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A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE  
**AMERICAN ARTS & CRAFTS  
MOVEMENT**

1887-1930

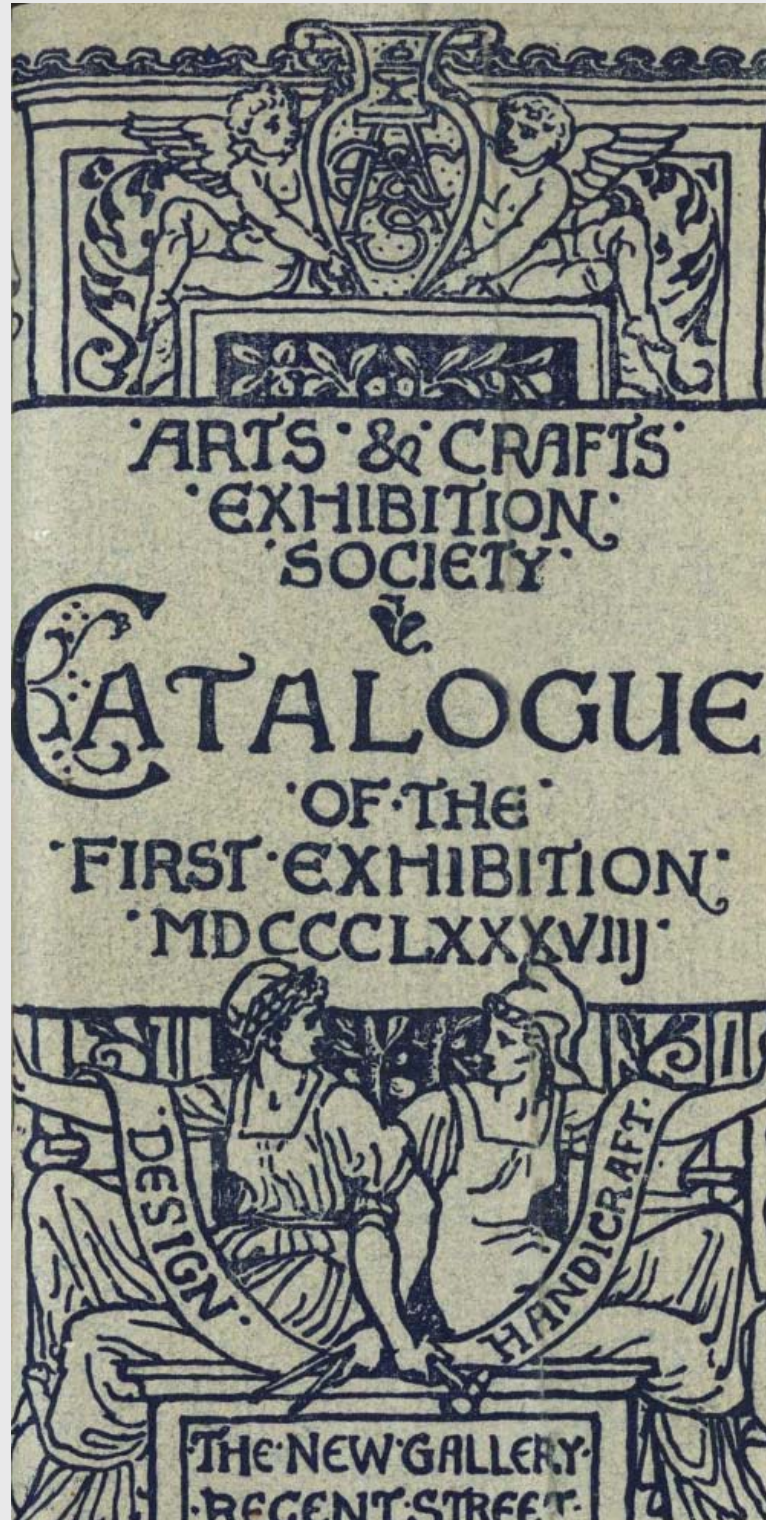
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THOMAS MAGOULIS AND DAWN KRAUSE

TWO RED ROSES FOUNDATION • PALM HARBOR, FLORIDA



Cover of the catalogue for the London Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society's First Exhibition, 1888. Photo courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. The formulation "Arts and Crafts" was first introduced only in 1888, in conjunction with the founding of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society in London.

## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE AMERICAN ARTS AND CRAFTS MOVEMENT

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**The** purpose of this essay is to provide the reader with a brief history and background on the American Arts and Crafts movement, the artists, objects, and enterprises that fueled it. It is not meant to be a scholarly treatise but more an introduction for beginners and the curious. It is our hope that as you read and begin to get a sense of the sweeping scope and dramatic impact the movement's philosophy had on design and the craftsmanship evident in the works produced, that you will also gain an awareness and appreciation of the Two Red Roses Foundation's decorative arts collection. The TRRF collection—believed to be among the most complete and important in the world—will be displayed in the Museum of the American Arts and Crafts Movement [MAACM] to be preserved, interpreted, and enjoyed by museum visitors in the future.



