THE ACCEPTANCE OF ART NOUVEAU IN ENGLAND 1895-1910

CRITICAL REACTIONS, ENGLISH TASTE AND QUESTIONS OF GENDER

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ABSTRACT

My justification for writing this thesis is that there is no standard work available that considers the question of English Art Nouveau. My aim is to develop a methodological framework to provide a critical historiography of Art Nouveau, and to account for the acceptance of Art Nouveau style in England. The thesis is contained within seven chapters, together with an introduction and conclusion. Where it is considered appropriate, there will be illustrations and chapter appendices.

The thesis considers the acceptance at two levels. These are English acceptance of the varied forms of Continental Art Nouveau; and their indigenous expression of the style. A historic fact is that there is no architectural exterior built in the period 1895-1910, which may be termed Art Nouveau, within an accepted definition of the style. However, today, at auction houses, there may be seen considerable numbers of small-scale pieces with distinct Art Nouveau characteristics. This seeming contradiction will be examined through an exploration of the social and economic concerns at the time. Taste, decadence and modernity are seen to be significant issues. The contemporaneous concepts of conspicuous consumption and emulation also had some relevance. However, above all, it will be demonstrated that class and gender had considerable influence on certain segments of the population, in their values and attitudes towards the 'New Art'.

The historiography invariably indicates that the approach to Art Nouveau was within the artistic creativity of celebrated individuals. My objective is to move forward from this and, to evaluate those small-scale works that were produced at the time. I do this by looking at archives, trade magazines, contemporary diaries and novels and journals, particularly those of the decorative arts. My approach is multi disciplinary and I shall draw from historic and sociological sources, when appropriate.

The evidence points to a powerful segment of the population who were unprepared to accept Art Nouveau. However, this did not mean a total rejection of the style. The analysis shows that England was a fragmented society at the time and individual consumption choices were often complex and problematic.

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INTRODUCTION

In the last ten years I have assembled a collection of ceramics that involved attending auctions and antique fairs. This led me to question why there seems to be a discrepancy between the antique trade's view of the period 1895-1910 and how the period is seen in the artistic literature on Art Nouveau. Auction house catalogues invariably label decorative arts produced at the time as being Art Nouveau. At a recent auction that I attended in Petersfield a vase, with no more than a formal pattern was catalogued and sold as Art Nouveau. On the other hand, published texts on Art Nouveau only tend to emphasise the work of major artists such as the Frenchmen Gallè and Majorelle[1].

A reading of some recent texts on Art Nouveau led me to conclude that, as far as England was concerned, there was no Art Nouveau. This was in direct contrast to my experience in the antiques trade. My academic background in sociology and a keen interest in history reinforced a desire to explore what, on the surface, was a problem.

The major thrust of my thesis that England produced decorative art that can be seen to incorporate Art Nouveau stylistic features in the first decade of the twentieth century. Second that there was also some acceptance of foreign Art Nouveau at the time. Such artefacts may be readily seen in the reprint of the 1906

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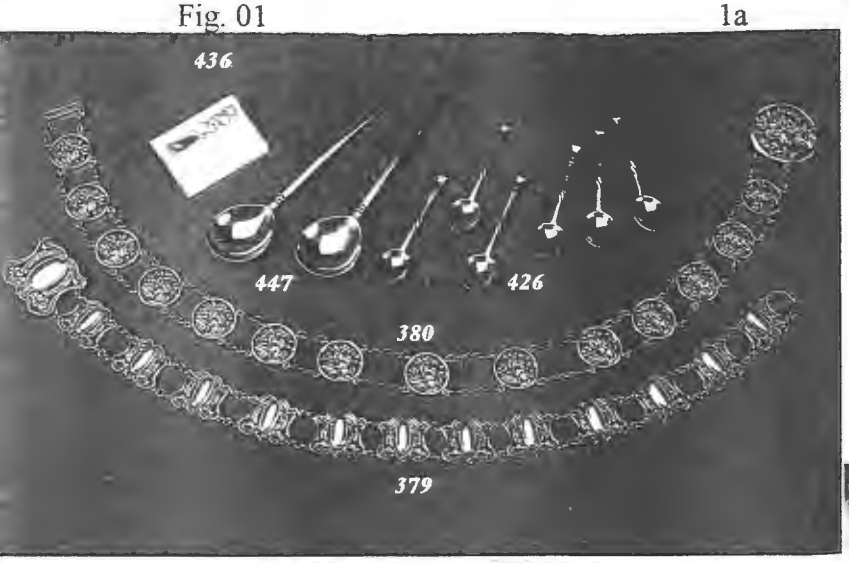
[1] A further example of the general neglect of English Art Nouveau in the literature and its acceptance today is a M.O.D.A. lecture on 29-09-04 which was given the title, *British Art Nouveau and the Silver Studio of Design.* The Silver Studio is notably conspicuous by its absence in the literature.

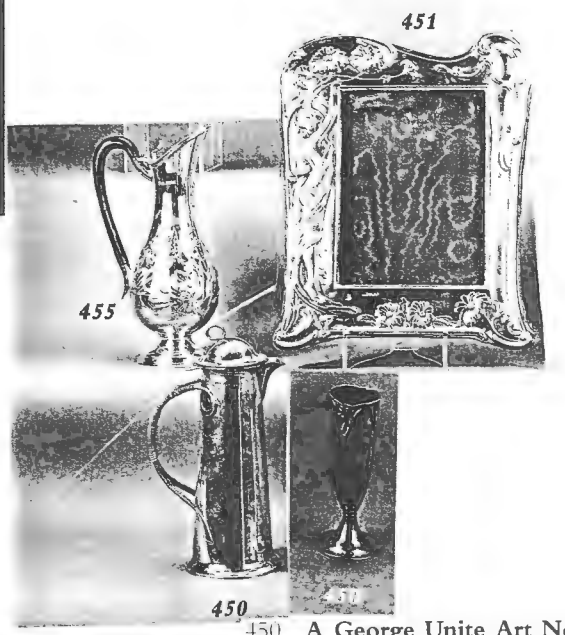
Fig. 01 1a



9 **A silver Art Nouveau belt**
erced and cast in relief with lily stems nking eliptical medallion, *stamped WA rmingham, 1902* — 61cm. diam.
e illustration

£150-200

0 **An Art Nouveau silver belt**
rcular panels stamped in relief with a ortrait bust of a maiden amongst owers and foliage, with chain link *mped L & S 1902*
e illustration £200-300



455 **A John Rose Art Nouveau silver jug**
on pedestal foot, the swollen body cast in relief with climbing clematis flowers and foliage, the hinged cover with similar motif, with scrolling wooden handle *stamped marks, Sheffield 1900* — 23cm. high
See illustration

£450-500

450 **A George Unite Art Nouveau silver ewer**
with hinged cover, applied with scroll handle and finial *stamped G U, Birmingham 1909* and a pedestal spill vase
See illustration

£200-300

JEWELLERY AND OBJECTS OF VERTU

377 **A set of six silver Art Nouveau buttons**
pierced and cast in relief with flowers and foliage, in presentation case *stamped marks JD WD Chester 1901*

Not illustrated

451 **An Art Nouveau silver picture frame**
of shades rectangular form, stamped in relief with a maiden amongst oversize flowers and foliage *stamed marks S.M.L. Birmingham 1907* — 31cm. high
See illustration

£300-400

CHRISTIE'S SOUTH KENSINGTON 20th CENTURY BRITISH AND CONTINENTAL DECORATIVE ARTS, FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 13th 1996

Here may be seen the wide variety of auction house application to suggestions of Art Nouveau. Art Nouveau has become a generic term to encompass the period 1900-10.

