

William Morris's artistic output and his diverse creative involvements come together in a philosophy embracing specific views on the Middle Ages and pattern design, and most especially, in the idea of 'authenticity.' An elusive concept in many ways, "authenticity" has no straightforward definition;^[1] its meaning, according to Susanne Knaller and Harro Müller, depends on its use in different fields, and rests on the Greek origin of the word: "original, reliable, authoritative."^[2] Webster's dictionary defines "authentic" as "fidelity to actuality and fact, compatibility with a certain source or origin, accordance with usage or tradition or complete sincerity without feigning or hypocrisy".^[3]

In its modern sense, and notably, as it concerns artistic production, the concept of "authenticity" depends on the 18th-century idea of "sincerité," signifying "honest" and "unadulterated"; yet the term, Knaller claims, does not appear during the Enlightenment, the Romantic era or the later 19th century.^[4] The notion of 'authenticity,' as Müller shows, was launched by the "Existenzphilosophie" e. g. Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger, and became an important term with Adorno and Habermas.^[5] More recently, alternative definitions have been offered by Niklas Luhmann, Charles Taylor, who include in the term "authenticity," the notions of "creation", "construction" and "originality" among others,^[6] and by Alessandro Ferrara, who distinguishes different forms of "authentic subjectivity".^[7]

My aim here is not to dwell on these philosophical definitions of "authenticity," which centre on the relationship between the individual and his/her social surroundings. Rather I propose to replace these philosophical interpretations with a more practically orientated definition, specifically suited to Morris's aesthetic theory. This definition concerns the relationship of an object to its production, use and historical conditions. Here the term not only means the concept of fitness to material, production and purpose, as it was so influential for the designers of the 20th century, but also fitness to time. The first aspect is referred to as "integrity," the second as "expressive authenticity". Denis Dutton has used this latter term as a counterpoint to "nominal authenticity," which deals with issues of forgery and plagiarism.^[8] "Expressive authenticity," however, is concerned with the inherent values of a work of art and its meaning for its contemporary audience. In the present essay, I will use the term to mean the actual relevance of the work of art to its own time in a period that favoured imitations and variations of historical styles.

This dual concept of "authenticity," relating, on the one hand, to the production of an item (integrity) and, on the other, to its affinity with the special issues and conditions of its time (expressive authenticity), underpins the modernity of Morris's late-nineteenth-century use of tradition and historical styles. A. W. N. Pugin had already hinted at this version of authenticity in his comments on contemporary church architecture, where he introduces the idea of truthfulness and the demand for "fitness of the design to the purpose for which it is intended"; but he was limited by his dependence on older catholic liturgical functions and religious concepts.^[9] His notion of architectural forms and decorative elements was thus determined by, and confined to, religious symbolism. Pugin, like Morris, used the Middle Ages as a model for his own time, looking for the design of objects in patterns from the Middle Ages but transforming them in accordance with altered life styles and modes of production.

Morris's appropriation of mediaeval tradition began during his student days in Oxford as a nostalgic longing for an ideal lost world. This perspective on the past, however, changed into a practical interest and into a quest for functional objects of good quality that could serve as exemplars for contemporary products. Nor was this search for a fitting pattern limited to the Middle Ages; it embraced (albeit selectively) other epochs as well such as the 18th century. Although, here, it might be supposed that Morris presumed that the models of this later era derived from older patterns that craftsmen had adapted for contemporary use.

For Morris, the Renaissance, with its ideal of artistic genius and its division between fine art and applied arts, constituted an interruption in the historical evolution of style. By contrast, the Middle Ages or the very early Renaissance were his preferred models, and they offered vantage points for grasping the significance of the artist-craftsman working in a community, and the interdependence of material, production and function of art objects. This said, turning to the past did not signify replicating or adopting its features mechanically. Objects from earlier times could supply models and patterns for inspiration, but they ought not to be copied; rather they needed to be reinterpreted for their own era.^[10] That Morris might have applied this precept in literary writing has been hinted at by Jonathan Freedman, where, in a discussion of "The Defence of Guenevere," he speaks of "Morris's remodelling of models" in view of a given audience.^[11]

The aim of my essay is to question the assumption that Morris's use of the Middle Ages was nostalgic; a further aim is to jettison the notion that he was predominantly orientated towards the future. By deploying the elements of "integrity" and "expressive authenticity" outlined above, I want to show that Morris used or discarded the Middle Ages as a stylistic example, depending upon its suitability and contemporary relevance and that one of his goals was to create objects that matched the needs of his own time. Morris's interest in his fellowmen, and his striving for a beauty that all could share enabled him to contemplate the production of objects that were both beautiful and useful. In this, he faced a two-fold challenge: on the one hand, he strove for high material quality and, on the other hand, he advocated Ruskinian ideals of production grounded in the relation between worker, production and object.^[12] Weaving the past with the exigencies of modernity, he appropriated and adapted the influences of the Middle Ages for contemporary ends; in this, Morris's art and philosophy of art exhibit the dialectical energies of "expressive authenticity".

Indeed, the mediaeval past and the Victorian present converge in his comments on mediaeval English pottery. He deems the latter a valuable model for the domestic pottery of his own day, emphasizing genuine joy in labour: the pleasure in producing pottery on the wheel and “the capabilities of clay for quaint and pleasant forms and fanciful invention.” [13] He witnesses and admires this in the older village pottery that carried on the mediaeval traditions for its own times as works done “in a very unconscious and simple fashion on the old and true principles of art”. [14] These principles underpin Morris’s concept of ‘integrity,’ and they are evident in the following discussion of pottery making.

First. Your vessel must be of a convenient shape for its purpose. Second. Its shape must show the greatest advantage of the plastic and easily-worked nature of clay, the lines of its contour must flow easily; [...]. Third. All the surface must show the hand of the potter, and not be finished with a baser tool. Fourth. Smoothness and high finish of surface, though a quality not to be despised, is to be sought after as a means for gaining some special elegance of the ornament, and not as an end for its own sake. [15]

In his fifth and sixth statements, Morris is concerned with the harmony between the character of material and ornament, and with the demand for the visibility of the workman’s touch or hand. This imprint of the craftsman’s creative labour on his final product becomes a measure of his integration in an artistic process, where he is as subjectively (and humanly) fulfilled as his artwork is satisfying in texture and aesthetic form : in this, the object pleases both the user and the maker.

The idea of integrity, e. g. the concordance of material, production and function of an object is a determining factor in Morris’s design work, and much as it may be attributed to his preference for mediaevalist aesthetic practices, it is also responsible for his reputation as one of the “fathers” of modern design, in spite of his reservations about industrial production. His desire to base the design of an object upon considerations of material, appropriate production, use and function, his rejection of the multitude of historical styles, and his quest for “honesty and simplicity of life” coincide with the work of modern designers of the 1930s, following the Bauhaus tradition. [16] Mentioned favourably by Herbert Read and Nikolaus Pevsner, Morris thus earns a place in the early history of modern design. [17]

Recent art history pays equal tribute to him [18] and studies his attitude towards design in the Victorian context, especially in the light of the Gothic Revival, the increasing nineteenth-century interest in the Middle Ages, and emerging preoccupations with socialism. [19] Salient here is Morris’s mediaevalism, [20] most evident in his emphasis on the mediaeval guild system—the latter promoted the collaboration between different artists and craftsmen—, on the devotion of the worker to his work, on the production of useful and beautiful objects of high quality and on the connection “with the tradition of the past.” [21]

Among some, Morris’s mediaevalism has bred popular perceptions of a backward-tending and nostalgic artist. But in his novel *News from Nowhere* (1890), Morris’s goals and hopes are mostly located in the future, in the context of a “mediævally-oriented future utopia”. [22] This has led others to see Morris’s strongest artistic propensity in the shape of things to come. Yet, Morris’s aesthetic endeavours and theories aim to recreate a style for his own age. Art historian Frank-Lothar Kroll makes this point in discussing the 1881 lecture, “Some hints on pattern designing.” [23] Clearly, Morris strove for a contemporary art through his efforts to identify the correct use of different materials and through his search for artistic forms suited to the needs of his day. I will elaborate on this two-faceted model of authenticity in Morris’s aesthetic creations, drawing on his theoretical writings to underscore the modernity of his work, notably through his book illumination, his furniture and tapestry.

Travels throughout England and France, visits to museums, and a study of illuminated manuscripts generated Morris’s knowledge of mediaeval art. He first pursued an artistic style that very closely emulated historical models from that period. But he eventually realised that this approach was not very successful. Its aesthetic proximity to the mediaeval predecessors did not convincingly fit aspects of modern life. Therefore he had to rethink which aspects of the applied arts of the middle ages were relevant for designs that suited the requirements of contemporary life.

With his detailed command of art history and artistic techniques, Morris established in his work a close correspondence between practical methods and historical period. His technical expertise derived mainly from the technical instructions laid down in the Middle Ages or the early Renaissance. He appreciated the complete and successful mastering of all material aspects of a work of art produced in these eras, as well as the work’s appropriateness to the conditions of its time. He esteemed the aesthetical as well as the conceptual approach applied then. Practical and theoretical discourses for Morris are therefore closely connected. He aimed to transfer the ideal historical works into “modern” art, an art suited to the Victorian age, and geared to the prospect of bettering the future. Artistic models from history are thus to be discerned in Morris’s work, but the work itself has its definite place in the 19th century and simultaneously aims to show the way towards a better aesthetic and social future.

Of special interest to Morris was mediaeval illumination. He studied it with intense admiration in the Bodleian Library (Oxford), and in London’s British Museum. His daughter, May Morris, wrote that “No young man in London outside the staff of the department [of the Manuscript Room of the British Museum] was so familiar with its treasures as my father was.” [24]

From the earliest days my father had an intimate knowledge of French and English mediaeval painted manuscripts, knowing the finest books in the Bodleian and the British Museum as though they belonged to him. Indeed, he would say laughing that they did belong to him because he enjoyed them so much. [25]

For a short time, in the late 1850s, Morris turned to illumination. This was a popular contemporary pastime. Boxes with tools for illumination, printed patterns and books on the technique and history of illumination, illustrated with

chromolithographical plates of complete pages or of different components of a page, such as initials and parts of borders, were widely available to the public.^[26] In the 19th century, the initials and border decorations of mediaeval illuminated manuscripts (mostly profusely illuminated Books of Hours) served as models for lithographers and illuminators. The illuminators transferred the decoration from its religious context to a decoration for profane documents and addresses. In most cases, only single leaves or sets of leaves were illuminated to mark a festive occasion or an historical event. Until the years around 1850, miniatures, unlike borders and initials, were of special interest given their artistic or historic significance. They were subsequently neglected and only seldom appeared as models in pattern books for illuminators. The main focus was now on the ornamental parts of the illuminated books. In search of patterns for contemporary book decoration, artists turned to early illuminated manuscripts which, thanks to the rather recent invention of chromolithography, could be reproduced in all their colourful and golden splendour. The main focus was on the ornamental decoration not the scenic illustration of a text. This change of function led to a change of models; the intricate patterns of the mediaeval ornaments became as attractive as the examples from the Renaissance. Formerly, miniatures of the late Middle Ages or the Renaissance were published as information on art history, history and material history, but now the interest turned to ornaments from the earlier Middle Ages, especially to works from the 13th and 14th century; these served as models for contemporary illuminators in executing addresses or manuscripts.