*The Wood Beyond the World*, designed by William Morris, published by Kelmscott Press, 1894, England. Museum no. 38041800870107. ©Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

## BEGINNINGS IN ENGLAND

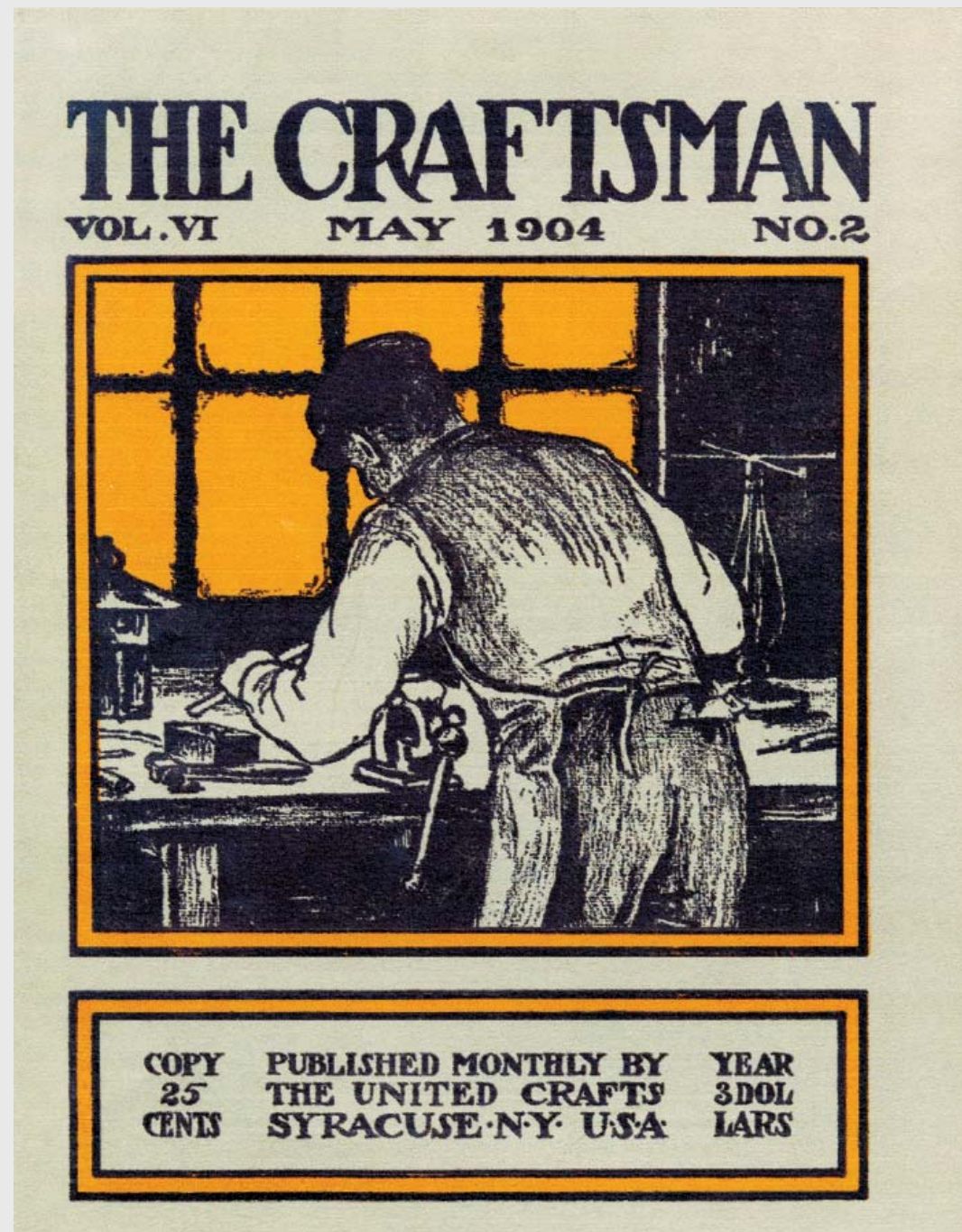
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**The** Arts and Crafts movement had its beginnings during the last half of the nineteenth century in England, the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution. It was a time of tremendous change, with large numbers of laborers moving from the countryside to the cities seeking work in the factories. Living in poor, overcrowded neighborhoods, these factory workers were subjected to harsh and often dangerous jobs, dismal working conditions, long hours, and low pay. This sudden societal change inspired the writings of art critic and educator John Ruskin (1819-1900), who advocated that it was hand labor—not the machine—that preserved human dignity.

Deeply influenced by the writings of Ruskin, it was William Morris (1834-1896) who would rise to become the recognized founder of the Arts and Crafts movement in England. A strong advocate for socialist philosophy, Morris believed that integrating the roles of designer, artist, and craftsman would create a leveling influence on England's class system and, as a result, preserve the dignity of the individual worker and lead to social change. In 1861, he founded Morris and Company, a professional design firm that worked to unite craft with fine art.

