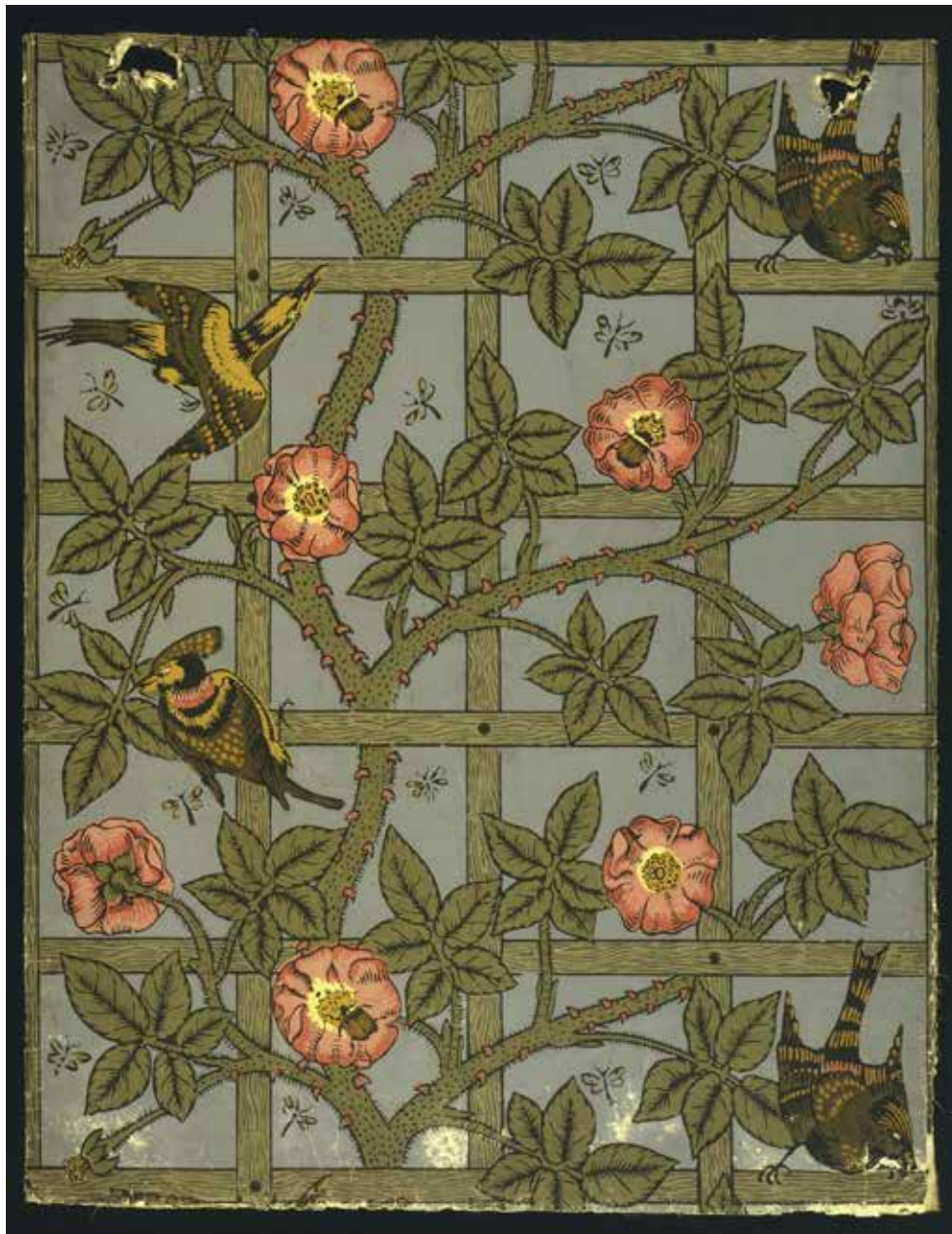


# Useful & Beautiful

Published by the  
William Morris Society in the United States  
Spring 2023



Morris & Co.'s 1862 *Trellis* wallpaper

## EDITORS' NOTE SPRING 2023

Our cover image is Morris & Co.'s 1862 *Trellis* wallpaper, which is well known for its intentional balance of the natural and the human made. The design centers on the careful geometry of the eponymous trellis which grounds the motion of William Morris's characteristic twining leaves, stems, and flowers.

*Trellis* challenges the boundaries between indoors and outdoors, between humans and the natural world. In *Trellis*, Morris gives us conventional roses and leaves, but insists that we also bring inside thorns, wood and nails (likely dirty), and creatures that we do not generally welcome in our living rooms. Here we have bugs, and not a few of them, which flit among the leaves and pollinate the flowers, actively pursued by Philip Webb's lively assortment of birds. We are given, in essence, a whole garden ecosystem. By asking us to bring the outside in, Morris's design elements make us reconsider our relationship to nature, its preservation, and its consumption.

The Spring 2023 issue of *U&B* centers on the idea of design, and the choices that influence its direction, execution, and final product. For curatorial work and visually-oriented practice in general, design can be used to shape arguments, evoke moods, and provide nuance to well-known objects and artists.

Our two feature interviews explore the curatorial choices that defined recent exhibitions. Dr. Margaret Stetz and Mark Samuels Lasner consider the constraints and affordances of staging their recent exhibition, *Aubrey Beardsley, 150 Years Young*, at the Grolier Club in New York City. Dr. Margaretta Frederick and Dr. Sophie Lynford also describe the development of their exhibition, *A Marriage of Arts & Crafts: Evelyn & William De Morgan*, at the Delaware Art Museum in Wilmington, which they co-curated with Sarah Hardy at the De Morgan Collection.

We also feature work by Thomas Cooper, our 2022 Dunlap winner, who details his Morris Society-sponsored travels to trace the influences of May Morris's time in Wales on her later work. Our own conversation with Sarah Mead Leonard explores the effects of late 19th-century design in the recent Apple TV+ adaptation of *The Essex Serpent*. This is joined by our WMS-US Undergraduate Essay and Art Project Prize winners, Mary Schreiner and Amuri Morris

Finally, "Words with William" opens this conversation to our readers, who discuss this relationship

between indoors and outdoors, and Morris's intentional insistence on the ethical and economic implications of design and its production.

We hope this issue inspires your own creative endeavors this spring in your work as artists, educators, thinkers, and design aficionados. *Trellis* also reminds us that summer is just around the corner.

Happy Spring,  
Brandiann and Anna

### IN THIS ISSUE

3. Interview with Dr. Margaretta S. Frederick and Dr. Sophie Lynford by Anna Wager and Brandiann Molby
10. Reflections on *The Essex Serpent* A conversation between Sarah Mead Leonard, Brandiann Molby, and Anna Wager
14. *Aubrey Beardsley, 150 Years Young* by Margaret D. Stetz
16. WMS-US Undergraduate Essay Prize by Mary Schreiner: Elbert Hubbard's *Little Journeys to the Homes of English Authors*: William Morris and his "K'ontroversial" Impact on the Reception of William Morris's Arts and Crafts Movement in America.
24. Researching May Morris in Welsh Collections by Thomas Cooper Artist Statement
26. Artist Statement: Amuri Morris, winner of the WMS-US Art Project Prize
28. Words With William
31. May Morris: Two Works

Website: [www.morrisociety.org](http://www.morrisociety.org)  
Blog: [morrisociety.blogspot.com](http://morrisociety.blogspot.com)  
Twitter @MorrisSocietyUS

facebook.com/The-William-Morris-Society-138704472341/

Submit articles and items of interest to:  
[williammorrisocietyus@gmail.com](mailto:williammorrisocietyus@gmail.com)

This newsletter is published by the William Morris Society in the United States, P. O. Box 53263, Washington DC 20009. Editorial committee: Brandiann A. Molby and Anna Wager (editors), and Karla Tonella (designer).

#### GOVERNING COMMITTEE OF THE WILLIAM MORRIS SOCIETY-USA

Jude Nixon, President; Sarah Mead Leonard, Vice President; David Lowden, Secretary; Rebekah Greene, Treasurer; Brandiann Molby, Editor, *Useful and Beautiful*; Adrienne Sharpe-Weseman, Membership Coordinator; Anna Wager, Editor, *Useful and Beautiful*; Monica Bowen, Imogen Hart, Mark Samuels Lasner, Katja Lindskog, Tracy Meserve

## A MARRIAGE OF ARTS & CRAFTS: EVELYN & WILLIAM DE MORGAN DELAWARE ART MUSEUM, OCTOBER 22, 2022–FEBRUARY 19, 2023



Fig. 1: Evelyn De Morgan (1855–1919), *Earthbound*, 1897.  
Oil on canvas. © De Morgan Collection, courtesy of the De Morgan Foundation

### INTERVIEW WITH DR. MARGARETTA S. FREDERICK AND DR. SOPHIE LYNFORD QUESTIONS BY ANNA WAGER AND BRANDIANN MOLBY

Could you speak to your collaboration in developing and organizing the exhibition? How did the exhibition evolve and change as it went through the planning and organizing process? What piece(s) or juxtaposition of pieces were particularly interesting or intriguing for you?

**Margaretta S. Frederick (MSF):** Firstly, this exhibition could not have occurred if not for Sarah Hardy, Director and Curator of the De Morgan Collection. Her knowledge of all things related to Evelyn and William is encyclopedic.