In the lavish books that appeared in chromolithography and resembled illuminations, the use of these patterns mostly depended on the content of the text. The ornamental decoration might not only hint at the time or the place where the action was located, but might also contain symbolic motifs that underscored the meaning of the text. Thus, Owen Jones's "Paradise and the Peri" (1860) shows ornaments that go back to old Egyptian and Oriental models, while H. N. Humphreys's borders for "Maxims and Precepts of the Saviour" (1849) contain objects, flowers and animals that support the religious meaning of the text and follow the traditions of Christian iconography.

In 1856, Morris began to illuminate on single pages short texts which he particularly favoured—his own poetry, Robert Browning's poetry and Grimm's fairy tales. For the decoration of the texts he turned to examples in illuminated manuscripts of the period from 1250 to 1350. These examples were especially recommended by John Ruskin. Ruskin admired these manuscripts because of the "majesty and simplicity" of the depicted drapery and the "exquisite brilliancy of colour and power of design".^[27] He discovered in them a sort of "authentic" decoration which was characterised by the understanding and the love of nature by the artists.^[28] Ruskin praised the "peculiar modification of natural forms for decorative purposes [...] in its perfection, with all its beauty and all its necessary shortcomings".^[29] "In their bold rejection of all principles of perspective, light and shade, and drawing," the miniatures were in Ruskin's opinion "infinitely more ornamental to the page, owing to the vivid contrast of their bright colours and quaint lines, than if they had been drawn by Da Vinci himself".^[30] He employed the example of miniatures of the period between 1250 and 1350 to propagate basic artistic principles such as "clearness of outline and simplicity of colour, without the introduction of light and shade," a "fenced, but varied, symmetry; a perfect definiteness; and a love of nature, more or less interfered with by conventionalism and imperfect knowledge." ^[31] Accordingly, he recommended Morris to the curator of the Manuscript Room of the British Museum, praising Morris's "gift for illumination" and comparing it with the work of a "thirteenth century draughtsman."^[32]

But despite the praise, Morris did not enter the field with confidence as is reflected in the illuminated page to his poem "Guendolen" (fig. 1)^[33] which contains twenty-four tightly written lines in gothic writing – six verses of four lines each.



Figure 1. "Guendolen". 1856, ink and watercolour on vellum, 24,7 x 19,3 cm.
Image provided courtesy of Sotheby's

First published in 1856 as "Hands," the poem "Guendolen" is part of "The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems," printed in 1858. Here it has the title "Rapunzel". The poem was inspired by a fairy tale of the Brothers Grimm in which Rapunzel, who has very long blonde hair, is imprisoned by a witch in a high tower and then rescued by a prince. In illuminating this text, Morris used certain floral ornaments and grotesque animals to convey the effect of a mediaeval manuscript. The choice of rather darkish colours, the concentration on blue and red, the planes of gold, the thick body colour and the ornamentation of the tendrils with wave and circular ornaments seem related to manuscripts from the 13th and 14th centuries. But the aesthetic result is somewhat wanting: the arrangement of writing and decoration on the page appears rather unstructured and cluttered. The structure of the text itself, its poetical frame remains unclear and the layout of the page seems restless. This effect is heightened by the seemingly unsystematic arrangement of a number of decorative elements across the page. This restlessness and overcrowding shows Morris's uncertainty in designing the layout of a text page which was based on his inexperience and his efforts to master the new medium. The decorative elements he chose are based on examples found in English and French manuscripts of the late 13th and early 14th century, such as the Ormesby Psalter (Bodleian Library Oxford, MS Douce 366) from the early 14th century. [34]

The mediaeval manuscripts offered models for framing the "Guendolen" page: the motifs used included tendrils with long slim leaves, berries, spiralling tendrils, and ivy leaves. The manuscripts also provided examples for the large T-initial that is not only shaded to suggest plasticity but is also decorated with tendrils, leaves and a serpent's body. The tendrils and the serpent are purely decorative motifs that organise the page and embellish the letter, but they have no relation to the content of the poem. By contrast, the little heads that, together with floral motifs and reptile-like grotesque animals, decorate the few smaller initials and the standing female figure in the bas-de-page are related to the content of Morris's text. However, because of the unfinished character of the decoration, the meaning of these elements is not always clear, but they show figures (such as the female at the base of the page, identified as Guendolen) that are, indeed, mentioned in the poem.

On another page from 1856 or 1857 with Robert Browning's poem "Paracelsus" (line 190-205, version of 1849; Huntington Library, San Marino, HM 6478), Morris added further elements to his decorative vocabulary from illuminated manuscripts of these two centuries: e.g., frame lines that end in animal bodies and line fillings. The line fillings constitute an ornamental closure of the verse, and serve to fill the empty space of a verse line and therewith to build a compact rectangular of text as in mediaeval manuscripts. Morris preferred a tightly closed dark block of text, as his layout of Kelmscott Press books shows, and as is mentioned in his essay "Printing". [35] In regards to the "Paracelsus"-page, Morris's inexperience with the medium results in an awkward contrast between dark and closely painted initial fields and vertical frame elements, on the one

hand, and delicate, thinly drawn stylised twigs and tendrils for line fillings and horizontal frame elements, on the other.

A third unfinished page, which includes "The Story of the Iron Man," after the fairy-tale of the brothers Grimm (fig. 2)[\[36\]](#) from 1857, seems to be the last page in Morris's series of early illuminated pages.

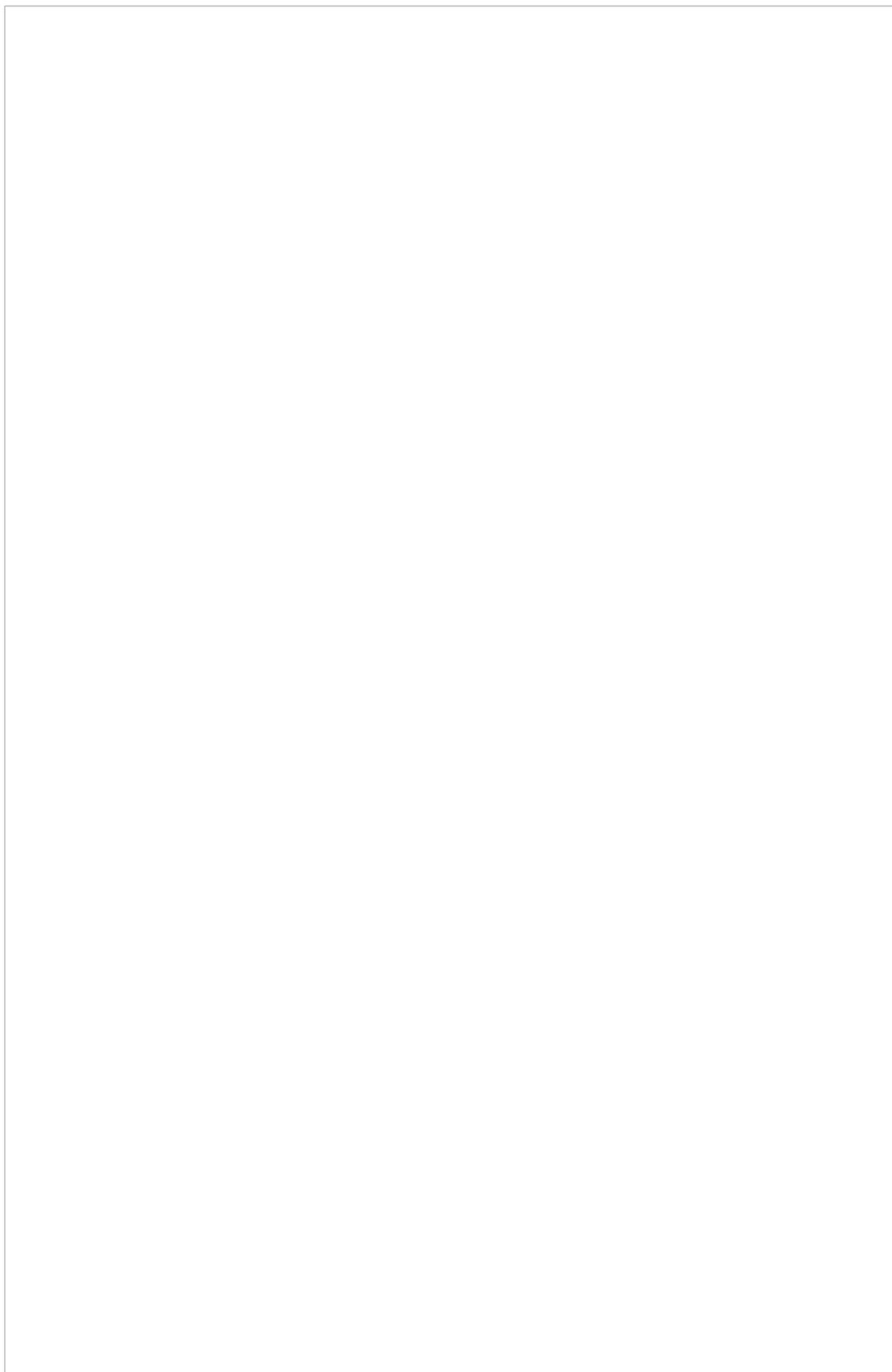


Figure 2. "Iron Man." 1857, watercolour and gold paint on vellum, 23,5 x 37 cm.
Courtesy of The Wormsley Library, Bucks.

