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Arts and Crafts Painting: The Political Agency of Things

Morna O'Neill

Abstract

Can there be such a thing as “Arts and Crafts” painting? This article will address that question by interrogating the points of connection between Pre-Raphaelite painting and the Arts and Crafts object. Taking its cue from William Morris’s reflection on the “English Pre-Raphaelite School” from 1891, this article examines the interplay between painting and design in both Pre-Raphaelite painting and the Arts and Crafts movement. It addresses the ways in which paintings depicted decorative art, as well as the aspiration of decorative art to the symbolic potential traditionally associated with painting. It is my contention that Pre-Raphaelite painting unleashed a radical possibility for decorative art: the Arts and Crafts belief in the political agency of things.

Authors

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In 1889, the artist and designer Walter Crane summarized the goals of the Arts and Crafts movement with a poem entitled "The Craftsman's Dream".¹

In sixty-five stanzas, this poem encapsulates the ideals of the movement in which Crane played a vital role, as he describes what happens when an unemployed craftsman wanders into a museum and strolls through the galleries admiring the decorative arts on display. Crane planned to publish an illustrated edition which was never realized: a drawing for the frontispiece shows the craftsman at the beginning of his visit, facing off with an Egyptian sphinx ([fig. 1](#)). This object and other physical traces of the past, characterized as remnants of "golden ages", inspire and inform. And yet the craftsman cannot escape a sense of despair, even in his admiration, that such wonders should be "cast aside" from use and imprisoned in museum cases.

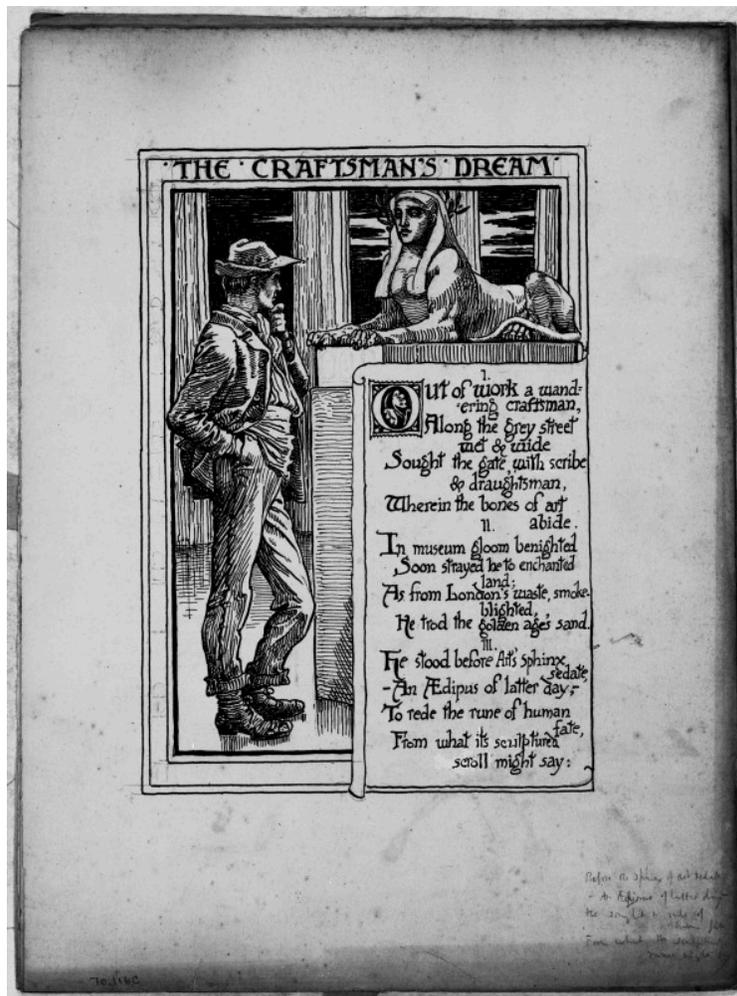


Figure 1.

The Craftsman's Dream, *The Craftsman's Dream*, n.d, pen and ink, 38.1 × 27.9 cm. The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, San Marino, CA. Gift of the Friends Digital image courtesy of The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Garden



Figure 2.

Walter Crane, illustration for *The Craftsman's Dream*, ca. 1890, pen and ink, 38.1 × 27.9 cm. Walter Crane Archive, Whitworth Art Gallery, University of Manchester Digital image courtesy of Courtesy of the Whitworth, The University of Manchester

What happens next in the poem is surprising: after contemplating the decorative arts of the past, the craftsman comes upon a painting that decorates the walls of the museum. And this is not just any painting; it is an imaginative projection of his thoughts onto the canvas, a proto-cinematic kaleidoscope of shifting scenes. What begins as a barren landscape painting quickly transforms into a battle scene, as bands of artists and workers, assisted by figures from history and mythology, defeat a monstrous Capitalist and his minions. In a second planned illustration, Crane depicted the Capitalist astride a decorated mount (fig. 2). He wears the armour of industrialism and the helmet of the factory, a “stove-pipe” hat that Crane would later describe as “the crown of the modern king, the financier—the business man—he who must be obeyed”.²

The Capitalist is also referred to as “The Philistine”. He is an accumulator of “sordid spoils” from “ruined lands” who cares only for the monetary value of art and not at all for its historical conditions or symbolic purpose. The craftsman imagines victory for the workers, and the painting once again transforms, this time into a depiction of the ideal society. In this utopia, art unites utility and beauty, and thus liberates all workers, including the artist: “for styles and learning vexed them not/ But, singing at his craft, each one,/ Was happy in his working lot.” With these lines, Crane alludes to the goals of the Arts and Crafts movement, as well as its politics. It is significant in this regard that “The Craftsman’s Dream” did not appear in an artistic journal but was published in the *Labour Leader*, a socialist newspaper.³

Crane’s poem summarizes Arts and Crafts ideals: a protest against industrial manufacture and an attempt to make daily life more beautiful inspired by, but not in imitation of, the best examples of past art. Looking to the past as a way to critique the present and imagine the future was a popular trope in socialist writing of this period, especially in William Morris’s *A Dream of John Ball* from 1888.⁴ The disjunctive temporality of “The Craftsman’s Dream” is also indebted to the writings of John Ruskin. The poem signals Crane’s admiration for Ruskin’s praise of the Gothic stonemason in *The Stones of Venice* (1851–3), a text that provided aesthetic and moral justifications for preferring handicraft to mass-produced decoration in the age of industrial manufacture. That text in particular championed the individual creative impulse, set in opposition to the contemporary urge to make man into a machine. The espousal of craftsmanship led to a further critique of political economy in Ruskin’s *Unto this Last* (1862). His promotion of craftsmanship and the concomitant denigration of industrialization, along with his assertion of the public function of art, influenced the political development of not only artists but an entire community of English socialists.⁵ William Morris in particular transformed Ruskin’s ideas into a type of artisanal socialism.⁶ The question remains, however, as to why Crane selected *painting* as the transformative artistic medium in his dream of the craftsman, bypassing crafts such as metalwork or ceramics or carpet weaving. Can there be such a thing as “Arts and Crafts” painting?

This article will address that question by interrogating the relationship between Arts and Crafts design and Pre-Raphaelite painting. In most popular accounts, William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones occupy dual positions; they are both the “second generation” Pre-Raphaelites and guiding forces in the Arts and Crafts movement.⁷ And yet William Morris merited only a single entry—for an oil painting—in the catalogue for the Tate Gallery’s groundbreaking exhibition *The Pre-Raphaelites* from 1984.⁸ On the other hand, the Pre-Raphaelites were a mere prologue to Morris’s heroic work as a designer in the Victoria and Albert Museum’s exhibition *William Morris* from

1996.⁹ This divide between “fine” art and “decorative” art says more about ways in which museums classify objects than about the interconnectedness of the Pre-Raphaelites and the Arts and Crafts movement.¹⁰ The recent exhibition *Pre-Raphaelites: Victorian Avant-Garde* (Tate Britain; 12 September 2012 to 13 January 2013) broke new ground by displaying a more expansive view; indeed, when the exhibition travelled to the National Gallery in Washington, DC, it was titled *Pre-Raphaelites: Victorian Art and Design* (17 February–19 May 2013). By re-connecting the personal and artistic links between these two movements, the exhibition articulated the ways in which painting and design shared concerns with craft, narrative, and ornament.



Figure 3.

Ford Madox Brown, *Work*, 1852–65, oil on canvas, 137 × 197.3 cm.
Manchester City Art Galleries Digital image courtesy of Manchester City Art Galleries

Pre-Raphaelites: Victorian Avant-Garde explored the interplay of art and design from the establishment of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in 1848 into the 1890s. I would like to further this investigation by interrogating the points of connection between Pre-Raphaelite painting and the Arts and Crafts object. The dynamic interaction between painting and design has long been considered a hallmark of early twentieth-century avant-gardes such as Russian Constructivism and De Stijl. In the latter example, both the abstract art of Piet Mondrian and the furniture design of Gerrit Rietveld sought to articulate a utopian vision of a new society. According to art historian Nancy Troy, these artists held “a common set of ethical and aesthetic principles” and explored “the possibility of merging the arts” through “collaborative relationships” over a period of some fifteen years (1917–32).¹¹ The example

presented by the “merging”, to borrow Troy’s formulation, of Pre-Raphaelitism and the Arts and Crafts movement is earlier and more complex, if equally utopian. Her terms could describe the creative dynamic between Ford Madox Brown’s *Work* (1852–65; [fig. 3](#)) and the “artisan” furniture he created for Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. during this same period ([fig. 4](#)).

