



## THE DESIGN REFORM MOVEMENT

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Christopher Dresser (1834–1904), Pitcher, 1879–82, earthenware, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

- Today I am talking about the Design Reform Movement a little-known art movement that was the precursor to William Morris's Arts & Crafts movement. The Design Reform Movement developed out of the ideas that originated from the Government Schools of Design which is where I begin.

### NOTES

- The history of design and the design schools in Britain has been little analysed until recently. One reason is that the Schools developed a poor reputation partly because Henry Cole and many others criticized the Schools. It needs to be understood that Henry Cole was trying to get extra funding from the Government to improve them and so was pointing out their faults more than their successes. They have also been criticized for their early internal squabbles and later their slavish and rigid training programme. It must be remembered that **between 1837 and 1848 15,000 men and women were trained in drawing and design**. By 1858 there were 120 Schools throughout the country and **the London School became the Royal College of Art**, in 2023 ranked the number 1 university for art and design in the world for the 9th consecutive year.
- Government Schools of Design led to Design Reform Movement. This was linked later to the health and hygiene movement. Dust-free homes, a lack of ornamentation for cleanliness and Charles Eastlake's *Hints on Household Taste*

(1868).

- Pugin and Ruskin initiated the Gothic Revival and this inspired Morris and the Arts & Crafts Movement (started in 1860s but not named until 1888).
- In **1821** the first **Mechanics' Institute** was opened in Edinburgh (later Heriot-Watt University) followed by Glasgow (based on a group started by George Birkbeck), Liverpool, London (later Birkbeck College), Ipswich and Manchester. By about 1850 there were **700 institutes**. The London Mechanics' Institute was formed in **1823** following an unprecedented gathering of 2,000 people who flocked to the Crown and Anchor Tavern on the Strand where Dr George Birkbeck and Jeremy Bentham were discussing the education of the working men of London. From this meeting the London **Mechanics' Institute** was established teaching science, art and economics. The idea was so radical Birkbeck was accused of '**scattering the seeds of evil**'. Seven years later the College decided to admit women. By 1858 Birkbeck was the first choice for obtaining a university education part-time. The Mechanics' Institute changed its name to the **Birkbeck** Literary and Scientific Institution in 1866 and Birkbeck College in 1906. In 1929 Birkbeck became part of the University of London.
- In **1837** the first **Government School of Design** started in Somerset House, replacing the Royal Academy which had just moved to the building in Trafalgar Square. By 1849 there were 21 Schools around the country and by 1858 about 120 Schools.
- In **1854** the **Working Men's College** was established in Red Lion Square. It used volunteer lecturers such as John Ruskin and Dante Rossetti and was inspired by Christian Socialist aims, it was an early example of the co-operative movement and it was linked to the Chartists.
- In **1857** the London **School of Design moved to South Kensington**. South Kensington Museum was part of Albertopolis, a group of museums and schools formed using the profits from the Great Exhibition in Hyde Park. South Kensington Museum became the Victoria & Albert Museum in 1899. That year it was renamed the Normal Training School of Art and in 1863 the **National Art Training School**. In 1897 it became the **Royal College of Art**. The library of the London School of Design became the National Art Library.
- In **1871** Felix Slade's bequest enabled University College, London, to establish the **Slade School** where women were educated on equal terms to men. Edward Poynter was the first Slade Professor and Kate Greenaway

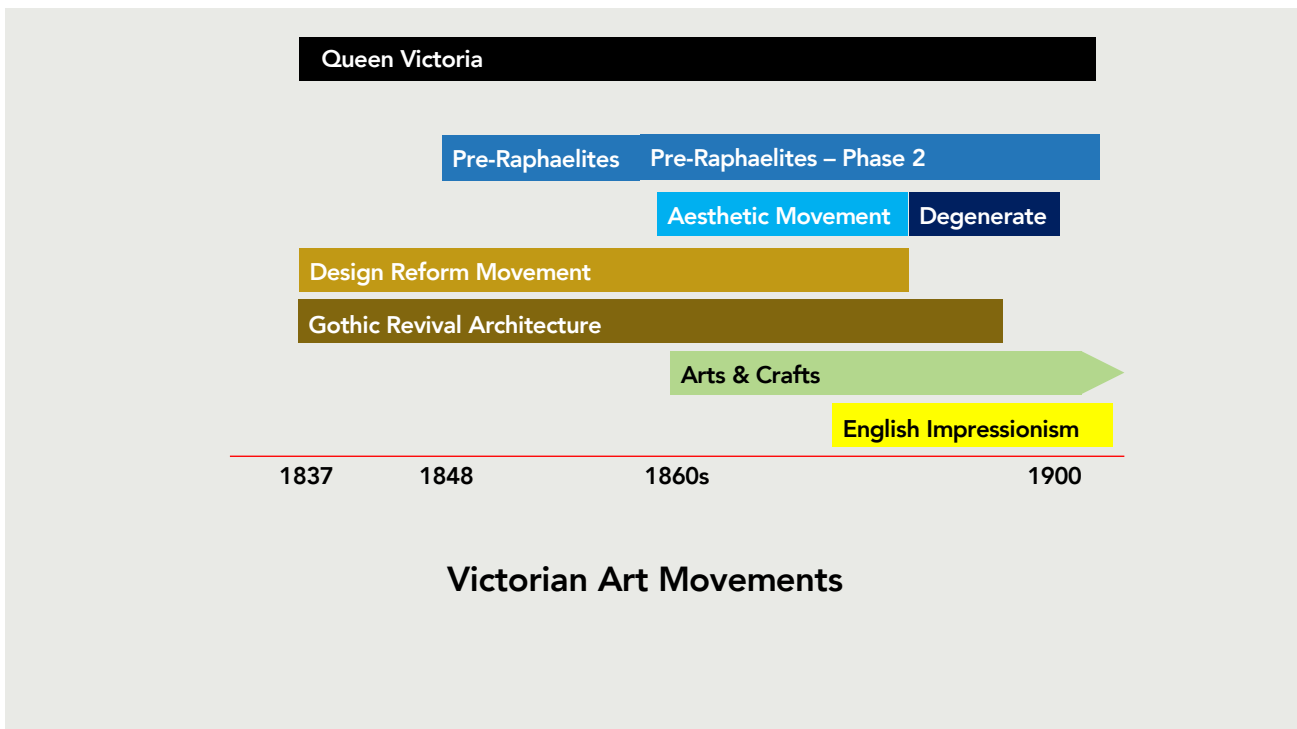
and Evelyn de Morgan were students.

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- Let me begin by putting the various British art movements into a timeline.
- The reign of Queen Victoria was from 1837 to 1901 and the best known art movement is the Pre-Raphaelites associated with William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais and Dante Gabriel Rossetti and many scenes taken from literature and the medieval period. Later the Aesthetic Movement focused on art for art's sake and is most closely associated with James McNeill Whistler.
- Today though I focus on the Design Reform Movement which covered a large part of the reign of Queen Victoria. **It all started in 1835** with the Government's concern that British design was inferior to that of Continental firms. As a result a **Parliamentary Select Committee on Art and Manufactures** was set up.
- The following year its report expressed concern that British-manufactured goods were poorly designed **compared to France, Germany and the United States, and that England risked losing business** to those countries. The economic argument for better British design was backed up by an aesthetic and even a moral reaction against the excessive use of **gaudy and excessive ornamentation. It also recommended the establishment of free, public galleries and museums throughout the country that were open after working hours in order to improve the taste of the British public.**
- The practical result was that the following year, in 1837, the first Government **School of Design** was founded to improve the education of designers, which, it was assumed, would in turn improve the output of British industry.

- More Schools were opened across the country and the **Design Reform Movement was a consequence. It was led by Richard Redgrave (1804-1888), Owen Jones and later Christopher Dresser.** However, few manufacturers changed their working practices and designs pandered to what they believed were British tastes. This **came to a head with the Great Exhibition of 1851** when the **British designs were clearly inferior to overseas designs.**
- In parallel there was a revival of Gothic architecture. In 1833 the Palace of Westminster burned down, a new design was sought and Gothic was selected over Classical as it was thought to better express the British identity. A group of architects and designers including Augustus Pugin were promoting the **Gothic Revival movement to improve British architecture and design.**
- Later **William Morris (1834–1896)** founded the **Arts & Crafts** movement in an attempt to improve British design by **rejecting modern manufacturing processes in favour of handmade items.**

## NOTES

- The **Parliamentary Select Committee on Art and Manufactures** had 50 members and took evidence from 60 witnesses (architects, sculptors, manufacturers and painters) of which one of the most vocal, influential and tactless was Benjamin Robert Haydon (1786-1846). Haydon was convinced of the need for a School to improve British art education and design and his most effective argument to convince the Committee was that if the design of British manufacturing goods could be improved then **exports would increase.**
- The increasingly **poor financial figures** for the **export of designed goods,** the fact that English manufacturers went to France, Germany and the United States for designs and the appalling standard of English design led to a Government commission being set up in 1835. It reported in 1836 and one conclusion was that in France art is diffused across the mass of society and so is cheap but in Great Britain it is comparatively dear.
- Morris' London retailing firms, Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. and later Morris & Co. (established 1875) sold furnishings made by artist-craftspeople as well as by rural peasantry. Utopian in theory, Morris' intentions were to create affordable, handcrafted goods that reflected the workers' creativity and individuality (qualities not found in industrially

produced goods). Ironically, in the end, high manufacturing costs made the objects too expensive for many to purchase. Morris' circle included the Pre-Raphaelites, especially Edward Burne-Jones (1833–1898), the ceramicist William De Morgan (1839–1917), and the architect-designer Philip Webb (1831–1915).