Here the more complicated layout on the page and the multitude of decorative elements hint at a stronger confidence of the artist in mastering his medium. Morris appeared to have planned to insert a miniature between the two columns of the text. This would have complemented the large scenic initial, the smaller ones with tendrils and heads and the line fillings with animals and floral motifs. Pencil drawings in the margins show that Morris intended to fill them with tendril-decorations. As in the case of the two other pages, the slightly uncoordinated juxtaposition of different decorative elements, the overcrowded additive layout, and the combination of different elements that are influenced by mediaeval predecessors results in a slightly

cramped composition. Overall, the three pages are characterised by a certain awkwardness that hints at Morris's inexperience with the practical side of illumination and his struggle to find solutions for a successful combination of the modern and the old: a modern text form with the repertoire of mediaeval ornaments.

In 1858, after these few attempts, Morris temporarily stopped his illumination work to turn his attention to other decorative ventures and to a project for an illustrated printed edition of his poem, "The Earthly Paradise," on which he collaborated with Edward Burne-Jones, his friend from Oxford days. The project was never realised. Morris wished for a book that was based on the models of the late 15th century and that had readable letter, a compact text with appropriate margins, forming a good looking double-page opening, a darkly set text that could be accompanied by an illustration in the wood cut style, although it was carried out as wood engraving.[37] This turned out to be one of the main problems in the conception of the book as none of the commercially available types built a successful counterbalance to the strong black lines of Burne-Jones's illustrations.[38] With the help of Emery Walker, Morris later solved this problem by designing his own types for the Kelmscott Press. They were based on a close analysis of the types from the late 15th century but were varied and enhanced.

Presumably, out of his dissatisfaction with contemporary printing and out of the failed attempt with "The Earthly Paradise," Morris sought in the late 1860s to create books that corresponded to his own taste and that fit his estimation of an "ideal" contemporary book. He thus took up illumination again in 1869.[39] As he started illuminating once more, he ceased to follow mediaeval examples, although his liking and his admiration for these illuminated books remained. Presumably, Morris had recognised that the modern text structure for prose and poetry required a different sort of decoration to achieve a harmonious effect. In discerning the discrepancy between mediaeval and modern text structures and, in recognizing, accordingly, the need for a different layout and decoration, Morris set his illuminations of the 1870s apart from those of his contemporaries; the latter tried, like he did in his earlier attempts, to transfer a decorative system of the Middle Ages onto a text structure of the 19th-century.

This new development in Morris's aesthetic considerations is to be understood in the light of his reflections on fitness of form, content and decoration in contemporary book illumination.[40] He no longer seemed to value mediaeval illumination and gothic script as proper models for writing and decorating the texts he was interested in during the 1870s. In place of gothic writing, he turned to a cursive script that follows examples of the Italian writing masters and that ensured a better readability of the text.[41] The choice of script led Morris to abandon decoration of a mediaeval type because this style seemed unsuitable and would have produced an aesthetic dissonance in his work.

Morris found new ways of illuminating his manuscripts in floral designs that followed natural examples but were in a certain way stylised so that they were not of such a plasticity and illusionism as the floral decorations in the margins of Flemish manuscripts around 1500. These destroyed the surface of the page and would therefore be unsuitable for its decoration. In this, Morris followed his own maxims, those pertaining to textile and wall paper designs where "the ornamentation of a surface by work [...] is not imitative or historical, at any rate not principally or essentially so".[42] He rejected imitative art, the kind that, through the naturalism of its motifs, seems to open up a given surface; he perceived the wall paper and textile designs of his time as examples of such art.

The idea of decorating initials and margins with stylised floral motifs shows Morris's dependence on mediaeval predecessors; but unlike his forefathers, he develops a system of decoration that carries the floral ornaments continually from the bottom margin over line fillings to the upper margin of the page. In this organisation of the floral growth and continuity of tendrils, he combines the two shaping influences of his artistic output: the love of the Middle Ages and of Nature. At the same time, in the fusion of these two inspirations (nature and mediaevalism), it becomes clear that Morris never imitates his models in a slavish way but generates his own pattern for illumination.

In the illumination of manuscripts such as the two "The Dwellers of Eyr"—manuscripts[43] and "A Book of Verse,"[44] the particular ways in which Morris conceived a contemporary decoration become apparent. With respect to the ornament, they seem to follow quite closely his reflections on pattern designing for other two-dimensional media such as wallpapers and textiles. In "Hints on Pattern Designing," of 1881 Morris demands that the artist cease to copy the art of the past. He should not produce a "dead Art", but should draw inspiration from those works of art. In creating works of art that correspond to his era and to its specific needs, the artist should combine a sound knowledge of the history of art and of nature.[45] Consider, for example, Morris's first illuminated version of "The Dwellers of Eyr." (Unavailable here. See William Morris, "The Dwellers at Eyr," 1869-1870, Ink and watercolour on paper by J. & J. G. Smith, 355 x 240 mm, Bodleian Library Oxford, MS Eng.misc. c. 265, p. 29.) Here, he experimented with a type of floral decoration found in mediaeval manuscripts that accompanies the initial letters. However, in its growth and closeness to natural forms, albeit stylised, Morris's decoration shows only a general resemblance to examples of the 13th and 14th centuries. In **The Book of Verse** (fig. 3), Morris changed the floral decoration in the margins from a cumulative arrangement of single sprays or flowers into a continuous floral growth, starting at the bottom of the page, rising along the outer margins and reaching between the lines of the poems.

In the later version of "The Dwellers at Eyr" (Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, inv. no. 92'20), Morris used different forms of decoration for prose and songs, thus differentiating between diverse literary structures. While the prose text is opened in each chapter by an initial on a square field with floral pattern and an accompanying twig and/or floral sprays in the margin, becoming more and more opulent and lively in their arrangement, the songs are framed by floral decorations consisting of continual arrangements on the left hand side from which floral tendrils emerge to frame the poem and to separate the verses.

Figure 3. *The Book of Verse*. 1870, ink, watercolour and gold on paper by C. Ansell, 279 x 216 mm.
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These ways of re-shaping or of varying existing historical patterns through structure and motifs constitute Morris's "expressive authenticity": here, the traditions are maintained, but in such fashion that they remain living and attuned to the artist's era. In the case of illumination, this means that traditional modes of decoration are adapted to a modern text form and that the maxims on pattern design in general, which concern decorating a surface, are maintained and applied.

In advocating such an appropriation of the past, Morris was underscoring the continuity of tradition as a living phenomenon and promoting its vital appearance in objects of everyday use. The idea of tradition, of the vernacular, which especially turns up in things of everyday use, was one of the major notions of the following Arts & Crafts Movement. For Morris, the continuity of tradition was interrupted again by the industrial revolution that offered the possibility of producing sham pieces in seemingly precious materials, with rich decoration at low prices, mostly imitating historical styles.

Morris demanded a return to a living tradition. This meant a return to a sound production in which function, form, material and production itself were closely connected.^[46] Existing historical models could serve as inspiration, but the artist-craftsman had to adapt the merits of these models for the benefit of his own time and for the good of the future. Rather than copy an object, the artist had to study it for its virtues and problems. His analysis would have to function as the basis for a contemporary, authentic design. Morris's call for an "art, made by the people and for the people, as a happiness to the maker and the user" expresses his demand for an authentic art.^[47]

Accordingly, his way of dealing with historical examples varies depending on the adaptability of these models to contemporary needs. This is evident in his furniture designs. With the "Sussex Chair" (fig. 4), which is based on an existing Regency prototype found in a local Sussex village, Morris did not alter the model of the armchair very much, but transformed the type into a series of other furniture, including a sofa and a corner chair.^[48] See Furniture of the Sussex range. ([fig.4 - click to view the figure](#))

An early 19th-century chair shows a shape that is basically repeated in the "Sussex Chair," especially in the continuation of the vertical supports of the arm rests through the rush seat to the stretcher.^[49] The earlier chair differs from Morris's chair in the design of the back-rest and the more elaborate turning of the vertical elements of the arm rest and the front legs. In the model for the "Sussex Chair," Morris found an object of exemplary everyday furniture, of which he demanded that it should be "solid and well made in workmanship, and in design should have nothing about it that is not easily defensible, no monstrosities or extravagances, not even of beauty, lest we weary of it. As to matters of construction, it should [...] be made on the proper principles of the art of joinery: [...]"^[50]

Not only did he seize upon the shapes of objects from the vernacular and the past, Morris also used mediaeval ornamental patterns that he believed translated the rules of pattern design in an excellent and exemplary way. So, an early design for a wall decoration for his bedroom in "Red House" (fig. 5),

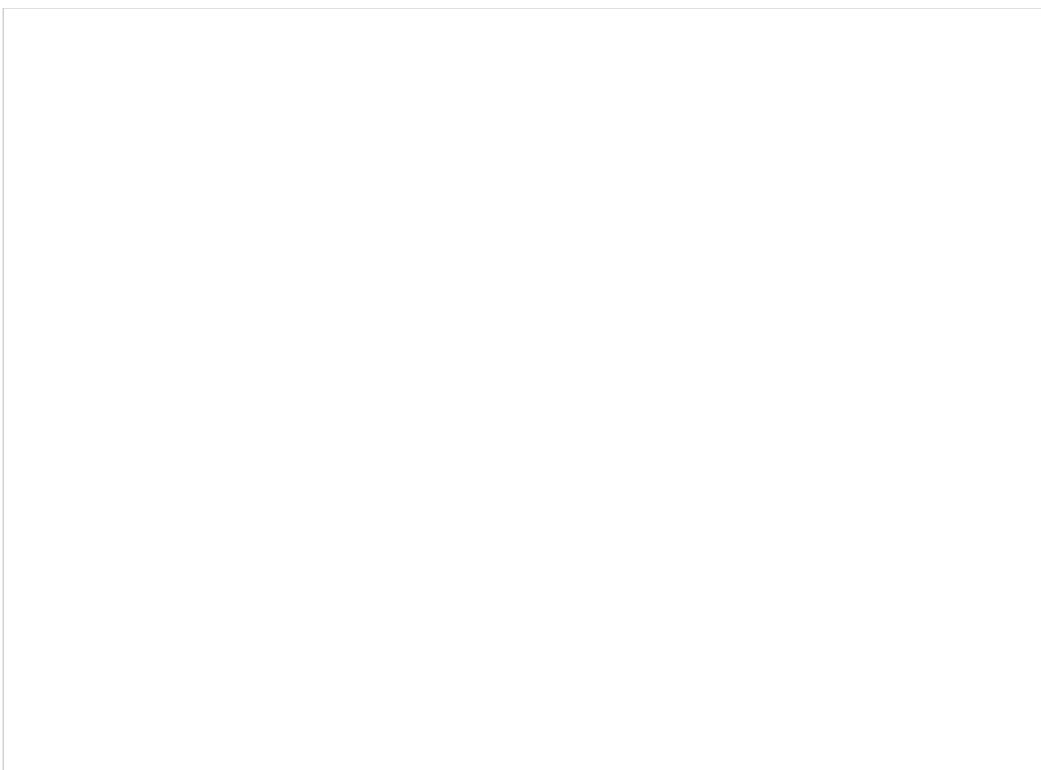


Figure 5. "Daisy Embroidery," early 1860s, worked by Jane Morris, Elisabeth Burden and others, woollen ground, embroidered with wools, 167 x 299 cm. Courtesy of the Society of Antiquaries, London (Kelmescott Manor). Photographer, Nigel Fisher.