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Figure 4.

Ford Madox Brown for Morris, Marshall, Faulkner, and Co, Washstand, ca. 1860, painted wood originally stained, 88 × 93 × 63 cm. Society of Antiquaries of London, Kelmscott Manor Collections Digital image courtesy of Kelmscott Manor, The Society of Antiquaries of London

Both examples declare a commitment to craft. While *Work* explores the various types of productive and unproductive labour, the unadorned yet elegantly solid form of the washstand celebrates construction. Yet, as I will discuss, Pre-Raphaelite painting was also critical to the later development of the “Arts and Crafts”, closer to the time that T. J. Cobden-Sanderson coined

the term in 1887. Crane's "Craftsman's Dream" presents painting as both wall decoration and revolutionary agent. The frame of the painting encountered in the museum likewise forms the frame of his dream of a socialist utopia. Taking my cue from William Morris's reflection on the "English Pre-Raphaelite School" from 1891, I will examine the interplay between painting and design in both Pre-Raphaelite painting and the Arts and Crafts movement. I will address the way in which paintings depicted decorative art, and the way in which decorative art aspired to the symbolic potential traditionally associated with painting. It is my contention that Pre-Raphaelite painting unleashed a radical possibility for decorative art: the Arts and Crafts belief in the political agency of things.

"The English Pre-Raphaelite School"

William Morris reflected on the influence of the "English Pre-Raphaelite School" on 2 October 1891 at the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.¹³

Looking back upon the artistic events of 1848, Morris suggested that the Pre-Raphaelites "revolted" against the art establishment in three ways: through the "presentation of nature", "the telling of a story", and "the ornamental function of art". He then reviews the importance of each of these categories. One would expect, given Morris's interest in the decorative arts, that he would focus on the final category, the way in which Pre-Raphaelite painting re-imagined the "ornamental function of art". Yet this "decorative side of the school" is inseparable from its commitment to realism and its interest in narrative, and Morris traces all of these categories back to the Pre-Raphaelite presentation of things.

Pre-Raphaelite realism resides in what Morris terms the "presentment of natural facts". In other words, viewers of Pre-Raphaelite paintings say to themselves, "Here are such and such things as we have seen them, as we see them every day, exceedingly like the things in question."¹⁴ For Morris, this mode of presentation constitutes the democratic impulse of Pre-Raphaelitism: its art is addressed to the public rather than to the art establishment, and meaning is built up through the assemblage of recognizable things. At the same time, it underscores the important role of what we might call "accessories" or even "decorative art" within the paintings themselves: the meaning resides in the interpretation of things. This process is not unlike what Erwin Panofsky called the "transfigured reality" of Early Netherlandish painting in his monumental study from 1953.¹⁵ He argues that "symbolism and realism permeate one another fully"; to give just a few examples, the single lit candle in the chandelier that hangs over the couple in the *Arnolfini Portrait* (1434) by Jan van Eyck represents the eye of God, while the dog represents fidelity, and the oranges on the windowsill communicate purity.¹⁶ The Pre-Raphaelites admired the Northern

Renaissance painters like Van Eyck, and the *Arnolfini Portrait*, in the collection of the National Gallery since 1842, exerted a wide influence on their art.¹⁷ As George Landow has demonstrated, the Pre-Raphaelite interest in narrative and iconography constituted a kind of “typological symbolism”, the co-mingling of the material world and spiritual meaning.¹⁸

Morris’s emphasis on “things” in his discussion, and the ability of the viewer to recognize “things as we have seen them”, brings to mind the

development of “thing theory” in literary studies.¹⁹ Yet in this theoretical formulation, the thing is designated as such because it is *unrecognizable*.

According to Bill Brown, to designate an object a “thing” is to separate it from the world of objects, to suggest that it lies “beyond the grid of intelligibility the way mere things lie outside the grid of museal exhibition”.

²⁰ Brown here contrasts the inchoate status of the “thing” to the orderly classification of objects in museums. The organization of, for example, keys, or masks, or charms against the evil eye at the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford transforms things into objects. But what about the organization of paintings in a museum such as the National Gallery? As John Plotz has pointed out, thing theory “is not a theory about the cultural significance of objects”, one of the key functions of museal exhibition.²¹ Rather, thing theory identifies the “limit cases at which our ordinary categories for classifying signs and substances, meaning and materiality, appear to break down”.²² Objects depicted in paintings, what we might call “painted objects”, present an interesting inversion of this logic. In these terms, the painted object is always a thing, since its status as representation means that it is unintelligible as an object. And yet the very fact of this representation restores the thing to the “museal”. Morris praises the “things” in Pre-Raphaelite painting (“here are such and such things”) in a way that suggests he would be familiar with this paradox: the viewer recognizes the specific qualities of a quotidian object—its shape, colour, surface—only through its representation in painting.

In some discussions of the Arts and Crafts movement, the thing itself is irrelevant. In his consideration of C. R. Ashbee, Alan Crawford declared that “the object is not the object.”²³ To put it another way, Ashbee’s own Arts and Crafts enterprise, the Guild of Handicraft, extended Ruskin’s understanding of creative labour to its logical conclusion: the experience of the craftsman should guide any creative enterprise. In a sense, the actual outcome of that enterprise is beside the point. In her recent study *Arts and Crafts Objects*, Imogen Hart suggested that the objects of the movement cannot be reduced to crafts alone. Carpets, tapestries, wallpapers, and the like offer multiple stories of what it means to be an “Arts and Crafts object”. For example, William Morris’s magnificent “Peacock and Bird” carpet (1885–90; [fig. 5](#)) communicates its meaning through its making.



Figure 5.

William Morris and Morris & Co, *Peacock and Bird Carpet*, 1885-90, hand-knotted pile on cotton warp, 410 × 410 cm. William Morris Gallery, London Borough of Waltham Forest Digital image courtesy of Friends of William Morris

The carpet is a beautiful and useful thing that also expresses the ideals of handicraft, fitness of purpose, and the sensitive use of materials in a design that looked to nature and the artistic past for inspiration. To be “Arts and Crafts”, then, is to exhibit a mode of making, to portray a type of decoration, and to re-imagine what an object can be. As she asserts, “encouraging people to look at decorative art in new ways is one of the most important Arts and Crafts ‘objects’.”²⁴ This dynamic between viewer and thing, between subject and object, underpins Morris’s musing on the Pre-Raphaelites as well as Brown’s theorization of the thing. According to Brown, “the story of objects asserting themselves as things, then, is the story of a changed relationship to the human subject and thus the story of how the thing really names less an object than a particular subject-object relation.”²⁵ For Morris, Pre-Raphaelite naturalism and narrative was inseparable from decoration. Specifically, Pre-Raphaelite paintings modelled a particular kind of subject-object relation which we could call decoration.

The attention to decoration links the Pre-Raphaelites and the Arts and Crafts movement in conceptual terms. When we think of “decoration” in terms of the Arts and Crafts, we usually think of objects that fall under the category “decorative art”, such as the “Peacock and Bird” carpet: a commodity likely intended for a domestic setting, its design and fabrication reflects both aesthetic and functional considerations. Victorian artists and critics, however, had a more expansive understanding of the term. Take, for example, William Morris’s definition of Pre-Raphaelite painting. While artistic naturalism goes hand in hand with its ability to tell a story, these two qualities are subsumed under the category of decoration. For Morris, painters such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Edward Burne-Jones present “things” in a way that also acknowledges the painting itself as a kind of thing, an example itself of decoration: “it ought to be possible for it [a painting] to be part of a beautiful whole in a room or church or hall.”²⁶ For these reasons, Pre-Raphaelite painting suggested a mode of engagement with things—with furniture and decorative art and with the very idea of decoration—that was critical to the Arts and Crafts movement. Pre-Raphaelite paintings reveal the potential of objects to have meaning by rendering them as things. The Arts and Crafts movement then returned these things to the world of objects.

Crafting the object, painting the thing

The Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society introduced the term “Arts and Crafts” to the public in 1888, the year before Crane wrote “The Craftsman’s Dream”, with an exhibition at the New Gallery in London. A loose confederation of designers and craftsmen had banded together in 1887 to draw attention to their work in order to, in the words of their first president Crane, “give opportunity to the designer and craftsman to exhibit their work to the public for its artistic interest and thus to assert the claims of decorative art and handicraft to attention equally with the painter of easel pictures”.²⁷ Here Crane signals a number of the innovations we now associate with the movement: a dual emphasis on the intellectual practice of design as well as the maker’s skill, the desire for a greater public appreciation of these interlinked processes, and recognition that “decorative arts” were as worthy of public exhibition and attention as the fine art of painting.

Artists such as Crane found inspiration in the collaborative projects undertaken by William Morris and the design work he pioneered with Burne-Jones, Rossetti, and Ford Madox Brown in the preceding decades. The moment when Morris and Burne-Jones met Rossetti constituted what many have called a “second phase” of Pre-Raphaelitism in the 1850s, one in which decorative practices like mural painting came to the fore. When Rossetti invited Morris and Burne-Jones and others to join him in creating frescoes for the new debating hall of the Oxford Union, he shifted Pre-Raphaelitism from

easel painting into decorative practice. As I will discuss, this interest in mural painting as a mode of wall covering became a central aspect of the Arts and Crafts movement, even though opportunities to realize this ideal were few.