The idea for this exhibition came to me back in 2017, and really didn't become a reality until Sarah's



Fig. 2: Evelyn De Morgan (1855 –1919), Drawing for ‘*Earthbound*,’ 1897. Gold pigment on dark wove paper.  
© De Morgan Collection, courtesy of the De Morgan Foundation

arrival a year later. From the start I was intrigued by what appeared to be the rare marriage partnership that William and Evelyn nurtured—and which in turn allowed them both to excel in their respective artistic disciplines. When they met they each brought slightly different artistic backgrounds to the relationship—William (who was 16 years older) trained at the RA and Evelyn at the Slade. William was in the decorative arts and closely aligned with William Morris; Evelyn was a painter, and made her mark during the height of the Aesthetic period, invited to exhibit (one of only 2 women) at the 1877 inaugural Grosvenor Gallery exhibition. I think the fact that they were on independent but parallel tracks contributed to the success of their partnership. And yet, when you view their work side by side—as they exhibited it early on in their relationship in William’s

showroom—there is a kind of visual symbiosis which I relate to their shared inspiration in the art of the Renaissance.

Anna and I were particularly taken with Evelyn De Morgan’s *Earthbound*. [Truly—our Zoom call ground to a halt as we both speculated about it!] Could you provide our readers with some context for this piece? How do you interpret the work, and how do you see it fitting into De Morgan’s larger oeuvre? If you’d prefer to focus on another work to deep dive on, that would be absolutely great too.

MSF: Yes, it is a spectacular work, and as with so many of Evelyn’s paintings, weighted with her progressive socio-political views. She and William shared dismay at the growing economic disparity

accentuated by the advent of the modern age. The industrialist middle class often made their fortune from the work of poorly paid unskilled laborers. They mandated long hours in appalling conditions. The vast accumulation of wealth by a few reflected a new materialism that was at odds with the De Morgans’ belief in spiritual well-being for all. In *Earthbound*, an old man is intently focused on the gold coins spread out on the ground before him, which he covetously gathers together. His lust for material wealth is such that he is unaware of the angel of death who hovers at left. The man’s failure to engage in a spiritually focused life will lead to doom in the afterlife. This composition is a commentary on the blatant pursuit of wealth of the modern age. As spiritualists, Evelyn and William believed in well-being for all.

*U&B* is the publication of the Morris Society in the US. What connections do you see between this exhibition and William Morris’s own life and work? How do you see this exhibition speaking to or participating in Morris scholarship, or scholarly examinations of aestheticism and the Arts and Crafts?

MSF: William De Morgan met William Morris early in his career, around 1863, and in many ways was rescued from the tedium he may have been feeling as he slogged through a traditional education in academic painting at the RA. He became quite close with both Morris and Burne-Jones. Soon he was involved in the design of stained glass for Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., discovering techniques which could be utilized in the firing and glazing of ceramics. He may have even designed some tiles for the Firm. With the startup of his pottery, Morris’s company was a ready client/collaborator. Reginald Blunt (1918, p. 174) writes of the end of the day at William’s premises in Chelsea: “...towards evening would often be heard a big voice shouting ‘Bill!’ and footsteps mounting the stairs three at a time like a schoolboy’s, which told of the arrival of William Morris with ruffled hair and indigo-stained fingers, keen to discuss some

new project or just to hear how things were going with his friend.” And much later, May Morris (1917, p. 83) would write about evenings spent with Evelyn and William in a villa outside of Florence, “We would sit long after the evening meal watch-



Fig. 3: Evelyn De Morgan (1855 –1919), *Flora*, 1894. Oil and gold leaf on canvas. © De Morgan Collection, courtesy of the De Morgan Foundation



Fig. 4: Evelyn De Morgan (1855 –1919), *Love's passing*, 1883-1894. Oil on Canvas. © De Morgan Collection, courtesy of the De Morgan Foundation



Fig. 5: Evelyn De Morgan (1855 –1919), *The Gilded Cage*, c. 1900. Oil on canvas. © De Morgan Collection, courtesy of the De Morgan Foundation

ing the fire-flies mingle with the stars in the blue of night above the Arno valley. At times the talk fell into friendly silence, and the nightingale's song and the scent from the rose-bowers and the lily-hedges seemed to weave more closely about us all that spell of sympathy that no trivial thing from without could ever break—nor ever has broken.”

That the friendship was lifelong and was shared by Evelyn as well is evidenced in her poignant capturing of Jane Morris in old age, modeling for *The Hour Glass*. The painting speaks to the passage of time and presents an honest, truthful rendering of an old friend whose life extended beyond the Pre-Raphaelite male gaze.

Dr. Lynford recently taught an online course in Pre-Raphaelite art. How do you see the course informing or adding to the work of the exhibition?

Sophie Lynford (SL): The public course I taught

this fall at DelArt, “Radical Beauty: The Art of the Pre-Raphaelites,” was purposely timed to coincide with the De Morgan exhibition. With both virtual and in-person components, it provided a deep dive into the history of Pre-Raphaelitism and the related movements that followed, including Arts and Crafts and Aestheticism. Participants in this multi-session course closely studied works in the museum’s Bancroft Collection of Pre-Raphaelite Art, coming away with an understanding of the compositional and technical differences between Pre-Raphaelite and Aesthetic painting, as well as familiarity with the reformist principles for design and decoration associated with the Arts and Crafts movement. With this background, participants engaged with objects in the De Morgan exhibition with deeper expertise, apprehending the unique ways both artists selected and recombined elements of Pre-Raphaelitism, Aestheticism, and Arts and Crafts to create stunningly beautiful paintings and ceramics.

NEXT TWO PAGES

WILLIAM DE MORGAN (1839 –1917)

© DE MORGAN COLLECTION, COURTESY OF THE DE MORGAN FOUNDATION

Fig. 6: *Seahorse Tile Panel*, c. 1880. Tin-glazed earthenware tiles set in wooden panel.

Fig. 7: *Fish and Net Vase*, 1882 - 1888. Copper lustre glazed earthenware.

Fig. 8: *Running Antelope Plate*, c. 1890. Copper and Silver lustre glazed earthenware.

Fig. 9: *Two Handled Persian Vase*, c. 1890. Tin-glazed earthenware.

Fig. 10: *Bear and Hare Dish*, c. 1890. Tin-glazed earthenware.



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9



Fig. 10

## REFLECTIONS ON THE ESSEX SERPENT



Cora (Claire Danes) and Will (Tom Hiddleston); opening credit slide for *The Essex Serpent*

*A conversation between Sarah Mead Leonard, Brandiann Molby, and Anna Wager over zoom in winter 2022. This conversation is likely more of interest to those who have seen or read *The Essex Serpent*, but we did try to avoid spoilers.*

The *Essex Serpent*, a television series based on the novel by Sarah Perry, is a story about science, belief, and feeling at the margins of respectable Victorian culture. Cora, a rich young widow and brilliant amateur paleontologist, comes to Essex in search of fossils, and follows rumors of a strange beast out into the marshes. Cora is convinced the serpent is a living fossil, a survival of an earlier evolutionary period, but the villagers around her are just as convinced that it is a supernatural beast, a judgment from God. And amongst this external drama of opposing beliefs and real danger, Cora is also at the heart of a maelstrom of deep, complex, and passionate relationships in both Essex and London.

**Brandiann Molby:** One of the things that I wanted to be sure to talk about was the look of the show. Because this is for U&B and we have amongst us the Every Morris (a social media project documenting every Morris & Co. wallpaper and printed fabric) expert. So, tell us about the title sequence, Sarah.

**Sarah Mead Leonard:** The title sequence. I was trying to think about it yesterday, and I've been

trying to think about it since I started watching it. The title sequence is also taken from the cover of the book, which is based on a Morris—well, really they're both based on [John Henry] Dearle designs. Actually, I need to go through it frame by frame, because the sequence uses a few designs. Black-thorn shows up, which is also a Dearle, and then also Morris's wallpaper Honeysuckle.

This is something that I keep on trying to hash out in my own mind, because Morris designs, and some [similar] designs keep showing up in shows with a certain vibe. I'm trying to figure out and have not managed to articulate to myself yet why there's an underlying old-fashioned creepiness that they're able to evoke. They show up in a lot of haunted houses, and I think it's partially just that Victoriana and horror go hand in hand a lot. But there's also something innate, I think, and it really stood out to me with this one, because the show is about nature, and about the weirdness of nature, and then they layer [the design] with the heart and the toad, which makes it even more intertwined with that, which I find very interesting. But, there is something I think about the darkness and density of the designs, which has an, if not uncanniness, then discomfort to it. Is that an innate thing? Is that an aesthetic that something about us in the 2020s finds really uncomfortable?

**Anna Wager:** I hesitate to use the word organic

when we talk about pattern design, but it feels like there's more of a sinuousness to Morris's wallpaper in a way that does lend it to movement, and to bringing a kind of creepy movement into a space, even though I have never thought of them as creepy, particularly. But why Morris and not another Victorian wallpaper? Maybe designers just use Morris because they're the most famous ones at this point, or the most famous type.

**Brandiann Molby:** Also the best!

**Anna Wager:** Yes, the best! I was thinking about Anna Tandler's artwork, do you know her photography? She did this series of photos over the last year called *Rooms in the First House*, and it's just her in her New York mansion up in the Catskills, with Morris wallpaper and other papers of the period, and these minimalist haunted scenes that she stages with her body. But I can't tell if the design is what is heightening the creepiness.

**Brandiann Molby:** I want to defend Morris a bit here. I don't think there's anything inherently creepy about [the designs]. I think any time you're doing any kind of design, [what matters is] what you do with it, because you can put the sweetest

teddy bear of all time in the middle of this haunted house scene, and all of a sudden it's terrifying. But I think you're right. It is the sense of movement. It is the nature, because horror is supposed to be like a perversion or distortion of something that we otherwise think of as wholesome, or that helps create this effect along with the Victoriana.

**Sarah Mead Leonard:** I really like the movement in the credits. I like seeing things where people articulate and add movement. There was a game that the V&A did with pattern, and it used Morris and Co. patterns with movement in it. There's something kind of strange and wonderful in seeing them in motion and seeing them with living creatures in them.

**Brandiann Molby:** Do you think then maybe we could say that the title sequence captures some of that tension in the show between the beauty of nature and the unsettling-ness of it? Is it natural? Is it really there?