executed as embroidery and showing stylised flowers in rows, was based on a tapestry that Morris found in miniatures of mediaeval manuscripts such as MS Harley 4380, fol. 1r, a Froissart-manuscript in the British Museum (fig. 6).[\[51\]](#)

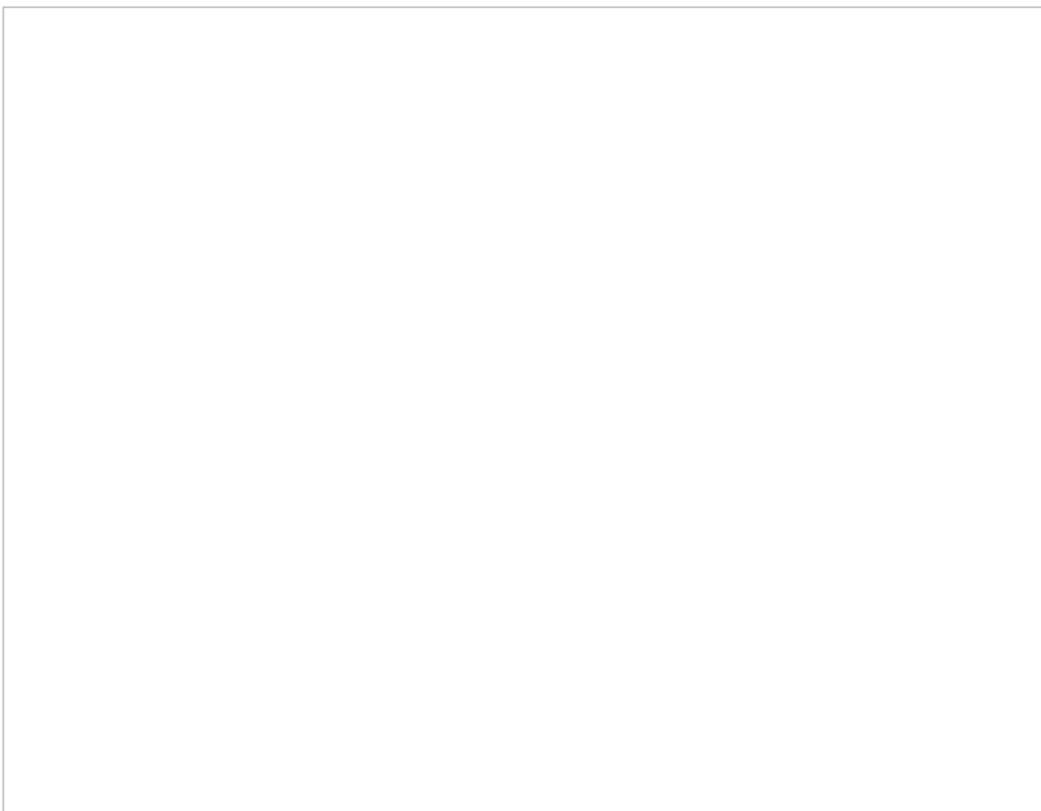


Figure 6. Jean Froissart, *Chronicles*, late 15th century. London, MS Harley 4380, fol. 1r. Courtesy of the British Library, London.

For Morris, the above-mentioned flower design was characterized by its combination of natural motif and high stylisation that prevented the breaking of the two-dimensionality of the surface. He repeated it in media that suited his society's temporal sensibility more than time-consuming embroidery – e.g., in his wall-paper "Daisy" (fig. 7) from 1862/1864—

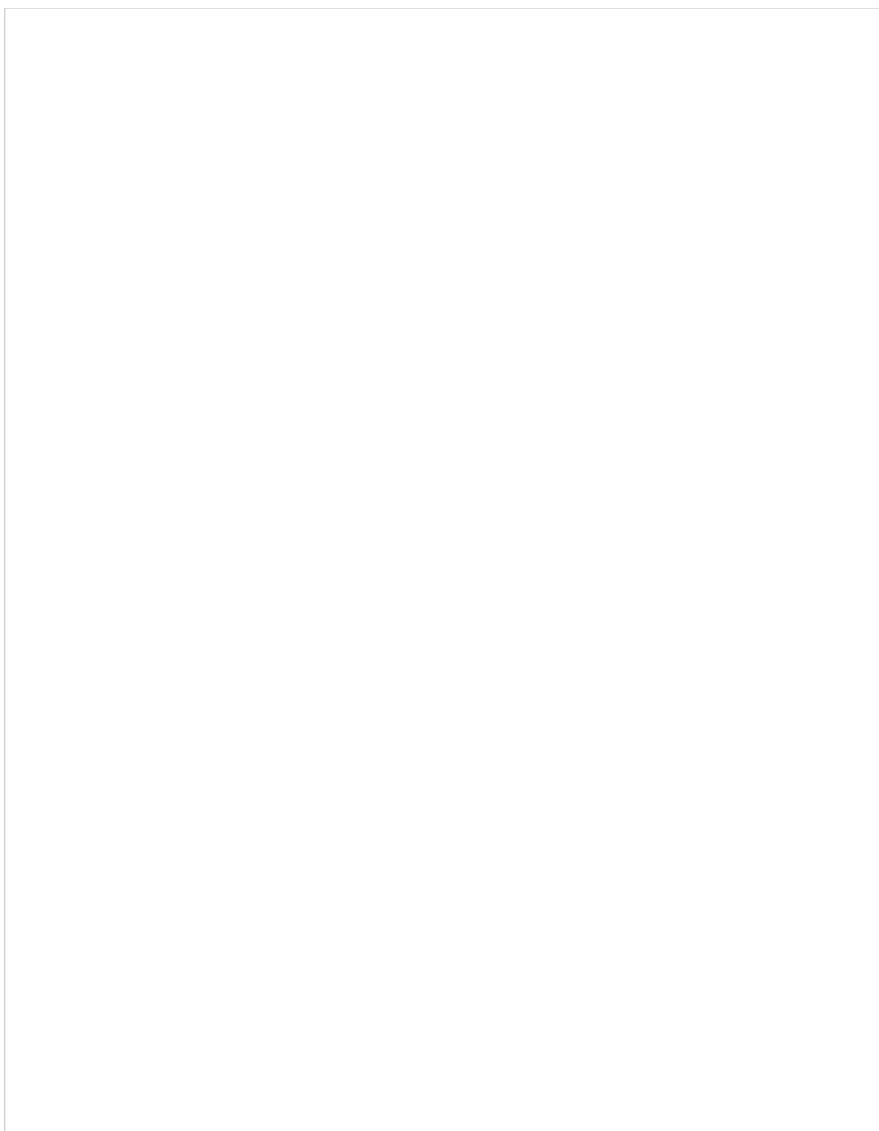


Figure 7. Daisy design, wallpaper by William Morris (1834-96). Block-printed paper. England, 1862.
© [V&A Images/Victoria and Albert Museum](http://www.vam.ac.uk), London. www.vam.ac.uk

and in tiles also from the early 1860s, again changing parts of the first design to suit the media of paper and ceramic tile better.^[52] The embroidery shows the flowers in a bold stylisation, with concentration on the outlines, while the tiles display a clear isolation of the flowers, and the wallpaper, a rather close positioning of the flowers before a stylised lawn and a more detailed drawing.

The change of media, conceived to meet contemporary needs, can also be observed in other instances. Like his contemporaries and the Pre-Raphaelites, Morris was also very much interested in wall painting that flourished in the Middle Ages and in the early Renaissance. He not only knew fragments from early English murals, but also examples of the Trecento and Quattrocento that were published by the Arundel Society and by Carlo Lasinio. Mural paintings were at the time popular given the projects for decorating the newly built Houses of Parliament, projects accompanied by competitions and exhibitions. The murals in the Houses of Parliament contain scenes from English history, and from literature with a didactic impulse. The Pre-Raphaelites around Dante Gabriel Rossetti tried their skills in mural painting in the Debating Society of the newly-built Oxford Union. Rossetti collected a circle of young artists (among them Morris and his friend Burne-Jones) to decorate the upper parts of the walls around the windows with scenes from Malory's "Le Morte Darthur," a Burne-Jones and Morris favourite.^[53] The cycle was never finished by Rossetti and it deteriorated early because of the remaining damp in the walls of the new building. Similar problems occurred with the Houses of Parliament-project: only parts were finished and conservation problems arose soon afterwards. Morris himself initiated a series of unfinished wall paintings in his "Red House," the residence designed by his friend the architect Philip Webb, and decorated with paintings on the walls and on the furniture by Burne-Jones and Rossetti. The walls in the drawing room show scenes from the *Life of Sir Degrevaunt* by Burne-Jones, who was also to have executed scenes from the *Trojan War* in the hall and staircase.^[54]

Morris only lived a short time (from 1860 to 1865) in "Red House." In moving back to London, he had to leave behind the paintings on the walls and on the huge furniture that he did not transfer to London. The earlier move from London to "Red House" showed that it was far better to have painted furniture than to have painted walls—Morris could take the settee and the Chaucer cabinet with him to "Red House".