- New ideas about health, hygiene, and design reform also helped shape the Aesthetic movement from the 1860s through the 1880s. Edward William Godwin (1833–1886), one of the originators of the movement, deplored "fluff and dust ... two of the great enemies of life" and designed innovative furniture without excessive carving that could also be readily moved for easy cleaning. Although designing with cleanliness in mind, Godwin's own aesthetic sensibilities were heavily influenced by the arts of Japan, antiquarianism, and the theatre.

### QUEEN VICTORIA

- Born 24 May 1819, reigned **20 June 1837** (coronation 28 June 1838) to **22 January 1901** – 63 years, seven months and two days (63 years 217 days). This means **Elizabeth II** will have reigned for longer than Victoria on the evening of 9th September 2015 (taking leap years into account and measuring to the exact time of death).
- The Houses of Parliament were destroyed by fire on 16 October 1834 and the new building was built to the design of **Sir Charles Barry** with **Gothic Revival** detailing by **A. W. N. Pugin**.
- Alexandrina Victoria, daughter Prince Edward, Duke of Kent, fourth son of George III and Princess Victoria of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld. He three elder brothers all died leaving no legitimate children.
- Her father died in 1820 followed by George IV (1820-30), who had been Regent since 1811, and then William IV (1830-7).
- Victoria married her first cousin Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha (26 August 1819-1861) in 1840 and they had nine children (Victoria, Edward, Alice, Alfred, Helena, Louise, Arthur, Leopold and Beatrice).
- Her successor was her son **Edward VII** (1901-1910), the first Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, later renamed Windsor by his successor George V in 1917.

### ART MOVEMENTS

- Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, founded by a group of three (Millais, Holman Hunt, Rossetti), then four more (Woolner, Stephens, W. M. Rossetti and

Collinson), in 1848. They rejected laziness in painting and wanted to return to nature and represent its intense colours, complexity of form and infinite detail. It caused an enormous impact and the style influenced artists through the rest of the century but as a brotherhood the artists had gone their separate ways by 1853.

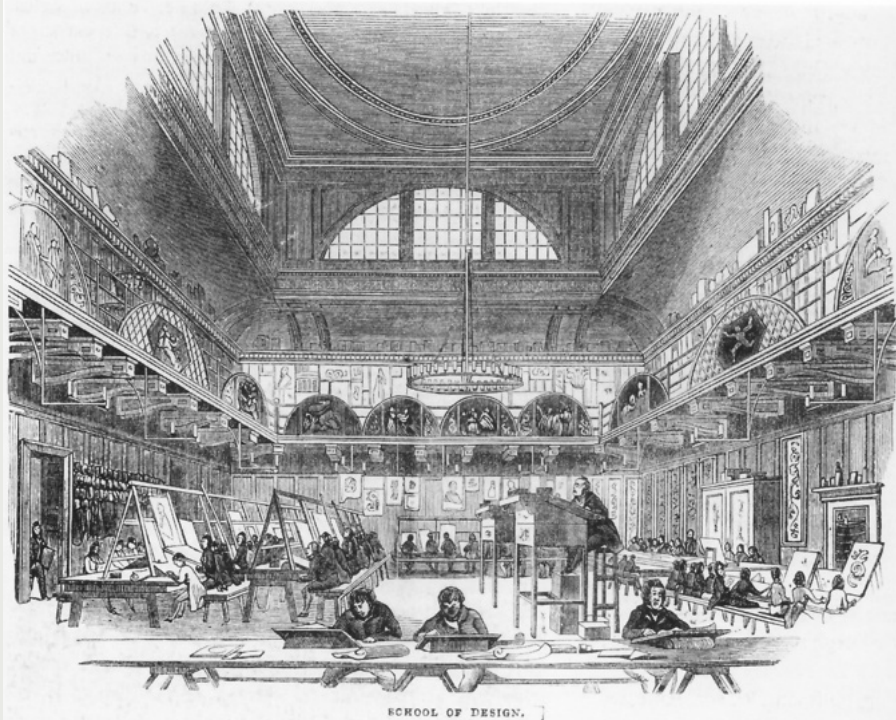
- Aesthetic Movement, also called 'art for art's sake', emphasized the aesthetic rather than making a moral point or telling a story. It can be considered the British equivalent of French Symbolism and it led to the Decadent art movement at the end of the century. Artists include Whistler, Leighton, Albert Moore and Edward Burne-Jones. In the 1880s and 90s it became very fashionable to have Aesthetic domestic interiors and it was satirized in cartoons and plays.
- Arts & Crafts, a movement that combined the fine and decorative arts and which had an enormous international influence at the beginning of the twentieth century. It is associated with William Morris but as we shall see it had many other precedents. It also became fashionable.
- English Impressionism, in this category I include schools, such as the Newlyn School (Stanhope Forbes), the Glasgow School and artists influenced by French Impressionism such as John Singer Sargent. However, English Impressionism took its own path and is associated with the New English Art Club, the Camden Town Group and Whistler's pupil, Walter Sickert, although this takes us into the twentieth century.

## **ARTISTIC CONTROVERSIES**

Controversies show use where art is challenging existing assumptions and bringing about change. Amongst others we see,

- The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood as a Catholic and anarchic organisation
- Millais, *Christ in the House of His Parents* was seen as blasphemous
- 'Art for Art's Sake' led to the Whistler v. Ruskin trial
- Rossetti and the 'Fleshly School' controversy
- The representation of the nude
- William Morris and Socialism
- Oscar Wilde's homosexuality
- Max Nordau and his book *Decadence*

Engraving School of Design, Somerset House, *Illustrated London News*, 1843, Victoria and Albert Museum



Engraving School of Design, Somerset House, *Illustrated London News*, 1843, Victoria and Albert Museum

- So, let us focus on the Design Reform Movement that sprang out of the Government's Schools of Design.
- **At the beginning no one seemed to have any idea what the School of Design should teach.** Its **Committee consisted largely of Academicians** whose aim was to ensure it did not conflict with the teaching at the **Royal Academy's School** and so **fine art in any form was excluded**. This boiled down to **whether to teach figure drawing** and within the first month it was decided to **categorically exclude drawing the human figure**.
- In France the Écoles de Dessin were **schools of drawing** (from the Italian 'disegno'). Some have said the reason the School of Design was so named was because someone was **unaware what Dessin meant or intentionally mistranslated it**. As a consequence **'design' was taken in the restricted sense** of a means of communication between the artisan and the manufacturer regarding the **ornamentation to be applied to the manufactured goods**. This confusion has plagued discussion ever since.
- Another problem with the Schools is that they charged **four shillings a week**, a significant sum for an artisan, so by the end of 1837 there were **only 15 students** during the day and 45 in the evening.
- The Committee **paid William Dyce to visit art and design schools in France**



**and Germany** (Prussia and Bavaria). He concluded that foreign schools deal with 'artists and designers as if they were to become workmen, and with the workmen as if they were to intended to be artists'. Dyce was made Superintendent and Professor and **his first act was to introduce life drawing classes**.

- Class number slowly increased and in **1842 the first schools outside London were opened in Manchester, then Coventry, Norwich and Birmingham** and in April that year the **first Female School** was opened at Somerset House.
- By October **there were 296 students**, mainly in the evening classes. Dyce left after being required to work full time and the new Superintendent introduced rigid rules of instruction and conduct. **No student was allowed to be admitted if he wanted to be a painter** and students had to sit down immediately and not move about unnecessarily.
- **In 1845 a disagreement over figure drawing** led to all the **best students being expelled** and the class was banned.
- **John Calcott Horsley** was appointed as Superintendent. He was known as 'Old Clothes Horsley' because of his **strong views against all nude painting and figure drawing which he regarded as immoral**.
- **In 1846 all the teachers resigned** led by Richard Redgrave.
- **In 1848 the Committee was replaced** and **William Dyce brought back** and he appointed Richard Redgrave as Master of Flower drawing and Botany.
- In brief, there were many ups and downs but slowly over the first half of the century the Schools improved.

## NOTES

- It was decided that its basic principles were that:
  - first, decoration is secondary to form;
  - second, form is dictated by function and the materials used;
  - and third, design should derive from historical English and non-Western ornament as well as plant and animal sources, distilled into simple, linear motifs.
- An 1836 report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Art and Manufactures. The committee expressed concern that British-manufactured goods were lacking in quality as compared to the output of France,

Germany and the United States, and that, consequently, England risked losing the 'export race'. The economic argument calling for better design was joined by an aesthetic as well as morally based reaction against the rampant and indiscriminate use of ornamentation. As an example of poor design, critics lambasted the 'deceptive' three-dimensional, illusionistic patterns that decorated the two-dimensional surfaces of carpets and wallpapers.