**Sarah Mead Leonard:** Yeah, I think so. And there's also something in the mix between aesthetic and beauty. You see that with Cora and her crazy gowns, and coming out of this London world, and



Essex Coast

her house. But then you also get it with Stella, who wears Artistic Dress, which is also very interesting. Given that she's a country vicar's wife, she's very much this aesthetic figure, both with her fixation on color, but also with the way that she dresses and the aesthetic around her. And then you've got these two women, and also Luke, with his embroidered waistcoats and all of his Bohemian friends. But then they're all in this other setting, and the contrast between [them]—. I didn't manage to fully finish that thought, but that happens in the show, and that also happens in the credits. The toad in the middle of Blackthorn is what rises in my mind, and the kind of lumpen muddiness of the toad in the middle of a Dearle pattern is the opposite of that rather than Cora in the marshes. Also the marshes are interesting to talk about, because the Essex marshes are one of Morris's native landscapes and a place that he really loved. But I don't think he [thought of the marshes] in the way they're depicted in the show. So I just jumped to three different things.

**Brandiann Molby:** I think you're right that the costumes and the sets highlight the extent to which everyone is out of place. I love your description of the vicarage in the marshes, and then Cora's husband's house. Because it's not her taste, she's not at home there, for all the reasons, and it's this lacquered like—

**Anna Wager:** Japonisme.

**Brandiann Molby:** Yes, Japonisme.

**Sarah Mead Leonard:** Red lacquered.

**Anna Wager:** It's oppressive—

**Brandiann Molby:** —Tightly controlled and artificial.

**Anna Wager:** You're so right that she doesn't fit—none of them do. And I was reading something today with the costume designer that was saying basically, Tom Hiddleston's clothing is cut from the same fabric that the other villagers are wearing, but it's cut in a totally different way. He looks like he's trying to fit in, and he's not quite getting it. And Stella definitely doesn't fit. And then Cora

comes in with her hair, which is that wild color, and her clothing being so completely different, like her cowboy hat! Sarah and I were texting about her sweater dress because we both want one, and it's just so different from what other people are wearing. Stella blends just because I think she's more of a blend-able person, whereas when you actually look at the style of her clothing you're like, "Oh, this is completely different from what anyone else here is wearing."

**Brandiann Molby:** The way that their vicarage is decorated is gesturing towards the eclecticism of the Arts and Crafts movement, even if it's not going full bore, and it's not having the money poured into it that luxury clients are using. Her aesthetic dress at least, to use your word, blends with that eclecticism, even if it does stand out from the architecture of the place.

**Sarah Mead Leonard:** I remember from the book they're not from there. Will, I think, came out of the university system, and they've settled there [in Essex], and they've committed there. And he particularly, like you said, with the costumes, is trying to fit in there. But that's not their world. They come out of a world that's more, well, not like Cora's exactly, but it's kind of equivalent; but they have rooted in this place.

**Brandiann Molby:** Cora has a dress—I don't think she wears it in the country, but she wears it in London, and it's got this herringbone or v-neck [striping] across the bodice in blue and red, and it's right at the point [in the show] where she's torn between town and country. Her house is red, or her husband's house is red, and the country is blue. Stella is all about blue, and [Cora's] son is obsessed with blue, and so here she is, like literally fifty-fifty, divided between these two spaces.

**Anna Wager:** I'm a sucker for any sort of media that kind of delves into places that are real and exist, but are also very mythical. Like anything related to Brittany; I was thinking of *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* while watching this. Or Cornwall, and Essex is doing something similar here. I was just on the Aran Islands, and there's very much

that kind of energy there too, where it's real but it's not, simultaneously, and that is always super fascinating to me.

**Sarah Mead Leonard:** That's a really good point, because Essex you think of as a London suburb. This is a story you expect to be telling about Cornwall or about Wales—these kind of Celtic fringe mystical places. But again, going back to Morris's thing with the Essex marshes, it is a weird landscape, I think. And it's really easy to get lost. Because tidal landscapes like that shift and change, with the water coming in and out, and are so featureless. I don't know if they filmed the show in Essex, but I feel like they did a really good job of capturing the landscape and the strangeness. During the scene where the boat is going out with Stella, there was a scene filmed from above with the water lapping at the marshy shores that was really beautiful and really strange, and also just muddy and brown and ugly at the same time.

**Anna Wager:** That's super interesting, because then you think about people trying to root themselves there when it's shifting around them. Stella's such a sympathetic character, obviously because of the TB, also because she's just very nice, and kind, and genuinely cares for Cora, and wants to be very supportive to her son and all of that. When you try and think of, how is she navigating this space again when she's so different from other people there, and when she can't even really get a handle on what the land around her is doing, that's such a wildly isolating space to be in. It's very, very evident. The landscape moves that much, even though it's also there, and there are all these attempts to contain it and structure it, and they kind of work.

**Brandiann Molby:** It's interesting, too, that the way that you are characterizing the landscape also connects with the faith and certainty tensions. Nobody can put a foothold in. You can't navigate it all the time. It's constantly shifting and altering around

you, and people are trying to make sense of that. In that way, the landscape makes a lot of sense.

**Sarah Mead Leonard:** I think with those kind of traditional, fishing communities and stuff you do think of superstition and things being associated with those communities, because the sea is ever changing, and it's an appropriate place to set it in more ways than one, because there is that kind of deep tradition which you also get in places like Cornwall, which is that kind of mystical ocean thing. But instead of being in the ocean, it's a weird, muddy marsh.

**Brandiann Molby:** It gives narrative access to the fossils without having to set it on the Jurassic coast or Lyme Regis, or other places where the nineteenth century novels have already kind of been done.

**Sarah Mead Leonard:** The Essex earthquake was a real thing. They don't mention it very often in the show. There's more stuff about it in the book. And that's why the ground has kind of shifted, and things have been revealed.

**Anna Wager:** It's another destabilizing force.

**Brandiann Molby:** Well, thank you both for doing this.

**Anna Wager:** Yes!

**Sarah Mead Leonard:** I'm glad we finally got it together.



Stella (Clémence Poésy) in artistic dress

## AUBREY BEARDSLEY, 150 YEARS YOUNG

Margaret D. Stetz

From September 8<sup>th</sup> through November 12<sup>th</sup> 2022, it was both a pleasure and an honor to have on view an exhibition that Mark Samuels Lasner and I curated for the Grolier Club, the distinguished bibliophilic organization in midtown Manhattan, and to have it be open to the public for free. Like William Morris, we believe that art should be accessible to everybody, not just those who can afford museum admission prices. Our exhibition, *Aubrey Beardsley, 150 Years Young*, was a display of 69 items (yes, the suggestive number was deliberate!), all of them from the Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, which has been donated to the University of Delaware. We surveyed Beardsley's career from the 1880s, when he was a precocious schoolboy, to 1898, the year of his untimely death from tuberculosis at age 25. The sesquicentennial of Beardsley's birth in 1872 seemed a very good moment to look back at his achievements and to do so not with reverence, but in something akin to the mischievous and often naughty spirit that animated his visual art and his writing. We used the phrase "150 Years Young" in our exhibition's title not merely because Beardsley died prematurely, but because his work still conveys a sense of exuberance, energy, innovation, and fearlessness of the kind associated with youth. What people who visited the exhibition in person saw—and what we hope that readers of the published catalogue, which is now available, will enjoy—is a series of images and explanatory labels about them that locate Beardsley in a particular historical and cultural context, while simultaneously emphasizing just how fresh and relevant he seems today. Many of the works from the Mark Samuels Lasner Collection will look familiar, as they have been reproduced so widely, but some have not been exhibited often and offer surprises. Almost all of them, however, involve a daring transgression of oppressive conventions—especially those involving gender and sexuality—and are nearly as eye-opening (and mind-opening)



Fig. 1: Aubrey Beardsley. *The Slippers of Cinderella*. Ink and watercolor over pencil on paper, [1894]. (Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, University of Delaware Library, Museums and Press)

now as they were in Britain in the 1890s.

Curating this exhibition allowed each of us to play to our strengths. Although legally blind, Mark Samuels Lasner is a tremendously determined and gifted researcher, as well as a world-renowned collector. I am a feminist scholar with particular expertise in the Victorian period, but also someone who loves to tell stories and to engage with an audience. Mark was responsible for selecting the items to be displayed and supplying factual information about them, while I wrote all of the label text, interpreting them. We were both very familiar with the exhibition space in the Grolier Club's second-floor gallery, and we knew that we would be working with a long hallway, conducive to hanging framed art, and a large room with wall cases and shelves. The hallway seemed the natural place for original drawings and smaller posters designed by Beardsley, while the room was the best space for the many books and periodicals

to which Beardsley contributed illustrations.

To know Beardsley's work is to love it—all of it—but if we had a "favorite" item, it was the one that represents a new and important discovery: Beardsley's original pen-and-ink drawing for the "key" device (with the initials "G. E.") that appeared in *Keynotes*, an 1893 volume of feminist short stories by the woman who wrote as "George Egerton." This drawing turned up in a scrapbook that belonged to the publisher's niece, and that was recently donated to the University of Delaware Library by Sheila Ann Hegy.

Because Beardsley made such groundbreaking and innovative use of black-and-white, it is easy to forget that he was also a master of color. We hope that our exhibition surprised even those who thought that they knew his work well, by highlighting such brilliant examples of his use of color as the watercolor *The Slippers of Cinderella* (Fig. 1), along with a number of posters. Of course, we also emphasized throughout how "colorful" a figure he himself was in other ways, peppering his art and his writing with outrageous jokes, often of a sexual nature.