## COMING TO AMERICA

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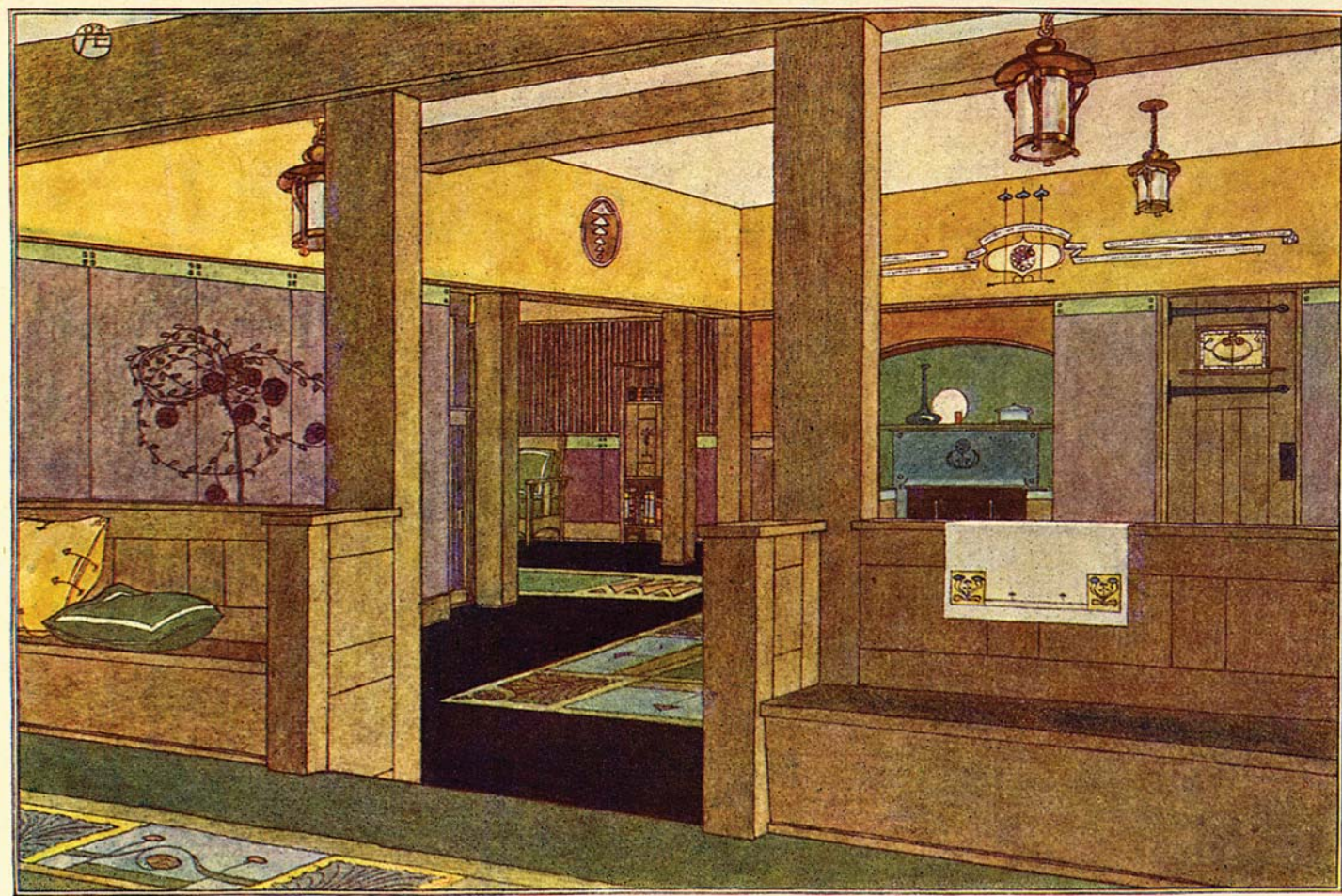
Cover of *The Craftsman* magazine, published by Gustav Stickley in May 1904, Vol. 6, No. 2.

During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the Arts and Crafts movement began to extend to the United States through a variety of journals, magazines, newspapers, and societies that sponsored lectures and programs. It was in Boston in 1897 that the first American Arts and Crafts Exhibition was held, featuring more than 1000 objects by 160 craftsmen—notably half of whom were women. Later that year, the Boston Society of Arts and Crafts was founded, and numerous groups followed in cities across the country, including Chicago, Minneapolis, Los Angeles, and New York, as well as in smaller towns such as Rochester, NY, Dayton, OH, and Deerfield, MA.

While practitioners of the movement also believed that a strong connection between the artist and their work was the key to human fulfillment, they largely overlooked the socialist politics of their neighbors across the Atlantic. As a whole, American craftsmen embraced the modern technology of machines, believing that it took a marriage of design and industry to produce beautiful objects for the majority of people. They viewed the machine as an advantage for increasing production without compromising quality.