- The report also recommended that the monopoly of the Royal Academy School should be broken. This resulted in the first Government School of Design in 1837 in Somerset House (the year the Royal Academy moved to Trafalgar Square). It was later called the South Kensington Art School and became the Royal College of Art in 1896. The early schools were a failure, few attended, there were restrictions and Academicians set out to prevent the students acquiring high art. Drawing from the human figure was encouraged and then banned again and again over the initial years.
- Design students wanted the opportunity to learn fine art as it paid much better. In 1851 only 1-2% of the population had an income of over £150 a year. One work of art could sell for several hundred guineas. The Royal Academy wanted to maintain its monopoly on teaching fine art and so controlling the market.
- To solve the problem of what was wrong with the Government School of Design William Dyce of Edinburgh was sent to study the schools of design in France and Germany. Among the critics of British design were the designer and educator Henry Cole (1808–1882), the artist Richard Redgrave (1804–1888), and the ornamentalist and theorist Owen Jones (1809–1874). With the support of Prince Albert (1819–1861), these three developed formal guidelines for a modern yet morally conceived design vocabulary.
- The French idea that fine arts, particularly life drawing, was central to the study of design, was introduced at the government Schools of Design (later the South Kensington Schools) but did not, in the end, hold sway.
- One of the key driving forces was Henry Cole and Cole was the driving force behind the Great Exhibition of 1851 when British design was put on show alongside art and manufacturing from all over the world. Henry Cole became superintendent of the Department of Practical Art which became part of the new South Kensington Museum, renamed the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1899.

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Crystal Palace from the northeast from Dickinson's *Comprehensive Pictures of the Great Exhibition of 1851-1854*

Crystal Palace from the northeast from Dickinson's *Comprehensive Pictures of the Great Exhibition of 1851-1854*

- 1851 and the Great Exhibition was the turning point for many aspects of design.
- The British designs on show were still **very poor** despite the Government Schools of design and were clearly far **inferior** to the **French and German** designs.
- **Henry Cole** was the driving force behind the exhibition working closely with Prince Albert. If problems arose Albert would say, "We need steam, get Cole".
- Cole was so successful that the exhibition even made a large profit and he made sure it was used to improve science and art in Britain. Land was purchased in South Kensington and the **South Kensington Museum** was built from 1857 to 1873, later **renamed** the **Victoria and Albert Museum in 1899** when the building we see today was started. The land, nicknamed '**Albertopolis**' was later used to build the Science Museum, the Natural History Museum and Imperial College.

## NOTES

- The '**Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations**' was held in The Crystal Palace in Hyde Park, London, from 1 May to 15 October 1851. The exhibition made a profit of £186,000.

- The architect of the current **Victoria and Albert Museum** was **Aston Webb** (1849-1930), President of the Royal Academy from 1919 to 1924 and architect of the present **Buckingham Palace** façade, the Queen Victoria memorial outside and **Admiralty Arch**.
- The **Natural History Museum** (formerly British Museum (Natural History)) was promoted by the palaeontologist **Richard Owen** and designed by **Alfred Waterhouse** (1830-1905) in his own idiosyncratic Romanesque style with terracotta tiles to resist the Victorian pollution. Waterhouse's brother was co-founder of Price Waterhouse now PriceWaterhouseCoopers.
- Cole also helped establish the National Art Training School (renamed the **Royal College of Art** in 1896).

## **REFERENCES**

See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great\\_Exhibition](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Exhibition)



Henry Cole (1808-1882) and John Callcott Horsley (1817-1903), the first Christmas card, 1843

Henry Cole (1808-1882), the first Christmas card, 1843

- **So who was Henry Cole** (1808-1882)? He is best known today as the inventor of the Christmas card and this is the first card he had designed.
- It was motivated by his dislike of the time consuming etiquette of writing letters at Christmas.
- The card had the greeting '**A Merry Christmas and A Happy New Year**' pre-printed inside. On the left '**feeding the hungry**' is illustrated and on the right '**clothing the naked**' (Matthew 25:34-36). It was a lithograph that was printed on 5" x 3" stiff card and hand-coloured.
- It was controversial as it shows **a child drinking a glass of wine**. Cole's cards sold for one shilling each and now sell for £6,000 to £9,000 but in 2001 one signed by Cole was sold at auction for £22,500. **Cole was involved with the introduction of the penny post and is said to have been the person who designed the first postage stamp, the Penny Black.**

## NOTES

- Cole was personally interested in industrial design, and under the pseudonym Felix Summerly designed a number of items which went into production, including a prize-winning teapot manufactured by Minton. As Felix Summerly, he also wrote a series of children's books.

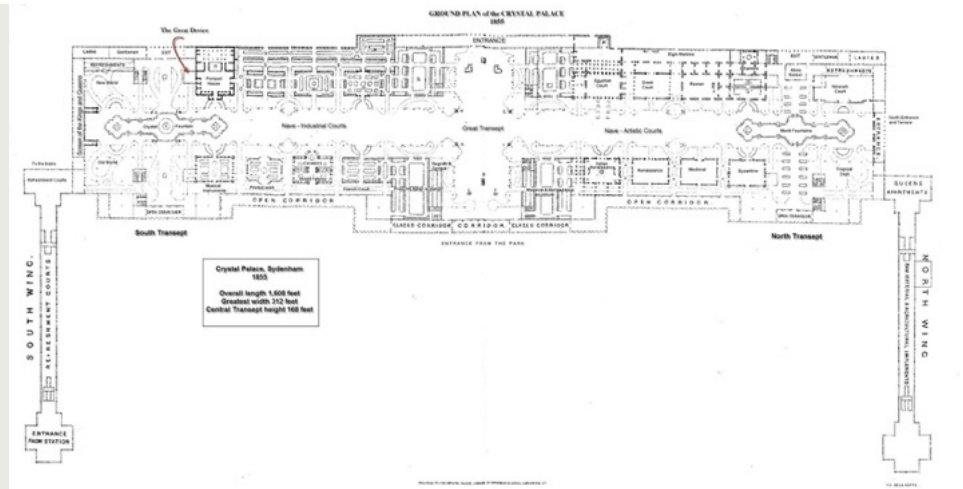
## JOHN CALLCOTT-HORSLEY (1817-1903)

- Academic painter and designer of the first Christmas card. Horsley had designed the Horsley envelope, a pre-paid device for sending letters before the uniform penny post was introduced throughout the UK in 1840.
- His sister Mary married Isambard Kingdom Brunel in 1836. He was taught at Dr Henry Sass's academy where he met Rossetti, Millais and W. P. Frith. He described Dr Sass as vain and untalented. He married Elvira Walter in 1846 and had three sons but his wife and all three sons died between 1852 and 1857. He remarried Rosamund Haden whose brother Frances Seymour Haden (1818-1910) married Whistler's half-sister. They had seven children and the first three sons went on to become an architect, artist and surgeon. He earned the nickname 'Clothes-Horsley' for his opposition to the use of nude life models. When, during the 1880s, the example of the French Salon began to affect the Academy exhibitors, and paintings of the nude became the fashion, he protested against the innovation, and his attitude caused Punch to give him the sobriquet of "Mr J. C(lothes) Horsley" (a pun on clothes horse).

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See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry\\_Cole](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Cole)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Callcott\\_Horsley](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Callcott_Horsley)



## The Great Exhibition

Plan of Crystal Palace in Hyde Park

Plan of Crystal Palace at Sydenham

- These two plans show the two different objectives of the Crystal Palace. In Hyde Park it was an international trade fair with areas devoted to each country enabling them to show off their chief exports.
- (CLICK) At Sydenham the Palace was rebuilt and increased in size and the exhibition was dedicated to entertainment and education. In Sydenham it had, for example, areas devoted to the major civilisations and their art.
- It is estimated that it was attended by six million people when the population of Britain was 21 million.
- All the great and the good came including **Charles Darwin, Karl Marx, Michael Faraday, Charlotte Brontë, Charles Dickens, Lewis Carroll, George Eliot, Alfred Tennyson, and William Makepeace Thackeray**. The only well-known person not to attend was the future Arts and Crafts founder **William Morris** (1834-1896), then a teenager, who later said he refused to attend on the grounds of good taste as the **British goods were so poorly designed**.






J. McNeven, *View of the Nave, Great Exhibition 1851, From the American Gallery*, 1851 (printed and published by Ackermann), colour lithograph, V&A

J. McNeven, *View of the Nave, Great Exhibition 1851, from the American Gallery*, 1851 (printed and published by Ackermann), colour lithograph, V&A