It was this refusal to take most anything seriously—including himself—that distinguished him from committed political reformers, such as William Morris. Beardsley began, however, as a fervent disciple of Morris's medievalism, and his first artistic mentor was Edward Burne-Jones. *Le Morte d'Arthur*, which was Beardsley's major commission from the publisher J. M. Dent, who hoped to rival Morris, played a significant role in our exhibition, and we included one of Beardsley's original designs for that volume (Fig. 2; now a prize object in the Mark Samuels Lasner Collection). Readers of the exhibition catalog (Fig. 3) will be able to see the evolution of Beardsley's style, as it moved from *faux* Pre-Raphaelitism, to something influenced by Japanese *ukiyo-e* prints, to a wholly new and original aesthetic that is still admired (and also imitated) today, by artists around the world.



Fig. 2: Aubrey Beardsley. *Design for Border for Sir Thomas Malory, Le Morte D'Arthur*. Ink over pencil on paper, [1892]. (Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, University of Delaware Library, Museums and Press)

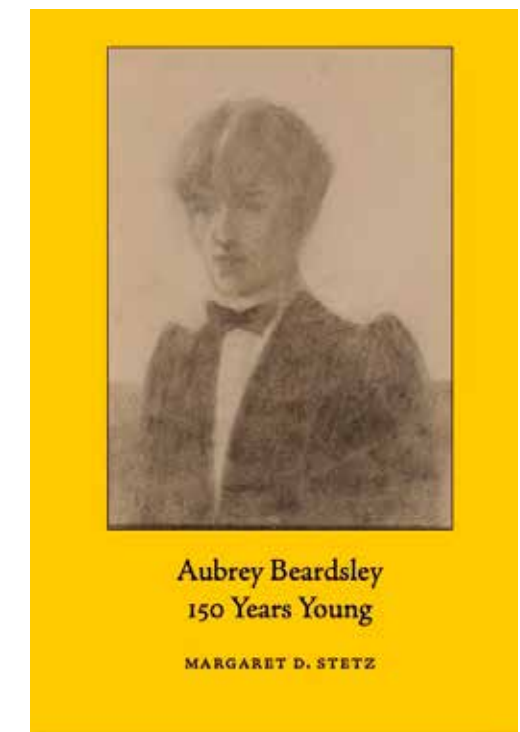
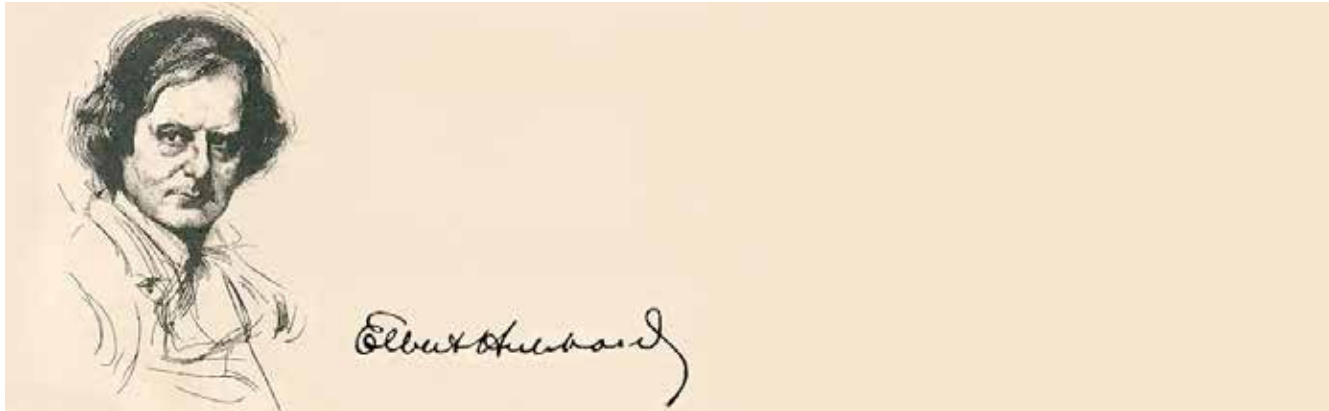


Fig. 3: Front cover of *Aubrey Beardsley, 150 Young* by Margaret D. Stetz. New York: The Grolier Club, 2022. Distributed by the University of Chicago Press. ISBN: 9781605831114 – \$25.00





**ELBERT HUBBARD'S  
LITTLE JOURNEYS TO THE HOMES OF ENGLISH AUTHORS:  
WILLIAM MORRIS AND HIS "K'ONTROVERSIAL" IMPACT ON THE  
RECEPTION OF WILLIAM MORRIS'S  
ARTS AND CRAFTS MOVEMENT IN AMERICA**

*Mary Schreiner, WMS-US Undergraduate Essay Prize*

Several years ago, I bought a 1900 edition of Elbert Green Hubbard's (1856-1915) *Little Journeys to the Homes of English Authors: William Morris*. The small book was an enigma, but it also charmed me. I displayed it. Everyone noticed it and asked about its origin, which at that time I had no information to give them. I doubted that it was even authentic, but I was wrong. It was authentic and its uncanny ability to enhance a room made it worth the \$36.00. However, this year, it became one of the most valuable investments of my education. It has taught me so much about art, about history and, especially, about controversy.

Even before Hubbard published this unique edition, William Morris's "views fell on particularly fertile ground in late nineteenth century America" (MacCarthy 603). *Little Journeys to the Homes of English Authors: William Morris* was just one example of people trying to replicate Morris's Arts and Crafts style. Morris had an "ingrained resistance to America...[but] was the distant guru... [and] his views were promulgated, often simplified and vulgarized" (MacCarthy 604). Many have claimed that Gustav Stickley was the patriarch of the American Arts and Crafts movement ([Antiques and the Arts Weekly](#)). However, Hubbard's

legacy, his *Little Journeys* series, and especially his *Little Journeys to the Homes of New English Authors: William Morris*, have revealed Hubbard's powerful impact on the reception of William Morris's Arts and Crafts Movement in America.

**ELBERT GREEN HUBBARD: WHO WAS HE?**

Elbert Hubbard definitely left his mark on the American Arts and Crafts movement. In 2010, Phillip Meyer "was overjoyed that his work was accepted by the Roycroft Copper Shop at the Roycroft campus...where Elbert Hubbard...and many others brought the Arts and Crafts movement to the USA" (Craftsman Bungalow). This recent enthusiasm contradicted May Morris's angry response in 1906 when, after speaking in Buffalo, N.Y, Hubbard's assistant Dard Hunter handed her an invitation to visit Hubbard at Roycrofters. Hunter recalled that, with "an air of disdain, she crumpled the note in her hand and gave it back to me" (Champney 119). Throughout his publishing career, Hubbard branded an image that seemed to welcome these negative reactions. "In fact, he was probably laughing all the way to the bank" (Johnson). Even though Hubbard impacted the reception of the Arts and Crafts in America, he did not always represent the honest in-

tegrity of William Morris's Arts and Crafts style.

Hubbard was a soap salesman, businessman, entrepreneur, socialist, and philosopher but, most importantly, he was an author and publisher. Some even labeled him a "heretic, [an] 'Anarkist' with a K...a successful fluke" (Ashbee) because Hubbard loved to not just break the rules of language, but smash them and throw them back into the face of the scholarly canon. His "rollicking vernacular" (Champney 85), e.g., 'Th' Ole Man', and 'did n't', his randomly placed commas, em dashes, and symbols, and his contrived language, e.g., "William Morris was the strongest all 'round man" (Hubbard 22), mocked the elite publishers. According to Hubbard the "person educated to write...never writes anything worth reading" (Champney 86). Hubbard played by his own rules and, instead of destroying his image, his rules enabled him to increase his profits and promote his brand in a country that was primed to challenge the status quo.



A Mezzotint portrait of Hubbard

Hubbard's counterculture personality blended perfectly with his fondness for controversy. However, the hypocrisy must have haunted him. Hubbard reaped huge profits from big business advertisements and ads that contradicted his stoic support of Morris's socialism. In a 1940 New York Times article, R.L. Duffus described Hubbard "as a man who could sell advertisements to a brass monkey" (Duffus 81). Hubbard's *Philistine*, a magazine that many considered a cheap tabloid, discredited his *Little Journeys* ideal of creating books as an object of art. "Commentary of [Hubbard's] magazine is seen between two lenses: a tabloid stuffed with half-truths, social commentary, and very profitable advertisements" ([Hricik](#)) and "a hodgepodge of maxims, clever ads, corny jokes that would make a Bob Hope gagwriter wince, and megalomaniacal self-promotion" (Kaufman). He instigated a contentious relationship with the publishing industry, an industry that enabled him to maliciously ridicule his enemies. Critics challenged Hubbard's

contentious writing style, but this criticism seemed to motivate him to become even more contentious.

In 1899, one year before publishing *Little Journeys to the Homes of English Authors: William Morris*, Hubbard wrote *A Message to Garcia*, an article that, in so many ways, contradicted the very essence of William Morris's philosophy. This short essay honored a soldier who does exactly as he is told, without questioning the commander, and is a metaphor for worker loyalty, for why "workers must do as they are told and only then can they deliver *A Message to Garcia*" (Belfer). After the New York Central Railroad General Passenger Manager and publicist, George Henry Daniels, bought thousands of copies of *A Message to Garcia* to give to his employees, "it sold over 40 million copies" (Duffus). Its popularity exploded. The irony of this story is obvious. It honored a man who asked no questions, just obeyed orders but it was *written* by Hubbard, who, throughout his life, promoted him-

self by breaking all the rules. The hypocrisy did not seem to bother most Americans. Roycrofters grew exponentially and books became just a small part of Hubbard's success. "Hubbard developed almost a cult-like status with his followers and well-oiled machines spit out Arts and Crafts products... He portrayed himself as a Bohemian, a cowboy" (Daniels), a socialist, and staunch supporter of Arts and Crafts, but also became a spokesman for rich capitalists. Critics condemned Hubbard but, paradoxically, this condemnation also launched his popularity.