English catalogue from Württembergische Metallwarren Fabrik.[2] Third the extent to which controversies about Art Nouveau throw light on some of the issues current in English society at the turn of the century. It is seen as necessary to explore the social consciousness of the time in order to explore the hypothesis that there was some acceptance of Art Nouveau in England in the period 1895-1910.

I am concentrating on English Art Nouveau rather than that of Great Britain. This is because the Scottish, in particular, have different cultural roots and traditions that led to a distinct form of Art Nouveau that is well documented in the literature. It is sometimes referred to as the Glasgow School and is often associated with the work of Charles Rennie Mackintosh.

The word 'acceptance' has varied meanings which require consideration. Acceptance may imply approval and a favourable reception with active consent to receive. Active consumption of Art Nouveau artefacts may therefore indicate 'acceptance'. In particular I will explore acceptance by a state run institution the Victoria and Albert Museum. I will also consider areas of manufacture including ceramics and jewellery. There is also in the word acceptance a sense of recognition and acknowledgement. There may be some toleration of Art Nouveau without, necessarily, going as far as to acquire objects in the style. There are therefore different routes to explore. There is also the issue of non-acceptance. There were some who totally rejected the style and I will endeavour to assess why this was the case.

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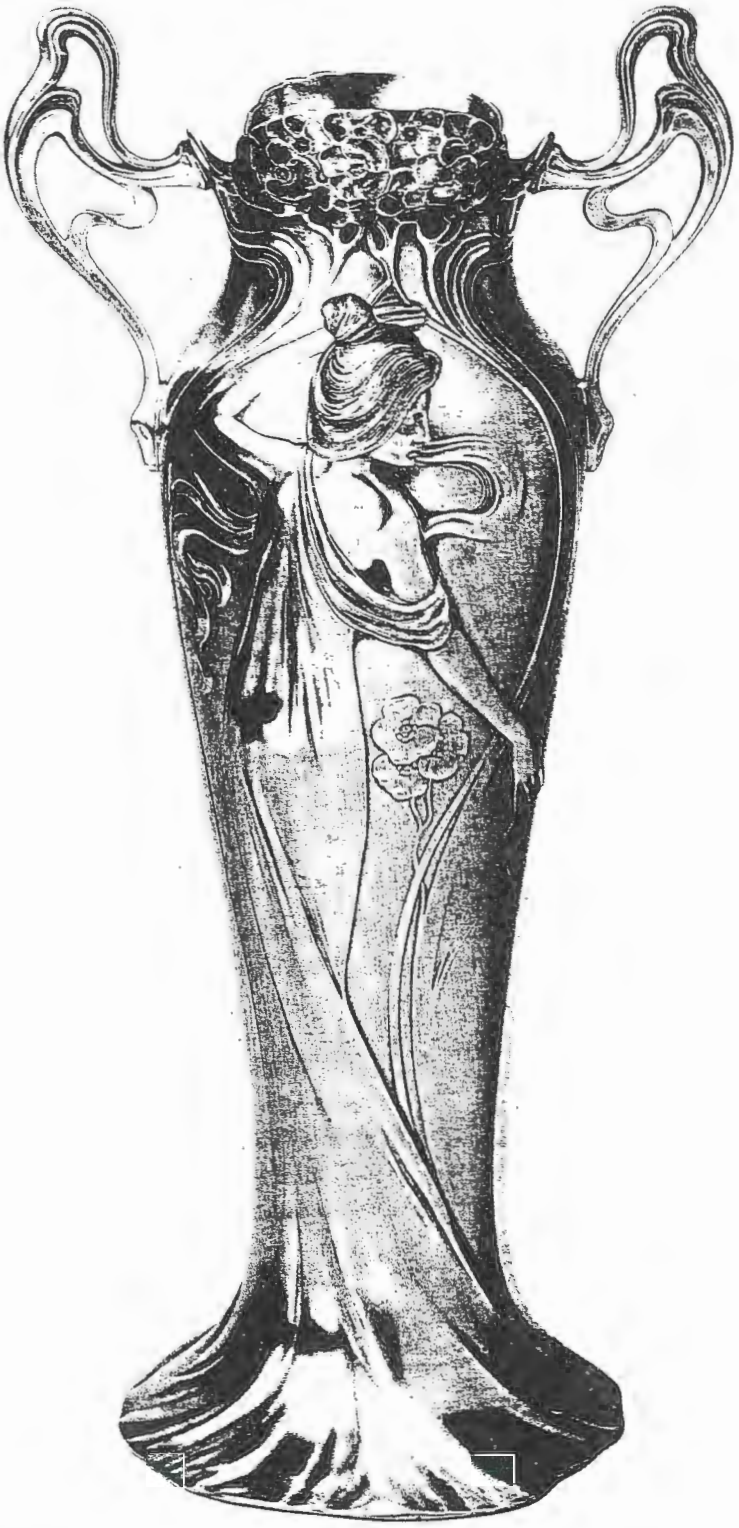
[2] Württembergische Metallwarren Fabrik, *Sales Catalogue,* Woodbridge: Antique Collectors Club, 1986, plate X111. Such a catalogue of 389 pages testifies to the appeal of Art Nouveau at the time.

Fig. 0.2



FLOWER VASE, MARK WMF, EP,OX g.
'ART NOUVEAU' DOMESTIC METALWORK from Württenbergische Meteallwarren Fabrik, 1906. Reprinted by Antigue Collectors Club: Woodbridge 1998. Plate x111.
The catalogue illustrates a continuing demand for Art Nouveau artefacts in England.

I will show that there was an indigenous Art Nouveau in England that varied in certain respects from that produced abroad. Moreover, the latter was by no means homogeneous and the English were prepared to accept some Continental Art Nouveau when it related to their taste.

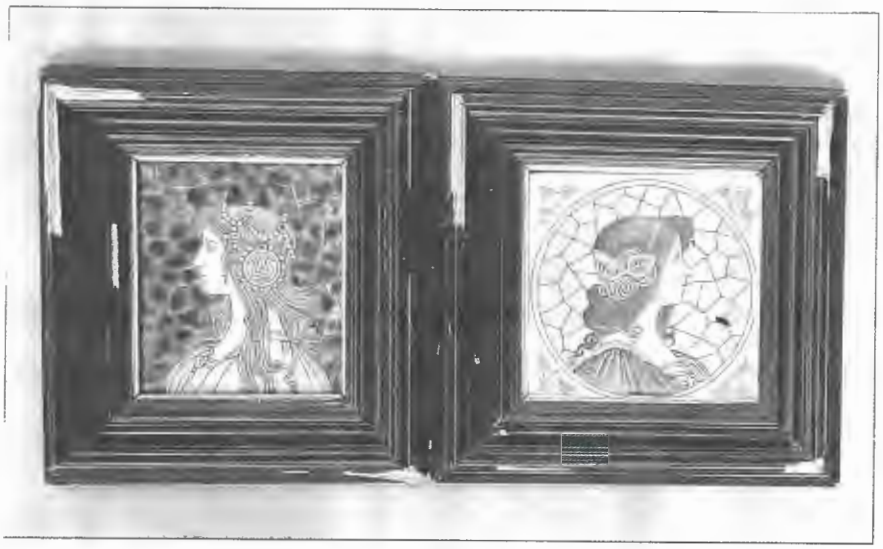
The thesis is contained within seven chapters together with introduction and conclusion. Following the precedent of Stefan Madsen the practice of applying relevant contemporary sources is adopted,[3] but unlike him I develop an understanding of the social context in which these examples circulated.