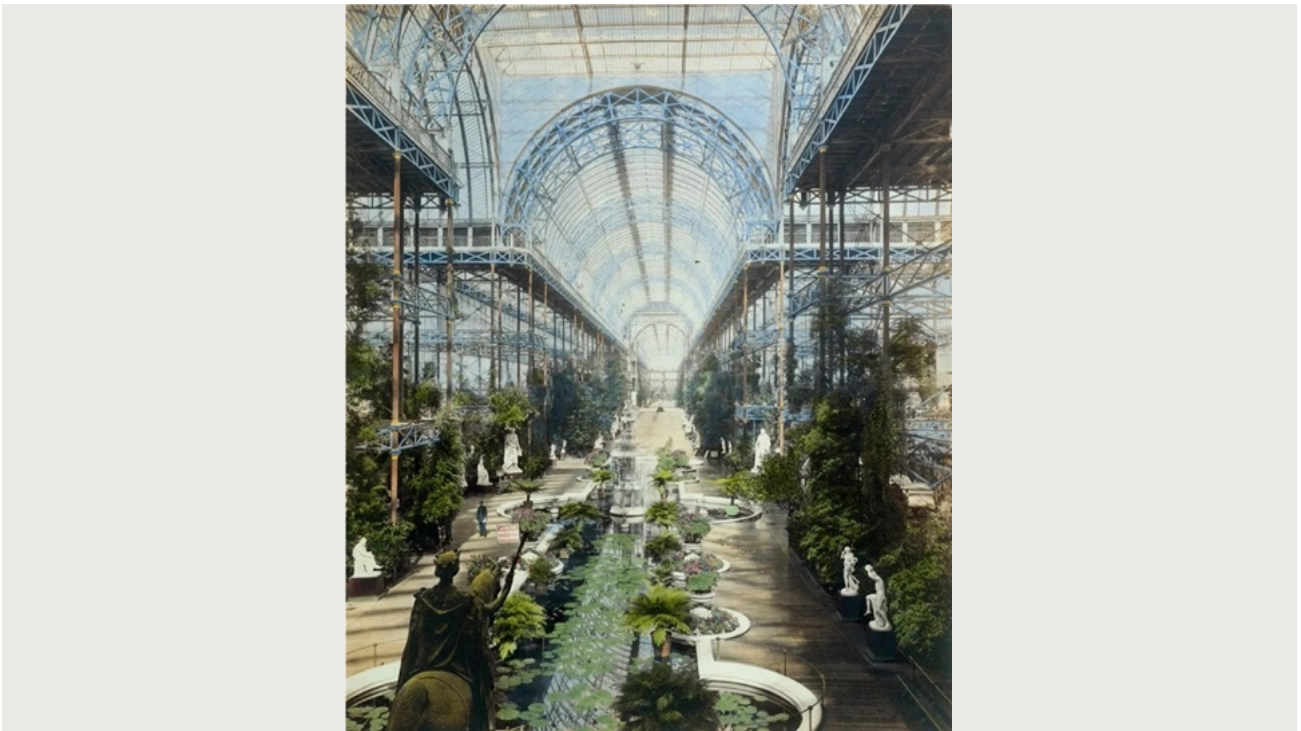
- This is the Great Exhibition at Hyde Park from the American Gallery. We know this is Hyde Park as the Palace has a flat roof.
- The curved rook is at Crystal Palace, an educational and entertainment pavilion with recreations of all the great civilisations including a Greek and Roman cast room.
- The bright colour scheme was the inspiration of **Owen Jones** who we will hear more about later. His simple yet radical paint scheme utilised only the primary colours: **blue, red and yellow**. The design generated much criticism and debate, yet Jones never lost confidence in his vision. The building eventually opened to much great acclaim. **Six million people** - three times the population of London at that time - visited the colossal iron and glass palace.



THE BRITISH DEPARTMENT .  VIEWED TOWARDS THE TRANSEPT .  
 J. McNeven, *The British Department viewed towards the transept*, 1851, Thomas, R. K. (chromographer), Ackermann (publisher), lithograph, coloured by hand, V&A

J. McNeven, *The British Department viewed towards the transept*, 1851, Thomas, R. K. (chromographer), Ackermann (publisher), lithograph, coloured by hand, V&A

- This is an interior view of the Great Exhibition in 1851 from the British department. The exhibits included contributions from around the country, with handmade works shown alongside manufactured objects. The products on display ranged from raw materials such as coal to elaborate decorative items.
- The Arts and Crafts style was partly a reaction against the style of many of the items shown in the Great Exhibition of 1851, which were **ornate, artificial** and ignored the qualities of the materials used.
- The art historian **Nikolaus Pevsner** has said that exhibits in the Great Exhibition showed 'ignorance of that basic need in creating patterns, the **integrity of the surface**' and '**vulgarity in detail**'.
- **Design reform began** with the organisers of the Exhibition itself, **Henry Cole** (1808–1882), **Owen Jones** (1809–1874), Matthew Digby Wyatt (1820–1877) and **Richard Redgrave** (1804–1888). Jones, for example, declared that "**Ornament ... must be secondary to the thing decorated**", that there must be "**fitness in the ornament to the thing ornamented**", and that wallpapers and carpets must **not have any patterns "suggestive of anything but a level or plain"**. These ideas were adopted by William Morris.
- Where a fabric or wallpaper in the Great Exhibition might be decorated with a natural motif made to look as real as possible.



The rebuilt Crystal Palace at Sydenham, rebuilt 1852-54, photograph c. 1900

- The Palace was rebuilt and extended at Sydenham in South London now known as Crystal Palace. The building had a very different function, it became a centre for entertainment and education with courts exhibiting and recreating ancient Egypt, Greek, Rome, the Italian Renaissance and so on all surrounded by greenery, cafes and restaurants.
- The building was never financially successful. While the original Palace cost £150,000 (equivalent to £17.5 million in 2021), the move to Sydenham cost £1,300,000 (£140 million in 2021) burdening the company with a debt it never repaid. In 1867 By 1866 its was partly destroyed by fire and by the 1890s it had deteriorated and became a downmarket attraction. In 1936 it burnt to the ground and the insurance was inadequate to rebuild it.

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[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Crystal\\_Palace](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Crystal_Palace)



Examples of wallpaper that were regarded as poor design by the Design Reform Movement.

- This is an example of **the poor design, critics lambasted the 'deceptive' three-dimensional**, illusionistic patterns that decorated the two-dimensional surfaces of carpets and wallpapers. Arbiters of taste complained that "**on the carpet vegetables are driven to a frenzy in their desire to be ornamental**" or that pictorial wallpaper patterns cause one to feel "**instinctively obliged to map out grass plots, gravel paths, and summer houses, like an involuntary landscape gardener.**"



Wallpaper with design of framed horse-racing scenes, about 1870-80



Nineteenth-century French scenic wallpaper

## HORSES AND FLOWER WALLPAPER

- V&A: Charles Dickens in his novel *Hard Times* (1854), in a scene by which a Government Inspector explains the principles of good taste to Gradgrind's class of school-children:

**'Let me ask you girls and boys, would you paper a room with representations of horses? ... Of course not ... Do you ever see horses walking up and down the sides of a room in reality - in fact? ... Of course not. Why, then, you are not to have, in any object of use or ornament what would be a contradiction in fact ... This is the new discovery. This is fact. This is taste.'**

- One of the children he addresses is **Sissy Jupe** who was raised in a circus family and is used to the sight of **horses around her at home**, and she plaintively defends **flower-patterned carpets** as '**pictures of what was very pretty and pleasant**'. Sissy spoke for many who would continue to buy wallpapers, carpets and fabrics adorned with '**florid and gaudy compositions ... imitative flowers and foliage rendered with the full force of their natural colours**', despite the best attempts of Cole and his associates to persuade them otherwise.
- In a famous passage, a visiting official asks Gradgrind's students "**Suppose you were going to carpet a room. Would you use a carpet having a representation of flowers upon it?**" The character **Sissy Jupe** replies, ingenuously, that she would because, "**If you please, sir, I am very fond of flowers.**"

***“And is that why you would put tables and chairs upon them, and have people walking over them with heavy boots?”***

***“It wouldn't hurt them, sir. They wouldn't crush and wither, if you please, sir. They would be the pictures of what was very pretty and pleasant, and I would fancy”*** – *“Ay, ay, ay! But you mustn't fancy,”* cried the gentleman, quite elated by coming so happily to his point. *“That's it! You are never to fancy”*. *“You are not, Cecilia Jupe,”* Thomas Gradgrind solemnly repeated, *“to do anything of that kind.”* *“Fact, fact, fact!”* said the gentleman. And *“Fact, fact, fact!”* repeated Thomas Gradgrind.

- Dickens very eloquently presents the conflict between the new design reform movement and the majority of people who continued to buy ‘very pretty’ flowers.



Thomas Allen (1831-1915, painter), Victor Etienne Simyan (1826- 1886, designer), vase, 1867, earthenware, painted in enamels and majolica glazes, Minton, Stoke-on-Trent, V&A



Christopher Dresser (1834- 1904), egg steamer with burner, Sheffield, 1884-1885, H. Stratford (maker), silver, with ebony handle, V&A

Thomas Allen (1831-1915, painter), Victor Etienne Simyan (1826- 1886, designer), vase, 1867, earthenware, painted in enamels and majolica glazes, Minton, Stoke-on-Trent, V&A

Christopher Dresser (1834- 1904), egg steamer with burner, Sheffield, 1884-1885, H. Stratford (maker), silver, with ebony handle, V&A

- The **Design Reform Movement** was a mid-Victorian campaign against the **excesses of florid, naturalistic ornamentation**.
- **A comparison of a conventional Victorian object for the home and a design by Christopher Dresser**. Although by the late 1850s, the Government Schools were encouraging the emulation of Italian Renaissance design, one former student of the system, **Christopher Dresser, a disciple of Owen Jones, adhered to the school's earlier tenets** and developed a design methodology that was visually as well as industrially progressive.
- The vase was made specifically for an international exhibition to demonstrate the technical and artistic superiority of their makers, **Minton & Co.** of Stoke-on-Trent. Objects of this size were acquired by public collections such as the V&A or by the most ambitious collectors with the grandest houses in which to display them. This vase is one of two made for the **Paris Exhibition of 1867**, each painted with a different scene. Still further variations were exhibited at the Paris Exhibition of 1878, where it was described as '**one of the noblest pieces ever produced**'.

- **Christopher Dresser** was a graduate of the Government School of Design at South Kensington, was one of the most talented designers working in Britain during the second half of the 19th-century. Unlike Ruskin or Morris, he fully accepted the implications of mechanical production, and was always more interested in design than craftsmanship. **In 1876 he made his first visit to Japan, which had a profound effect on him.** Many of his highly original shapes for metalwork were the result of his interest in mass production techniques combined with his concern for function and performance.
- Before I discuss the Design Reform Movement in more detail I want to touch on the Neo-Gothic movement as this also had an major influence on design...