Figure 6.

Philip Webb and Edward Burne-Jones, *The Prioress's Tale Wardrobe*, 1859, oil on pine and oak, 219.71 × 157.48 × 53.7 cm. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. Bequeathed by Miss May Morris, 1939 Digital image courtesy of Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford

Painting also became a part of furniture design, as in “The Prioress’s Tale Wardrobe” (1857–8; [fig. 6](#)), planned as a wedding present from Burne-Jones to Morris. The wardrobe exemplifies the junction between Pre-Raphaelite painting and Arts and Crafts design. This type of “decorative painting”, as it was known, was a regular feature of the movement. Such hand-crafted decoration resisted the cheap, mass-produced ethos of the marketplace even as it addressed the functionality of the wardrobe: in this instance, the jamb between the two doors divides heaven from earth in relating a story from Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*. A further division in the lower portion

divides narrative (Chaucer writing his story) from narration (a portion of the text in painted form). A few years later, the establishment of Morris's firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. in 1861 broadened the audience for this type of thoughtful integration of art and craft.

A Pre-Raphaelite exploration of historical forms of art and the admiration of nature also guided the pattern designs produced by "the Firm" and by its later incarnation, Morris & Co., established in 1875. As Diane Waggoner has discussed, Morris's "Cray" (1884; [fig. 7](#)) blended contemporary Indian textiles and historic examples with an organic structure rooted in his deep affinity for the natural world.²⁸ The rounded meandering lines evoke but do not delineate the abundant banks of the Cray, a tributary of the Thames. Morris's philosophy of a lively pattern design rooted in and yet abstracted from nature exerted a profound impact on the next generation, including Walter Crane, as suggested by his "Teazle" wallpaper design for Jeffrey & Co. from 1894 ([fig. 8](#)). Crane borrowed the curving forms of Morris's diagonal lines to structure his own pattern while eschewing the dense floral background considered more appropriate for textiles than for wallpaper. This attention to nature, combined with an admiration for the expressive forms of historical art, brings the concerns of Pre-Raphaelite painting into the realm of pattern design. "Cray" also evokes interest in older, often labour-intensive forms of artistic practice. Morris revived a method of cloth printing known as the "indigo-discharge", and this pattern required no less than thirty-four printing blocks to achieve its lively and vivid design.²⁹ "Cray" presents a design analogue to the Pre-Raphaelite attention to the craft of painting; the layering of the printing is here akin to the layering of paint on canvas, both beginning with the white ground that characterized the Pre-Raphaelite approach to painting.³⁰ The crafting of a Pre-Raphaelite canvas conceptualized an approach to artistic process that would become central to the Arts and Crafts movement.



Figure 7.

William Morris, *Cray*, 1884, block-printed cotton, 96.5 × 107.9 cm.
Victoria and Albert Museum, London Digital image courtesy of
Victoria and Albert Museum, London



Figure 8.

Walter Crane for Jeffrey & Co, *Teazle*, 1894, colour woodblock print on paper, 89.5 × 51.4 cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London Digital image courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum, London

The displays of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society brought these paradigms to public attention.³¹ We can see how these strands came together with the presentation of Crane's wallpaper design entitled "The Golden Age" (1886) at the inaugural 1888 exhibition. It was featured in a section of the display devoted to the wares of the wallpaper manufacturer Jeffrey & Co., whose director Metford Warner appreciated the expressive potential of design. As such, "The Golden Age" appeared in four different treatments: one sample of embossed leather with the design hand-painted by Crane (fig. 9) and a second sample made of embossed paste-board that simulated leather (fig. 10), again with the design hand-painted by Crane. The exhibition also featured a hammered metal plate with the same pattern designed by Crane but executed this time by Thomas Godfrey, a skilled metalworker. The final iteration was not a manufacturer's sample: Crane's

showed his original watercolour design for the paper (fig. 11).³² While it was typical for a design to be available in a variety of treatments for different types of markets, in its various permutations “The Golden Age” also suggested the inventiveness of the designer and his collaboration with other makers. In addition, Crane’s design acknowledged the individual agency of the consumer in selecting a treatment, as it was also available in two colourways, red and blue (figs. 13 and 14) as a wood-block printed wallpaper.



Figure 9.

Walter Crane for Jeffrey & Co, *The Golden Age*, 1886, exhibited 1888, embossed leather with brown-and-gold lacquer, painted by Crane, 79.4 × 59.1 cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London Digital image courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum, London



Figure 10.

Walter Crane for Jeffrey & Co, *The Golden Age*, 1886, exhibited 1888, embossed pasteboard simulating leather, with coloured lacquer, painted by Crane, 89 × 50.8 cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London Digital image courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum, London



Figure 11.

Walter Crane, Design for *The Golden Age*, 1886, exhibited 1888, watercolour and bodycolour on paper, 101 × 66.7 cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London Digital image courtesy of victoria and Albert Museum, London

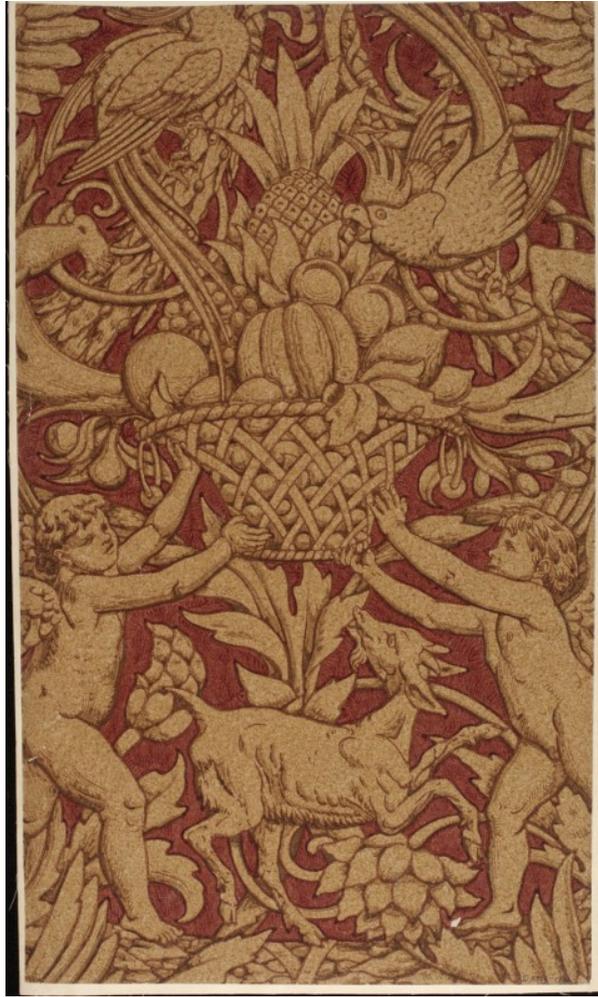


Figure 12.

Walter Crane for Jeffrey & Co, *The Golden Age*, 1886, colour woodblock print on paper in red colourway, 85.1 × 49.2 cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London Digital image courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum, London

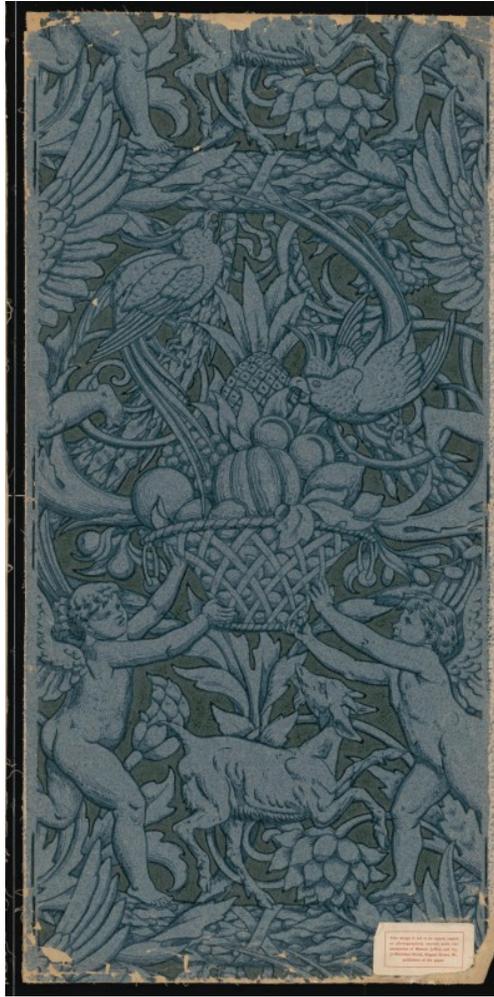


Figure 13.