The opening chapter explores the general historiography of Art Nouveau with particular reference to English acceptance or rejection of the style. A traditional chronological approach seems inappropriate to the diverse and ambiguous nature of the subject matter. To accommodate this the chapter is split into sections. At the outset the idea that individual countries developed their own individual form of Art Nouveau is examined. This is followed by a consideration of national variations in the style, which is taken from contemporaneous sources. Primary sources will then be looked at in more general terms and the chapter concludes with a review of the secondary sources.

The literature on Art Nouveau will be seen to be both wide-ranging and extensive. However, it is far from being cumulative. The lack of continuity is most apparent on a detailed examination of the texts. There is also a lack of continuity in what is

[3] Madsen, Stephan Tschudi, (1956) *The Art Nouveau Style,* Dover: New York, 2002.

Fig. 0.3 3a



580

580 **Two French Art Nouveau enamelled glass panels**
each of square section, finely decorated with the profile of a young maiden wearing a renaissance style costume with elaborate headdress, both against a 'crazed' background, within black wooden frames, *painted artist's signature 'A. Baratte' to reverse, one with monogram (some wear to frames)* — 27.2cm. high overall
See illustration £600-800

CHRISTIE'S SOUTH KENSINGTON 20th BRITISH AND CONTINENTAL DECORATIVE ARTS, FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 13th, 1999.
See page 124 for an English comparison. Illustrated is a Della Robbia charger that shows the English stylistic interpretation of Continental Art Nouveau.

perceived to be English Art Nouveau, and this is not assisted by the differing definitions that are applied. Within the literature there is an emphasis on highlighting the more expensive work and this was accentuated in the 1970s by developments in colour photography. It is difficult to find examples of what may be considered the middle and lower end of the market. No two authors follow identical routes, with some authors considering particular decorative forms such as furniture or architecture while others highlight the most expensive pieces.

In the second chapter I move from the general survey of the historiography to specific detailed examples of three English architectural interiors that have varied histories as exemplars of English Art Nouveau. The examples are Compton Mortuary Chapel Surrey, Black Friar Public House London and Great Warley Church Essex. Each was featured in the Pevsner and Richards *Anti Rationalists* (1976)[4] and they were considered as having variable affiliation to Art Nouveau. Some of the major definitions of Art Nouveau will be applied to these three examples in order to tease out and determine what distinguishes English work from that found on the Continent and in Scotland. I will also consider the question of how far there is a relationship between continental Art Nouveau and English Arts and Crafts. I have visited the three buildings and have examined the Compton archives.

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[4] Pevsner, Nikalaus, and J. M. Richards, (Eds.) *The Anti Rationalists*, London: Architectural Press, 1976.

The third chapter on the Donaldson Bequest brings further issues that relate to ideas of acceptance. The South Kensington complex, which included the Museum and the Royal College of Art, was a government-funded institution that was ultimately the responsibility of a Secretary of State for Education. As such it will be seen as giving public recognition to the 'New Art'. The Bequest is seen as a microcosm of my entire study, both in content and methodology. Archival records together with contemporary and post war sources will be examined in this chapter The reception of the Bequest, within an institutional context, will be seen to encapsulate English values and taste at the time. Some of the criticisms of the Art Nouveau furniture bequest relate to issues of foreign competition and the appropriateness of Art Nouveau as a 'national' English style

Chapter Four considers English ceramics between 1895-1910 and Art Nouveau. There is an in depth examination of *The Pottery and Glass Trades Gazette,* the mouthpiece of the ceramics industry; and the archival records at Doulton and Wedgwood are examined. Financial restraints and economic competition meant that Art Nouveau provided a necessary impetus to a number of manufacturers to embrace the style.

There are references to the 'modern' and to 'decadence' within the *Pottery Gazette.* These are seen to highlight some of the concerns at the time and they are examined in Chapter Five. For some the idea of 'modern' or 'new' was important at the turn of a century, while for others, especially those with traditionalist values, it was anathema.

The idea of decadence is seen to give the 'New Art' an unfortunate image at a time when sexuality, sensuality and degeneration were to the forefront of the social consciousness. Such issues will be seen to impact directly on class, gender and taste, with consequences for the reception of the 'New Art'.

The question of taste, examined in chapter Six, is central to the analysis and both theoretical insights and contemporaneous sources will be examined. Questions addressed include whether there were acknowledged 'gatekeepers' of taste at the time as well as the different patterns of those within class fractions that made up the late nineteenth century social world and what, if any, were the accepted models of taste to be followed. The chapter examines the question of why the 'New Art' failed to penetrate the public domain with public buildings having no Art Nouveau stylistic characteristics.

Chapter Seven on gender will address the question as to why the bourgeois female was more likely to accept and consume Art Nouveau than her spouse. Jewellery will be seen as important, both within primary and later sources, with the concept of conspicuous consumption significant. Social change leads the sexes in opposite directions and this fact has a direct consequence for the acceptance of Art Nouveau.

My aim is to go beyond the idea that there was a general acceptance or rejection of the style but to examine, why some sections of the population were more prepared to tolerate and actually accept the style, by consuming its artefacts, than were others.

CHAPTER 1

HISTORIOGRAPHY - REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter I will explore the historiography of Art Nouveau. It is accepted practice that an academic thesis should begin with a chapter that outlines the literature extant on the subject. However, a study relating to the acceptance of Art Nouveau in England has number of problems to face. The texts are either generic accounts of Art Nouveau or accounts relating to fields of design.

The perception of an English Art Nouveau is considered from both primary and secondary sources. The former include the contemporary arts press, in particular *The Studio*, and where appropriate, memoirs relating to the period 1895-1910. Major secondary texts that were written in the half century between 1950 and 2000 will be examined to order to assess how far there was an acknowledgement of an English Art Nouveau.

Within this assessment of Art Nouveau three basic questions will be addressed. First, the ways in which Art Nouveau was considered in the period 1895-1910; second, the comments and evaluations made by contemporary writers; third how far secondary sources since 1910 have recognised an English Art Nouveau. It is the third of these basic issues that will form the heart of my study.