## NOTES

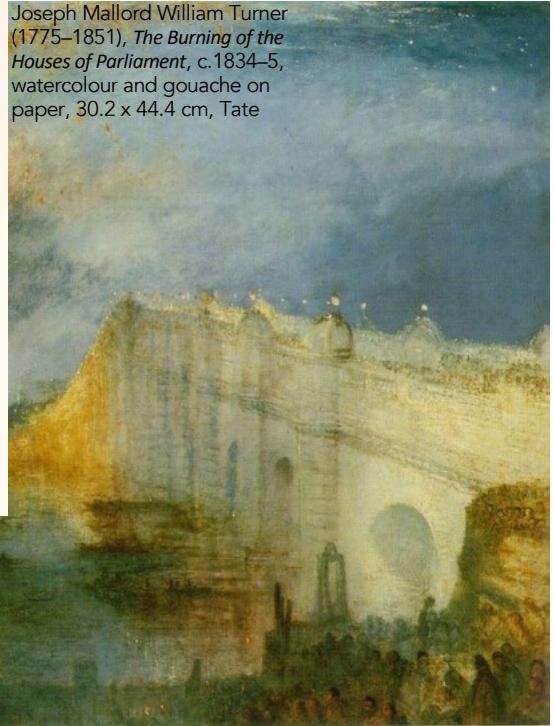
- The modeller of the vase was Victor Simyan (sometimes spelt Simian), a French sculptor who moved to Britain in about 1860. He founded his own workshop and designed for the pottery industry. The painter, Thomas Allen, was a local artist. As an apprentice at Minton's he studied at the Stoke-on-Trent School of Design from 1849. In 1852 he became one of the first students to be awarded a National Art Training Scholarship to the School of Design at Somerset House (the forerunner of the South Kensington Museum, later the V&A). He stayed with Minton's until 1875, when he left to join Wedgwood as chief designer.





J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851),  
*The Burning of the Houses of Lords  
and Commons, 16th October, 1834*,  
1834 or 1835, 92.1 x 123.2 cm,  
Philadelphia Museum of Art

Joseph Mallord William Turner  
(1775–1851), *The Burning of the  
Houses of Parliament*, c.1834–5,  
watercolour and gouache on  
paper, 30.2 x 44.4 cm, Tate



J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851), *The Burning of the Houses of Lords and Commons, 16th October, 1834*, 1834 or 1835, 92.1 x 123.2 cm, Philadelphia Museum of Art

Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775–1851), *The Burning of the Houses of Parliament*, c.1834–5, watercolour and gouache on paper, 30.2 x 44.4 cm, Tate

- In 1834 the Palace of Westminster burned to the ground with the exception of the 11th century (1097) Westminster Hall.
- Turner painted two oil paintings of the fire that broke out in the Palace of Westminster on the evening of 16 October 1834. Turner witnessed the fire from the south bank at Westminster and made sketches from different points, including possibly from a rented boat. The first painting was exhibited at the British Institution in February 1835 and shows the fire consuming the chamber of the House of Commons in St Stephens Hall. In the distance the towers of Westminster Abbey can be seen illuminated by the fire.
- The distorted perspective of Westminster Bridge intensify the drama. The next day *The Times* wrote 'Shortly before 7 o'clock last night the inhabitants of Westminster, and of the districts on the opposite bank of the river, were thrown into the utmost confusion and alarm by the sudden breaking out of one of the most terrific conflagrations that has been witnessed for many years past....The Houses of the Lords and Commons and the adjacent buildings were on fire.'
- Many saw this as divine retribution for the passing of the Reform Act of 1832 and the fortuitous destruction of the poor architecture of some extension

buildings by others. **The House of Lords had recently been rebuilt in a mixture of neo-Classical by Sir John Soane** and neo-Gothic by James Wyatt (1746-1813) and some saw the burning as God's displeasure with the resulting aesthetic mess.

- **Some thought the fire was an arson attempt but it was caused by the excessive burning of 'tallies'.** These are square hazelwood sticks notched to show amounts of tax paid or deposited and then split in half to record the transaction. The system went back to William the Conqueror. Two cartloads of tallies had accumulated and the Board of Works decided to burn them in stoves. The two workers assigned were overly enthusiastic and despite warnings from the housekeeper who told them that two tourists could not see the tapestries for the thick smoke, they continued to pile on the wood. They left at five o'clock and by six some oak panels had ignited. Within nine hours all the buildings except the Westminster Hall had been destroyed. Some of the destroyed buildings dated back to Edward the Confessor.
- Benjamin Robert Haydon wrote, **'The terrify burning ... from the bridge it was sublime ... The feeling among the people was extraordinary—jokes and radicalism universal.'**
- **Among the spectators were Charles Barry (1795-1860) who realised a new building would be required and Augustus Pugin (1812-1852) who rejoiced in the destruction of Soane's mixtures and Wyatt's heresies.**

### PALACE OF WESTMINSTER

- Burned down on 16 October 1844 because Richard Weobley ordered the tally sticks to be burned and two Irish labourers from the Metropolitan Board of Works, Joshua Cross and Patrick Furlong did not follow his orders to only burn a few at a time. Parliament used split tally sticks to collect taxes. A groove of various thicknesses was cut across the stick to represent the amount and the reason was written in ink. The stick was then split in two and one part formed the receipt.
- There was a competition for the design of the new building and it was rebuilt according to a design by Sir Charles Barry with Gothic Revival detailing by A.W.N. Pugin. Dickens deplored the cost but it has become one of the most familiar landmarks of London.



- The Palace of Westminster is a victory for Romanticism. Following intensive debate it was **decided to rebuild The Palace of Westminster in Neo-Gothic style** rather than Neo-classical. It was thought this was more true to the history of the country.
- Augustus Pugin (1812-1852) and Sir Charles Barry's (1795-1860) collaborative design for the Palace of Westminster uses the **Perpendicular Gothic style**, which was popular **during the 15th century**. Barry was a classical architect, but he was aided by the Gothic architect Augustus Pugin.
- **Westminster Hall, which was built in the 11th century and survived the fire of 1834, was incorporated in Barry's design.**
- Pugin was displeased with the result of the work, especially with the symmetrical layout designed by Barry; he famously remarked, 'All Grecian, sir; Tudor details on a classic body'. Neo-Gothic architecture was focused on **Romantic ideas that harked back to what was believed to be the creativity and individual free work of the medieval craftsman compared with the rigid symmetry of classical architecture.**

## NOTES

- The Palace of Westminster has three towers the largest of which is the Victoria Tower (renamed in tribute to Queen Victoria on her Diamond Jubilee) at 323 feet. At the north end is the more famous Elizabeth Tower (previously known as the Clock Tower or St. Stephens Tower, it was renamed in 2012 to celebrate

the Diamond Jubilee of Elizabeth II). It is commonly known as Big Ben and is 315/6 feet high. The clock was built by Edward John Dent and is accurate to a second. It has four 23 feet faces and the minute hand is 14 feet long. Elizabeth Tower was designed by Augustus Pugin and built after his death. The largest bell is officially called The Great Bell of Westminster and generally as Big Ben.

- In 1852 aged 40 Pugin was travelling by train when he suffered a complete breakdown from overwork and was unable to speak or recognise anyone. He lived in an asylum for four months and was taken home and recovered slightly but died the same year in Ramsgate. Some suggest he died from hyperthyroidism and others from syphilis. His death certificate says he died from 'convulsions followed by a coma'.



A.W.N. Pugin (1812-52), Wallpaper for the Palace of Westminster, 1847

- This is an example of one of Pugin's designs for the Palace of Westminster. Pugin had won the commission for the interior decoration in 1837.
- **He also deplored illusionistic designs and argued for flat patterns.**
- **Pugin was one of the first to promote 'honesty' in design** and ornament thus introducing **morality into design** and ornamentation.

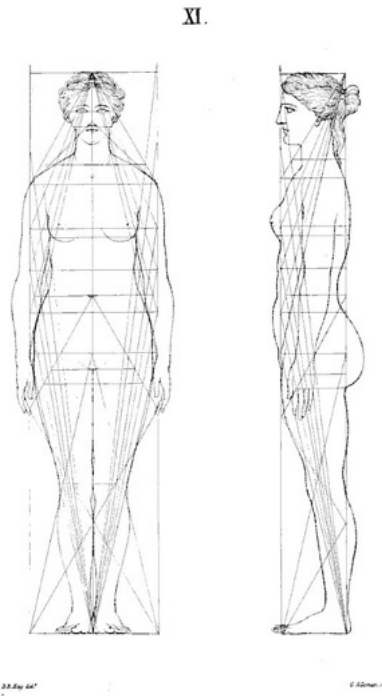
### NOTES

- In Britain, paper printed with patterns has been used for decorating walls since the 16th century. By the late 19th century wallpapers were widely used by all classes, in homes and also in public buildings.
- The crowned portcullis is the symbol for the Palace, and the crowned flower is the Tudor rose, a Royal emblem. The letters 'V' and 'R' stand for Victoria Regina - Queen Victoria. The design was intended to symbolise the authority of Crown and Parliament.