Walter Crane for Jeffrey & Co, *The Golden Age*, 1886, colour woodblock print on paper in blue colourway, 116.9 × 54 cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London
Digital image courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum, London

If the museum presented the golden ages of the past for Crane’s wandering craftsman in “The Craftsman’s Dream”, then the Arts and Crafts display illustrated the golden age of the present. But the two were in dynamic contact: Crane found inspiration for his design of stylized putti holding aloft a basket of ripe fruit crowned by a pineapple in historical examples, such as an embossed leather panels from the seventeenth century, like those still extant at Dyrham Park in Gloucestershire.³³ Crane’s four samples of “The Golden Age” ally a Pre-Raphaelite evocation of an artistic past to the goals of the Arts and Crafts movement. In this, he and others drew inspiration from the imaginative and self-conscious reconstruction of a past that never existed—an imagined “golden age” of art also evoked by objects such as “The Prioress’s Tale Wardrobe”. Yet these concerns with decoration and

meaning predate the collaborative venture launched by Morris in the late 1850s; in fact, they reach all the way back to the first examples of Pre-Raphaelite painting and the depiction of decoration.

Take, for example, John Everett Millais's *Isabella* (1848–9; [fig. 14](#)), one of the “manifesto” paintings shown at the Royal Academy in 1849 and signed with the initials PRB. If we focus on the decorative objects in the painting, we find that they communicate the narrative of forbidden love and family violence that will end with the murder of Lorenzo at the hands of Isabella's brothers, a post-mortem beheading, and the planting of his head in a pot of basil. For example, Isabella dines on a majolica plate that depicts a beheading scene ([fig. 15](#)). It is likely a scene of Hercules beheading the Hydra, similar to one now in the collection of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford ([fig. 16](#)). As Elizabeth Prettejohn has pointed out, “the setting and accessory details are literally ‘Pre-Raphaelite,’ Italian examples from the time before Raphael.”³⁴ Yet they are more than just historically appropriate props; their detailed description demands that the viewer look, and look again, to puzzle over their form and significance in the same way that decoration and description are integrated in “The Prioress's Tale Wardrobe”. In Bill Brown's terms, these objects become things, and both engender what Tim Barringer has called one of the central “paradoxes” of Pre-Raphaelite painting: an insistence on the contemporary that also asserts the historical.³⁵



Figure 14.

John Everett Millais, *Isabella*, 1848–9, oil on canvas, 103 × 142.8 cm.
National Museums Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery Digital image courtesy of
National Museums Liverpool



Figure 15.

John Everett Millais, *Isabella* (detail showing the plate in front of Lorenzo), 1848-9, oil on canvas, 103 × 142.8 cm. National Museums Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery Digital image courtesy of National Museums Liverpool



Figure 16.

probably Maestro Giorgio Andreoli, *Maiolica dish with Hercules and the Hydra*, ca. 1520, tin-glazed earthenware (maiolica), lustred, 32.2 cm. diameter. Ashmoleum Museum, Oxford. Bequeathed by C. D. E. Fortnum, 1899 Digital image courtesy of Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford

The new “Pre-Raphaelite” way of painting pioneered by Millais and his fellow travellers furthered this paradox: the emphasis on line in the delineation of forms, and the use of bright, unmixed colours creates a visual effect not unlike a pattern. Without the traditional use of light and shade, the pictorial space is daringly uniform, always threatening to collapse into flatness.³⁶

Both Walter Crane and Ford Madox Brown would later describe this treatment of space as decorative. In a lecture on “Decorative Painting” to the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society in 1888, Crane explained that “the first essential of a decoration is that it shall be related to its environment, that it shall express or acknowledge the conditions under which it exists.”³⁷ If it is a painting, then it should acknowledge the two-dimensionality of its support. Ford Madox Brown reiterated this point with characteristic candour when he lectured on painting at the 1889 exhibition: “the very essence of the wall-

picture is its solidity, or at least, its not appearing to be a hole in the wall.”³⁸ This flatness keeps our eye on the surface, returning again and again to the things and faces outlined against that golden backdrop.

The repeating pattern of Millais’s wall covering is an example of good design; it, at least, acknowledges the flatness of the surface—and this is another aspect of its contemporaneity. In fact, it resembles wallpaper designs from the 1840s by A. W. N. Pugin, one of the first pattern designers to declare that ornament should “enrich” the construction of the surface rather than disguise it.³⁹ For a Gothic Revivalist such as Pugin, this meant studying the principles that governed a pattern and adapting that to a modern design such as his “Rose and Lion” wallpaper from about 1848 (fig. 17). To garner motifs and patterning for his designs, ecclesiastical and secular alike, Pugin studied historical examples of Italian woven silks from around 1500 (fig. 18).⁴⁰ These same fabrics were often depicted as the “cloths of honour” that cover the throne of the Virgin Mary in Early Renaissance panel paintings in gold and tempera, as in *Gentile da Fabriano’s Quaratesi Altarpiece*, and this selection by Millais perhaps emphasizes the pure and sacred love that Lorenzo and Isabella share.⁴¹ The artist repeats this decorative scheme to different narrative ends a few years later with his *Mariana* (1850–1; fig. 19). In this narrative of sexual frustration, the flora and fauna of the golden wall covering seem to taunt Mariana in their fecundity. And yet they also present a contrast to the vivid description of nature that lies outside her window. By placing these two “side by side”, as it were, Millais emphasizes not only the flatness of the decorative wall covering but also its potential for symbolic narrative. Millais’s chosen wall coverings, then, are both strikingly modern and historically precise in each instance.

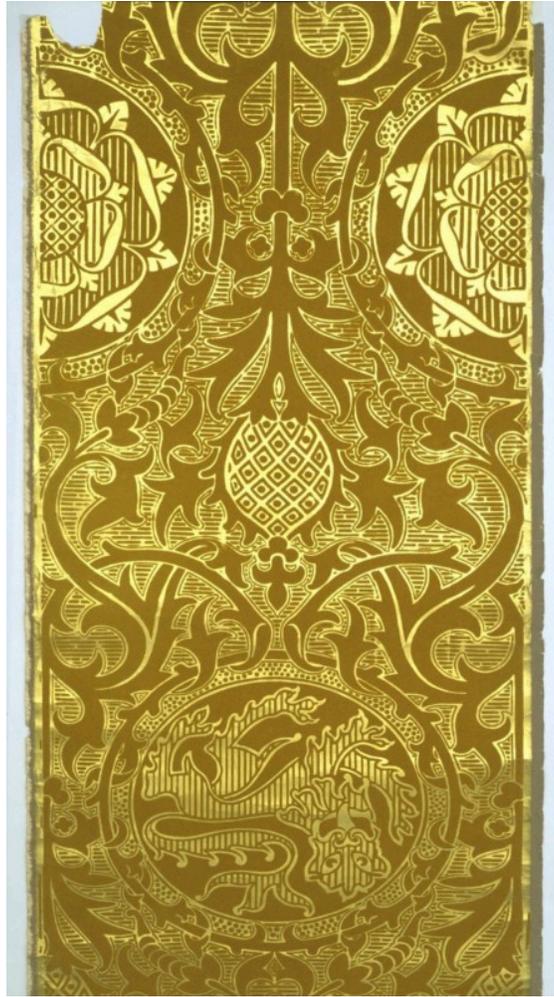


Figure 17.

A. W. N. Pugin, *Rose and Lion*, ca. 1848,
woodblock print and gold flock, 154.8 × 55.2
cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London
Digital image courtesy of Victoria and Albert
Museum, London

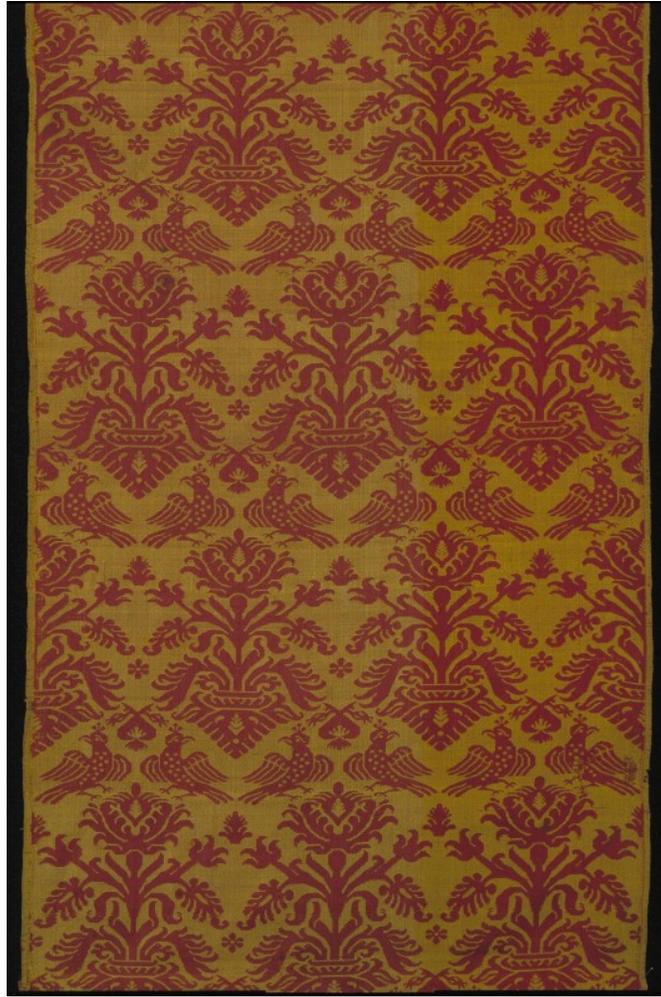


Figure 18.