# THE AMERICAN ARTS & CRAFTS MOVEMENT

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Craftsman interior from "The Living Room, its Many Uses and its Possibilities for Comfort and Beauty,"  
The Craftsman 9 (October 1905)

**The** American Arts and Crafts movement was more a philosophy of living rather than a distinct aesthetic style, and extended to virtually every area of the decorative arts, design, and architecture, influencing furniture, metalwork, pottery, tile, lighting, woodblock prints, and photography. Two of the best-known promoters of the Arts and Crafts movement in America were Gustav Stickley (1858-1942) and Elbert Hubbard (1856-1915), both of whom had visited England and were inspired and informed by the writings of Ruskin and Morris.

Stickley, already a veteran of the furniture business, formed Craftsman Workshops in upstate New York in 1903, bringing together a talented guild of designers, cabinet makers, and metal and leather workers. He began publishing a monthly magazine called *The Craftsman*, a how-to manual for living the Arts and Crafts style, and pledged to achieve "the union in one person of the designer and the workman." An astute businessman, Stickley sold his designs by mail order and through more than one hundred retailers across the country that represented his "Craftsman" brand.

## THE AMERICAN ARTS & CRAFTS MOVEMENT

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**Sideboard Model No. 966**  
Craftsman Workshops, c. 1902  
Oak, chestnut, iron

Stickley was instrumental in promoting the principal attributes of the Arts and Crafts movement in the United States—a simple lifestyle, the use of quality, natural materials in handcraft, and an independent spirit in design and construction.

Illinois-born Elbert Green Hubbard was a writer, publisher, artist, philosopher, and entrepreneur, whose first successful business venture was as head of sales and promotions for the popular Larkin soap products. A self-described anarchist and socialist, Hubbard left Larkin to establish the Roycroft Press in East Aurora, NY, in 1895, and began publishing his monthly magazine, *The Philistine: A Periodical of Protest*. By the end of the nineteenth century, Hubbard began to branch out in other directions, and his expanding community of craftsmen, who produced metalwork, pottery, furniture, leatherworks, and books, became known as “The Roycrofters.”

## THE AMERICAN ARTS & CRAFTS MOVEMENT

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### **Linen Press**

Attributed to Dawson-Dawson-Watson  
Byrdcliffe Colony, c. 1904  
Oak, secondary wood, paint, brass

Other Arts and Crafts communities formed elsewhere. From 1901-1906, the Rose Valley workshops—founded by architect Will Price in Rose Valley, PA—produced furniture in an old mill on Ridley Creek. Most of the furniture was designed by Price, exhibiting many characteristics of the Arts and Crafts style.

In Woodstock, NY, the Byrdcliffe Arts Colony was founded in 1902 by Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead and his wife Jane Byrd McCall. Created as an experiment in utopian living inspired by the Arts and Crafts movement, Whitehead envisioned a community where all the arts would come together, including painting, sculpture, music, metalwork, and furniture making. Facilities at Byrdcliffe included housing for the artists as well as studios for painting, weaving, pottery, metalwork, and woodworking. Furniture making was the predominant craft at Byrdcliffe and reached its height of production in 1904, though their output was low: only about fifty pieces of handcrafted furniture were made between 1901 and 1904, including tables, chairs, lamp stands, bookcases, sideboards, and chests.

## METALWORK

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**Fern Jardinière, Model No. C-86**

The Roycroft Shops, c. 1910-1912

Designed and executed by Karl Kipp

Copper and German silver

**Hubbard's** Roycroft community had its own metal shop and became well known under the leadership of designer Karl Kipp, who supervised 35 artisans and a product line of more than 150 items. Likewise, metalworkers at Stickley's Craftsman Workshops in Eastwood, NY, produced hand-wrought hinges, key escutcheons, and handles for Craftsman furniture, along with fireplace hoods and tools, tableware, desk sets, and other accessories. These hand-wrought metal objects epitomize the philosophy of the Arts and Crafts movement—the dignity of hand labor combined with good, attractive, and honest design.

## POTTERY

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**Vase**  
Newcomb Pottery, 1904  
Glazed earthenware

**Unity** between the artist and his handiwork was an important part of the Arts and Crafts movement and most artisans worked hard to promote this idea to their customers, depicting themselves or their studios as the sole designer, creator, and producer of their wares. For many Arts and Crafts potteries, however, factory-produced vessels were a necessity. Studio pottery companies such as Rookwood, Gates, and Grueby Faience could produce multiple blanks at once, while relying on a separate decorator to add the finishing touches by hand. This division of labor for Arts and Crafts potteries did allow the opportunity for women to join the workforce. Most often, vessels were thrown on the wheel by a male potter, while women were hired to do pottery decorating.