If we examine two typical current texts published by art specialists, Thames and Hudson and Taschen, there is little to suggest that England produced an acceptable viable Art Nouveau. The two texts[1] K. J. Sembach *Art Nouveau* 2000 and Alastair Duncan *Art Nouveau* 1994 give a ready insight into how Art Nouveau is perceived a century on from its conception. The Thames and Hudson text by Alastair Duncan, after a brief introduction, concentrates on eight specific decorative areas. There is little suggestion of any English Art Nouveau. In the introduction Aubrey Beardsley and Arthur Mackmurdo, in particular, are acknowledged as influential precursors[2] but there is little to imply that England had an independent Art Nouveau style. The only suggestion is to be found in the chapter on silver where the contribution of Liberty and Company is acknowledged. "In the United Kingdom silversmithing was one of the few crafts at the turn of the century to embrace the Art Nouveau idiom. It did so reluctantly however."[3]

The Taschen text by Klaus Jurgen Sembach, which was translated from the German, is more extreme in its dismissal of an English contribution to Art Nouveau. Unlike the Duncan text this concentrates on particular geographical areas, specifically particular cities, with London conspicuous by its absence. Only in the introduction is there mention of an English contribution to the evolving Art Nouveau style. Here it is stated, "Morris was a trail blazer for Art Nouveau which was beginning to emerge at the time of his death."[4]

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[1] Sembach, Klaus-Jurgen, *Art Nouveau*, Cologne: Taschen, 2000, Duncan, Alastair, *Art Nouveau*, Thames & Hudson: London, 1994.
[2] Duncan, Op. Cit., pp. 17-20.
[3] Ibid., p.172.
[4] Sembach, Op. Cit., p.17.

However, Ruskin was castigated for the absurdity of his ideas and equally Morris for attempting to put them into practice.[5] In a book of some two hundred pages this is the sum total of an English involvement in the movement.

An embryonic case can thus be made that an in depth exploration of English Art Nouveau is indeed virgin territory. There has been a growing appreciation of the extent of the penetration of Art Nouveau into areas, particularly geographical ones, which were barely recognised by the early authors, but there is no discussion of England having a style that had affinities to mainstream Art Nouveau.

ART NOUVEAU AND ITS NATIONAL VARIATIONS

Countries such as Latvia and Hungary are now seen as having their own **individual** Art Nouveau style. This may be seen in Jeremy Howard's recent work[6]. Howard justifies this shift in emphasis by arguing that Art Historians have traditionally limited their investigations to a few accepted countries. He states, "Art Nouveau encapsulated almost all the facets of newness that abounded in the Europeanised world in the 1890s and 1900s. This helps explain its contradictions and ambiguities as well as its stylistic and regional variations".[7]

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[5] Ibid., 15-17.
[6] Howard, Jeremy, *Art Nouveau,* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996.
[7] Ibid., p. 4.

Howard develops the argument by suggesting that few artists at the time worked in isolated conditions of stability. He maintains that artists were not impervious to the changes transforming their society. Further, he makes the case for seeing the localised vernacular as being central to the evolving movement. Howard writes of, "A new art, burgeoning with the visions of vernacular revivalism or romanticism that could be instilled with the spirit of modernity and relevance."[8] There was too, a growing nationalism at the time in England and therefore I am able to argue that forms of artistic expression such as Art Nouveau need to be recognised along with the country's cultural traditions. These gave expression to an artistic reticence that was recognised by Nikolaus Pevsner in *The Englishness Of English Art.*[9] It was in such constraints that England developed its own individual form of expression within the Art Nouveau movement but this does not find a place in many of the established writings on Art Nouveau.

In 2000, the Victoria and Albert Museum held the most comprehensive and wide-ranging Art Nouveau exhibition to date. To accompany the exhibition was an equally wide-ranging catalogue.[10] In this, the curator of the exhibition, Paul Greenhalgh, maintained that the vernacular and modernity were at the core of Art Nouveau.[11] In the first page Greenhalgh points to the fact that, "In the nine decades since its decline there has been no real agreement as to what Art Nouveau looked like, when it started or finished and where precisely it happened."[12]

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[8] Ibid., p. 7.
[9] Pevsner, Nikolaus, *The Englishness of English Art,* London: The Architectural Press, 1956.
[10] Greenhalgh, Paul,(Ed.) *Art Nouveau,* London: Victoria & Albert Museum Publications, 2000.
[11] See pp. 47-52.
[12] Greenhalgh, Op. Cit., p. 15.

He adds on the following page, "It was a multi faceted, complex phenomenon that defied-then and now-any attempt to reduce it to singular meanings and moments."[13]

Notwithstanding the fact that a specific definition of Art Nouveau is difficult to find, the position of England has received little consideration, and is ripe for re-investigation.[14] Its Art Nouveau may not be the Rococo derived curvilinear expressions found in Belgium or France as developed by such artists as Guimard, Horta or Majorelle but nonetheless in feeling and spirit, if not in style, it reflected the time. Its form could not have taken place at any other historical period.

It would seem appropriate therefore to consider an English contribution to Art Nouveau at a time when the emphasis has shifted towards national forms. In fact it may seem ironic that Stefan Madsen makes a similar point:

> In Britain historicism had been rejected, and a new wholesome approach, based on tradition and simple constructive principles partly of a rectilinear nature had been adopted. It is therefore hardly surprising that Continental Art Nouveau with its soft lines and Rococo elements should have evoked no response. Nonetheless it would be wrong to suppose that no Art Nouveau is to be found in Britain. In England we come across a special national development which might perhaps be called English Art Nouveau. It is unusually sophisticated, linear in essence, and developed especially on the two dimensional plane.[15]

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[13] Ibid., p. 17.

[14] It is worthy of note that Greenhalgh failed to consider the question of either the production of an English Art Nouveau or its more general acceptance. This despite the fact that he was saw it in vernacular, nationalist terms and the Exhibition was the most wide ranging on the style to date in this country. See Greenhalgh, Op. Cit., pp. 126-148.

[15] Madsen, Stephan Tschudi, *Art Nouveau,* London: World University Library, 1967, pp. 164-65.

Madsen observed that there were strong nationalistic tendencies in the emergence of Art Nouveau.[16] He considered the impact of the Celtic Revival in relation to the emergence of a national spirit in Scotland. [17]

He maintained that it was the medieval *entrelac* motifs that were seen as making the most obvious direct contribution to Art Nouveau, blending as they did with Art Nouveau's stylistic tendencies. He argued that these were to be found in small objects such as jewellery in the British Isles and Scandinavia. Indeed Jewellery at the time was probably the most popular expression of Art Nouveau[18] and the Mortuary Chapel built by the villagers of Compton in Surrey also has similar *entrelac* motifs.

Art Nouveau is a wide-ranging and complex phenomenon and as Greenhalgh argues the literature reflects this fact. A traditional chronological approach seems inappropriate to the diversity and ambiguous nature of the subject matter. Indeed, it may be argued that much of the literature tells us more about the culture of the time in which it was written than the subject matter itself. However, I do not intend to proceed in this direction. The task at hand is to explore and attempt to tease out the complex and problematic nature of the subject in relation to the question of English acceptance of Art Nouveau.

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[16] Madsen, Stephan Tschudi, (1956) *The Art Nouveau Style*, New York: Dover, 2000, p. 443. Here he states, "Despite its international character it was markedly a national style, born of national desires and hopes".
[17] Ibid., p. 16.
[18] See chapter 7 pp. 168-176.