### REFERENCES

See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pugin>

David Ramsay Hay, *The Science of Beauty as Developed in Nature and Applied in Art*, (Edinburgh, William Blackwood, 1856), Plate XI

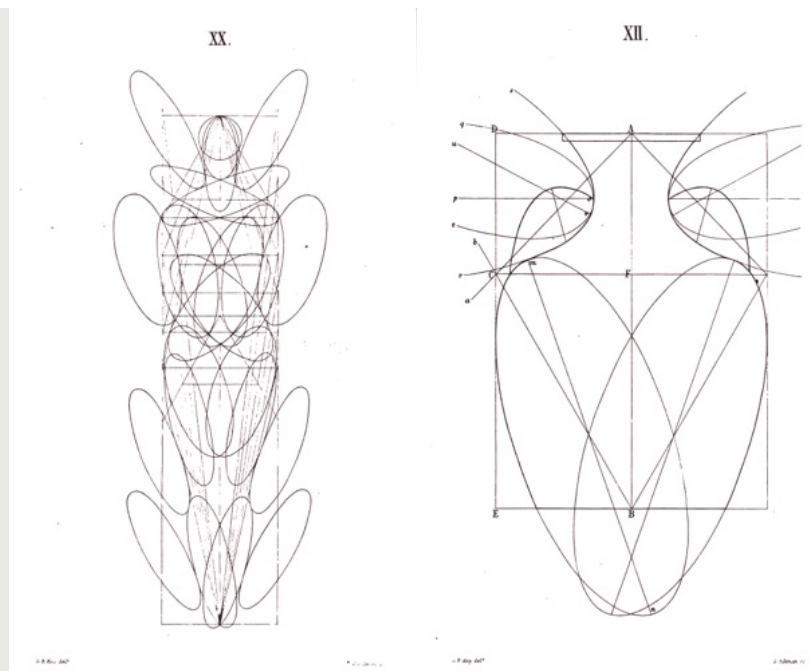


David Ramsay Hay, *Science of Beauty as Developed in Nature and Applied in Art*, Edinburgh, William Blackwood, 1856, Plate XI

## DESIGN REFORM MOVEMENT

- David Ramsay Hay wrote a book called ***The Science of Beauty as Developed in Nature and Applied in Art***. Transformed the highest ideals of beauty from the human form to stylized plant forms based on ideal 'types' or archetypes.
- The German philosopher **Johann Wolfgang von Goethe** (1749-1832) was one of the first to study the underlying forms and processes of nature that related a multitude of plant structures with the form of the leaf. **In France, Victor Cousin** (1792-1867) thought that all form in nature is symbolic. Nature is beautiful because it expresses the Divine intellect and so the underlying forms of nature are ideas in the mind of God.
- In England **Joshua Reynolds** in his *Discourses* maintained that **the most perfect forms of the human figure are ideal** and are superior to any individual form. Science had rediscovered or corroborated the ancient Greeks' use of beautiful proportion in art.
- **David Ramsay Hay** (1798-1866) was a **Scottish interior designer who explicitly used Cousin's aesthetics to ornament**. Hay's defined aesthetics as the 'science of beauty' whose principle element was **proportion and the ratios between angles** that he calculated and equated with the intervals of the musical scale.
- Hay developed a mathematical theory of beauty of both colour and form and

he used this to **transform the real using the rules of regularity (the ideal) and variety**. Whereas the French and German philosophers saw beauty in the ideal British philosophers found beauty in the modification of the real by the ideal.



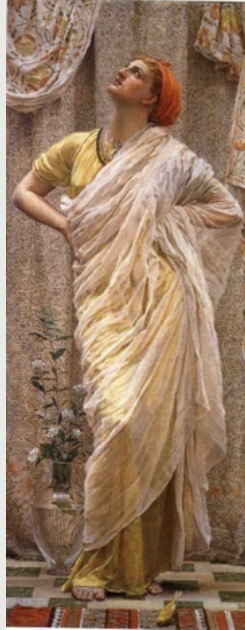
David Ramsay Hay, *Science of Beauty as Developed in Nature and Applied in Art*, (Edinburgh, William Blackwood, 1856), Plates XX and XII

- In his books Hay generalised these construction lines in order to **link the human body with buildings, vases and other beautiful objects** in order to show a **common underlying logic** based on proportions that explained their beauty.





Albert Moore, *Nude Figure Study for 'Birds'*, 1878, Charcoal on paper, 88.2 x 38.9 cm, Victoria and Albert Museum, London



Albert Moore, *Birds*, 1878, oil on canvas, 155.4 x 63.3 cm, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery



James McNeill Whistler (1834–1903), *Symphony in White, No. 1: The White Girl*, 1863, 213 x 107.9 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington

James McNeill Whistler (1834–1903), *Symphony in White, No. 1: The White Girl*, 1863, 213 x 107.9 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington

- Albert Moore is an artist associated with the Aesthetic Movement and he employed a rigorous approach to composition and colour. Here we see his full-size sketch marked up with construction lines linking the elements of the design and the final painting. He was applying a scientific approach with calculated proportions to the production of fine.
- (CLICK) His paintings can be seen as part way between design as described by David Ramsay Hay and the work of Aesthetic painters such as his friend James Whistler.

## **REFERENCES**

- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert\\_Joseph\\_Moore](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Joseph_Moore)
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symphony\\_in\\_White,\\_No.\\_1:\\_The\\_White\\_Girl](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symphony_in_White,_No._1:_The_White_Girl)

James Abbott McNeill Whistler  
(1834-1903), *Nocturne in Black and  
Gold The Falling Rocket*, c. 1875,  
Detroit Institute of Arts



James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), *Nocturne in Black and Gold The Falling Rocket*, c. 1875, Detroit Institute of Arts

### **ABSTRACTION IN BOTH FINE ART AND DECORATIVE ART**

- A reminder that Whistler and the Aesthetic Movement were **removing content, that is any overt subject matter, from fine art painting.**
- **The applied or decorative arts had a lower status as they lacked human content and meaning but now fine art was rejecting meaning in favour of purely formal elements such as shape and colour.** This movement towards abstraction of course became a major force in the early part of the twentieth century.
- At the same time the applied arts were rejecting naturalism and by 1890 taste had swung towards stylised ornament.

### **REFERENCES**

See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James\\_Abbott\\_McNeill\\_Whistler](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Abbott_McNeill_Whistler)

Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851), *Study of a plaster cast of The Belvedere Torso*, 1789-93, black, red and white chalks, V&A



Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851), *Study of a plaster cast of The Belvedere Torso*, 1789-93, black, red and white chalks, V&A

### THE TRAINING PROGRAMME AT THE ROYAL ACADEMY SCHOOL

- Once the Schools of Design could train their students in drawing they worked in the **tradition of the Royal Academy** that had used a similar training technique from the time the Academy was founded. The discipline was based on not allowing the student to progress until that had demonstrated competence at each step.
- Students at the Royal Academy Schools began their training in the '**Antique Academy**' by copying from plaster casts of classical sculpture. These works were considered to represent the highest point of artistic achievement. The Belvedere Torso, cast from the classical fragment in the Vatican Museums, was an essential model for aspiring artists. Students were not allowed to progress to the life class until they had mastered drawing the plaster cast.
- As the 19th century progressed antique sculptures was gradually replaced by depictions of un-idealised human figures. Stylistically, the earlier insistence on a high level of technical finish gave way to a more spontaneous, sketchy kind of drawing.



Maria Brooks (active 1868-1890), *Study of a plaster cast of The Borghese Gladiator*, black chalk, V&A

Maria Brooks (active 1868-1890), *Study of a plaster cast of The Borghese Gladiator*, black chalk, V&A

### THE TRAINING PROGRAMME AT THE SCHOOLS OF DESIGN

- **The first year the Government Schools of Design opened was a disaster and the Government appointed William Dyce (1806-1864)** to visit France and Germany to enquire into design education there and prepare a report.
- **In 1852 the Government placed the School under the control of Henry Cole**, an extremely dynamic figure with some training as a painter. Cole made the young painter **Richard Redgrave (1804-1888)** responsible for the **national system**, and appointed Richard Burchett (1815-1875) Headmaster of the London School.
- **Redgrave, drawing on Dyce's ideas, and propelled by Cole, set out the 'South Kensington system'**, a highly specific syllabus for the teaching of art, which was to be **dominant in the UK, and other English-speaking countries**, at least until the end of the century, and not to entirely vanish until the 1930s.
- In the 1850's the 'South Kensington System' became standardised on 23 stages of learning
  - Copying from reproductions
  - Copying from casts
  - Drawing from observation

- Drawing from nature (included a small amount of drawing the nude at Stage 13 as it was considered potentially morally harmful)
- Only from Stage 13 might students use media other than pencils and then under strict guidance
- By the 1860s many British students went to study in Paris but found the French students worked much harder. It has been suggested that this alone helped raise the professionalism of British art.
- **Maria Brooks** (active 1868-90) **student at the Department of Science and Art Schools** *Study of a plaster cast of The Borghese Gladiator* (1872). The schools run by the Department of Science and Art became notorious for their insistence on a **laborious drawing technique**. Painstaking cross-hatching and minute stippling meant that a drawing like this **could take months to complete. Although women were excluded from the Royal Academy, they were permitted to study at the government-run schools.**

## NOTES

- Later in the century the education programme defined by Richard Redgrave was standardised across the country.
- Drawing was limited to drawing the cast and the approach was meticulous. In order to win a prize a student had to spend literally months, in one case nine months, on a single drawing, stippling with a finely sharpened chalk minute areas at a time. The student started by spending about two weeks, six hours a day minutely measuring the cast with tape measure and plumb line. This was followed by covering the drawing paper with tracing paper which was exposed one square inch at a time. The drawing of one square inch could take a day or more.
- As soon as the Government Schools of Design were founded The Royal Academy tried to create a distance between their School and the Schools of Design. The principal way this was done was to argue that the Schools of Design should not offer live drawing classes. Over the years life drawing was encouraged and banned alternately at the Schools of Design.
- The distinction between the two schools was also class based. The Schools of Design were for working class people and life drawing was thought to be inappropriate for the working class as they would be unable to distinguish between an artistic nude and a naked body.