Newcomb College, a New Orleans institute for women's higher education, founded Newcomb Pottery in 1895, where women designers were recognized for their skills and creativity. An exhibition and sale of their work in 1896 marked the realization and encouraged the notion that the products could be sold for profit.

## POTTERY

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**Vase**

Gates Potteries, c. 1905  
Glazed earthenware

Once launched, the Newcomb Pottery quickly developed into a professional organization. It is interesting and important to note that the nature of the students changed from undergraduates to graduate students thus creating a more mature staff of skilled decorators.

In Boston, an enterprise was started as a philanthropic undertaking to help immigrant children of the North End. A reading and discussion group for young girls was formed, the participants of which became known as the Saturday Evening Girls. After a trip to Switzerland in 1906 and a visit to a rural pottery the group's founders decided to start an art pottery that offered women the opportunity to find employment in arts-related industry by hand decorating ceramics. This concept fit perfectly with the philosophy of the Arts and Crafts movement. The pottery moved to a larger home in the Boston's North End and became Paul Revere Pottery deriving the name from its close proximity to both the American patriot's house and the Old North Church where the lantern signal for his famous ride was hung.

## TILE & ARCHITECTURAL FAIENCE

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**Peacock Four-Tile Panel**  
Frederick Hurten Rhead, 1910  
Buff body

**Beautifully** decorated terra cotta tiles also played an important role in Arts and Crafts architecture. Colorful artisan tiles offered endless possibilities for adding decorative charm to homes and buildings, both inside and out. Tiles were in demand for walls, floors, friezes, fireplaces, murals, and fountains. The most noted names in American tile manufacture during the period include California Faience, Grueby, Marblehead, Rookwood, and Rhead. In Southern California, Ernest Batchelder had a tile shop that provided artisan pieces to brothers Greene & Greene Architects for commission projects such as the iconic Gamble House in Pasadena.

## LIGHTING

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**Table Lamp**

George Mann Niedecken, c. 1911

White oak, glass, copper

An essential element in the architectural design of the Arts and Crafts home was lighting. The height of the Arts and Crafts movement in America coincided with the introduction of electricity and the light bulb. Architects like Greene & Greene and Frank Lloyd Wright included electric light fixtures in their designs with the goal of achieving a harmonious, unified home interior, while lamps themselves were a joint effort of talented designers and skilled craftsmen. Both Gustav Stickley and the Roycroft shops produced accessories for the ideal Craftsman home, including light fixtures. Additionally, decorative lamps were of interest to metal artists as well as ceramic potters, including Elizabeth Eaton Burton, Karl Kipp, Dick van Erp, Grueby, Newcomb, and Teco.

## WOODBLOCK PRINTS

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In the late nineteenth century, the broad appeal of Japanese art in Western culture merged with the heightened interest in craftsmanship promoted by the Arts and Crafts reform movement, resulting in the transformation of the ancient art of the woodcut, the technique of printing images from a block of wood.

Arthur Wesley Dow (1857-1922) was a pioneer of twentieth-century woodblock prints in America, along with other important artists such as Edna Boies Hopkins, Frances Hammell Gearhart, William Seltzer Rice, Gustave Baumann, F. Morley Fletcher, and Margaret Patterson.