The descriptions of Hubbard were not all negative. Jean-Francois Vilain's essay on "The Roycroft Printing Shop" in the exhibit catalog *Head, Heart and Hand* concluded, "Some Roycroft books can be charitably forgotten, many more are outstanding examples of bookmaking, but all contributed to the awakening of the American public to the value of a book as an art object, and to the spreading of the tenets of the Arts and Crafts movement" ([Luther](#)

[Library](#)). Hubbard’s legend was not dualistic; he was neither a great legacy nor a pure charlatan. His legacy was a quagmire of opinions that history may never untangle.

### CONTROVERSY: UNTANGLING HUBBARD’S LEGACY

Hubbard’s life and legacy have continued to allure bibliophiles, like me, even in the twenty-first century. My undergraduate Capstone class project required that students learn to create critical digital editions of public domain texts on the COVE Collaborative platform. For our Capstone project, my classmate Adriana Culverhouse and I decided to edit Hubbard’s *Journeys to the Homes of English Authors: William Morris*. Adriana, a self-proclaimed gamer, artist, and computer geek, dove right in and became as captivated with Hubbard and Morris as I was. This Capstone class utilized COVE Studios, a “flipped classroom for student projects built with [COVE’s] on-line tools” and



Roycroft Printing Press (Wikimedia Commons)

COVE Editions, “a scholar-driven open-access platform” (COVE) that publishes peer reviewed editions, galleries, maps, and timelines. COVE Editions will also give international scholars—who seek to investigate Hubbard’ unorthodox attempts to promote William Morris’s *objet d’art*—access to this unique Morris biography. Collaborating with Adriana on this project was one of the most enjoyable experiences of my college career.

To make our COVE edition less complicated, Adriana and I chose to only post a facsimile of Hubbard’s book without annotations. Instead of annotations, our Introduction critically examined *Little Journeys to the Homes of English Authors: William Morris* from an artistic and historical perspective, analyzed the endless labyrinth of facts and opinions on Hubbard, and explored how the passion and turmoil in Hubbard’s life impacted the reception of Morris’s Arts and Crafts style in America.

### TURMOIL: THE SPARK THAT IGNITED THE *LITTLE JOURNEYS* SERIES

Hubbard’s passion—almost obsession—to create the *Little Journeys* series that reflected William Morris’s printing techniques began with a trip to Europe around 1894. A voyage that some scholars believe played out very differently than what Hubbard describes in *Journeys to the Homes of English Authors: William Morris*.

In 1893, after eight years of marriage and fathering four children with his wife Bertha, Hubbard had an affair with Alice Moore and essentially became “a man with two wives” (Champney 49). This situation “contributed mightily to his restlessness” (Champney 49). Hubbard admitted that this “double life...makes the man a liar” (Champney 49). He resented his Evangelical upbringing whose “entire intent...is to destroy his self-confidence” (Champney 16); he harbored indignance towards Harvard professors who “told him he’d never be a writer” (PBS); and he mocked the big brick and mortar publishers. His bitterness, his unhappy marriage, and his guilty conscience all seemed to coalesce into an unbearable restlessness, a restless-

ness that pushed him to embark on a life-changing trip to Europe.

That trip to Europe inspired Hubbard to publish the *Little Journeys* series, and, like Morris, to try printing beautiful books in the Arts and Crafts style. Hubbard returned to the states but first bought “a hand press, type, and accessories...and Roycroft took shape in Hubbard’s barn...Kelmscott Press was fresh in Hubbard’s mind and...Morris was printing books that were beautiful as books; books to be looked at as much as read” (Champney 58). The journey to Europe and the hand press became the important catalysts that inspired Hubbard to publish an unprecedented 180 *Little Journeys* booklets honoring great artists, philosophers, businessmen, and a few notable women.

Hubbard’s new passion (obsession?) for creating books as *objet d’art* helped promote Roycroft. He eventually transformed the Roycrofters into “one third business establishment, one third university, and one third horse ranch, with just a touch of the monastic” (Champney 64). Hubbard attempted to replicate the Kelmscott Press through the *Little Journeys* biographies, but many American readers may not have realized that these unique books, that Hubbard sold as non-fiction, were at times, fiction.

One *Little Journey*’s biography highlights Hubbard’s disreputable writing ethics—questionable ethics that seeped into much of his literary ‘fictional’ endeavors. The *Little Journeys* biography of Edward Abbey and his wife “verged on the unforgivable... [when in] 1902 he did a *Little Journey* on the Abbeys [that included] ...a detailed and dramatic account of [his] visit... and the attractiveness of the family group comprising as he remembered it seven or eight children” (Champney 85). George Haven Putnam, the original publisher of the *Little Journeys* series, read the pamphlet but knew Abbey had no children. He alerted Abbey who replied, “the desire for children has been the passion of his wife and ...this description... might bring her into a state of nervous prostration” (Champney 85). Putnam demanded that Hubbard cancel the edition. Hubbard admitted “that he had...never

seen Abbey” (Champney 85). However, the “brood of little Abbeys [was]... still there...with an addition that they ‘run wild and free along the hedgerows’” (Champney 85) in *Little Journeys: Edward Abbey* that Hubbard published. He ignored Putnam’s demands because Hubbard played by different publishing rules than Putnam; rules that successfully sensationalized all the *Little Journeys* publications.

### *LITTLE JOURNEYS TO THE HOMES OF ENGLISH AUTHORS: WILLIAM MORRIS*

Hubbard included similar sensationalized and over-the-top accounts throughout *Journeys to the Homes of English Authors: William Morris*. For example, he described his visit to Kelmscott Press. He went on to detail the genius design, the comfort, and the beauty of the Morris chair, “the one in which I rested at Kelmscott House—broad, deep, massive, upholstered with curled hair, & covered with leather that would delight a book binder” (Hubbard 11). Hubbard may have visited Kelmscott but seemed to embellish his account of being introduced to Morris, talking to him, and immediately recognizing him because who “could mistake that great shaggy head, the tangled beard, and frank, open-eyed look of boyish animation? [He] greeted me as if we always had known each other...and piles of Chaucer proof led straight to old



Adriana’s Sketch of the Morris Chair

Professor Childs of Harvard” (Hubbard 18). There was no evidence that Hubbard actually met Morris during his trip. There was:

no mention of any Hubbard visit in any of Morris’ letters...and the anecdotes of the meeting reported years later by Hubbard do not match up with the facts (for example Hubbard says he saw sheets for the Kelmscott Chaucer being printed, but that didn’t happen til [sic] months after his visit). Bert [Hubbard’s son] in the February 1916 *Fra* later wrote that on June 30, 1896...they met only Mr. Cockerel and Mrs. Peddie, but that Morris himself was sick in bed. (Hricik)

As Adriana and I also discussed in our COVE Edition’s Introduction, this fictional meeting also reveals Hubbard’s genius ability to entice readers. The Arts and Crafts movement was taking off in the States and a book that described an *actual* meeting with Morris would have become a hot commodity.

Hubbard’s use of sarcasm throughout *Little Journeys to the Homes of English Authors: William Morris* also demonstrated his uncanny ability of hooking readers in. One example began by paying respect towards Mr. Cobden-Sanderson who “borrowed his wife’s maiden name and made it legally a part of his own...Anyway I quite like the idea of linking one’s name with that of the woman he loves” (Hubbard 18). On the very next page, Hubbard described how Morris silenced Sanderson, a man who was “small, red-headed, meek, and wears bicycle trousers” (Hubbard 19). Hubbard knew that, by expressing respect then flipping to mockery, he would have amused readers. The image of a meek sophisticated lawyer being silenced by Morris would have entertained many Americans.

Hubbard’s fabricated encounter with Th’ Ole Man and sarcastic bicycle trouser comment was dwarfed by his over-the-top admiration—almost deification—of Morris throughout *Little Journeys to the Homes of English Authors: William Morris*. The book’s final sentence asks, “shall we not call him Master?” (Hubbard 24). The descriptions

portrayed Morris as an almost God-like figure, not a man. Hubbard’s “talent was not really as a writer, it was more in re-packaging, writing in ways that stuck in people’s minds” (Mills). On the other hand, Hubbard’s glorified portrayal of Morris *does* seem sincere. He may not have actually met Morris, but that visit to Kelmscott obviously left a life changing impression upon Hubbard and, throughout *Journeys to the Homes of English Authors: William Morris*, it became apparent that Morris’s art and Kelmscott Press transformed Hubbard’s life’s mission.

### HUBBARD’S ‘OBJET D’ART’: PASTICHE?

Hubbard tried to achieve the aesthetics, the essence of Morris’s style by publishing *Little Journeys to the Homes of English Authors: William Morris*. It is only 6” x 8” and is a mere 39 pages. It reflects Hubbard’s passion for Morris’s art and, like Morris, his life-long obsession “to resurrect the lost art of making books” (Hubbard 24). This biography boasts hand illuminated pictorials, archaic ligature Bookman-like fonts, hand-made paper and vellums, teardrop formatting, tiny clovers inserted throughout the text, and impressive portraits—a lithograph of Morris and a mezzotint of Hubbard. The images below reveal that this book was unique, but in 1900, few Americans had experienced William Morris’s genuine book art. *Little Journeys to the Homes of English Authors: William Morris* attempted to honor Morris’s legacy. Hubbard may have even created a respectable pastiche of Morris’s art. Many Americans may have equated *Little Journeys to the Homes of English Authors: William Morris* to the English Arts and Crafts style, but, when comparing Hubbard’s work to Morris’s, there’s no doubt that, although Hubbard’s book was beautiful, it failed to successfully replicate Morris’s *objet d’art*; he failed to create a book that, like those of Morris, transformed book publishing into an art form that went beyond beauty.