Richard Redgrave (1804-1888), wallpaper design, 1849

Richard Redgrave (1804-1888), wallpaper design, 1849

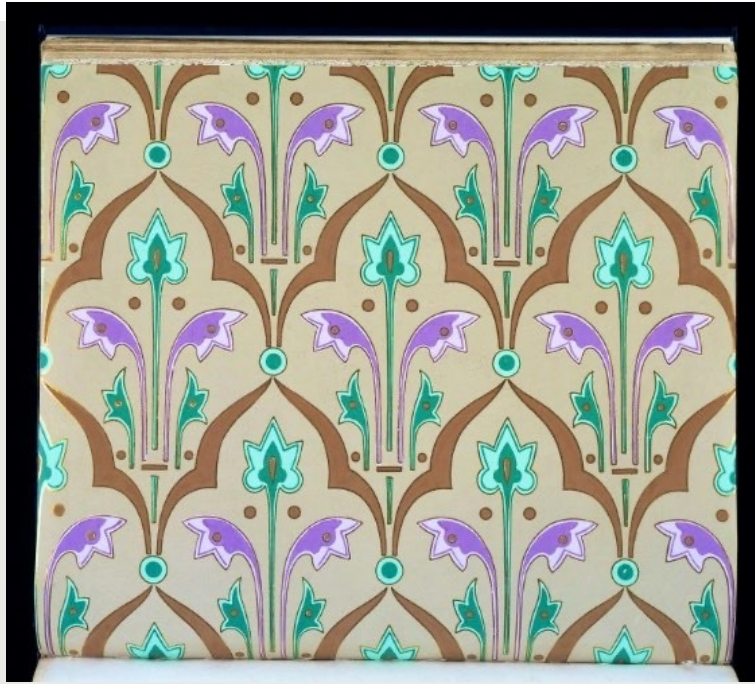
- **Richard Redgrave** was a well known and successful painter and a designer and a teacher at the School of Design in London. He was influential in the design reform movement, a radical movement to fundamentally change the types of design used in Britain. **This wallpaper design pre-dates William Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement** and had the same aim, which was to replace the garish and brightly coloured wallpapers, fabrics and carpets using realistic flowers and landscape designs.

## **REFERENCES**

See V&A article on wallpaper design

<http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/w/wallpaper-design-reform/>

See <http://thetextileblog.blogspot.com/2010/12/wallpaper-design-by-richard-redgrave.html>



Owen Jones (1809-1874), Wallpaper with formalised floral motif, Owen Jones, mid-19th century

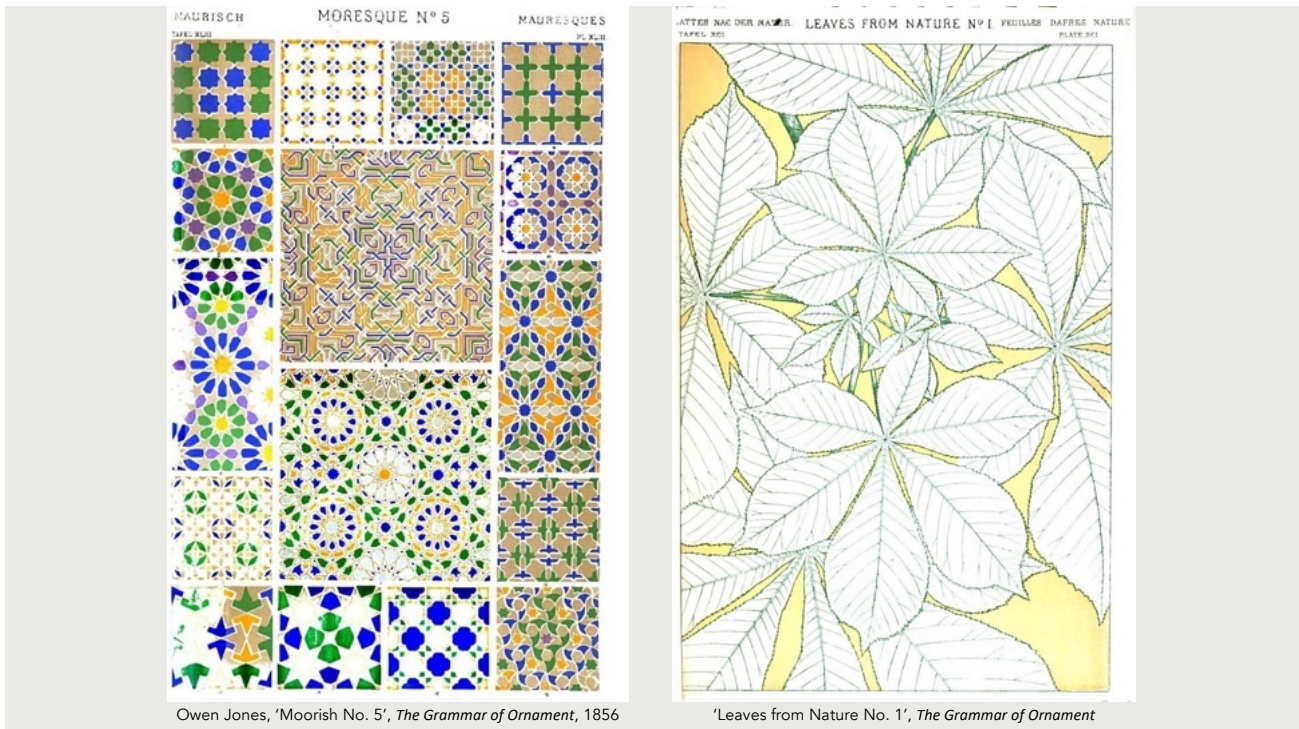
Owen Jones (1809-1874), Wallpaper with formalised floral motif, Owen Jones, mid-19th century

- Another famous artist that helped found the Design Reform Movement was **Owen Jones**, an architect, designer and authority on historic pattern and ornament who had begun to formulate rational and reforming theories in the course of his travels in the 1830s and 1840s. As a young architect, Owen Jones was profoundly **influenced by his travels** and observations in Italy, Greece, Egypt, Turkey and Spain (notably the Alhambra).
- He particularly admired **Greek, Egyptian and Islamic (or Moorish) motifs**, and adapted them into his own architectural schemes and designs for wallpaper which went into production with various manufacturers from the early 1850s. He did not visit India and the Indian design are based on what he saw at the Great Exhibition of 1851.
- The fruits of his researches were published as ***The Grammar of Ornament*** (1856), an important source or pattern book for fellow designers of his own and succeeding generations.
- Owen Jones was responsible for the School of Design's teaching collection which was later to form the basis of the South Kensington Museum, later renamed the **Victoria & Albert Museum**. Cole was the first director of the South Kensington Museum and he asked Jones to design the galleries known as the 'Oriental Courts'. Jones was assisted by his most famous protégé, Christopher Dresser.

## **REFERENCES**

See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Owen\\_Jones\\_\(architect\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Owen_Jones_(architect))





Owen Jones, 'Moorish No. 5', *The Grammar of Ornament*, 1856

Owen Jones, 'Leaves from Nature No. 1', *The Grammar of Ornament*, 1856

- *The Grammar of Ornament* became the pattern book for designers.
- Owen Jones collected and reinterpreted designs **from all over the world – Greek, Celtic, Moorish, Egyptian, Persian and particularly Islamic art.**
- The plates for the '**Savage Tribes**' chapter were also important in that it was the first time that such images had been published at a time when 'primitive' art and ornament was seen as backward and uncivilised. Jones was the first architect to consider the ornament of undeveloped nations worthy of study'.
- The book is prefaced by **thirty-seven general principles** in the arrangement of form and colour in architecture and the decorative arts'.
  - 'Proposition 1: The Decorative Arts arise from, and should properly be attendant upon, Architecture.' Indicating that ornament should grow out of, and not compete with, architecture, one of Jones's key principles, and a view which he shared with the influential architect and designer A.W.N. Pugin
  - 'Proposition 8: All ornament should be based upon a geometrical construction.' Jones was particularly influenced by Islamic art from the Alhambra.
  - 'Proposition 11: In surface decoration all lines should flow out of a parent stem. Every ornament, however distant, should be traced to its

branch and root. Oriental practice.' As in the veins of a leaf in nature. This feature is particularly found in Arabic and Islamic art, and is known as 'arabesque'. A curved line should break away gradually from another curved line or a straight line, rather than in an abrupt fashion which would disrupt the repose of the eye.

- 'Proposition 13: Flowers or other natural objects should not be used as ornaments, but conventional representations founded upon them sufficiently suggestive to convey the intended image to the mind, without destroying the unity of the object they are employed to decorate
- **His publications and ideas were very influential to many artists, designers and architects both in England and abroad, including Christopher Dresser, William Morris, and later, the architects Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier.** Jones also contributed indirectly to the Arts and Crafts, Art Nouveau and Aesthetic art movements.
- However, Jones had a **number of critics**, particularly the eminent writer and **art critic John Ruskin** who dismissed Jones's principles as the 'dregs of corrupted knowledge'. The ideas of Jones and Ruskin were frequently at odds with one another. In particular, **Ruskin's ideas favoured historicism, the revival of historic styles, especially the Gothic style**, whereas Jones saw the reinstatement of **Gothic as adopting a 'galvanized corpse'**, inappropriate for the modern industrial age.