If Art Nouveau is made up of national variations, giving rise to a range of stylistic expressions, then its English version is as valid as any other. A strong case has been made by Deborah Silverman for the Rococo having a major role in determining the direction of French curvilinear Art Nouveau.[19]

Silverman stated that the Rococo was the *national* style of France. The idea of Art Nouveau having distinct national and local characteristics has been significant within the recent literature. However, it is to be found too in the early texts on the subject, especially in explanations relating to the stylistic derivation of the Glasgow School. Peter Selz, writing in the 1950s said, "The marked individuality of Art Nouveau in different countries is partly due to specific traditions. If the Nancy School seemed inspired by the Rococo the cult of the Celt attracted the Glasgow designers of the Nineties in their search for an independent national culture."[20]

The suggestion of national variations within the context of Art Nouveau was well expressed by Rosanna Bossaglia in 1971. In her introduction to Art Nouveau she maintained that, "[It] was not a single style derived from a well defined, clearly delineated area of culture. It was rather a whole series of aesthetic intentions, and moralistic occupations, manifested in formal attitudes, which varied from studio to studio and country to country."[21] Analysis such as this became submerged in the quest for forms of decoration with only occasional forays into national variation. The 1990s therefore witnessed something of a renaissance in the exploration of Art Nouveau as perceived by Bossaglia and Selz.

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[19] Silverman, Deborah, *Art Nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989.
[20] Selz, Peter, *Art Nouveau and Design at the Turn of The Century*, New York: M.O.D.A., 1959, p.12.
[21] Bossaglia, Rosanna, *Art Nouveau*, London: Orbis, 1971, p.3.

Robert Schmutzler, writing in 1962, a decade after Madsen, sees motifs in which dragons were fused into original work, and the mixture of craftsmanship and popular art that characterised Scandinavian work as somewhat different to other elements current at the time. He argued that vernacular elements were to be found within the Jugendstil movement and sees an inclination towards a world of unbroken local tradition.[22]

Following Schmutzler, with the exception of Bossaglia in 1971, the literature proceeded in other directions and there was little mention of regional variation. The folk derived Art Nouveau of the northern countries became increasingly marginalized. There was a consideration by Tim Benton and Sandra Millikin in 1974 of the Compton Chapel, with its entrelac Celtic motifs, [23] but little more. In the late 1980s William Hardy was one of the few prepared to consider the impact of the Celtic Revival.[24]

Hardy saw it linked to the nationalist revivals of the late nineteenth century, with its romantic idealisation of the past. This he suggests became quite significant in the development of the distinctive Glasgow School that collected itself around Charles Rennie Mackintosh. Celtic jewellery, derived from the ancient gospel books, was seen as revealing, with its elaborately curving and twisting decoration, the combination of stylisation and natural inspiration that typified Art Nouveau itself. Hardy also considered Scandinavian Art stating,

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[22] Schmutzler, Robert, (1962) *Art Nouveau*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1967, p. 207.
[23] Benton Tim & Sandra Millikin, *Art Nouveau*, Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1974. p.7. See p. 57 of this study.
[24] Hardy, William, *A Guide to Art Nouveau Style*, London: Apple Press, 1988, p, 66.

"The Celtic Art with its intricate curves and spirals found its way into the local forms of Art Nouveau as in the designs of Henrik Bull."[25]

A year later in 1989, Malcolm Haslam also considered the national tendencies. He was particularly interested in exploring the cultural roots that led to the emergence of the Glasgow style. He considered that Glasgow was an ideal seedbed for Art Nouveau with its wealth from the shipbuilding industry and its distance from London. Haslam states, "Remoteness from London and a lingering national resentment against English Government caused a large measure of discontent with established authority.[26] He further suggests that the religious bigotry within the city forced some into an artistic backlash in which Art Nouveau was a peaceful haven. He argued that the city's wealth was seen to give rise to a progressive intelligentsia, who were able to pay artists and designers, in an attempt to create what was considered a modern environment. Schmutzler also identified similar groups in Brussels and Barcelona. [27]

Within the last few years the suggestion of regional variations, coupled with the perceived rise in nationalism, has become a major aspect within the literature on Art Nouveau. National tendencies are now studied and recognised. Jeremy Howard's *Art Nouveau* published in 1996, has the subtitle, *International Styles In Europe.* At the outset his aim is clearly laid out:

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[25] Ibid., p. 22.
[26] Haslam, Malcolm, *In the Art Nouveau Style,* London: Thames & Hudson, 1989, p. 84.
[27] Schmutzler, Op. Cit., p.212.

The intention of this book is to supply a new appraisal of the arts movement that has become known as Art Nouveau. To this end it addresses the development of the movement's art through a regional survey. This has been given wider scope than is usual to date and indicates several areas that have hitherto been neglected despite the wealth of their contributions, for example Latvia and Hungary.[28]

Howard argues that art historians have confined their investigations to a limited range of countries and that Art Nouveau's strength lay in its diversity and complexity. He maintains that the basic motivation was that of renewal with the revival of the vernacular an essential part of this process. This argument is similar to that expressed by Bossaglia two decades earlier.

Such a vernacular revival was to the forefront in the English Arts and Crafts Movement. In his summary chapter Madsen considers this issue and suggests, "Art Nouveau was never firmly established in England was due to the fact that native designers had already made considerable progress in their own new style."[29]

Howard argues that to be modern was seen as bringing romantic visions of the past into a new century. He relates the technological changes of the time to the question of conspicuous consumption; that there was equally a wave of self-expression among the repressed and the repressors. This he links to the burgeoning nationalist movements that were to be found in many of the rambling empires of the time such as the Austro-Hungarian. He states:

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[28] Howard, Op. Cit., p. 1.
[29] Madsen, Op. Cit., p. 433. However, as will be seen in his second book (1967) pp. 74-101, Madsen maintains that there are examples of English Art Nouveau.

It [Art Nouveau] arose out of the desire for renewal, for an art which would correspond to the movements of the time; and essentially for a new art, burgeoning with the vision of vernacular revivalism or romanticism, that could be instilled with the spirit of modernity and relevance.[30]

This is similar in spirit to the point made by Greenhalgh in 2000. Howard does explore issues that had been dormant in the literature. Folk Art and the Vernacular are now on the agenda and receive appropriate consideration in the new generation of texts. A significant one is by Gabrielle Fahr-Becker published in 1997. Becker devotes a chapter to Scandinavian Art Nouveau.[31] She links the growth of nationalism to the emergence of an awareness and interest in the cultural heritage. She suggests that varied World Expositions, where a range of works were shown led to an increase in awareness of what was occurring in other cultures. The folkloric character of the entries, together with the more general concept of art renewal, led Norway and Finland to look back to their artistic traditions and genuine folk art. She argues that certain stylistic characteristics of folk art could serve as an inspiration and starting point for new works.[32]

Becker maintains that in the Scandinavian countries Art Nouveau derived its inspiration from its rural past. She maintains that Art Nouveau in Finland drew upon the country's past sagas and myths. The spirit of national romanticism was strongly influenced by the resistance to Russia that characterised the years around 1900.[33] This is similar to the point made by Hardy in relation to Scotland.[34]

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[30] Greenhalgh, Op. Cit., p.7.
[31] Fahr-Becker, Gabrielle, *Art Nouveau,* Cologne: Konemann, 1997, pp. 283-313.
[32] Ibid ., p. 284.
[33] Ibid., p. 293.
[34] Hardy, Op. Cit., p. 22.