Painted furniture was popular in the early years of Morris's "firm" and was advertised in their prospectus, but was scarcely executed after 1870 due to wanting demand. Nevertheless, it played an important rôle in these early years, because the paintings on furniture pursued the idea of the unity of artist and craftsman according to mediaeval models, highly valued by Morris and his artist-friends. Thus, the painting on a cupboard and on a panel can be seen as equivalent. Painted furniture was

also a way of emulating the colourfulness and the richly ornamented interiors that Morris knew from the miniatures in illuminated manuscripts and that he already had tried to recreate in his painting "Queen Guinevre" / "La Belle Iseult" (fig. 8).[\[55\]](#)

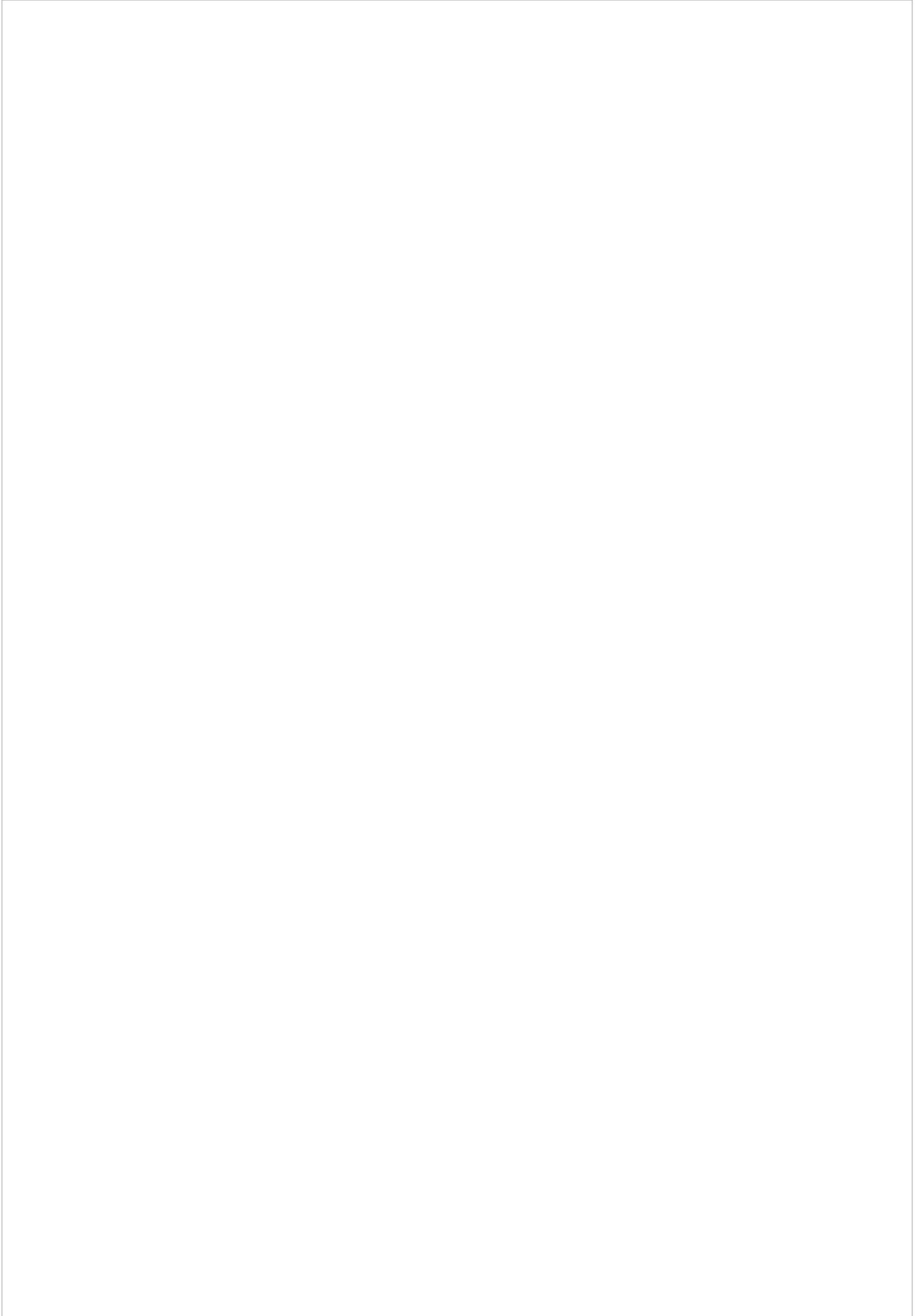


Figure 8. *Queen Guinevere* / *“La Belle Iseult”*, 1858, oil on canvas, 71,8 x 50,2 cm.
Image provided courtesy of the Tate Gallery, London

In the context of Morris's early artistic aims and his experience with moving house, these paintings on furniture are to be understood as a substitute for mural paintings that were no longer needed due to changing ways of living and increasing mobility. They were also a substitute for the function that was associated with mural paintings: the articulation and building of a common set of ideals. In the case of Morris, this included early literature such as Dante, Malory, English legends and Chaucer. In their subject matter and stylistic affinities to the Middle Ages and early Italian art, the paintings articulated the visual and ideal world that connected the artists. They served as a background for meetings at which mediaeval texts (or texts that were based on mediaeval models) were read and presented.^[56] They gave visual form to the ideals and models of the community, illustrated their aims and imaginary worlds. Therewith the living rooms of the artists, in which these pieces of furniture stood, gained a similar function to the halls in Italian city palaces or mediaeval castles. In particular, Morris's painting on a cupboard with bench and roof in the hall of the "Red House" might have served to underline this function of painted furniture in Morris's circle (fig. 9).

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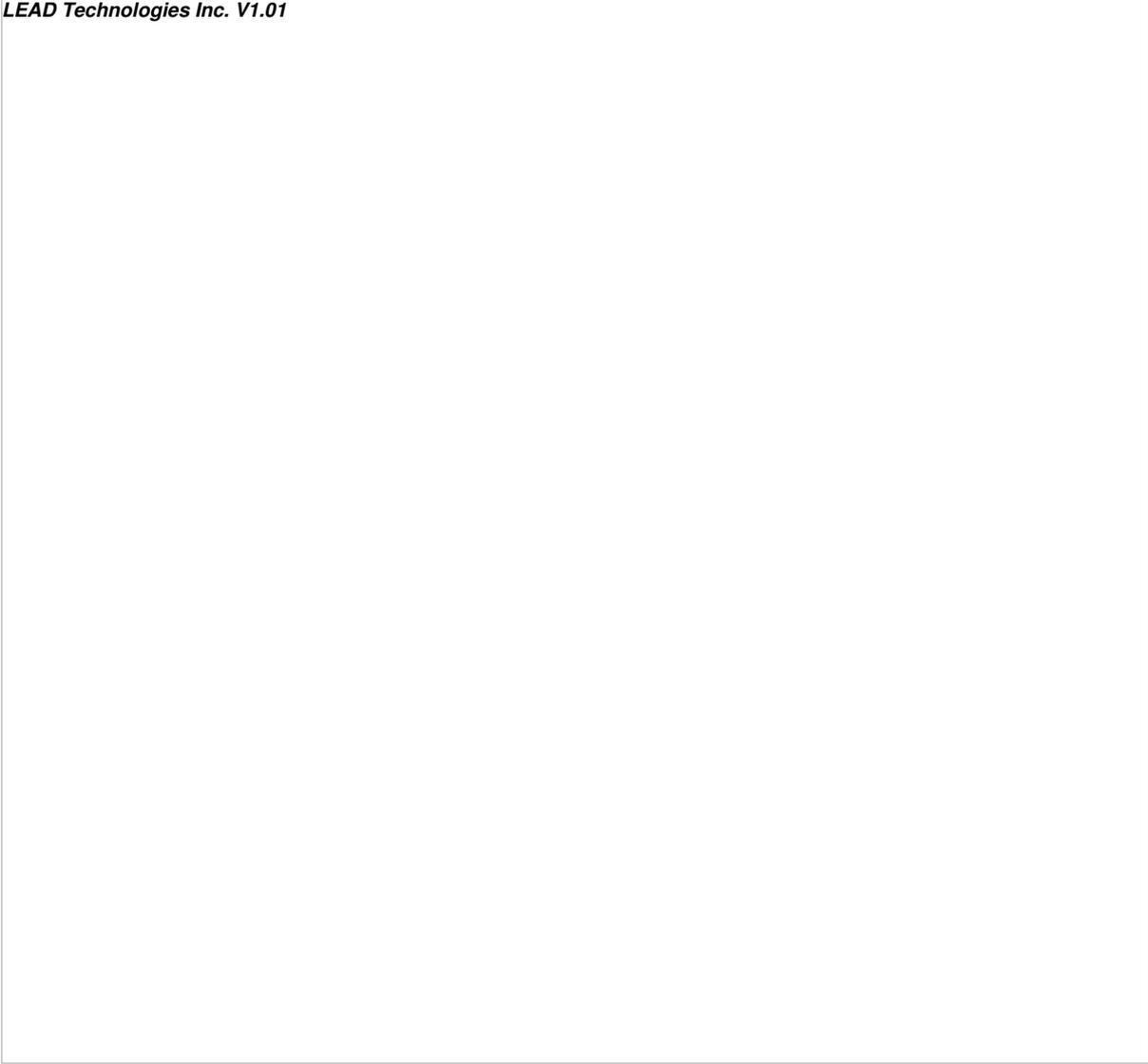


Figure 9. *Painting on a settee.* ©NTPL/ John Hammond
Image provided courtesy of the National Trust Photo Library (U.K.).