Christopher Dresser (1834-1904), 'Leaves and Flowers from Nature, No.8', *Grammar of Ornament*, 1856



Christopher Dresser (1834-1904), 'Leaves and Flowers from Nature, No.8', *Grammar of Ornament*, 1856

- One of the pages in Jones's *Grammar of Ornament* was by **Christopher Dresser** (1834-1904). This style of design was known as '**Art Botany**'.
- **Christopher Dresser was Owen Jones's most famous disciple**, and the most successful graduate from the School of Design. An **expert in botany**, he contributed plant studies to Jones's seminal design sourcebook. Hugely influenced by Jones's design theories and his search for new sources, Dresser himself looked to **Japanese design principles** for guidance.

### **CHRISTOPHER DRESSER**

- Christopher Dresser (1834-1904) was a designer and design theorist and one of the most important designers of the Aesthetic Movement and a major contributor to the Anglo-Japanese or Modern English style. Arguably he was Europe's first industrial designer in the modern sense. He had a long lasting influence in England and abroad. He was born in Glasgow of a Yorkshire family and attended the School of Design in Somerset House when he was 13. He specialised in design and botany and wrote a number of articles and in 1850 he was awarded a doctorate from the University of Jena, Germany for his books *Rudiments of Botany* (1859) and *Unity in Variety* (1859).
- His design work included carpets, ceramics, furniture, glass, graphics, metalwork, including silver and electroplate, and textiles printed and woven.

He claimed to have designed 'as much as any man' at the 1862 International Exhibition London.

- In 1876 he lectured in America and later that year and 1877 he travelled about 2,000 miles through Japan recording his impressions in a book. He was received by the Emperor as a representative of the South Kensington Museum and all doors were opened to him.



Christopher Dresser (1834-1904), *Teapot*, c. 1870

Christopher Dresser (1834-1904), *Teapot*, c. 1870

- The leading designer of the Design Reform Movement was **Christopher Dresser who has been described as the father of industrial design.**
- **Dresser set the scene for the Arts and Crafts Movement** but their agendas were different. **Dresser was designing for industrial production**, William Morris believed all goods should be handmade.
- **This teapot by Dresser is 144 years old and it still looks modern.** Some of his design were so innovative at the time that the manufacturer refused to make them as they thought they would not sell.
- **New ideas about health, hygiene, and design reform also helped shape the Aesthetic movement** from the 1860s through the 1880s. Edward William Godwin (1833–1886), one of the originators of the movement, deplored "fluff and dust ... two of the great enemies of life" and designed innovative furniture without excessive carving that could also be readily moved for easy cleaning.

### **DESIGN REFORM MOVEMENT**

- The mission of the Government Schools of Design was to instil three basic principles:
  - first, that decoration is secondary to form;
  - second, that form is dictated by function and the materials used; and
  - third, that design should derive from historical English and non-Western

ornament as well as plant and animal sources, distilled into simple, linear motifs.

- Although by the late 1850s, the Government Schools were encouraging the emulation of Italian Renaissance design, one former student of the system, Christopher Dresser, a disciple of Owen Jones, adhered to the school's earlier tenets and developed a design methodology that was visually as well as industrially progressive and would influence twentieth-century design.
- The new design philosophy was partly to do with cleanliness. Germs had been recently discovered and cholera epidemics plagued the century. Bedbugs, which lived in wood bedsteads, walls, and floors, were common to all classes, including the aristocracy, and industrial soot soiled the interiors of urban homes. Design reformers attempted to help a new and rapidly growing generation of middle-class homemakers create artistic yet healthy homes. Among the many advice manuals that were written in the second half of the century, Charles Locke Eastlake's highly influential *Hints on Household Taste* (1868) was widely read throughout England as well as in the United States.

### **CHRISTOPHER DRESSER**

- Dresser was a designer and design theorist, now widely known as one of the first and most important, independent, designers and was a pivotal figure in the Aesthetic Movement, and a major contributor to the allied Anglo-Japanese or Modern English style; both originated in England and had long lasting international influence.
- Dresser was born in Glasgow and began attending the Government School of Design, Somerset House, London aged 13. He took botany as his specialization and lectured on a new subject called Art Botany. He was awarded a doctorate for his work by the university of Jena in 1850.
- From 1850 his design work widened to include carpets, ceramics, furniture, glass, graphics, metalwork, including silver and electroplate, and textiles printed and woven. He claimed to have designed 'as much as any man' at the International Exhibition London 1862.
- As early as 1865 the *Building News* reported that in the early part of his career he had been active as a designer of wallpapers, textiles and carpets thus the most active revolutioniser in the decorative art of the day. He wrote several books on design and ornament, including *The Art of*

Decorative Design (1862), The Development of Ornamental Art in the International Exhibition (1862), and Principles of Design (1873) which was addressed in the preface to 'working men'.

- In 1899 The Studio magazine found it was possible to quote this book 'page after page and not find a line, scarcely a word, that would not be endorsed by the most critical member of the Arts and Crafts Association today.' In effect Dresser set the agenda adopted by the Arts and Crafts movement at a later date.
- In 1873 he was requested by the American Government to write a report on the design of household goods. En route for Japan in 1876 he delivered a series of three lectures in the Philadelphia Museum and School of Industrial Art and supervised the manufacture of wallpapers to his design for Wilson Fennimore. He was commissioned by Messrs Tiffany of New York to form a collection, whilst in Japan, of art objects both old and new that should illustrate the manufactures of that country.
- In four months in 1876/1877 Dresser travelled about 2000 miles in Japan, recording his impressions in Japan, its Architecture, Art and Art-Manufactures. He represented the South Kensington Museum whilst in Japan, and was received at court by the Emperor, who ordered Dresser to be treated as a guest of the nation – all doors were open to him. He was requested by the Japanese Government to write a report on 'Trade with Europe'. His pioneering study of Japanese art is evident in much of his work which is considered typical of the Anglo-Japanese style.
- "Born in Glasgow, Scotland, to English parents in 1834, Dresser studied from the age of thirteen at the Government School of Design in London under the influence of leading design reformers such as Richard Redgrave (1804–1888), Henry Cole (1808–1882), Owen Jones, and Matthew Digby Wyatt (1820–1877). During his studies, Dresser was exposed to the new scientific discipline of botany and in 1856 contributed a botanical plate to Owen Jones' celebrated publication The Grammar of Ornament. Continuing to focus on botany, Dresser lectured at the women's School of Design from 1854 and published papers and books on the subject. In 1859, he received a doctorate in absentia in the field from the University of Jena, Germany. He was elected a Fellow of the Edinburgh Botanical Society in 1860 and a Fellow of the Linnean Society a year later."  
(Metropolitan Museum of Art)

## **REFERENCES**

See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christopher\\_Dresser](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christopher_Dresser)





Christopher Dresser objects at the V&A Museum

## Christopher Dresser objects at the V&A Museum

### Transcript:

- I'm Tom Dixon, I'm Head of Design at Habitat, I spend a lot of time with designers commissioning designs, I'm also a practising designer and manufacturer. Part of the reason I find these pieces appealing is I myself tend to take influences from **a variety of eclectic sources and that's what Christopher Dresser has achieved**. What we have here is somebody who's **interested in everything**, he's interested in engineering, he's interested in design, he's interested in decoration and many cultures and it's all reflected within the work. **I mean the chair, I can spot maybe five or six influences** that go from classical to tribal. Well I like the fact that it's got decorative elements, but they're very much incorporated into the structure, I mean, they come at points where there's a change in direction or a joint and they're extremely restrained for the time.
- To the left of the chair you see an **earthenware set of one jug and two cups** that are sitting on their own tray. Now people, you know, who are designing these days are almost embarrassed of decoration, what's quite nice here is that it's **almost like it could be functional**, it comes at the point where he'd probably place your hands, and they're very nicely proportioned and they look like it could even pour properly. Directly below the jug and cup set we find **a very heroic vase like object**, I mean, here's an object that is very hard to tell **whether it's contemporary or, you know, five hundred years old**, so there's

something that's very successful about this which is its timelessness. I feel that really, with somebody who's got so much knowledge and so much interest in various styles, I'd find him very useful in-house at Habitat today.

Museum no. C.59-1980

### **REFERENCES**

<https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O8097/jug-dresser-christopher/>



Christopher Dresser (1834–1904), Pitcher, 1879–82, earthenware, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

- Dresser, like his contemporary William Morris, strove to produce **affordable, functional, and well-designed domestic objects**. Unlike Morris, however, he recognized the **benefits of the Industrial Revolution** and designed specifically for the **growing consumer market**. Part of Dresser's success came from his ability to produce designs for a wide range of merchandise, whereas **Morris** and his colleagues sought to produce only **handcrafted pieces**.

### **ARTS & CRAFTS MOVEMENT**

- In contrast to the progressive approach of the Government Schools of Design, the Arts and Crafts movement **rejected modernity and industry**. The movement was founded by the socialist William Morris (1834–1896) in an attempt to reclaim the preindustrial spirit of medieval English society. It was rooted in the teachings of the designer August Welby Northmore Pugin (1812–1852) and John Ruskin (1819–1900), perhaps the greatest art critic and theorist of the nineteenth century. Following the ideas that a happy worker made beautiful things regardless of ability, and that good, moral design could only come from a good and moral society
- That leads us neatly on the **William Morris**, the **central figure** of the **Arts and Crafts Movement ...**



# THE ARTS & CRAFTS MOVEMENT

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William Morris, photograph, Frederick Hollyer, 1884, © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

- Part 2 of the talk on the Arts & Crafts Movement is about William Morris, shown here. He is the artist most closely associated with the Arts & Crafts Movement in the public's eye.