Italian woven silk, ca. 1550, 194 × 53 cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London Digital image courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Crane would explore this type of decoration in his practice as a painter, as in his depiction in 1872 of his wife reading, *At Home: A Portrait* (fig. 20). Crane recalled in his autobiography that his first-hand encounter with Millais's paintings at the Royal Academy exhibition of 1857, when Crane was only twelve years old, "impressed me beyond words".⁴² In emulation of the Pre-Raphaelites, he adopted a consciously archaizing painting style, using tempera here as his medium. Mary Frances Crane, the artist's wife, leans on a mantelpiece, her arm gently resting beside an Italian-style vase labelled "Maria". The interior is artfully composed, and every surface appears decorated or designed, from the quilting of her costume to the gold-embroidered saddle blanket in the hunting scene on the wall. In the study for the work (ca. 1870; fig. 21), Crane sketched his wife posing in front of a

green wall, beside a chair nearby that resembles the "Sussex" side chair by Morris & Co. He later revised the design to include a decorative background, a tapestry abounding in narrative detail.

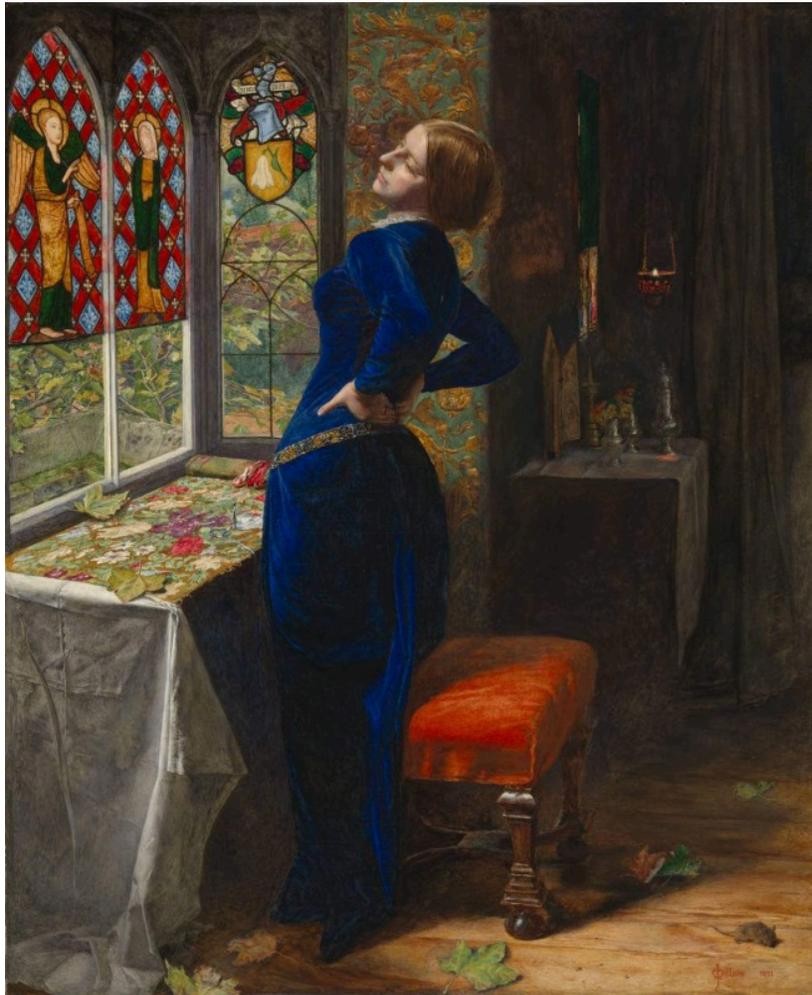


Figure 19.

John Everett Millais, *Mariana*, 1851, oil on mahogany panel, 59.7 × 49.5 cm. Tate. Accepted by HM Government in lieu of tax and allocated to the Tate Gallery, 1999 Digital image courtesy of Tate, 2015, CC-BY-NC-ND 3.0 (Unported)



Figure 20.

Walter Crane for Jeffrey & Co, *At Home*, 1872, tempera on paper, 71.7 × 40.6 cm. Leeds Museums and Galleries, City Art Gallery Digital image courtesy of Leeds Museums and Galleries, 2015



Figure 21.

Walter Crane, Study for *At Home: A Portrait*, ca. 1870, watercolour. Whitworth Art Gallery, University of Manchester Digital image courtesy of Courtesy of the Whitworth, The University of Manchester

The decoration enriches the painting's evocation of domestic life. The story is hunting in romantic and spiritual terms related through an amalgam of pagan and Christian symbolism. Just above Crane's wife's head, a rider carries a staff with a banner labelled "St. Hubert", the patron saint of the hunt who was converted to Christianity by a vision of the Crucifixion between the horns of a stag. A doppelgänger for Mrs Crane appears in the decorative background as a Renaissance princess wearing split sleeves and a white lace collar, coiffure adorned with the half-moon crown of the goddess Diana as Queen of the Hunt. Below the huntress, the fox's head points towards a motto from Virgil that refers to Diana's famed hunting ground in Sparta. Above the huntress, Cupid takes aim while a crane flies overhead. The disparate elements of this pictorial background coalesce in a fascinating evocation of the Cranes' life together, as the artist blends religious tradition,

classical mythology, and ancient literature to explain how this huntress captured him. In the manner of tapestry decorations undertaken at the same time by Morris & Co., the full narrative potential of the image emerges only in the decorative background, a powerful comment upon the power of the object, or the image, in this instance, to conjure alternate worlds.



Figure 22.

Walter Crane , Illustration from *Beauty and the Beast*, ca. 1875, *Beauty and the Beast*, (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1875), 27 × 54 cm, facing p. 4. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven. Digital image courtesy of Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University

The symbolic potential of decoration, gleaned from the Pre-Raphaelites, also informed Crane's work as a book illustrator. Decorative art abounds in his illustrations for *Jack and the Beanstalk*, *The Frog Prince*, and *Beauty and the Beast* created throughout the 1870s. Yet these things all contribute to the narratives of the stories. In *Beauty and the Beast*, for example, the internal emotional progress of Beauty is shown through the decoration. In one illustration, she stands in front of a wall painting that depicts the Garden of

Eden, where human and beast coexist peacefully, near a female nude who is a dual image of Venus and Eve, foreshadowing the developing romance between Beauty and the Beast (fig. 22). A later critic argued that Crane's illustrations realized the relationship of part to whole, depicting "the equal importance of what are generally regarded as accessories".⁴³ Crane himself claimed that illustrations were essential in children's books as "the eye" is "the chief organ for the reception of ideas".⁴⁴ The latter rely upon emblems to communicate narrative and trust in the ability of the viewer or reader to translate the message from fantasy into reality. Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, early childhood educators emphasized the role of symbolism in pedagogy and the accompanying need to teach children how to interpret non-verbal signs.⁴⁵

In the same way, paintings such as *At Home: A Portrait* and Crane's book illustrations are premised on the idea that the decoration can be read and interpreted. But what happens when we remove the framing device of the painting or the page? What does the decorative wall communicate in the real world, rather than the realm of art? William Morris discussed the symbolic potential of decoration in his lecture "Some Hints on Pattern-Designing" from 1881. He declared that all decoration is "futile" and "degraded" unless it reminds the viewer of "something beyond itself, of something of which it is a visible symbol".⁴⁶ However, he suggested that natural forms were the most appropriate inspiration for such work. In this regard, Crane's wallpaper is a symbolic design that more closely resembles paintings by Millais than patterns of Morris. Decorative design such as Crane's "Golden Age" depends upon a broad visual language, a kind of alphabet of forms, to communicate meaning.⁴⁷ The art historian Ernst Gombrich warned against the "multiplicity of meaning" inherent in the study of symbols.⁴⁸ And he suggested that the decorative in particular was not a successful symbolic mode, wondering "where does meaning end and the decorative pattern begin?"⁴⁹ Perhaps for this reason, most pattern designs by Morris resist narration: it is beside the point to ask what "Cray" means. In his lecture, Morris noted that such designs are "suggestive" rather than "imitative". For this and other reasons, it doesn't tell "facts".⁵⁰ It expresses its ideals through its pattern.

For Crane, however, the pattern is narrative. In "The Craftsman's Dream", a visit to the museum prompts a meditation on the golden ages of the past and a dream of their future realization. With "The Golden Age", the design reframes the question of temporality in terms of the ages of humankind: when was "the golden age" and will it be again? Here the design figures the very negotiation of past, present, and the future inherent in this process: one putto looks towards the basket, the promise of the golden age. Yet the other looks away, out towards the viewer, or perhaps into the room that the

wallpaper adorned. One cockatoo approaches the basket, while another looks up, leading the eye to follow the repeat of the pattern to the next set of putti.⁵¹ As the pattern travels up and over, across the wall, it acknowledges the space that it adorns, and it asks the inhabitant of that space to reflect upon the past in the present moment, as well as to contemplate the future.