The painting is applied on the two doors of the cupboard and stretches over their whole width, forming a continuous scene. The left door shows groups of standing and sitting figures, playing musical instruments. On the right door are depicted two couples and at the end stands a female figure, echoing in reverse Morris's drawing of Jane Morris in a mediaeval dress from ca. 1857-1860 (fig. 10).^[57]

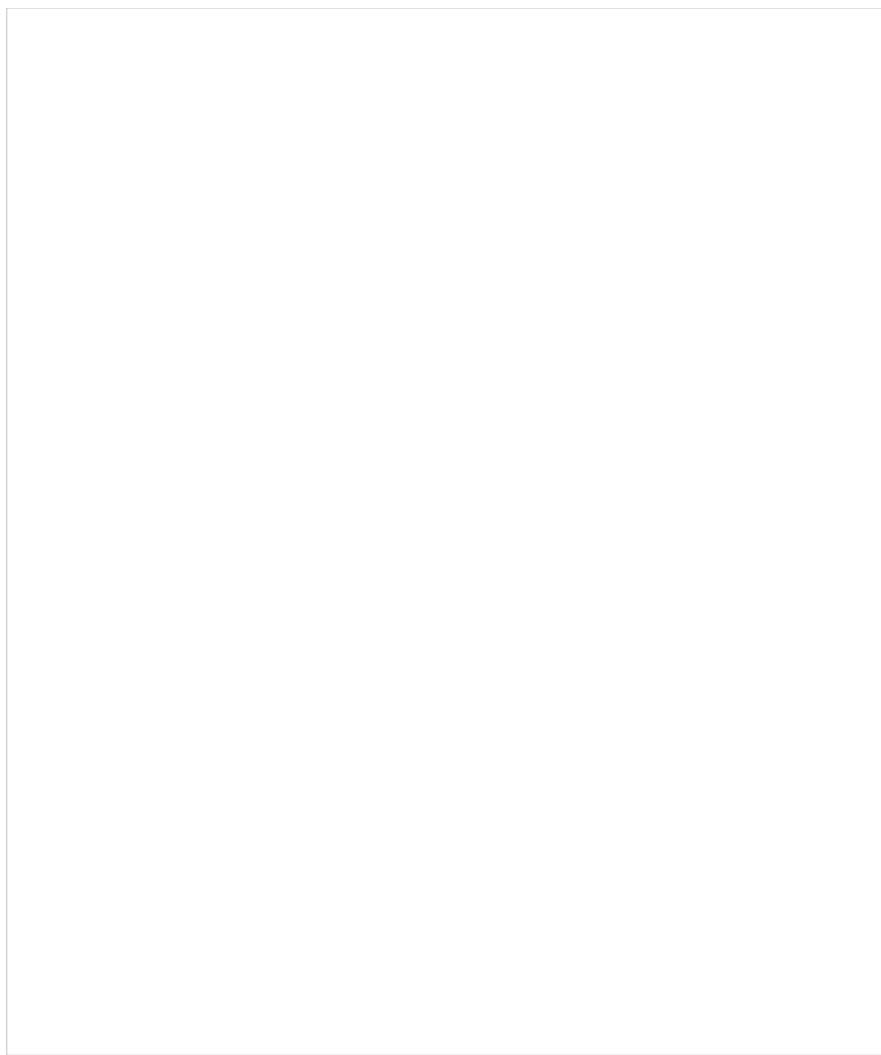


Figure 10. Study for 'Iseult on the Ship' by William Morris, c. 1857.
Portrait of Jane Burden. Pencil and ink.
Courtesy of William Morris Gallery, London Borough Waltham Forest.

In its arrangement of figures that are lined up side by side behind a narrow strip of meadow and in front of the verticals of tree trunks, the painting resembles the lower right hand scene of the fresco portraying the **Triumph of Death** in the **Campo Santo of Pisa**. [58] The subject of the painting, dated 1861-1862, is yet to be settled. Mackail, Morris's biographer, mentions a bench in the hall which was painted with scenes of the **Nibelungenlied**. [59] The scene was also connected with the story of **Tristan and Isold** and the **Roman de la Rose**. [60] But it likewise possesses certain parallels to the beginning of Boccaccio's **Decamerone**. The author describes how the protagonists are fleeing from the plague to withdraw to a country house with extensive gardens to enjoy conversation, listen to stories, sing love songs, play games and dance. In the paradise-like existence, reality and her threats are excluded. This leads to a focus on the communal life and on the practise and enjoyment of the different arts. The subject of garden entertainment establishes a relation to the surroundings of "Red House," which include a garden and a fountain with roof structure. Should the painting go back to this literary model, Morris's idea for the "Red House" would be repeated in pictorial form. It would reflect Morris's notion of living in "Red House" with his circle of consorts: his friends were frequent guests and they collaborated on decorative projects for the house or for other schemes; they took pleasure from the reading of literature, enjoyed the garden, and it was planned that Burne-Jones and his family would also move to the place in his own house opposite Morris's home. [61]

For the design of the garden, Morris probably received inspiration from mediaeval miniatures in illuminated manuscripts. [62] At the same time, the garden forms a popular **topos** for love, but also for transitoriness. The cupboard in the hall is positioned in an area of transition, and the depicted garden scenery mediates between inside and outside. The subject of the painting and the location of the scene, therefore, refer to the placement of the piece of furniture which has to be passed on the way to the garden.

Morris executed painted furniture only in the early years of the firm as these items due to the high prices were commercially not very successful. As a sort of replacement for moveable wall decoration he turned in 1879 towards tapestry weaving. [63] This was another medium in which literary subjects could be narrated, a medium that had a close affinity to mediaeval predecessors and that was suited to Morris's contemporary ways of living. The tapestries illustrating Malory's rendering of the Holy Grail for Stanford Hall (since 1890) or "Angeli Laudantes" / "Angeli Ministrantes," 1894, (fig. 11) combine a composition by Burne-Jones of only little depth, with floral motifs that follow **Verdure — or Millefleurs — Tapestries** from France and Flanders of the 15th and 16th centuries, comparable to the verdures of Philippe the Good from 1466 in the collection of the "Historische Museum" in Bern (fig. 12).



Figure 11. *Angeli Laudantes*, designed by Sir Edward Coley Burne-Jones (1833-98) and made by Morris & Co. Woven wool, silk and mohair on cotton warp. London, England, 1894. © [V&A Images/Victoria and Albert museum](https://www.vam.ac.uk), London. www.vam.ac.uk

These show a cumulative arrangement of stylised but clearly recognisable local flowers in rows. Neither Burne-Jones's compositions with figures that are lined beside each other nor the rows of flowers destroy the two-dimensionality of the picture plane or break up the walls.

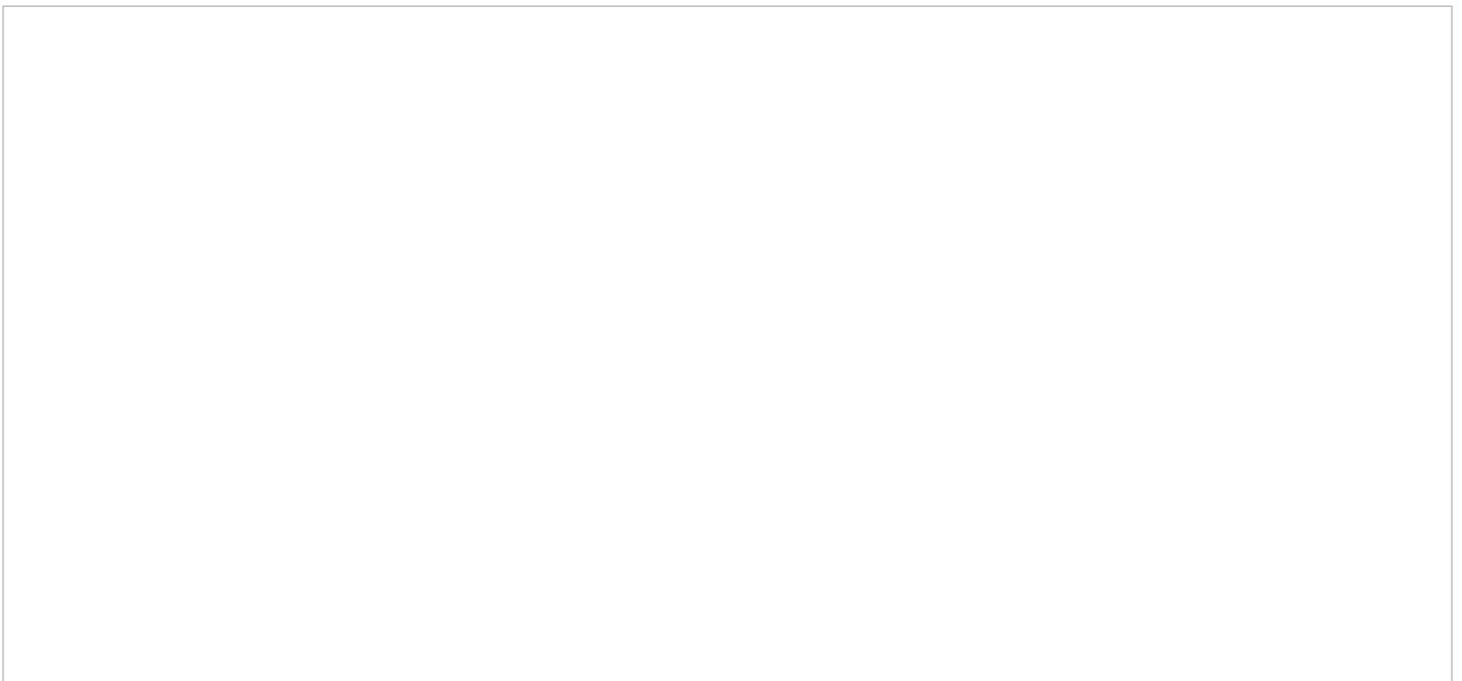


Figure 12. *Verdure for Philippe the Good* from 1466. Courtesy of Bernisches Historisches Museum.

Morris had a very high esteem for tapestry weaving and it appeared to him as a medium conducive for the creation of beauty and creative feeling.[64] It seemed a perfect conjunction between narrative and ornamental decoration on a scale that could compete with mural painting but matched the living conditions of his time and place. He regarded early tapestry weaving as a substitute "in Northern Europe of the fresco painting of Italy".[65]

Morris started his decorative ventures with the view to create objects and surroundings that delighted him personally and that he could not receive through commercial suppliers. After first attempts (in 1856) to recreate a mediaeval interior with huge, heavy painted furniture, he realised that these items were incompatible with contemporary conditions of living. His increasing attentiveness to this issue and his continual search for fitting prototypes can be seen in the evolution of form and decoration in his work on illumination, furniture and textile—to name only a few. This exploration resulted not only in changes within a medium but also in the change of medium itself. He thus first transformed illumination into a "modern" illumination adapted to modern texts, and then replaced it with book printing; he then substituted time-consuming embroidery with printed wall papers and painted tiles; finally, he switched from mural painting and painted furniture to tapestries that accorded more with his own time but could also narrate stories. The basis for a change of medium was always its mastering. Morris first tried his own hand in the execution of objects in the new media, thus exploring its technique, its practical use and its suitability to his aims. Clearly, for him, the two aspects of "authenticity," namely "integrity" and "expressive authenticity" (fitness to time), were intimately connected.