Hubbard’s desire to publish for the masses at the expense of truth was apparent in *Little Journeys to the Homes of English Authors: William Morris* as he “neglects to include two cantos of seven lines each of *The Idyll Singer*, from Morris’s *The Earthly*



Clockwise: Book Cover, signature page with watermark, hand-painted pictorials, and Archaic font of Hubbard’s *Little Journeys to the Homes of English Authors: William Morris*.

*Paradise* and randomly adds a comma and edits out an em dash to Morris’s poem” (Culverhouse *et al*). Why did Hubbard revise Morris’s poem? Was it a misprint, a random error, a creative interpretation, or an example of Hubbard’s negligence? Readers can only guess Hubbard’s motives but, throughout this biography, they will discover many more examples of Hubbard’s questionable (disreputable?) publishing practices.

Hubbard claimed to have hand-printed nine hundred and twenty-five copies of *Little Journeys English Authors: William Morris* but scholars have pointed out that Hubbard “sold his books as

handmade when, in fact, many were bound by a nearby Buffalo printer,... signed editions had actually been signed by his assistants, ...[and] limited editions routinely exceeded the number Hubbard claimed (Luther Library). Hubbard sensed—correctly—that ignoring the truth, mocking the elite, and flaunting publishing ethics ultimately enhanced his image, an image with which American consumers fell in love. Hubbard successfully branded himself as a counterculture personality.

### HUBBARD: AN AMERICAN MARTYR

Hubbard’s reputation also shined a light on his savvy business sense. “His literary, publishing and handicraft ventures flourished...so widely that his voice and face were known in every state in the union” (Duffus). Hubbard wrote in ways that appealed to both the working class and the rich and beautifully printed, yet affordable books that adorned the shelves of public libraries, the studies of affluent business tycoons, and the homes of many working-class families. An achievement that impacted the reception of William Morris’s art in America and has continued to impact the American Arts and Crafts movement in the 21st century.

By passionately building the Roycrofters to honor Kelmscott, by meticulously adding rich archaic Bookman fonts, lithographs, and hand-painted pictures in his *Little Journeys* booklets, and especially by cleverly creating cheaper, quasi-Arts and Crafts items that appealed to the American consumer (and, unlike the Kelmscott books of Morris, that even the working class could afford), there’s little doubt that Hubbard contributed to the reception of William Morris’s Arts and Crafts style in the United States. However, in the end, the controversy and drama surrounding Hubbard’s death,

especially the final minutes of his life, symbolized the uncanny circumstances that both haunted and promoted Hubbard's legacy.

Elbert and Alice (who had become his wife) booked passage on the Lusitania in 1915, even though the passengers were warned by the German Embassy to cancel their tickets and to avoid traveling on ships sailing near the war zone. Hubbard "pooh-poohed any talk of danger...[he] told reporters that he didn't know but what the Kaiser would be willing to talk to him and that such a meeting might even lead toward peace" (Champney 195). Hubbard taunted the obvious danger.

Hubbard and Alice were aboard the Lusitania as it sank into the ocean. Only eighteen minutes passed between the torpedo hitting the ship and the ship plunging beneath the surface. However, survivor accounts described Elbert and Alice calmly ignoring the chaos and one account claimed he saw "them go into a cabin and close the door" (Champney 195). Even though "very little is known about the actions of the Hubbards in the eighteen minutes of chaos...[the] final issue of the *Philistine* treated this as a deliberate self-sacrifice" (Champney 195). The man whom "many claimed promoted William Morris's art and was the Father of the American Arts and Crafts movement, became a martyr as he plunged into the depths of the ocean, along with the Lusitania" (Culverhouse, et al). The accounts of Hubbard bravely facing death aboard the celebrated Lusitania may have been Hubbard's final victory over the countless contradictions he faced during his life.

As a self-proclaimed socialist, Hubbard profited from big business advertisements and attempted to silence the voices of the working class; as a follower of the honest integrity and simplistic style of the Arts and Crafts movement, he also spread malicious half-truths and blatant lies to promote his art; and as a passionate defender of William Morris's philosophy, he also knew May Morris considered him an "obnoxious imitator of my dear father" (Champney 119). May Morris's cutting retribution was a gift to Hubbard. He knew that controversy can have a positive impact: May

Morris's resentment and anger ironically promoted Hubbard and, in the end, even the reception of her father's art in America.

#### WORKS CITED



Elbert Hubbard's Roycroft Press printer's mark

Antiques and Arts Weekly Website, "Gustav Stickley and American Arts and Crafts Movement," August 31, 2010. Available at <https://www.antiquesandthearts.com/gustav-stickley-and-american-arts-crafts-movement/>

Ashbee, Felicity. (2002). Janet Ashbee & Elbert Hubbard in East Aurora. *Style 1900*, 15(2).

Belfer, Lauren. Interviewed in "Head Heart & Hand: Elbert Hubbard and the Roycrofters." Public Broadcasting Station Documentary, director/writer Paul Lamont, 2009. Available at <https://www.pbs.org/video/head-heart-hand-elbert-hubbard-and-the-roycrofters-ie9alu/>

Champney, Freeman. *Art & Glory: The Story of Elbert Hubbard*, New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1968.

COVE Editions website, <https://editions.covecollective.org/>

Craftsman Bungalow, Arts and Crafts Home Furnishing Builder. <http://www.thecraftsmanbungalow.com/craftsman-spotlight-ragsdale/>

Culverhouse, Adriana. Personal sketch of Morris's chair. 2022

Culverhouse, Adriana and Schreiner, Mary. Introduction to COVE Editions website, <https://editions.covecollective.org>.

Daniels, George. Cited in "Head Heart & Hand: Elbert Hubbard and the Roycrofters" Public Broadcasting Station Documentary, director/writer Paul Lamont, 2009. Available at <https://www.pbs.org/video/head-heart-hand-elbert-hubbard-and-the-roycrofters-ie9alu/>

Duffus, R. L. "Elbert Hubbard of Roycroft: A Biography of the Various Sided Man of Letters and Affairs Whose Message to Garcia Was the 40,000,000-Copy Best-Seller of Its Day." *New York Times* Feb. 25 1940: p. 81. A review of David Balch, *Elbert Hubbard, Genius of Roycroft*. Available at <https://www.nytimes.com/1940/02/25/archives/elbert-hubbard-of-roycroft-a-biography-of-the-various->

[sided-man-of.html](#)

Hricik, David. "Professor Hricik's chronology of Things Roycraftie," 2004. Available at <http://www.hricik.com/Roycroft/roycroftlinks.html>

Hubbard, Elbert. *Little Journeys: William Morris*, East Aurora, New York: Roycroft Shop, 1900.

Hubbard, Elbert. *Little Journeys to the Homes of English Authors: William Morris*. Edited by Adriana Culverhouse and Mary Schreiber. COVE Editions. [Work in Progress, 2022], Available at <https://editions.covecollective.org/edition/little-journeys-homes-english-authors-william-morris>, 2022.

Image of Roycroft printing press: Available at Available at <https://www.alamy.com/stock-photo/roycroft-shop.html>

Johnson, Bruce. Interviewed in "Head Heart & Hand: Elbert Hubbard and the Roycrofters." Public Broadcasting Station Documentary, x director/writer Paul Lamont, 2009. Available at <https://www.pbs.org/video/head-heart-hand-elbert-hubbard-and-the-roycrofters-ie9alu/>

Kauffman, Bill. "Arts and Crafts Apostle." *The American Enterprise*, vol. 10, no. 1, Jan. 1999, p. 76. Gale Academic OneFile, Available at <link.gale.com/apps/doc/A53542803/AONE?u=greenbay&sid=book-mark-AONE&xid=fee897f0>. Accessed 4 Apr. 2022.

Luther College, Preus Library, Roycroft Collection. <https://www.luther.edu/library/about/collections/special/roycroft/>

<https://www.pbs.org/video/head-heart-hand-elbert-hubbard-and-the-roycrofters-ie9alu/>

MacCarthy, Fiona. *William Morris, A Life for Our Time*, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1994.

Mills, Angela. Interviewed in "Head Heart & Hand: Elbert Hubbard and the Roycrofters" Public Broadcasting Station Documentary, director/writer Paul Lamont, 2009. Available at <https://www.pbs.org/video/head-heart-hand-elbert-hubbard-and-the-roycrofters-ie9alu/>

Public Broadcasting Station (PBS), *Head Heart & Hand: Elbert Hubbard and the Roycrofters, A Documentary*. Available at <https://www.pbs.org/video/head-heart-hand-elbert-hubbard-and-the-roycrofters-ie9alu/>



After a successful counseling career, Mary Schreiner began pursuing a B.F.A. in Writing. She currently volunteers at a homeless shelter and plans to become a grant writer for non-profit agencies that support her community.

## IN REMEMBRANCE OF DR. HARTLEY SPATT

The William Morris Society gratefully acknowledges the life and fellowship of Dr. Hartley Steven Spatt, who passed away in December 2022 surrounded by his family. Dr. Spatt earned his Ph.D. at Johns Hopkins University in 1975 with a dissertation on "William Morris: The Languages of History and Myth." He was a State University of New York distinguished teaching professor at SUNY Maritime, and was responsible for more than 80 articles and presentations. He was also a former member of the board of the William Morris Society in the United States and its long-term treasurer.

He is well remembered for his love of literature and technology, along with his joy in sharing his excitement with his students. Florence Boos recalls, "I first met Hartley about 1975 at a Modern Language Association Convention, and we shared several projects. He was a man of rare literary gifts, kind, and always good-humored, astute, and appreciative of others. He was also a truly devoted family man, and enjoyed talking of his children and their pursuits."

Professor Spatt's publications on William Morris include three articles, "William Morris and the Uses of the Past" (*Victorian Poetry*, 1975), "Morrissaga: *Sigurd the Volsung*" (in *After-Summer Seed*, 1978), and "William Morris's Late Romances: The Struggle Against Closure," (*History and Community*, 1992), all available on the William Morris Archive.