“The Golden Age” is, to paraphrase John Ruskin, an object that can be read “rightly” in terms of pictorial narrative. Ruskin formulated this idea in response to William Holman Hunt’s *The Awakening Conscience* (1853-4; [fig. 23](#)), a painting whose complex iconography of sin and redemption had confused some contemporary critics and offended others. In a letter to the *Times*, Ruskin explained that the key to understanding the painting was to allow “trivial objects” such as the discarded glove, or the veneer of the piano, to “force themselves upon the attention” with an insistence that does not allow the viewer to look away.⁵² Likewise, the art critic F. G. Stephens, a member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, noted that here “the very decorations on the wall are significant.”⁵³

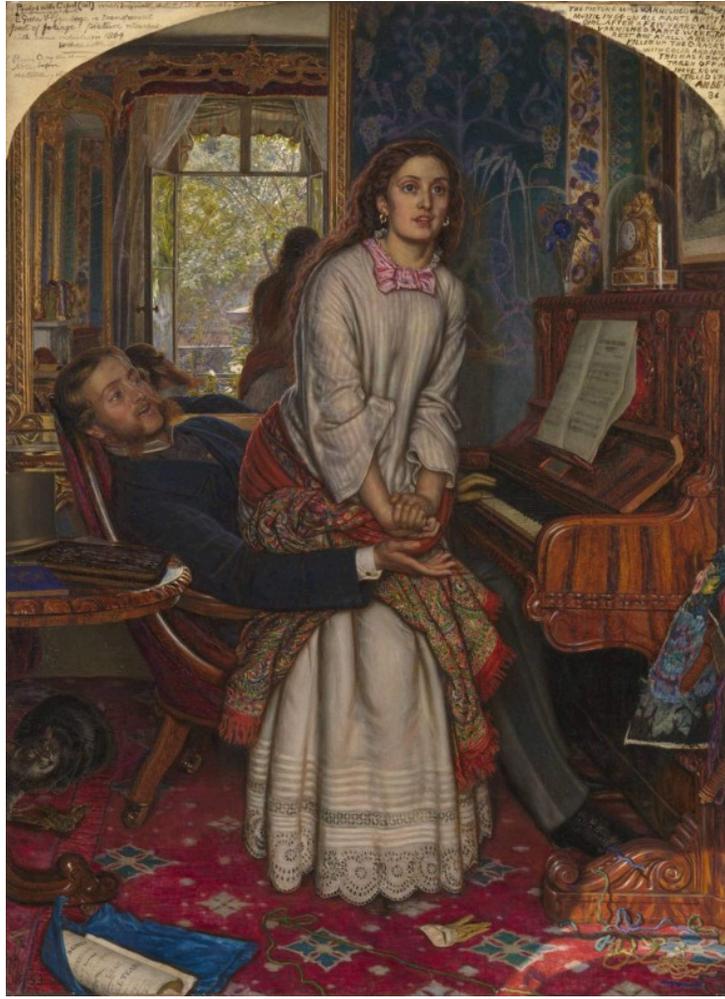


Figure 23.

William Holman Hunt, *The Awakening Conscience*, 1853-4, oil on canvas, 76.2 × 55.9. Tate, presented by Sir Colin and Lady Anderson through the Friends of the Tate Gallery 1976
Digital image courtesy of Tate, 2015, CC-BY-NC-ND 3.0 (Unported)

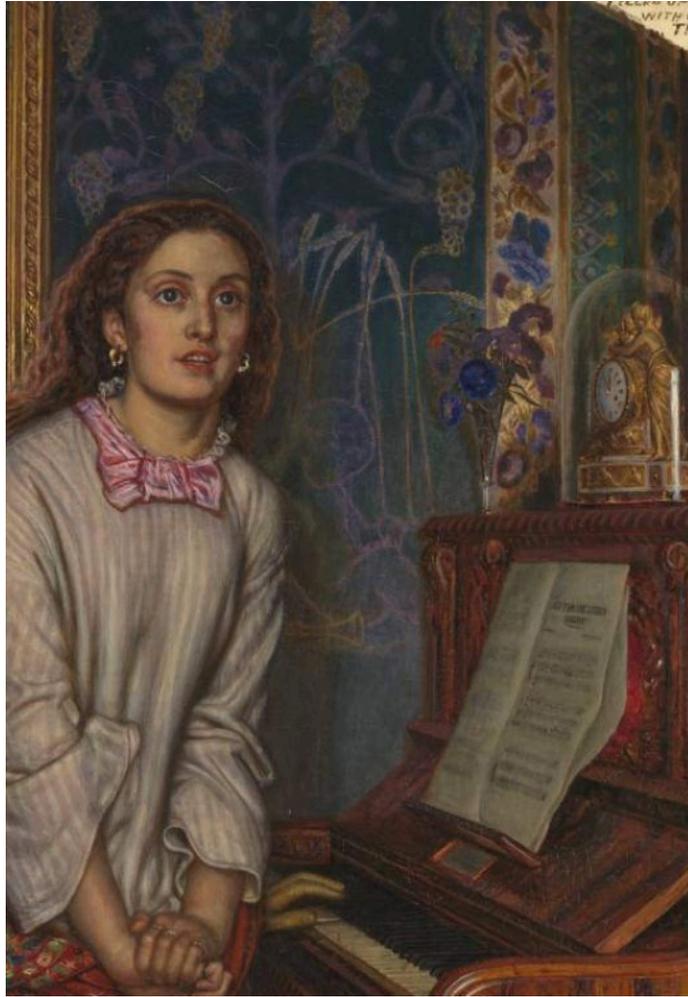


Figure 24.

William Holman Hunt, *The Awakening Conscience* (detail of wallpaper), 1853-4, oil on canvas, 76.2 × 55.9. Tate, presented by Sir Colin and Lady Anderson through the Friends of the Tate Gallery 1976 Digital image courtesy of Tate, 2015, CC-BY-NC-ND 3.0 (Unported)

This significance functions in two ways: the wallpaper is a gaudy and overwrought example of bad design, a further marker of the room's immorality. No overarching principle of pattern unites the birds, vines, grapes, sleeping child, and sheaves of wheat (fig. 24). Furthermore, the floral border disguises the corner of the room and thus disrupts the surface of the wall (perhaps for this reason it is sometimes suggested that this is a tapestry, and not wallpaper). At the same time, a perceptive critic like Stephens noted that the wallpaper encapsulated the story of the painting: "a vineyard, in which corn is mingled with the vine; birds destroy the grapes of the latter, while at the foot sleeps a boy-guardian, whose horn, fallen from his hand, indicates neglected duty".⁵⁴ I do not want to suggest that this type of symbolic decoration was a new feature of painting; the art historian George Landow, for example, pointed to Holman Hunt's admiration for

William Hogarth and his “modern moral pictures”.⁵⁵ Rather, it provided an important model for artists of Crane’s generation. Morris’s “Peacock and Bird” carpet was one response to the cheap machine-made goods catalogued in Holman Hunt’s painting, yet it resists any attempt to interpret it in the way that Stephens can interpret Holman Hunt’s rendering of wallpaper. With “The Golden Age”, in contrast, it is as if Crane has extracted the decorative background from a Pre-Raphaelite painting but maintained its symbolic power.

A “Golden Age” of things

Crane, a committed socialist since 1884, would have been aware of the political import of the notion of a “Golden Age”. It became a trope in socialist and anarchist discourse to re-direct the longing for an idealized past into a future hope, usually expressed as the dictum, “the Golden Age lies in the future, not in the past.”⁵⁶ We find this “golden age” in Crane’s political cartoons, designs such as “The Triumph of Labour” from 1891 (fig. 25), a scene brimming with natural vivacity—the abundance promised by the fruit of “The Golden Age” is here realized.⁵⁷ Morris made only a few designs for the socialist cause and employed a visual language of natural forms familiar from his wallpaper designs, as in his membership card for the Democratic Federation (fig. 26). Crane’s works, in contrast, combined the human figure and natural forms to convey their message. It was Crane who created the visual culture of English socialism: he even designed the punning emblem for Morris’s own Hammersmith branch of the Socialist League: Morris is the smith who quite literally forges the instruments of a new society (fig. 27). The design would later be adapted to Morris’s Hammersmith Socialist Society. Other designs often depicted a utopia not unlike the “Nowhere” found in Morris’s novel *News from Nowhere* of 1890. The cover of Morris’s socialist newspaper, *Commonweal*, from 24 May 1890, elegantly juxtaposes Crane’s vision with that of Morris: in the centre of the serialization of *News from Nowhere*, now at the chapter describing revolution entitled “How the Change Came”, we find Crane’s vision of that change: a cartoon declaring the international “Solidarity of Labour” depicting the united workers of the world (fig. 28). Hand in hand, they encircle the globe. Reproduced in newspapers and given away at rallies, these cartoons do not have recourse to the usual arsenal of satire, parody, and caricature, or even Morris’s own allusions to revolutionary violence in his explanation of “how the change came” in *News from Nowhere*. Rather, they gain their power through their very idealism, the portrayal of a coming golden age, rendered in a decorative style familiar from Crane’s wallpapers.



Figure 25.

