

The Arts and Crafts Movement as Cultural Catalyst

Note: This lecture is linked thematically to the lectures on National Romanticism and the Art Nouveau, as well as to the lectures to come on the Garden City movement and the Factory Aesthetic.

Arts and Crafts movement as an international movement with English roots; reawakened attention to native traditions, working of materials, and inspiration from nature and the vernacular past. Arts and Crafts movement also has important implications for birth of “industrial design” in twentieth century, as we will see. William Morris and the rise of the Arts and Crafts movement as represented by the **Red House**, by Philip Webb (Interiors by Morris, Edward Burne Jones, and others), 1859-1860, Bexley Heath (outside London) in England. Red brick as native material, picturesque massing as direct expression of functionally conceived interior plan; house meant to evoke and exude “Englishness” in an emergent domestic ideal anchored in native vernacular and Gothic traditions. Arts and Crafts movement and the wider application to domestic architecture – a Ruskinian, anti-classical ideal. Morris inspires Art Workers' Guild, 1884, where “artists and craftsmen sit at a common table.” Craft techniques rediscovered for increased artistry, quality, and independence of expression in the face of perceived corruptions of industrial manufacturing and mass production. Artist’s involvement in all aspects of crafts and interior/architectural design; The Arts and Crafts as an embodiment of the approach known as the “total work of art” (“**Gesamtkunstwerk**”) involving architecture and all the arts à la Ruskin, who described architecture as the “Mother of All the Arts.”

The A + C movement generally as a variety of highly individual responses to modernity and modernization; individuals working in all aspects of interior furnishing, decorative art, and architecture. Example: **Charles Robert Ashbee, Guild and School of Handicraft**, 1880s, East End of London, example of furniture (writing cabinet, 1900 and silver/glass decanter, 1899. Guild as communal living arrangement for training in art and life – a “social cell” for community and crafts production. Ashbee’s gradualist socialism, as against Morris’s call for revolution from below. Exceptional quality of Ashbee’s designs and production inspires Josef Hoffmann in Vienna, who founds the Vienna Workshops (Wiener Werkstaette) in 1902.

CFA Voysey **Orchard**, 1890, outside London, published in **The Studio**, the key journal of the Arts and Crafts Movement in England beginning in 1890 and the designed informality and simplicity of arts and crafts living – anticipates unornamented, hygienic emphasis of 1920s, although Voysey maintained that he was a traditionalist to the end. Voysey produces dozens of stripped down, simplified rustic northern European and English houses, with steep roofs, half timbering, buttresses; inspired by old English villages and picturesque ensembles like the 17th-century **Arlington Row** in Bibury, the Cotswolds, England (no architect), and by romantic rediscovery of English countryside, natural forms and plants, native folk tales and myths. The importance of crafted local materials as symbols of nationality and rootedness – these are significant to the Arts and Crafts movement, and will reappear in our study of National Romanticism.

International influences on the Arts and Crafts: Japanese prints, art, and craft following the Meiji Restoration of 1869 opens Europe to exciting new possibilities for depiction and making. Artistically crafted objects and the “art” of building and furnishing a home – in part a response to poorly designed and executed English products at the Crystal Palace Exhibition in London, 1851. Examples: Christopher **Dresser**, teapot of silver plated steel and ebony, 1879; Louis Comfort **Tiffany**, “Wisteria” lamp, copper, stained glass, bronze base, 1900. Barry Parker and Raymond Unwin, *The Art of Building a Home*, 1901, with example of living room illustration.

Richard Norman Shaw, **Leyes Wood in Sussex**, 1869; **Bedford Park** by London, 1875+.

Charles Rennie Mackintosh with Margaret Macdonald, **Hill House**, Glasgow, Scotland, 1902-1903, and the modern reinterpretation of Scottish vernacular forms.

In U.S., importance of Gustav Stickley’s *Craftsman* magazine (from 1901-1916, a counterpart to Britain’s *Studio* magazine) and Andrew J. Downing’s book, *The Architecture of Country Houses* of 1850; e.g., “**Cottage Villa**.” Also debts to Beaux-Arts-trained Henry H. Richardson (1838-1886), e.g., Richardson’s **Watts Sherman House** in Newport of 1875. Richardson designs throughout New England, then Midwest, in variety of historical styles which we will see later.