The family has kindly requested that memorials be made to the William Morris Society in the U.S. in honor of Dr. Spatt <https://williammorrisocietyintheus22.wildapricot.org/Donations>

## RESEARCHING MAY MORRIS IN WELSH COLLECTIONS

*Thomas Cooper*

In January last year, I was awarded the Joseph R. Dunlap Memorial Fellowship 2022. With this fellowship, I was able to undertake research in collections in Wales in support of my PhD on the career and work of a leading Arts and Crafts figure, May Morris (1862-1938).

Morris was a leading figure of the second generation of the Arts and Crafts movement. Her extensive career included designing and making textiles and jewellery, writing articles and books, lecturing and exhibiting internationally, and teaching at leading art schools. Among her many achievements, she is noted for co-founding the Women's Guild of Arts in 1907 and substantially shaping the legacies of the Arts and Crafts in the twentieth century.

I wanted to get to Wales because a significant quantity of artworks and archive material relating to Morris is dispersed throughout national collections in Cardiff and Aberystwyth. Many of these were instituted through bequests made by Morris's partner, Mary Lobb, in the late 1930s. These collections, far from the Victoria and Albert Museum, the environs of Walthamstow and Hammersmith, and even Kelmescott Manor, might seem unfamiliar to those studying the lives and work of members of the Morris family. However, Lobb's decision to place artworks and archives belonging to the family in these locations was appropriate. Morris had deep ties to Wales. She had a large number of Welsh friends, many of whom visited Kelmescott Manor. In the last two decades of her life and she and Lobb frequently holidayed in Wales during the last two decades of her life. Wales became a dearly loved part of the world for them both, and together they went camping, walking and exploring in Pembrokeshire, Ceredigion, Snowdonia, and Powys.

My fellowship research began in Cardiff at Llandaff Cathedral, which Morris and Lobb visited in 1920. On the day of my visit, I had the unexpected pleasure of seeing a Morris & Co. embroidered altar frontal, in use in the Lady Chapel. This was designed by William Morris and Philip Webb and embroidered by Morris's aunt, Elizabeth Burden (Fig. 1)



Fig.1: Morris & Co. embroidered altar frontal, Llandaff Cathedral.

I then headed to St. Fagans Museum of Natural History, part of the National Museums Wales consortium, located in the outskirts of Cardiff. Laid out ready for me to see was the museum's version of the Morris & Co. Acanthus bedcover, designed by William Morris and (very likely) embroidered by Jane and Jenny Morris (Fig. 2). I also examined Lobb's correspondence with museum in the late 1930s over the bequest of the bedcover. This research provided the basis for a short article I have forthcoming in *The Burlington Magazine*. From St. Fagans, I headed to the National Museum Cardiff. I saw the museum's collection of jewellery designed and made by May Morris (Fig. 3). Both museum appointments provided valuable opportunities to study in person artworks which I examine in my doctoral research.

My next destination was Aberystwyth. I had proposed to reach this sea-side town by travelling along the south and west coastlines of Wales, stopping along the way at St. David's Cathedral in Haverfordwest and the Church of the Holy Cross in Mwnt (a parish in Ceredigion). These two churches were significant for Morris and Lobb as much beloved camping spots. Unfortunately, a week before my scheduled travel, I contracted Covid-19, and I was forced to reschedule the trip.

A few months later, however, I finally arrived at Aberystwyth. I spent three days at the National Library of Wales, examining the contents of a bequest Lobb made to the library in 1939. The Lobb bequest includes a series of albums, richly filled with photographic reproductions of buildings, landscapes, textiles, paintings, sculptures, mosaics and more. In many cases, the albums are incomplete, and the exact nature of who compiled them and when remain unclear. In researching these albums, however, I learned a great deal more about Lobb and her relationship with Morris. I recently discussed some of this research at the William Morris Society US-sponsored panel, 'Queering the Pre-Raphaelites', at the Modern Languages Association conference, in January 2023.



Fig. 2.: Acanthus bedcover, designed by William Morris, thought to have been worked by his wife Jane and daughters, May and Jenny. Photo: © Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales



Fig. 3: Pair of Sleeve Clasps, and hair ornament designed and made by May Morris. Photos: © Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales

I wish to convey my enormous thanks to the WMS-US for kindly supporting my research in Wales, which has been instrumental for the progress of my PhD research. My thanks also to the curatorial, library and collections staff at St. Fagans Museum of Natural History, National Museum Cardiff and National Library of Wales, for generously welcoming and assisting me during my research appointments.



*Shelton Johnson Calls*

## ARTIST STATEMENT

AMURI MORRIS

WINNER OF THE WMS-US ART PROJECT PRIZE

My work upholds William Morris's philosophy that society should work toward promoting the happiness and well-being of every one of its members. I aim to show how western culture tends to negate and undermine the place of Black figures, and combat that in a corrective manner. In William Morris's writing, he also states that "For the lesson Ruskin here teaches us is that art is the expression of man's pleasure in labour; that it is possible for a man to rejoice in his work." In line with this, my work leans into the idea of the

endless possibilities and pleasure that creation can foster on the canvas. For me, the paintbrush in my hand allows the boundary between reality and the imaginary to fade away. With my work, I begin to see myself outside my circumstances and it becomes my vehicle for my individual journey of exploration and discovery. My painting creates this fantastical fruitfulness that gratifies the inner childlike passion that William Morris describes that needs to be present in your work. But it also often acknowledges the "making do" and inequities of the past that we must aim to correct. My work also relates to William Morris's work because I often highlight a distance for industrial trends of society. I am to counteract this by painting about the beauty of everyday life and emphasizing a return to nature.

This piece focuses on where the intersection between race and class has informed many collective childhoods. I'm specifically looking at the place where the intersections between being African-American and being from a lower class have led to systemic deficits, and I'm examining how many have had to "make do" as children. The threads holding together the notion of the endless bliss associated with childhood wonder seem to come undone when one has to "make do." In this piece I aim to reinfuse this sense of wonder while acknowledging the "making do" of the past.

I often think about how these overlapping adversities make areas of "play" inaccessible to a child and many other points of inaccessibility that spring forth. One recurring point of inaccessibility coming from these intersections is the inaccessibility of greenspace due to the mandated infrastructures of poor Black neighborhoods. I want to acknowledge the inaccessibility of some children to a truly fruitful childhood. In these childhoods we can't remain blissfully unaware of the impact of our adversities.

My painting creates this fantastical fruitfulness that gratifies my inner child but also often acknowledges the "making do" in the past and the unconventional charm these memories have. Although these adversities were present there is a nostalgic lens I look back on my childhood memories with that points towards resilience. In this piece I wanted the intersection between the past and these reimagined spaces to all pull together in varying degrees. Some elements from my past childhood may seem collaged in with my reimagined space, such as in "Shelton Johnson Calls." In instances such as this I like to imagine that these dual worlds are in the beginning stages of aligning; this early phase in the process may lead the scene to be less cohesive and lead to things such as distortion of scale.

In this piece Shelton Johnson calls the children from these government regulated neighborhoods back into the natural world. His life's mission is to encourage black people to reconnect with the natural world. People of disadvantaged groups

need to be invited into the space of imagining what a just world is so we can begin to craft it. Part of the complexities of a just world involves ensuring positive interactions between living organisms and their physical environment. The world, from the perspective of 21st century artists, would look like the transitions and shifts I depict in "Shelton Johnson Calls." As catalysts for change we have to look towards ways to include disadvantaged groups in the conversation for planetary change and to foster positive relations between all groups of people (rather than mistreatment of some).



Amuri Morris

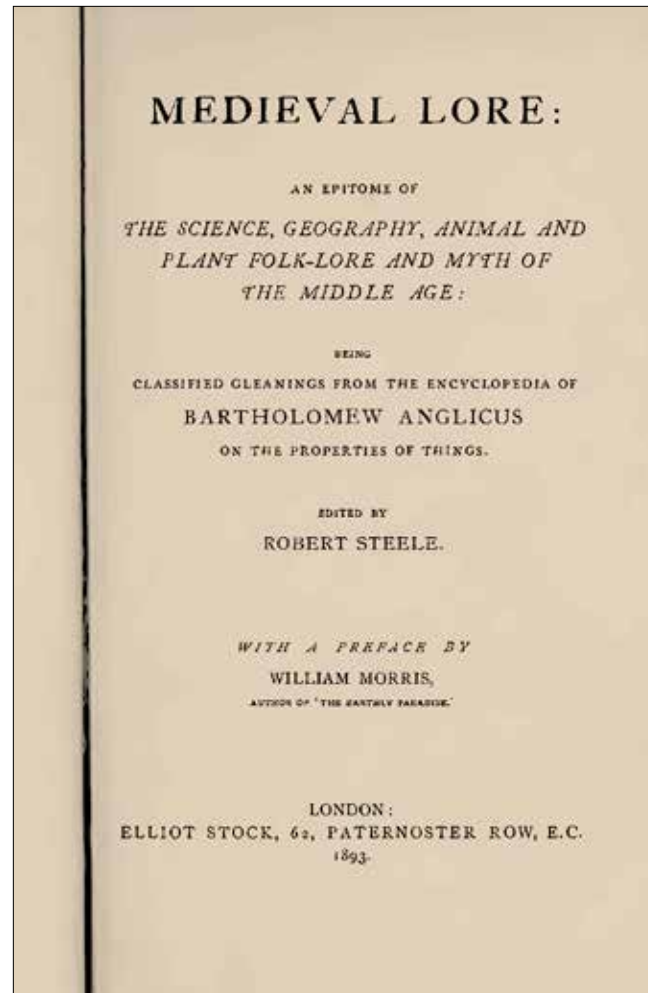
I'm a contemporary realist, inspired by the classical realism of still life and portraiture. The craftsmanship of painting is very important to me. The paintings I create are a result of years spent honing my artistic skills, and studying techniques of past artists, as well as contemporary artists. I'm currently studying painting and printmaking at Virginia Commonwealth University. Prior to this, I studied art at the Center for the Arts at Henrico High School. Throughout the years I have acquired several artistic accolades. I aim to promote diversity in art canon, specifically focusing on the black experience. One of my goals is to promote community engagement in the arts and better the community with my talent.