Simultaneously, Morris's perspective on historical models in the form of the "vernacular" is obvious: historical forms were bettered in the course of time and adjusted constantly to developing demands and technical possibilities. Tradition with Morris was something living: it proved the worth of the design of a particular item; but the appearance of the object was changeable, indeed, historically flexible. Although Morris insisted on traditional craft production, it should be emphasised that he did not completely reject the machine, but more its use by contemporary producers. He stressed the function of the machine to free the labourer from heavy and dull work, thus enabling him to be more creative and to enjoy more leisure.[66]

So, at least in his designs and his lectures on design, Morris features as someone who follows the demands of his time albeit according to his maxim for production and for living: "Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful". [67] His aim was to re-establish a contemporary art that was "authentic," focussed on the two aspects of usefulness and beauty.[68] These two dimensions were the key aspects of his goal of "simplicity," and "this simplicity," he argued, "you may make as costly as you please or can: [...]"[69] He hoped for "simplicity of life, begetting simplicity of taste,"[70] while demanding "a use and a meaning" in decoration.[71] Morris wished a "popular" art for his own time and for the future, an art understood by the maker and the user.[72] "Popular" in this Morrisian context signifies "authentic". Here, art is based on a living tradition that is still understood and valued; it is an art that is "reasonable and beautiful: yet [...] simple and inspiring" and available for everyone.[73]

Morris's authenticity is reflected in his fidelity to actuality, to the factual and material substrate of his own society, to the demands and needs of his contemporaries; at the same time, his art is compatible with its sources; it harmonizes with the traditional aesthetic practices of the Middle Ages. Most importantly, Morris's art and theories of art underscore sincerity, not only in their striving after simplicity of life style and of aesthetic taste, but in the adherence to a personal ideal that is to be achieved with as few compromises as possible.

Often, while closing his lectures, Morris expressed the wish that his hopes for the future would be fulfilled, but throughout he made it clear that he was working permanently on the accomplishment of his dreams in the present.[74]

Figures

1. William Morris, "Guendolen," 1856, ink and watercolour on vellum, 24,7 x 19,3 cm, Sotheby's.
2. William Morris, "The Iron Man," 1857, watercolour and gold paint on vellum, 23,5 x 37 cm. Wormsley Library, Bucks.
3. William Morris, A Book of Verse, 1870, ink, watercolour and gold on paper by C. Ansell, 279 x 216 mm. Victoria & Albert Museum, NAL, L. 131-1953, p. 32-33. www.vam.ac.uk
4. Morris & Co., Furniture of the Sussex Range. A Page from the Morris & Co. Catalogue.
5. William Morris, "Daisy Embroidery," early 1860s, worked by Jane Morris, Elisabeth Burden and others, woollen ground, embroidered with wools, 167 x 299 cm. Society of Antiquaries, London (Kelmscott Manor).
6. Jean Froissart, Chronicles, late 15th century. MS Harley 4380, fol. 1r. British Library, London.
7. William Morris, Wallpaper "Daisy", 1862 /1863. Block-printed paper. England, 1862. © V&A Images/Victoria and Albert museum, London. www.vam.ac.uk
8. William Morris, "Queen Guinevere" / "La Belle Iseult", 1858, oil on canvas, 71,8 x 50,2 cm, Tate Gallery, London.
9. William Morris (attributed), Painting on a settee, Hall, Red House. National Trust Photo Library (U.K.).
10. William Morris, "Iseult boarding the ship," ca. 1857-1860, pencil and ink, 51 x 41 cm, William Morris Gallery, Walthamstow.
11. Edward Burne-Jones, "Angeli Laudantes," Morris & Co., 1894, Victoria & Albert Museum, London. www.vam.ac.uk
12. "Verdure for Philippe the Good," 1466, Historisches Museum, Bern.

[1] For a concise introduction to the term and its problems, see Susanne Knaller, Harro Müller, "Authentisch / Authentizität," in Karlheinz

Barck et. al. eds., *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe* (ÄGB). *Historisches Wörterbuch in sieben Bänden*, Vol. 7. Stuttgart & Weimar: Verlag J. B. Metzler, 2005, 40-60.

[2] Ibid., 40: "original, zuverlässig, maßgebend".

[3] Philip Babcock Gove (ed.). *Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language*. Springfield, Mass: Merriam-Webster, 1993, 146. In contrast to "genuine" in relation to portrait painting: "GENUINE emphasizes certainty of ascription [...] and AUTHENTIC emphasizes the close similarity between portrait and subject, " ibid.

[4] Ibid., 43: "wahrhaftig," "unverfälscht,," 44, 47-48.

[5] Ibid., 52ff.

[6] Ibid., 59. Charles Taylor. *The Ethics of Authenticity*. Cambridge, Mass., & London: Harvard University Press, 1992.

[7] Ibid., 60. Alessandro Ferrara. *Reflective Authenticity. Rethinking the Project of Modernity*. London & New York: Routledge, 1998.

[8] Denis Dutton. "Authenticity in Art." *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*. Ed. Jerrold Levinson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, 258-274, see 266-268. For the latter issue, see Denis Dutton (ed.). *The Forger's Art. Forgery and the Philosophy of Art*. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983.

[9] A. N. W. Pugin. *Contrasts: or, A Parallel between the noble edifices of the Middle Ages, and corresponding buildings of the present day; showing the present decay of taste*. Reprint. Reading: Spire Books in association with the Pugin Society, 2003, 1. ed. London 1841, 1; 5-7. See also Pugin's *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture* set forth in two lectures delivered at St. Marie's Oscott, London, 1841. Reprint. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973.

[10] Compare William Morris. "Some Hints on Pattern-Designing" (1881). *The Collected Works of William Morris*. Ed. May Morris. London 1910-1915. Reprint. London: Routledge/Thoemmes Press, 1992, Vol. XXII, 175-205, 180; "Architecture and History" (1884), May Morris. Op. cit. Vol. XXII, 296-317; 314-315.

[11] Jonathan Freedman. "Ideological Battleground: Tennyson, Morris, and the Pastness of the Past." Eds. Christopher Baswell and William Sharpe. *The Passing of Arthur. New Essays in Arthurian Tradition*. Garland Reference Library of the Humanities, Vol. 781. New York & London: Garland, 1988, 235-248, see 241.

[12] Compare William Morris, "The Art of the People" (1879). May Morris. Op. cit., Vol. XXII, 28-50; "The Lesser Arts" (1877), May Morris. Op. cit., Vol. XXII, 3-27.

[13] William Morris. "The Lesser Arts of Life." May Morris. Op. cit., Vol. XXII, 235-269, 243.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid., 243-244.

[16] Ibid., 47.

[17] Nikolaus Pevsner. *The Sources of Modern Architecture and Design*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1995 (1. ed. 1968), S. 19ff, esp. 22; Nikolaus Pevsner. *Wegbereiter moderner Formgebung von Morris bis Gropius (Pioneers of Modern Design)*. Cologne: DuMont Buchverlag, 1983 (1. ed. London 1936), 39ff., esp. 45; Herbert Read. *Art and Industry. The Principles of Industrial Design*. London: Faber & Faber, 1945 (1. ed. 1934), 39, 42-43.

[18] Alf Bøe. *From Gothic Revival to Functional Form. A Study in Victorian Theories of Design*. Oslo & Oxford, 1957. Reprint. New York: Da Capo Press, 1979, 107ff.

[19] Jennifer Harris. "William Morris and the Middle Ages." Eds. Joanna Banham, Jennifer Harris. *William Morris and the Middle Ages*, exhib. cat. Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984, S. 1-17.

[20] Larry D. Lutchmansingh. *Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co.: William Morris's Medieval Craft Adventure, Studies in Medievalism* III, 2, 1990, 115-127.

[21] William Morris. "Art and its Producers" (1888). May Morris. Op. cit., Vol. XXII, 342-355; 346.

[22] Ibid., 43. For a critical consideration of Morris's "utopia," see also Paul Greenhalgh, "News from somewhere: Morris and the Problem of Utopia." *The Earthly Paradise. William Morris Yesterday and Today*. Conference papers. Eds. Jean Johnson C. M. & Richard Bishop. Toronto, 1993. The William Morris Society of Canada & The Craft Studio at Harbourfront Centre, Ontario, 1996, 115-127.

[23] Frank-Lothar Kroll. *Das Ornament in der Kunsttheorie des 19. Jahrhunderts Studien zur Kunstgeschichte*, Vol. 42, Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1987, 108.

[24] May Morris. Op. cit., Vol. IX, xviii.

[25] Ibid., xviii. The cursive lettering follows the original.

[26] For further information, see Alice H. R. H. Beckwith, *Victorian Bibliomania. The Illuminated Book in 19th-Century Britain*, exh. cat. Museum of Rhode Island School of Design. Providence, Rhode Island, 1987; Rowan Watson. "Educators, Collectors, Fragments and the 'Illuminations' collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum in the Nineteenth Century." Eds. Linda L. Brownrigg, Margaret M. Smith. *Interpreting and Collecting Fragments of Medieval Books*. Proceedings of The Seminar in the History of the Book to 1500. [Oxford,

1998] Los Altos Hills, California & London: Anderson-Lovelace, 2000, 21-46; Sandra Hindman and Nina Rowe (eds.) *Manuscript Illumination in the Modern Age. Recovery and Reconstruction*. Evanston, Illinois: Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art. Northwestern University, 2001.

[27] John Ruskin. *The Works of John Ruskin*. Eds. E.T. Cook & Alexander Wedderburn. London & New York: Allen, Longmans, Green & Co., 1903-1912, Vol. XI, 23; see also *ibid.* Vol. V, 262 and Vol. XII, 481.

[28] Ruskin. *Op. cit.*, Vol. V, 264, 268.

[29] *Ibid.*, 266.

[30] Ruskin. *Op. cit.*, Vol. IX, 285.

[31] Ruskin. *Op. cit.*, Vol. XII, 481; *ibid.*, Vol. VI, 99; *ibid.*, Vol. XII, 482; *ibid.*, Vol. V, 264.

[32] Letter by John Ruskin to Edward Augustus Bond, Keeper of Manuscripts at the British Museum, ca. 1857/1858. John Rylands Library, Manchester. See the reproduction of the letter in *Journal of the William Morris Society* II, 1, Spring 1966, 2.

[33] London Sotheby's 21.-22.6.1993, Lot 244; Joseph R. Dunlap. "Morris and the Book Arts before the Kelmscott Press." *Victorian Poetry* 13, 3-4, Autumn / Winter 1975, 141-157, see 142

[34] For the use of mediaeval models in the text of the volume "The Defence of Guenevere," see David Staines, "Morris's Treatment of His Medieval Sources in *The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems*." *Studies in Philology* 70, 1973, 439-464.

[35] William Morris. "Printing" (1893). Ed. William S. Peterson. *The Ideal Book. Essays and Lectures on the Arts of the Book by William Morris*. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982, 59-66, see 64.

[36] Compare Dunlap 1975, *op. cit.*, 143.