Becker also suggests that symbolism was a major force in the development of the Finnish style. Nature too was recognised as a major determinant of the style that developed. Ornamental themes were seen to come directly from the local flora and fauna. This was necessarily different to that found in southern European countries, given the cold climate. Becker considers that the long cold winters led to considerably more time spent indoors. A consequence of this was an emphasis on the interior. Walter Crane had a century before made similar observation regarding the diversity of Art Nouveau.[35]

Becker shows that there are different facets to the vernacular. Norway, achieved political independence in 1905, and was inspired by its heritage of folk art, myths and legends which affected its Art Nouveau. However, Becker is ambiguous in her attitude to Munch as an Art Nouveau artist. She suggests that Gaudi's inspiration derived from latent nationalism and this too was a strong driving force behind the work of the Glasgow group. [36]

In the 2000 Paul Greenhalgh considers the significance of nationalism, folk and Celtic art.[37] Folk art is considered to be the most consistent stylistic source during the period 1890-1914. Greenhalgh maintains that the vernacular was the core and not the periphery of European Culture. Celtic art was seen as giving a vernacular dimension to the rising political and social consciousness especially in the Nordic countries. He says:

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[35] Crane, Walter, 'Modern Decorative Art At Turin: General Impressions', *Magazine of Art, 1902*, p. 490.
[36] Fahr – Becker, Op. Cit., p.287, p. 197 and p. 53.
[37] Greenhalgh, Op. Cit., p. 47.

"Very much following the vernacular spirit the period witnessed a revival of interest in the art of the various cultures, principal among which was the Celtic Revival in parts of Britain with the dragon style prominent in the Nordic countries."[38] However, Greenhalgh is unprepared to relate such arguments to English cultural experience. This is well summarised in the chapter heading, "*Le Style Anglais: The English Roots of the New Art.*"[39] However, Greenhalgh sees the Arts and Crafts Movement as giving significant expression to the evolution of Art Nouveau style. My contention, which I develop in succeeding chapters, is that there was limited acceptance of Art Nouveau that relates to English cultural traditions. The acknowledgement of the style and its limited acceptability at the time may be found today in decorative objects that have either hints or distinct elements of the style that were produced in England during the period. Concurrently, especially in the realm of jewellery, there was large-scale acceptance of the style with French work in particular being popular. Thus we have some home grown Art Nouveau alongside the acceptance of some emanating from Europe. England was the first country to industrialise on a large scale and the first to repudiate some of the consequences of this. The Arts and Crafts cultural revolution had already made its mark. The period 1895-1910 might have been a time of consolidation but this did not necessarily mean a total repudiation of the 'New Art'.

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[38] Ibid., p.37.
[39] Ibid., p. 126.

PRIMARY SOURCES AND NATIONAL VARIATIONS

Before proceeding it is necessary to say what is understood by the English vernacular. In the *Studio* at the time there were numerous articles relating to the English country house. Architects such as Charles Voysey, Edwin Lutyens and Baillie Scott were producing work which gave prominence to wooden beams, wooden panelling and slate roofs, that was far removed from Continental Art Nouveau. Indeed, the English pavilion at the Paris *Exposition* in 1900 was the recreation of an English manor house, of the late Elizabethan period, by Edwin Lutyens

Scotland, however, which was to develop an individual form of Art Nouveau that found ready acceptance at the time, had very different cultural traditions. However such facts did not mean that England was not to develop an individual form of Art Nouveau, which related to its tradition of reticence and understatement. Such concepts were analysed by N. Pevsner.[40]

Ideas relating to nationalism, folk art and the vernacular were to be found in early *Studio* articles. In 1898 the *Studio's* editor Glesson White contributed four successive articles on the Glasgow designers. He stated, "The fact remains that in Scotland, as in England, Germany and Belgium, and in many other places, there is a return to mysticism and to superstition and legendary forces, which at first seem out of touch with the actuality of modernity, as modern journalism phrases it."[41]

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[40] See p. 10 of this study.

[41] White, Gleeson, 'Some Glasgow Designers and Their Work,' *Studio*, Volume 11, 1898, part 3, p. 228.

He maintained that the Glasgow designers were influenced by local traditions, particularly the Celtic with its covert symbolism.

The separate cultural roots of England and Scotland were analysed in the *Art Journal.* There was an article on Scottish Arts and Crafts that maintained that the Scottish version was no more than an adaptation of its vernacular roots. The Morris led renaissance was seen as a scholar's dream that did not relate to Scottish national tradition and taste. The Scottish revival, on the other hand, was seen as incorporating the national vernacular. Thus English Arts and Crafts were necessarily opposed to the 'New Art', whereas the Scots responding to their traditions were necessarily led forward. The 'New Art' that developed within the Scottish Arts and Crafts Movement it was argued, was thus a translation of Art Nouveau, being " a phase of style and not a phase of art."[42] From this it was argued that there was greater possibility of accepting the Continental style than the English craft renaissance. Thus the Scottish craft revival allied itself naturally with the Continental Art Nouveau rather than the English Gothic led revival.

In 1900 the *Studio* devoted a long and detailed article to Scandinavian Decorative Art. There is no sense of Scandinavian adaptations to Art Nouveau either in the text or within the illustrations. The *Studio* does, however, illustrate how national traditions were being resurrected and relived.[43]

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[42] Anon., 'Scottish Arts and Crafts', *Art Journal,* 1907, pp. 233-237.
[43] Anon., 'Scandinavian Decorative Art', *Studio,* Volume 21, 1900, pp. 190-199.

PERCEPTIONS OF THE NEW: PRIMARY SOURCES

Here I shall consider contemporaneous sources in more general terms. These will include in particular within the decorative arts press, *The Magazine of Art*, *The Art Journal*, *The Artist*, as well as, the magazine of the architectural profession, *The R.I.B.A.Journal.* The major source was *The Studio.* However, some interpretations of *The Studio's* role in developing awareness of Art Nouveau are questionable. In 1966 Mario Amaya maintained, "One issue after another of [*The Studio*] is like an endless series of Art Nouveau."[44] The reality, however, is somewhat different. In no issue from its inception in 1893 to 1910 is there identification of any work as having Art Nouveau stylistic tendencies.

The *Studio's* total exclusion of the architectural works of Horta and Guimard cannot be explained by it being a decorative arts magazine. Issue after issue considers the new buildings of contemporary Arts and Crafts architects particularly those of Voysey and Baillie Scott. The 1901 supplement on British Architecture and Decoration is entirely devoted to the current Arts and Crafts. The 1906 *Yearbook of Decorative Art*, which considered furniture, illustrates *The Studio's* position. "Excess in ornamentation and extreme eccentricities of form have been excluded as being inconsistent with the true principles of decoration."[45]

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[44] Amaya, Mario, *Art Nouveau*, London: Studio Vista, 1966, p. 57.
[45] Introduction to 1906 Yearbook on Decorative Art, *Studio,* p.3.