# Words with William

The co-editors of our *Useful and Beautiful* publication would like to solicit submissions from our membership for the “Words with William” feature. If you’d like to join the conversation, please submit your responses to the quote below to [williammorrissocietyus@gmail.com](mailto:williammorrissocietyus@gmail.com).

**“How can you care about the image of a landscape, when you show by your deeds that you don’t care for the landscape itself?” From the preface to Robert Steele’s *Medieval Lore*, 1893.**

We must find a shared language across political and class divides to work together to save our landscapes and our waterscapes. When I initially started my undergraduate career as a business management major, one mantra was repeated endlessly across every class: we were to remember the importance of managing land, labor, and capital by the end of our program, just as we were to remember that our true role within any company was to maximize shareholder revenue. Now, when I drive through the Rust Belt city that I live in on the southern shore of one of the Great Lakes, I’m constantly reminded that previous owners and managers, desirous of showing off their wealth and power, didn’t always carefully manage the land. These days, many of America’s cities are riddled with dying malls, skyscrapers that need serious repairs in order to comply with zoning codes, a lack of green spaces in urban areas, polluted waterways, rusted bridges, and blighted neighborhoods that are the result of being cut in half and destroyed for urban renewal projects. The resources to fix these issues are extremely minimal and are primarily centered in the hands of professional property management companies who prioritize projects that will receive tax breaks.



Title page, 1893  
*Medieval Lore An Epitome of the Science, Geography, Animal and Plant FolkLore and Myth of the Middle Age Being Classified Gleanings From the Anglicus On the Properties of Things*

Even when presented with these reminders of why we need more careful stewardship practices, we don’t always think about our symbiotic relationship with the landscape. However, I’m lucky to have grown up in a small village located in an agricultural area where our primary non-farming industries after all the canneries closed were prisons and a landfill that took in waste from a 600 mile radius. That radius included many of

the East Coast’s major cities. The company didn’t properly set up fields, the water table was polluted, and people like my family had to turn to bottled water, a relative luxury for the 1980s. The community organized, recognizing the symbiotic relationship humans have with nature, and began pressing for laws to be enforced. It took years, but eventually, the landfill shut down. These days, the diesel-fueled tandem trailers and the endless train cars no longer come through, but the water is still polluted (although showing signs of improvement) and there is a mass breakout of kidney disease and rare cancers among the area’s remaining residents. If you go to one of the local coffee shops, you will hear farmers, small business owners, and retired folks of all sorts grouching about increased taxes and green infrastructure, a phrase they don’t recognize and therefore feel is something they are excluded from. Yet they *know* the land was damaged, that their friends are sick, their grandkids are sick, and that the damage was allowed by the previous generation. They *know* that they must save what’s left and adapt to their new circumstances but feel frustrated that no one is paying attention or directing the tax dollars to their needs.

As I listen, I feel my own sense of frustration. How does one start that process of saving and adaptation, if no one is able to pay or able to put into words the steps that are needed for action by private/public partnerships? What if the private/public partnerships simply don’t care about the vast open fields that are now brown because they can’t figure out how to monetize them? My former neighbors know now that the landscape must be protected and conserved and I think would have been sympathetic to Morris and his desire to protect the beauties of nature that *should* surround us. I like to think that Morris would have asked them what do we need to do to convince those with resources and power to finally take action here, on this planet, and to remind them that the good of the many outweighs the good of the few. I also like to think that they would have immediately responded, positively, warmly, and with enthusiasm, to this outreach effort, this desire to learn and to listen.

For me, this quote can be interpreted as a warning and critique. Morris tried to warn anyone who would listen that the land needed to be carefully held in stewardship for future generations and appreciated just as one would appreciate a fine canvas on display in a civic art gallery. Unfortunately for all of us, there has been a marked decline in respect for both art and for the very real landscape that surrounds us, that we occupy, that we must partner with if we are to survive as a species. Does it really matter if we are moved by the lush greenspace and idyllic countryside depicted by Constable or by the Barbizon School, for instance, if we keep supporting companies that put plastic in our water supply or try to use other nations or the oceans as a landfill? Ultimately, I think Morris would suggest that the first step that we can and should take is to consider the situation we are in and to then work, with empathy and compassion, towards educating ourselves and educating others while finding common ground to try to save what’s left of the landscape that we have all been entrusted with.

–Rebekah Greene, Ph.D.

As an art historian, I feel compelled to consider what this quotation means for those who work with art. Morris first spoke these words in a lecture to the Birmingham Society of Arts and School of Design in 1880. In his talk, titled “The Beauty of Life,” Morris criticized his own society for its inequality and recklessness, chastising those who accumulate beauty for themselves while perpetuating a system in which most people are condemned to live without it. Towards the end, Morris calls out the hypocrisy of art lovers who prioritize “the image of a landscape” over the health and survival of the land. Morris’s comment on landscape appears in the context of his scornful description of “manufacturers” who collect art while polluting their surroundings and oppressing their workers. He follows it up with another question: “or what right have you to shut yourself up with beautiful form and colour when you make it impossible for other people to have any share in these things?”

By shining a spotlight on this particular Morris quotation--“How can you care about the image of a landscape, when you show by your deeds that you don’t care for the landscape itself?”--the editors of *Useful and Beautiful* have inspired me to re-read “The Beauty of Life” from a different perspective. This lecture contains one of Morris’s best-known soundbites, the passage from which the present publication takes its name--“Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful.” Being reminded of Morris’s concern for the land makes me somewhat regret the ubiquity of the latter quotation. Alone, it appears to encourage us to look inward, to be concerned only with the contents of our own “houses,” and to do what nowadays would be known as decluttering. But Morris does not see such a clear distinction between the house and the rest of the world. Those who care about art, he says, must care about the beauty of everything, including the grass, the water, the sky, the ordinary everyday object, the home. Morris offers his comment on use and beauty as advice for those who are wondering how to “liv[e] a simple life.” He implies that following this advice will make the house as close as possible to the experience of living in nature. For Morris, the rules of use and beauty apply as much to the broader environment as they do to the domestic interior.

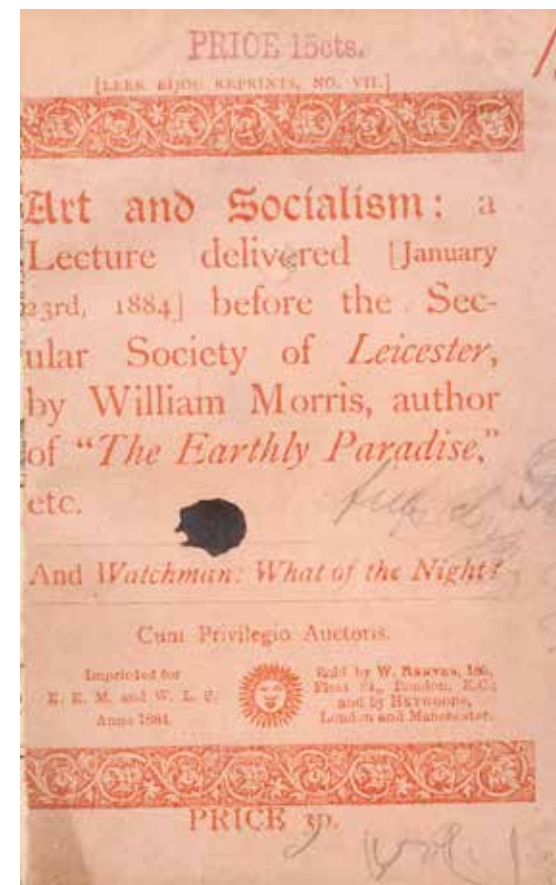
Similarly, Morris’s landscape comment reads differently in the context of the rest of the lecture. On its own, this quotation might seem to question the importance of art. In the face of the destruction and damage done to the land by humanity, art’s efforts to produce “the image of a landscape” may seem pointless. They may even appear dangerous, distracting attention from the plight of the planet, and replacing the reality of ecological crisis with a soothing aesthetic experience. But Morris addresses this possibility earlier in the lecture. He suggests that being concerned that art will distract from more important matters is like fearing that the beauty of an ear of wheat would interfere with its taste. “Nothing made by man’s hand can be indifferent,” he insists; “it must be either beautiful and elevating, or ugly and degrading.” Again,

Morris’s point is that art is not something separate from the rest of the world. According to Morris, someone who was truly concerned with beauty could not endure the loss of beauty anywhere—including in the house, on the street, or in the land. Morris warns us that it is futile to pursue rarefied objects to adorn the world without preserving the world.

-Imogen Hart, Ph.D.

QUOTATION FOR NEXT ISSUE:

“Nothing should be made by man’s labour which is not worth making; or which must be made by labour degrading to the makers.” From “Art and Socialism: A Statement of the Aims and Ideals of the English Socialists of To-day,” 1884.



MAY MORRIS: TWO WORKS  
 “I’M A REMARKABLE WOMAN –  
 ALWAYS WAS, THOUGH NONE OF YOU SEEMED TO THINK SO.”

From a 1936 letter May wrote to George Bernard Shaw



Maids of Honour c. 1890s, designed and worked by May Morris.  
 © William Morris Gallery, London Borough of Waltham Forest. Detail below







*Fruit Garden* portière or hanging of plain weave silk with embroidery in silk, designed by May Morris in 1885, worked by Theodosia Middlemore, England, 1894. With two details, right & bottom.  
Photos © Victoria and Albert Museum