**The White Rose**  
Margaret Patterson, c. 1920s  
Color Woodblock Print

## PICTORIAL PHOTOGRAPHY

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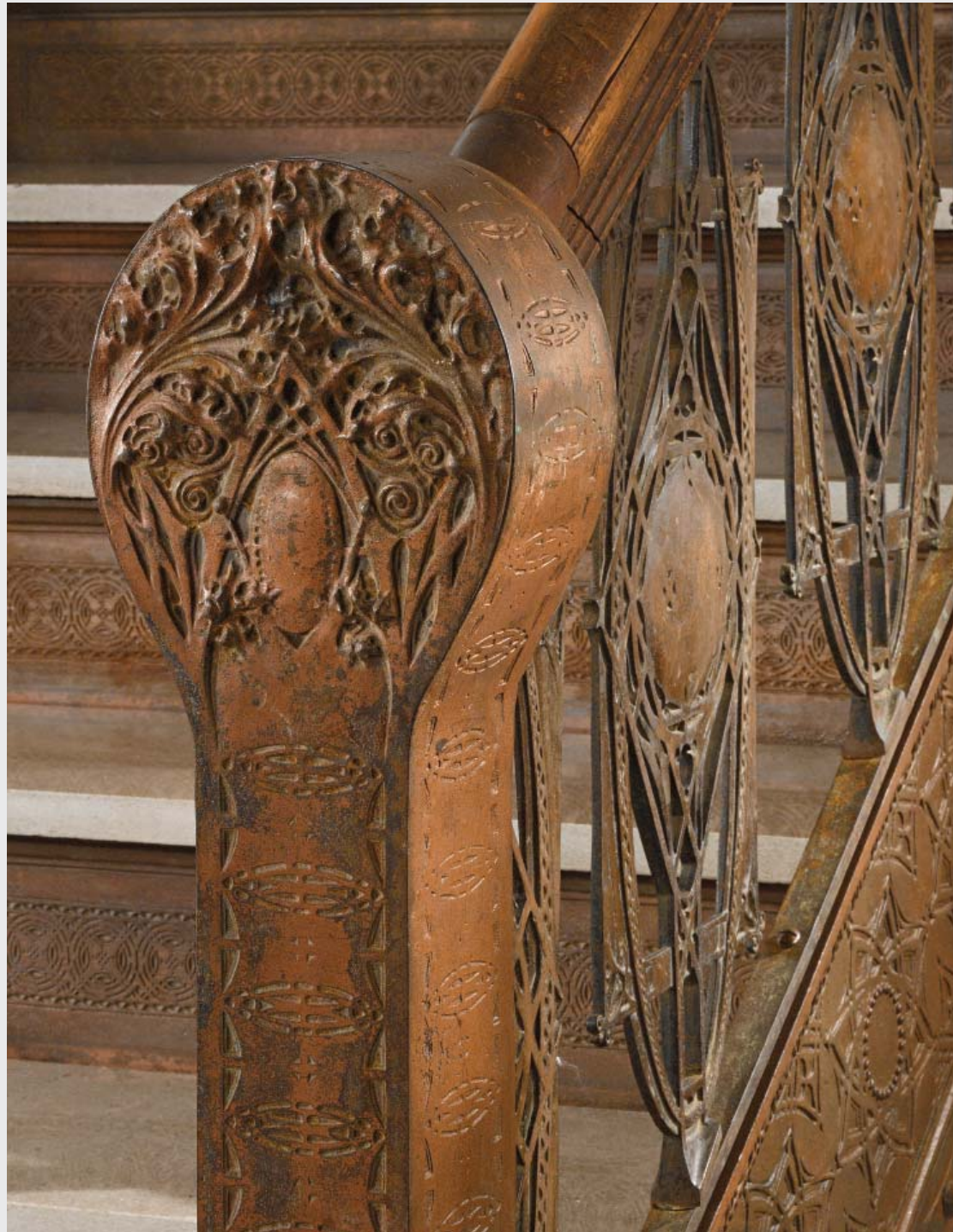


**The Steerage**  
Alfred Stieglitz, 1907  
Large-format photogravure on  
Japanese paper

**Although** photography is less associated with the Arts and Crafts movement, Stickley's popular Craftsman magazine often featured articles on Pictorialism. A movement in its own right, Pictorialism was an approach to photography that emphasized the beauty of subject matter, tonality, and composition to produce atmospheric "pictures" rather than simply recording reality. The desire to create works of beauty and originality was the common link between Arts and Crafts practitioners and pictorial photographers. Pictorialists in the United States included noted photographers Alvin Langdon Coburn, F. Holland Day, Gertrude Käsebier, Edward Steichen, Alfred Stieglitz, Clarence H. White, and many others. Like Stickley, Stieglitz promoted his views by publishing *Camera Work* and *Camera Notes*, two highly influential photographic journals, between 1897 and 1910.