The Studio suggested the need for regeneration stating, "We may perhaps discover that national style." That the style should not relate to Art Nouveau may be seen in the sentence that followed, "It will be a sad day if fashion tempered by novelty neglects the new awakening."[46] It requires little imagination to know what the author was referring to in addressing novelty. Lewis Day talked of latter day anarchy in design. He stated, "The influence of Morris appears to have gone." [47] The Arts and Crafts philosophy dominated the views of the *Studio* at the time, and many saw it as a way forward, to a new renaissance in English decorative arts.

This was the view too of the architectural profession and was expressed in its mouthpiece the *R.I.B.A. Journal.* R.G. Hatton, Head of the Art Department at Durham College of Science, strongly expressed an unease that many felt at the time in an article published in 1903. He unashamedly directs his venom against the 'New Art' by contrasting, in the Pugin tradition, the strengths of the old against the perceived weaknesses of the new. The classic tradition is also attacked with a plea for a return to pre industrial methods where the workman designed for himself. The legacy of Morris may be clearly seen in the proposition, "No one surely is prepared to assert that the Gothic carvers worked from other men's designs."[48]

The perception of a Morris inspired return to English indigenous traditions is in another issue of the *R.I.B.A. Journal.* In this Arthur Flower, Professor of Architecture, at Liverpool University, reviews old and new architecture:

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[46] Anon., 'Some Recent Designs By Voysey', *Studio,* Volume 7, 1896, p. 217.
[47] Day, Lewis,'L, Art Nouveau', *Art Journal,* 1900, p.294.
[48] Hatton, R.G., 'The Principles Underlying the Handicraft Movement and their Influence on Architecture and Decoration', *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects,* 1903 pp. 145-9.

He decries the Renaissance as being un-English and states, "A good many of us in our hearts, I believe, would like the work of the future to have a thoroughly national stamp."[49].

While the old was seen as providing a stepping-stone to the future, if this future was to be an adoption of Continental forms of the 'New Art' it was totally unacceptable. In his presidential address to the R.I.B.A. John Belcher gave expression to such a feeling and he was contemptuously dismissive of Art Nouveau:

> These days, supply (of a sort) follows hot footed upon the heels of demand and the quickened public interest in art was promptly met by the abominable affectation (I should like to use a stronger phrase) of what is known as 'l'Art Nouveau. A new art forsooth! A pernicious trick easily acquired and applied alike to buildings or jewellery, furniture or dress; no matter what the nature of the material, whether iron or wood, stone or glass, all alike twisted to curves, representing the final stages of vegetable decay, and animal decrepitude, in defiance of all true principles of construction and beauty.[50]

The Studio argued that the need was for an English art form derived from the country's heritage and traditions. It stated, "The dominant craze at the moment requires none of the historic French styles, nor indeed novelty, but something, anything English, provided it is English of some date or other."[51]

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[49] Flower, Arthur, ' Old and New Architecture a Retrospect and Suggestion', *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects,* 1901, p 419.
[50] Belcher, A., Presidential Address, *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, 1904, p. 4.
[51] 1906 Year Book on Decorative Art, *Studio,* p. 55.

There was a general feeling for a need to find something new - a sense of looking beyond the present but an uncertainty as to which direction to take, despite a certainty, that it had to be within English tradition. In a seminal work of the time, Holbrook Jackson's, *The Eighteen Nineties,* this feeling for change was well expressed, "The fact must not be overlooked that much of the vitality of the period was destructive of ideas and conventions which we have come to upon as more or less permanent."[52] Lewis Day uses similar language in stating "The quarrel with the Fin de Siècle is with tradition. It is against rules of any kind."[53] However, despite such antagonism towards the 'New Art', there was some acceptance of the underpinning theoretical base, that had its origins in the ideas of Ruskin and Morris, and this was given serious consideration. In particular the concept of democratisation of the arts/crafts divide received wide attention. [54] F. Hamilton Jackson well summarises the feelings of the English Art establishment at the time. He stated, "Let us have freshness and originality by all means but to base one's designs on eccentricity, throwing to the winds the fruits of experience of generations of capable craftsmen is folly and to court failure."[55]

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[52] Jackson, Holbrook, (1913) *The Eighteen Nineties,* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1939, p. 17.
[53] Day, Op. Cit., *Art Journal.*, p. 294.
[54] Vallance, Amyer, 'The Arts and Crafts Exhibition' *Studio,* Volume 18, 1899, p.37. De La Sixeranne, Robert, 'Is Ruskin of Date?' *Magazine of Art,* 1900, p. 260. Vallance is scathing on what he sees as the elitism of the fine arts. He takes to task their assumptions of supposed superiority. Robert De La Sixeranne is equally scathing. He argues that an artist, a few years before, would have regarded a commission to paint a teapot, as an insult. He states that he is now prepared to accept the humblest of work. From this Sixeranne poses the question, "Is this not a modern movement?"
The *Studio* had in 1898 recognised the significance of the new direction in its appreciation of the contribution of the Century Guild. However, it was concerned that few people knew the name of the designer of most objects of applied art. It stated, "Not only are we unaware of the actual designers of most objects of applied art, but as a rule we do not know, the controlling personality, the art director of the factory, whose taste influences the whole output ".
Anon, 'The Work of Mr. Selwyn Image', Part 1, *Studio,* Volume 14, 1898, p. 3 sq.
See Mourey, Gabriel, 'Auguste Delarerche', *Studio,* Volume 12, 1897, p. 112.
[55] Jackson, Hamilton F., 'New Art as Seen at the Paris Exhibition', *The Magazine of Art,* 1901, p. 123 sq.

Lewis Day, perhaps more than most gets to the heart of things. While the need for change, especially at the *fin de siècle*, had some acceptance, the form it appeared to take seemed reprehensible to the English character and taste. Unsurprisingly therefore there is virtually no mention of an English Art Nouveau in the contemporary arts based press. However, as will be seen, work produced at the time is compared favourably with examples from the Continent that had secured the label Art Nouveau. Day wrote in the *Art Journal* 1900 " British art, on the whole is much cleaner and more wholesome than that of the Continental decadents. Compared to the French it is not so wild, nor yet so wilful."[56] However, three years later *The Art Journal* in 1903 he acknowledges pendants by Edgar Simpson as being Art Nouveau.[57] Day said of Simpson's work, "Mr Simpson's jewellery goes, perhaps as near to the 'New Art' as anything there, but his aim is clearly beauty of line, and there is distinct refinement in his work."[58]

The majority of illustrations used by Day in the 1900 *Art Journal* article would today be seen as Art Nouveau. However they are not referred to as such in the text which roundly attacks the 'New Art'. Yet Day shows the ambiguity of his position in stating:

> The designers of this country seem to me to have less skill perhaps, but more originality certainly than their Continental rivals, and a sort of conscience in design which is their own. That is even more plainly shown in the work of students than in that of older men. English prize works show that design is being done by students, which is fresh without being wildly up to date.[59]