[37] William Morris. "The Ideal Book" (1893). Peterson 1982. *Op. cit.*, 67-73. For Morris's estimation of early printed books, see his lectures "The Early Illustration of Printed Books" (1895) and "The Woodcuts of Gothic Books" (1892), *ibid.*, 15-24, 25-44.

[38] For this book project, see Joseph R. Dunlap, *The Book that never was*. New York: Oriole Editions, 1971.

[39] This opinion is also expressed in Rosie Miles, "'The Beautiful Book that was': William Morris and the Gift of 'A Book of Verse'." Eds. Peter Faulkner and Peter Preston. *William Morris. Centenary Essays. Papers from the Morris Centenary Conference* organized by the William Morris Society at Exeter College 30 June - 3 July 1996. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999, 133-143, see 135; David Faldet. "An Index of their Maker: Morris's Labour in 'A Book of Verse' and the Kelmscott 'Poems by the Way'." *Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies* V, Autumn 1996, 61-76, see 66.

[40] Compare, for example, similar thoughts concerning the printing of books in an interview with the "Bookseller" in 1895, in Peterson 1982, *op. cit.* Appendix B, 95-96.

[41] William Whitla, "'Sympathetic Translations' and the 'Scribe's Capacity': Morris's Calligraphy and the Icelandic Sagas." *The Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies* N.S. 10 (Autumn 2001): 27-108, 70.

[42] William Morris. "Some Hints on Pattern-Designing." May Morris. *Op. cit.*, Vol. XXII, 175.

[43] Bodleian Library Oxford, MS Eng.misc.c.265; Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, inv. no. 92'20.

[44] Victoria & Albert Museum, London. National Art Library, L.131-1953.

[45] William Morris. "Some Hints on Pattern-Designing." May Morris. *Op. cit.*, Vol. XXII, 177-178, 199-201.

[46] William Morris. "The Lesser Arts." May Morris. *Op. cit.*, Vol. XXII, 15-16.

[47] William Morris. "The Art of the People" (1879). May Morris. *Op. cit.*, Vol. XXII, 28-50, see. 50. Morris described this art as a "perfect expression of their thoughts by men very specially gifted." William Morris, "The Beauty of Life," (1880), May Morris. *Op. cit.*, Vol. XXII, 51-80, see 55.

[48] Compare Linda Parry (ed.), exh. cat. William Morris 1834-1896. Victoria & Albert Museum, London, 1996, cat. no. J.11, 169.

[49] Compare *ibid.*, cat. no. J.1, 164.

[50] William Morris. "The Lesser Arts of Life." May Morris. *Op. cit.* Vol. XXII, 261.

[51] Banham/Harris 1984, *op. cit.*, cat. no. 56, 118-120; A. R. Dufty. *Morris Embroideries. The Prototypes*. The Society of Antiquaries. London, 1985, 11, pl. II, III. Presumably, Morris drew inspiration for another embroidery (early 1860s, private collection) from the depiction of tapestries in the Harley-miniatures containing mediaeval interiors. This one shows a fruit tree with a script banner and a flying bird. See Parry 1996, *op. cit.*, cat. no. M.5, 235.

[52] Richard Myers / Hilary Myers. *William Morris Tiles. The Tile Designs of Morris and his Fellow-Workers*. Shepton Beauchamp, Somerset, Richard Dennis, 1996, 16-20, pl. 3-5 on 35-37. For Morris's ideas on wall papers, see William Morris. "Some Hints on Pattern-Designing." May Morris. *Op. cit.*, Vol. XXII, 190-192.

[53] John Christian. *The Oxford Union Murals*. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1981; John D. Renton. *The Oxford Union Murals*. Oxford, 1983; William Michael Rossetti. *Ruskin: Rossetti: Preraphaelitism*. Papers 1854 to 1862. London: George Allen,

[54] J. W. Mackail. *The Life of William Morris*, 2 Vols. New York: Dover, 1995 (1. ed. London, 1899), Vol. I, 158.

[55] For further literature concerning the painting, see Letter by D. G. Rossetti to William Bell Scott from June 1857. Ed. William E. Fredeman. *The Correspondence of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. The Formative Years 1835-1862*. Charlotte Street to Cheyne Walk, Vol. II 1855-1862. Cambridge: Brewer, 2002, no. 57.26, 185; John Christian. *The Pre-Raphaelites*. exh. cat. Ed. Leslie Parris. London: Tate Gallery, 1994 (1. ed. 1984), cat. no. 94, p. 169; Jan Marsh. *William Morris's Painting and Drawing in Burlington Magazine* 128, August 1986, 571-577; Banham/Harris 1984, op. cit., cat. no. 51, 114-116; Parry 1996, op. cit., cat. no. G.10, 102-103 and 91; Debra N. Mancoff. "Problems with the Pattern: William Morris's Arthurian Imagery." *Arthuriana* VI, 3, Autumn, 1996, 55-68, see 58-60.

[56] Michaela Braesel. "Bilderzählung und englische Möbel um 1860." *Münchner Jahrbuch der Bildenden Kunst*, forthcoming.

[57] It is interpreted as a design showing Isold mounting the ship; compare Ray Watkinson in Parry 1996, op. cit., cat. no. G. 9, 102.

[58] Attribution to Burne-Jones or Rossetti in N. Cromly-Hawke. "William Morris and Victorian Painted Furniture." *Connoisseur* 191, January 1976, 33-43, see 38. Compare Maureen Harper, "Here's to the Ingle where True Hearts mingle: The Revival of the Settle and Inglebrook by Nineteenth-Century English Architects." *Journal of the Decorative Arts Society* XII, 1988, 10-17, see 12.

[59] Mackail, 1995, I, op. cit., 159.

[60] Marsh. Op.cit., 1986, 573. Ray Watkinson. "Red House Decorated." *Journal of the William Morris Society* VII, 4, Spring 1988, 10-15, see 13-15 with allusion to Tristan and Isold at Joyous Gard in Malory X, 52. Compare also Watkinson in Parry 1996, op. cit., 95. Watkinson tried to identify the figures with members from Morris's circle of friends, *ibid.*; Muriel Whitaker. *The Legends of King Arthur in Art*, Arthurian Studies XXII. Cambridge, C. S. Brewer, 1995 (1. ed. 1990), 193; Jan Marsh. *William Morris & Red House*. National Trust, London, 2005, 48.

[61] Morris had planned to establish in the connection of these two houses a "palace of art." Mackail, 1995, I, op. cit., 164. In 1832, in his poem "The Palace of Art," Tennyson had pointedly described the imaginary palace that the soul builds for herself according to her ideas, and in which she turns away from the exterior world. See *The Poems of Tennyson* in three volumes. Ed. Christopher Ricks. Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1987 (1. ed. 1969), no. 167, 438ff. Compare Roderick Marshall. *William Morris and his Earthly Paradises*. Tisbury, Wiltshire: Compton Press, 1979, 44-56. For a resemblance between Morris's "Red House" and Tennyson's "Palace of Art", see *The Poems of Tennyson*, 1987, op. cit., 439-441.

[62] Compare Banham/Harris 1984, op. cit., 111-112. Compare the drawing, British Library, London, MS Add. 45336, fol. 12r, based on the garden in the illumination of the Harley-"Roman de la Rose." British Library, London, MS Harley 4425, fol. 12v.

[63] The date is based on Morris's "Acanthus and Vine" (a tapestry from 1879 which is his first known piece of tapestry weaving). London: Society of Antiquaries. There are no known earlier experiments in weaving by Morris, although he seems to have built a loom already in 1877. See Parry 1996, op. cit., cat. no. M.115, 286.

[64] William Morris. "The Lesser Arts of Life." May Morris. Op. cit., Vol. XXII, 235-269; 251-255.

[65] *Ibid.*, 254.

[66] William Morris. "Art and Socialism" (1884). May Morris. Op. cit., Vol. XXIII, 192-214, 206ff.

[67] William Morris. "The Beauty of Life." May Morris. Op. cit., Vol. XXII, S. 76. For Morris and the machine, see Herbert L. Sussman, *Victorians and the Machine*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968, 104-133.

[68] William Morris. "The Beauty of Life." May Morris. Op. cit., Vol. XXII, 76.

[69] *Ibid.*, 77.

[70] William Morris. "The Lesser Arts." May Morris. Op. cit., Vol. XXII, 24.

[71] *Ibid.*, 4.

[72] *Ibid.*, 27.

[73] *Ibid.*, 27.

[74] *Ibid.*, 27.



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feat which is in no small part down to the work of The William Morris Society. Set up in 1955, the society's goal is to preserve Morris's memory by introducing his ideas on creative work, leisure, conservation and politics to new generations. To coincide with its 50th Anniversary, Pentagram has created a new identity for The William ...

William Morris: Story, Memory, Myth (Two Temple Place exhibition catalogue, 2011). Caroline Arscott William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones Interlacings (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2008). Joanna Banham and Jennifer Harris eds. William Morris and the Middle Ages (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1984). Philippa Bennett and Rosie Miles eds. Chris Miele ed. From William Morris: Building Conservation and the Arts and Crafts Cult of Authenticity (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2005). Book Arts. Joseph R Dunlap The Book That Never Was (Oriole Editions, New York, 1971). William S Peterson The Kelmscott Press: A History of William Morris's Typographical Adventure (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1991). So wrote William Morris to Georgiana Burne-Jones, recounting his voyage on the river near Streatley and Goring. We also had a jolly day, despite near-constant rain. The Midsomer Maiden has clear plastic panels that can be unrolled and zipped together, and we felt exceptionally snug, and generally dry, on today's journey. David made a thematically appropriate choice of his own, Bruce Springsteen's "The River." Ruth Levitas responded with Ewan MacColl's "Sweet Thames, Flow Softly." Ruth followed that triumph with a suite of Morris-related songs, including Leon Rosselson's "Bringing the News from Nowhere" and Happy End's version of a J. Bruce Glasier lyric, "We'll Turn Things Upside Down." William Morris is best known as the 19th century's most celebrated designer, but he was also a driven polymath who spent much of his life fighting the consensus. William Morris, photograph, Frederick Hollyer, 1884, England. Museum no. 7715-1938. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Morris was born in Walthamstow, east London in 1834. The financial success of his broker father gave Morris a privileged childhood in Woodford Hall (a country house in Essex), as well as an inheritance large enough to mean he would never need to earn an income. Time spent exploring local parkland, forest and churches, and an enthusiasm for the stories of Walter Scott, helped Morris develop an early affinity with landscape, buildings and historical romance.