Henry Scheu, *The Triumph of Labour* engraving after Walter Crane, 1891, first published in the *Pall Mall Budget*, 30 April 1891, 31.5 × 59.7 cm. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven Digital image courtesy of Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University

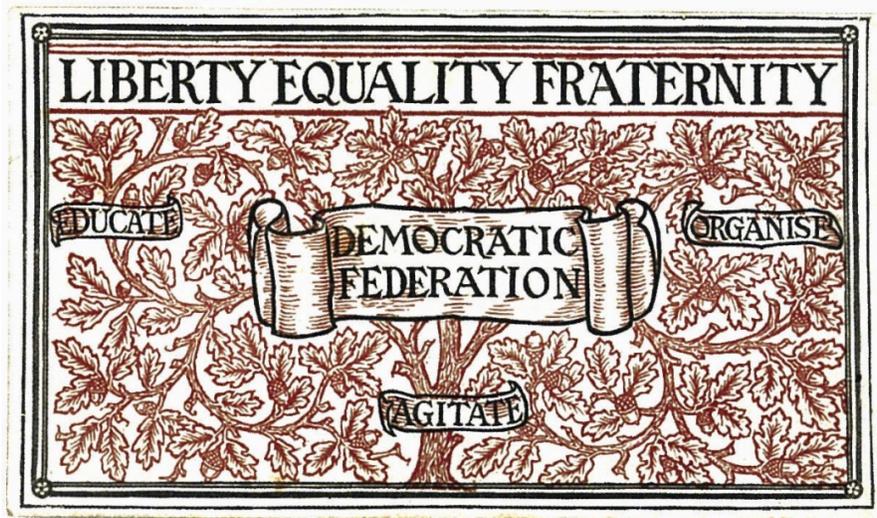


Figure 26.

William Morris, Design for the *Democratic Federation*, used on membership card, ca. 1884, 8.5 × 14.5 cm. Trades Union Congress Library Collections, London Digital image courtesy of TUC Library Collections, in Fiona McCarthy, *Anarchy & beauty : William Morris and his legacy 1860 - 1960* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2014), plate 49, 48



Figure 27.

After Walter Crane, Membership Card for the Hammersmith Branch of the Socialist League, 1890, for Henry Holiday Sparling, designed 1885, 11.5 × 5 cm. Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, San Marino, CA Digital image courtesy of Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens

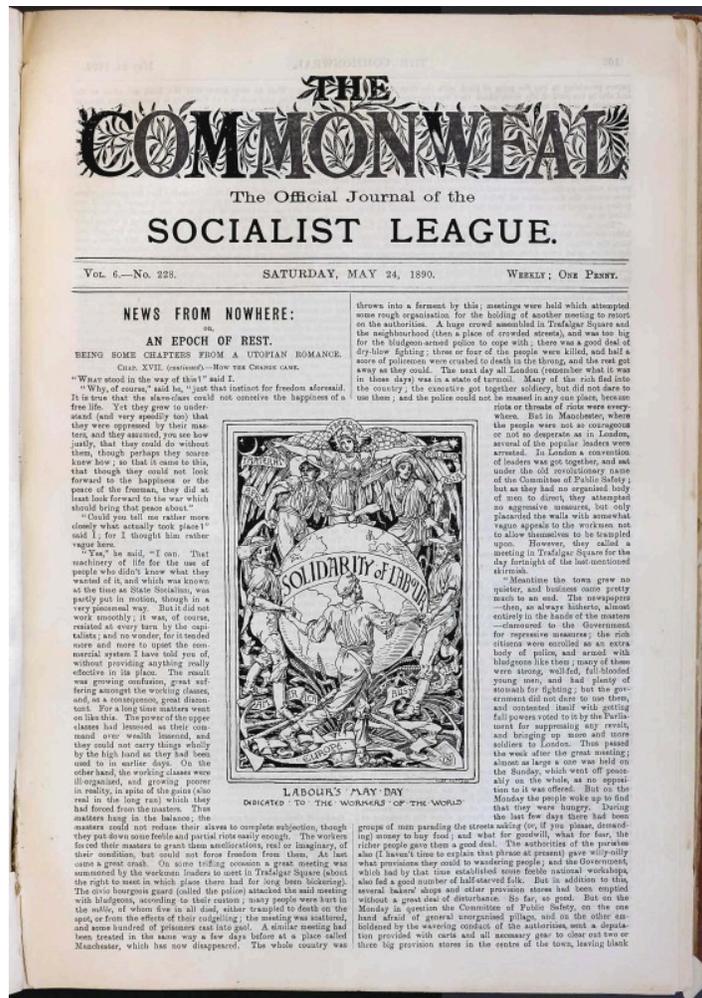


Figure 28. Walter Crane, *The Commonwealth*, 24 May 1890, front page featuring Walter Crane's "Solidarity of Labour: Labour's May Day, dedicated to the workers of the world", 1890, 15 x 31 cm. Labadie Collection, University of Michigan Digital image courtesy of Labadie Collection, University of Michigan Library, CC-BY 4.0 license

These designs further confused the category “decoration” at the very moment when others sought to fix these terms. Morris, for example, excluded easel painting from the decorative arts in a lecture from 1877, since most canvases were “ingenious toys for a few rich and idle men” that were “at the present day divorced from decoration”.⁵⁸ In this regard, we must distinguish between Morris’s own views and the programme put forth by the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society. The establishment of the Society derived in equal measure from Morris’s championing of the decorative arts and from the powerful critique of the Royal Academy, first expressed by the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in 1848 and re-stated in 1886 by Crane, along with William Holman Hunt and the painter George Clausen. They wrote an open letter to the Academy lambasting its restrictive exhibition practices. In

its place, they proposed a truly national exhibition that would bring together the work of artists, designers, and craftsmen. Crucially, this agitation did not exclude painters.⁵⁹ Instead, they argued that painting was a decorative art with its own discourse of use and materials.

This activism resulted in the creation of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, and Holman Hunt and Ford Madox Brown both joined. These exhibitions regularly featured designs and cartoons for mural painting—a historic mode of wall covering that could be narrative and decorative, like tapestry or wallpaper. Crane, Edward Burne-Jones, Frederic Leighton, and George Frederick Watts all showed cartoons at these displays, and the few photographs that have survived, taken by Emery Walker, show the diversity of items on display as well as the surprising fact that the majority of display space is given over to wall coverings (fig. 29). The acknowledged master of this decorative art was Ford Madox Brown, who created twelve murals depicting the history of Manchester for Manchester Town Hall, executed from 1877 to 1893. For Crane, these were the most important examples of public painting in England—moving beyond the boundaries of the picture frame to address a broader public. They signalled a return to the ideal of the integrated artistic practice, when “painting was once what it might be again . . . at the head of the decorative arts.”⁶⁰ As I have argued, we can trace this logic back to the Pre-Raphaelites.



Figure 29.

Emery Walker, Fifth Exhibition of the *Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society* at the New Gallery, Regent Street, 1896, photograph. National Portrait Gallery, London. Image in Morna O'Neill, "Rhetorics of Display: Arts and Crafts and Art Nouveau at the Turin Exhibition of 1902", *Journal of Design History* (2007) 20 (3): 205-225. doi: 10.1093/jdh/epm013 Digital image courtesy of National Portrait Gallery

Intriguingly, a letter from William Holman Hunt to the Arts and Crafts organizing committee in 1889 asked "whether framed pictures were or were not admissible to the exhibition".⁶¹ The minutes note that the question was left undecided. But at least one oil painting did feature in an exhibition: the second, smaller version of Ford Madox Brown's *Work* from 1863 (Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery; [fig. 30](#)), which served as the centrepiece for a memorial retrospective of his decorative designs in 1896. In a sense, this display treated the smaller version as a kind of cartoon for its larger (and earlier) iteration in Manchester.



Figure 30.

Ford Madox Brown, *Work*, 1863, oil on canvas, 68.4 × 99.9 cm.
Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery Digital image courtesy of
Birmingham Museums Trust

It is intriguing to think of *Work* as a design that decorates a wall—what Brown called a “wall-picture”—rather than an easel painting. For one, the perspectival recession of space constructed by the brick wall on the left and Heath Street on the right begins to waver, overtaken by a series of horizontal bands marked out by the raised shovels of the navvies. What remains is, in the words of Tim Barringer, a “great secular altarpiece”, with a rich and complex narrative about the redemptive value of work, one that would have resonated with the crafts on display in the adjacent galleries.⁶² Given the scale, ambition, and message of *Work* as a decorative design, it did not seem out of place beside mosaics, stained glass windows, and wallpaper, in addition to Brown’s own designs for furniture. William Morris stated, “Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful.”⁶³ Perhaps Morris’s use of “nothing” should be interrogated further in light of the distinction between thing and object prompted by thing theory. Houses should not have unintelligible and unrecognizable things but instead be filled with objects. The “Peacock and Bird” carpet not only covers the floor but also re-imagines the relationship between producer and consumer. Arts and Crafts objects re-imagined subject-object relations. In this regard, *Work* is an Arts and Crafts painting, and it represents at least a partial fulfilment of Crane’s dream of the craftsman.