## ARTS & CRAFTS ARCHITECTURE

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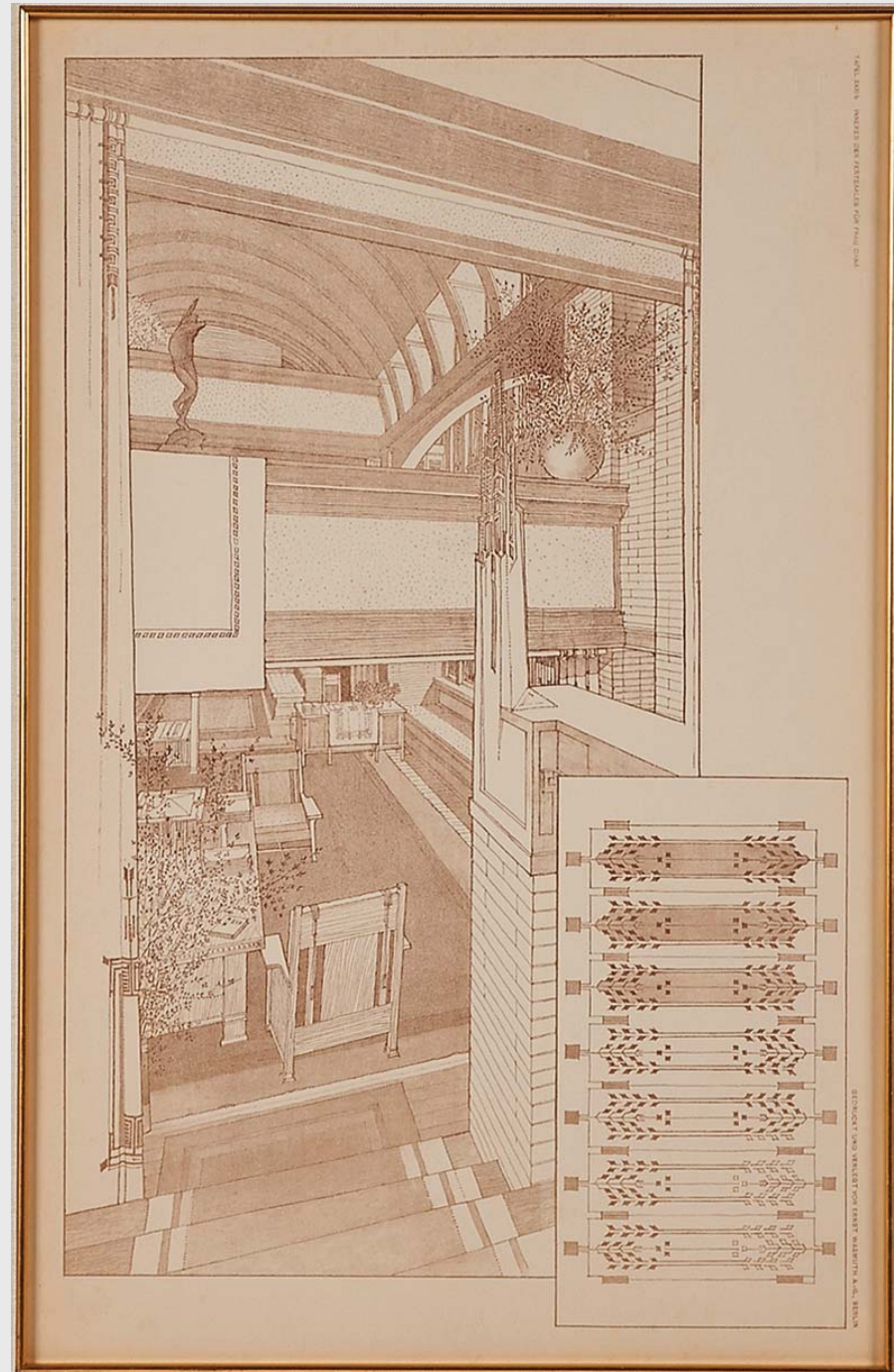
**Detail of Staircase from the Chicago Stock Exchange**

Louis Sullivan, 1893-1894

Cast iron, electroplate copper finish, mahogany railing

**Architectural** style in America varied regionally due in part to the nation's ethnic diversity, as well as differences in landscape and climate. Chicago-based Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959), who trained under architectural giant Louis Sullivan, was one of the most prominent architects of the Arts and Crafts era and beyond, and developed a style that was to become known as the Prairie School—designs based on the rhythms and colors of nature, with low, broad buildings that employed horizontal geometric lines reflecting the prairie landscape.

While the wide expanses of the Midwest guided the Prairie School, West Coast architects looked to the Spanish missions for influence, hence the term "Mission Style" that is often used to describe Arts and Crafts furniture and architecture. Architects Charles Sumner Greene (1868-1957) and his brother Henry Mather Greene (1870-1954) were the champions of Arts and Crafts architecture in Southern California, often incorporating designs and imagery borrowed from its Spanish and Native American heritage as well as the Japanese.



**Plate XXXIB from the Wasmuth Portfolio Vol. 1.**  
 Interior View of Susan L. Dana House, Springfield, IL  
 Frank Lloyd Wright, 1910  
 Lithograph

The Greene's unique style of utilizing native California redwood in the construction developed into the iconic Arts and Crafts style home—the bungalow. The brothers also designed the furniture, lighting, and stained-glass windows, as well as the landscaping.

Ironically, while the bungalow might have gotten its start on the West Coast, the East Coast ensured its popularity. It was Gustav Stickley that promoted the bungalow design, specifically through the “Craftsman Homes” section in his monthly Craftsman magazine, which included images, plans, and original designs by architects Greene & Greene, among others. Between 1907 and 1925, the bungalow was one of the most sought-after home designs. Typical characteristics of this style included a low-pitched gabled roof, large verandas covered by the overhanging roof, broad eaves with exposed rafters, a large fireplace, and an open floor plan with the front entry opening directly into the living room.

## DECLINE OF THE ARTS & CRAFTS MOVEMENT

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**Art Deco Bookends**  
Robtj, Paris, c. 1930s  
Painted and glazed porcelain

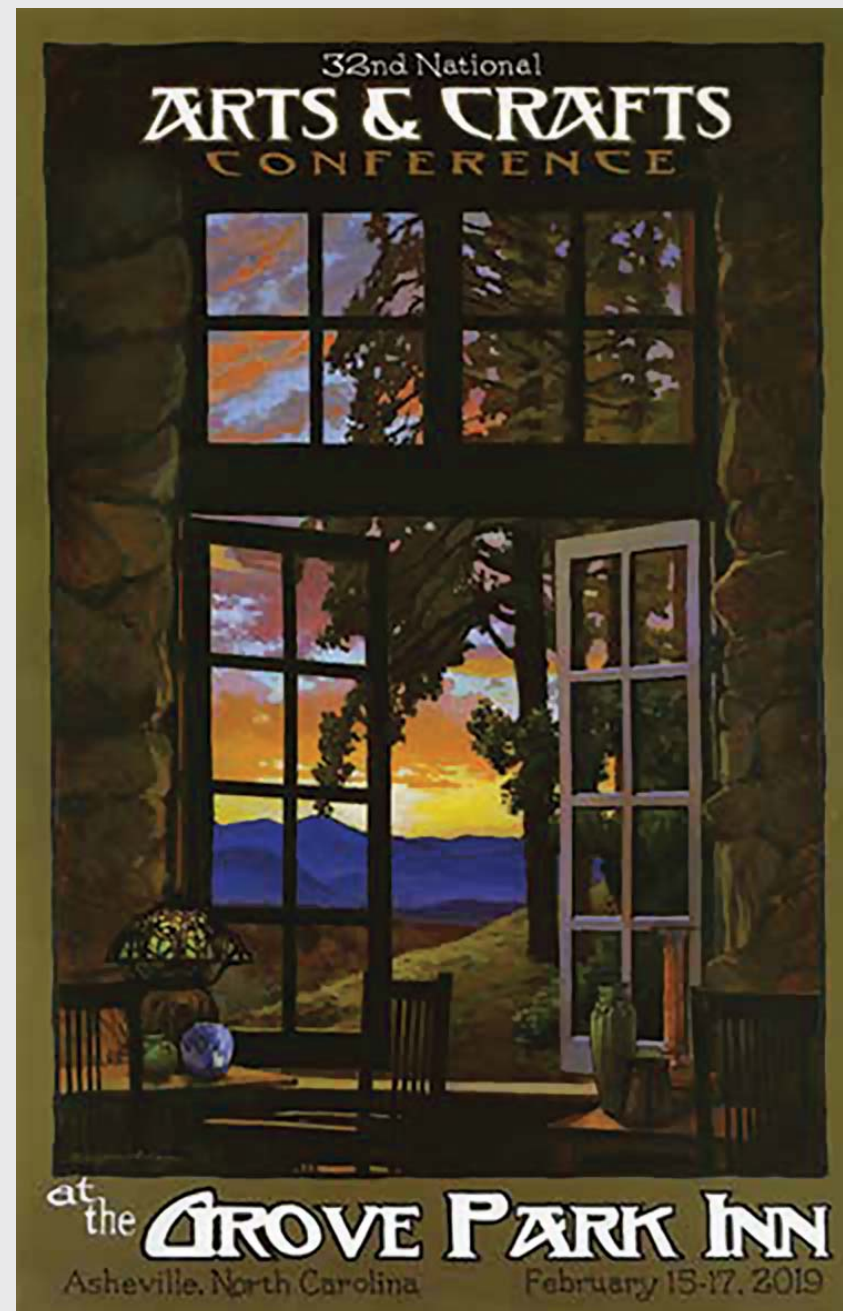
**Like** many other artistic eras throughout history, the Arts and Crafts movement was to fall victim to changing tastes, economics, and world affairs. In 1917 the United States entered into World War I, and Americans were in search of a new national identity. The media grew bored with the style and was in pursuit of the next great design trend. The greater problem leading to its demise, however, was simply one of supply and demand. Hand-crafted objects could not be produced in great enough quantities and at competitive prices to compete and appeal to a mass audience. As time went on, many Arts and Crafts practitioners were forced to adopt machine production and quality was inevitably compromised.

By 1920 the popularity of the American Arts and Crafts movement had dramatically declined, and artists, craftsmen, and architects caved in to the demands for sleek designs and machine-made products, making way for the streamlined glamour of Art Deco with its rich colors, zigzags and angular geometric forms.

## INSPIRING ARTS & CRAFTS LOVERS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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**While** Art Deco embraced a new age of rapid industrialization, the clean and simple “handcrafted” aesthetic of the Arts and Crafts movement would resurface in future generations. One of its greatest legacies was breaking down the barriers between the craftsman/architect and the painter/sculptor—between applied art and fine art. The Arts and Crafts reformers of the early twentieth century had developed a visual language of quality in materials and simplicity in design that is as inspiring today as it was 100 years ago.



Poster released for 2019 Arts & Crafts Conference.  
Asheville, NC. Designed by Jan Schmuckal.



Window, *Two Red Roses Across the Moon*, c. 1910  
From a private home in Saint Petersburg, Florida. Unknown maker from a design by E. A. Taylor, Glasgow. "Two Red Roses across the Moon" is the title of a romance poem by William Morris, published in *The Defence of Guenevere* in 1858.

Front Cover:  
Inlaid detail from "Settle" c. 1903-1904  
attributed to Harvey Ellis & LaMont Warner, designers  
Craftsman Workshops, Eastwood, NY

Back Cover:  
Plaque  
Newcomb College, New Orleans, LA., 1918  
Glazed earthenware