Footnotes

- 1 Crane wrote the poem in 1889 but would not publish it until almost a decade later. *Labour Leader*, 1 May 1897, 206.
- 2 Walter Crane, "Of the Influence of Modern Social and Economic Conditions on the Sense of Beauty", in *Ideals in Art: Papers Theoretical, Practical, Critical* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1905), 82.
- 3 For a further discussion of Crane's own socialist politics in relation to art, see Morna O'Neill, *Art and Labour's Cause is One: Walter Crane and Manchester, 1880–1915* (Manchester: Whitworth Art Gallery, 2008).
- 4 William Morris would also use the themes of dreams and battles in social revolution in *A Dream of John Ball* (London: Reeves & Turner, 1888). See Stephen F. Eisenman, "Communism in Furs: A Dream of Prehistory in William Morris's *John Ball*", *Art Bulletin* 87, no. 1 (2005): 92–110. My thanks to an anonymous reader for making this point.
- 5 See Morna O'Neill, *Walter Crane: The Arts and Crafts, Painting, and Politics, 1875–1890* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 2010).
- 6 See, for example, William Morris, "Useful Work versus Useless Toil", 1884, William Morris Internet Archive (hereafter WMIA) <https://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1884/useful.htm>.
- 7 Jennifer Meagher, "The Pre-Raphaelites", in "Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History" (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–). http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/praf/hd_praf.htm (Oct. 2004).
- 8 The exhibition featured Morris's oil painting *Queen Guenevere* (now known as *La Belle Iseult*). See Leslie Parris, ed., *The Pre-Raphaelites* (London: Tate Gallery and Penguin Books, 1984), 169–70.
- 9 "Morris also developed an interest in modern painting and particularly the work of the Pre-Raphaelite painters Rossetti, Holman Hunt, and Millais." Linda Parry, ed., *William Morris* (London: Philip Wilson in association with the Victoria and Albert Museum, 1996), 14.
- 10 For an important intervention in this regard, see Caroline Arscott, *William Morris & Edward Burne-Jones: Interlacings* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 2008).
- 11 Nancy J. Troy, *The De Stijl Environment* (Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT Press, 1983), 3.
- 12 For Ford Madox Brown's "artisan" furniture, see Julian Treuherz, Kenneth Bendiner, and Angela Thirlwell, *Ford Madox Brown: Pre-Raphaelite Pioneer* (London: Philip Wilson, 2011), 54.
- 13 William Morris, "Address on the Collection of Paintings of the English Pre-Raphaelite School", 2 Oct. 1891, WMIA <https://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1891/english.htm>
- 14 Morris, "Address".
- 15 Erwin Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting: Its Origin and Character*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1953).
- 16 As discussed in Bernhard Ridderbos, "Objects and Questions", in *Early Netherlandish Paintings: Rediscovery, Reception, and Research*, ed. Ridderbos, Anne van Buren, and Henk van Veen, trans. Andrew McCormick and Anne van Burne (original Dutch ed., 1995; Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2005), 64.
- 17 See Jenny Graham, "Artistic Inspirations", in *The Cambridge Companion to the Pre-Raphaelites*, ed. Elizabeth Prettejohn (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2012), 32–46.
- 18 George P. Landow, *William Holman Hunt and Typological Symbolism* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1979).
- 19 Bill Brown, "Thing Theory", *Critical Inquiry* 28, no. 1 (2001): 1–22.
- 20 Brown, "Thing Theory", 5.
- 21 John Plotz, "Can the Sofa Speak? A Look at Thing Theory", *Criticism* 47, no. 1 (2005): 110.
- 22 Plotz, "Can the Sofa Speak?", 110.
- 23 Alan Crawford, "The Object is Not the Object: C. R. Ashbee and the Guild of Handicraft", in *Pioneers of Modern Craft: Twelve Essays Profiling Key Figures in the History of Twentieth-Century Craft*, ed. Margot Coatts (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1997), 1–12.
- 24 Imogen Hart, *Arts and Crafts Objects* (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 2010), 12.
- 25 Brown, "Thing Theory", 4.
- 26 Morris, "Address".
- 27 Walter Crane, "Of the Arts and Crafts Movement", in *Ideals In Art*, 22.
- 28 See Diane Waggoner, "Cray", in Tim Barringer, Jason Rosenfeld, and Alison Smith, *Pre-Raphaelites: Victorian Avant-Garde* (London: Tate Publishing, 2012), 186.
- 29 See Barringer, Rosenfeld, and Smith, *Pre-Raphaelites*, 186.
- 30 See Joyce H. Townsend, Jacqueline Ridge, and Stephen Hackney, eds., *Pre-Raphaelite Painting Techniques: 1848–1856* (London: Tate Publishing, 2004).
- 31 As suggested by Peter Stansky, *William Morris, C. R. Ashbee and the Arts and Crafts* (London: Nine Elms Press, 1984), 4.

- 32 *Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society Catalogue of the First Exhibition 1888* (London: New Gallery, 1888), nos. 65 and 66 (both hand-painted samples), 67 (design), 68 (plate).
- 33 Although it is not known if Walter Crane ever visited Dyrham Park, he was familiar with historical examples of stamped leather, as suggested in his entry on "Mural Decoration" in *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, ed. Hugh Chisholm (London: Encyclopaedia Britannica Company, 1911), 19: 16–26.
- 34 Elizabeth Prettejohn, *The Art of the Pre-Raphaelites* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2000), 32.
- 35 Tim Barringer, *Reading the Pre-Raphaelites* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1999), 18.
- 36 As discussed by Prettejohn, *Art of the Pre-Raphaelites*, 30 and Alison Smith, "Isabella, 1848–9", in Jason Rosenfeld and Alison Smith, *Millais* (London: Tate Publishing, 2007), 34.
- 37 Walter Crane, "Of Decorative Painting and Design", in *Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society Catalogue*, 29.
- 38 Ford Madox Brown, "Of Mural Painting", a lecture delivered in 1889 and reprinted in *Arts and Crafts Essays by Members of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society* (London: Rivington, Percival & Co., 1893), 157.
- 39 As discussed in Charles Locke Eastlake, *Hints on Household Taste in Furniture, Upholstery, and other Details* (London: Longman, Green, & Co., 1868), 34. For a further discussion of Pugin's theories of design in relation to his contemporaries, see Jules Lubbock, *The Tyranny of Taste: The Politics of Architecture and Design in Britain, 1550–1960* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1995), especially "Part V: Good Design", 205–90.
- 40 See Dom Bede Millard, Linda Parry, and Paul Harrison, "Chapter 16, Textiles," in *Pugin: A Gothic Passion*, ed. Paul Atterbury and Clive Wainwright (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press in association with the Victoria and Albert Museum, 1994), 207–18.
- 41 Barringer, Rosenfeld, and Smith, *The Pre-Raphaelites*, 46.
- 42 Walter Crane, *An Artist's Reminiscences* (London: Methuen & Co., 1907), 38.
- 43 Arthur Popham, Foreword, in *Catalogue of Memorial Exhibition of Paintings and Water-Colour Drawings by Walter Crane* (London: Bromhead, Cutts, & Co., 1920).
- 44 Walter Crane, "Correspondence: Out of the Mouth of Babes", *Pall Mall Gazette*, 22 March 1886, 6.
- 45 For a discussion of these concerns as they relate to Crane's children's book illustrations, see Grace Brockington, "Rhyming Pictures: Walter Crane and the Universal Language of Art", *Word & Image: A Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry* 28, no. 4 (2012): 359–73.
- 46 William Morris, "Some Hints on Pattern Designing", delivered 10 Dec. 1881, WMIA <https://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1881/hints.htm>.
- 47 In a series of lectures to the Royal Society later published as *Of the Decorative Illustration of Books Old and New* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1896), Crane acknowledged the importance of the alphabet to design theory: "We know that the letters of our alphabet were once pictures, symbols, or abstract signs of entities and actions, and grew more and more abstract until they became arbitrary marks—the familiar characters that we know." Crane, *Decorative Illustration of Books*, 17.
- 48 E. H. Gombrich, *Symbolic Images: Studies in the Art of the Renaissance*, 2 vols. (London: Phaidon, 1972), 1: 12–13.
- 49 Gombrich, *Symbolic Images*, 1: 3.
- 50 Morris, "Some Hints on Pattern Designing".
- 51 Contemporary critics praised Crane's "facile handling of gorgeous birds . . . as decorative motifs". See Alan Victor Sugden and John Ludlam Edmondson, *A History of English Wallpaper, 1509–1914* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1925), 172.
- 52 John Ruskin, "Letters on Art: The Awakening Conscience", *The Times*, 24 May 1854, reprinted in John Ruskin, *Arrows of the Chace: Being a Collection of Scattered Letters Published Chiefly in the Daily Newspapers, 1840–1880* (Boston: Dana Estes & Co., 1880).
- 53 F. G. Stephens, *William Holman Hunt and his Works: A Memoir of the Artist's Life, with Description of his Pictures* (London: J. Nisbet & Co., 1860), 34.
- 54 Stephens, *William Holman Hunt*, 34.
- 55 Landow, *William Holman Hunt*, especially 47–59.
- 56 The French anarchist Charles Malato used this phrase in *La Revue Anarchiste*, 1 Nov. 1893, 78. The English anarchist journal *Freedom* 3, no. 37 (Dec. 1889): 53, mentions an article in the journal *L'Attaque* by Francesco Saverio Merlino with the title "The Golden Age".
- 57 For a further discussion of these concerns, see O'Neill, *Walter Crane*.
- 58 William Morris, "The Lesser Arts", delivered 4 Dec. 1877, and reprinted in *Hopes and Fears for Art* (1882), WMIA <https://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1882/hopes/chapters/chapter1.htm>.
- 59 As described by Crane, *Artist's Reminiscences*, 288.
- 60 Walter Crane, "The Claims of Decorative Art", in *The Claims of Decorative Art* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin, & Co., 1892), 6. Crane originally titled this essay "On the Position and Aims of Decorative Art" when he first published it in 1881.
- 61 "Minutes of the General Committee", 14 April 1889, Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society Papers, AAD 1/43-1980. Archive of Art and Design, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

- 62 Tim Barringer, *Men at Work: Art and Labour in Victorian Britain* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 2005), 21.
- 63 William Morris, "Hopes and Fears for Art", 1882, WMA <https://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1882/hopes/chapters/chapter3.htm>.

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