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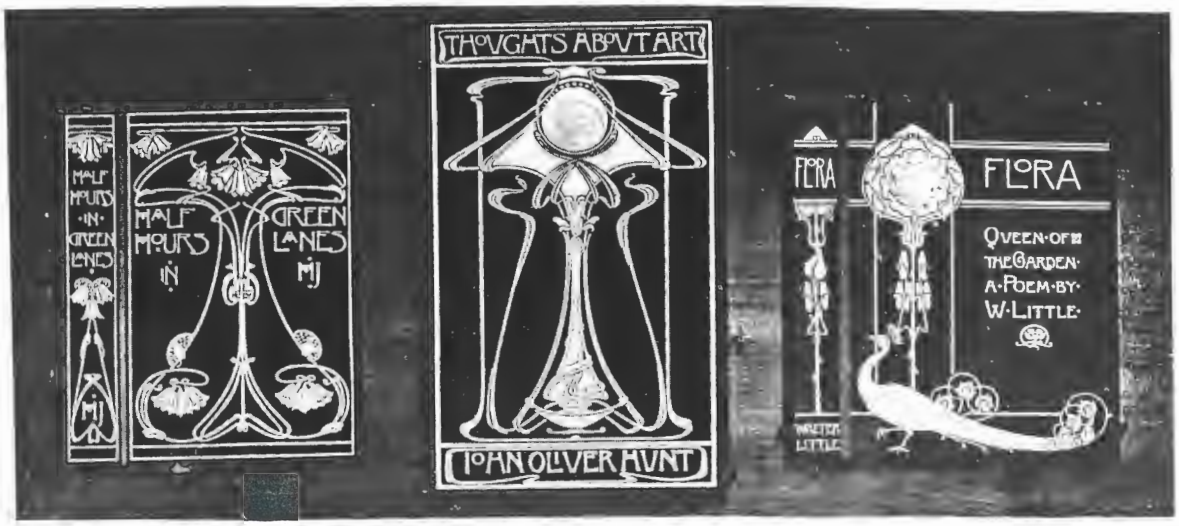
[56] Day, Op. Cit., *Art Journal,* 1900, p. 296.
[57] Day, 'The Arts and Crafts Exhibition', *Art Journal,* 1903 p. 93.
[58] Ibid., p. 93.
[59] Day, Op. Cit., *Art Journal,* 1900, p. 197.

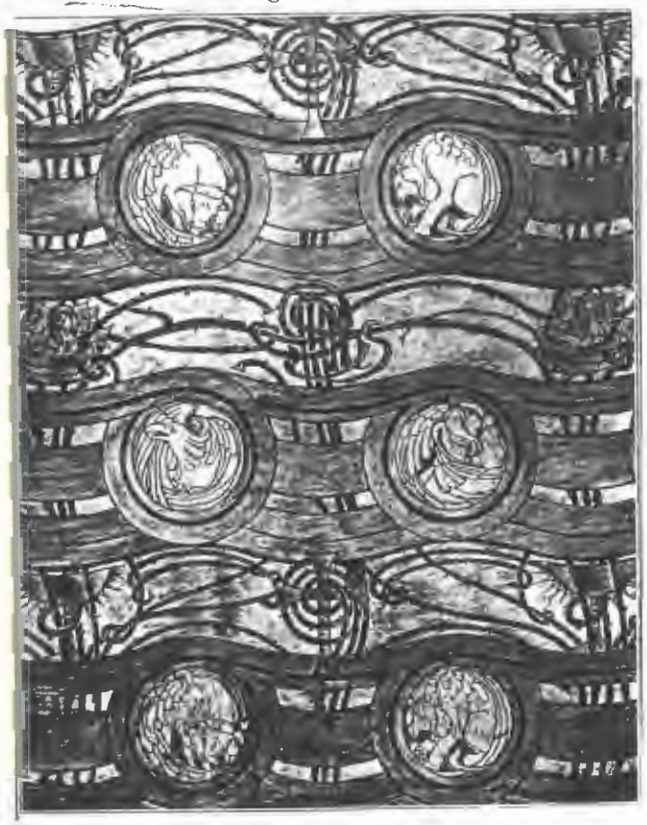
Fig. 1.1



Designs for Gesso Bookcovers.—Silver Medal.
By Fred Paul (Leeds).

"L'ART NOUVEAU."

NO one who has during the last few years been in the habit of glancing at the magazines can have failed to be aware of a change which has come over the spirit of design. The influence of William Morris appears to have gone by, or to act mainly upon designers who, being strictly speaking only amateurs in practical design, and lacking the invention of the master, find excuse in his theories for affectations with which he would have had no sympathy. The fashion is no longer for mediæval romance but for latter-day anarchy in design. The precise origin of this state of things is difficult to determine. It came about only by degrees; though perhaps it first manifested itself plainly in the work of Aubrey Beardsley. His was an imagination touched with a taint of decadency, caught, no doubt, in Paris. At all events the idea, essentially pessimistic, was sympathetic to, if not congenital with, the French art student—so called, perhaps, because he is by nature not studious—and it has spread abroad like a fever. Germany and other countries have caught the contagion; and at the Paris Exhibition, where the pulse of modern art beats palpably, the new idea of design appears to be raging.



Design for Church Tapestry.—Gold Medal.
By Arthur E. Payne (S. Kensington).

Of course, there are conservatives in all countries who keep closely to the beaten track; one section of the French in particular clings to traditional forms, as though there were no safety to be found outside the bounds of imitation; but of sane and serious recognition of the new century there is very little. New departure is in the direction of mere novelty. Former International Exhibitions impressed one with the difference between what was being done in one country and another; this time one sees the likeness. Taste has become more cosmopolitan. National character is less and less conspicuous — if even it is to be detected. The coming race, whencesoever they may start, are making all for one direction: they are all struggling to be "up to date"—writhing, one may say—for the lines of their design are with one accord contorted, in a manner which begins to be as trite as the severest of classic forms; the trick is already a convention, only an ugly one instead of a beautiful.

It is used to express no matter what—flames of fire, wreaths of smoke, waves of water—and is an invaluable means of veiling forms, such as the nude figure, which it is inconve-

LEWIS DAY "L'ART NOUVEAU." ART JOURNAL, 1900, P. 296 sq.

Lewis Day was a major critic of Art Nouveau and this may be seen within the text. However, today most commentators would suggest that the illustrations that accompanied the text were within the spirit of Art Nouveau.

There would seem to have been a refusal to use the term Art Nouveau at the time and the reason may be seen in Day's *Art Journal* article. There are references to a perception of decadence, novelty for its own sake and orgies of extravagance. On the other hand Day, in discussing English decorative arts states:

> The best of it shows not only a true appreciation of natural beauty, but a consistently ornamental treatment of flower forms. True, the principle of growth is not always conscientiously adhered to –the stems of plants may remind one at times, for example of whip-lashes than of any growing thing–but the problem of duly decorative modification of ideas derived from nature and of adapting ornament both to the purposes it is designed to fulfil and to the means by which it is to be rendered, is on the whole so satisfactorily solved-that it seems as if we were really on the way to building up a style of decorative art which may hereafter be identified with the turn of the century.[60]

It needs to be emphasised that Day here was discussing English work at the time. There is excellent understanding of stylistic issues but for Day and others Art Nouveau was decadent and decorative motifs such as sinuous stylised flowers and organic curling leaves were anathema to English sensibility. Consequently English authors and artists were unprepared to recognise designs as Art Nouveau. In *The Studio* there are a number of articles relating to student work and prize competitions whose illustrations have distinct elements of Art Nouveau. There is though no acknowledgement of this on its part.[61]

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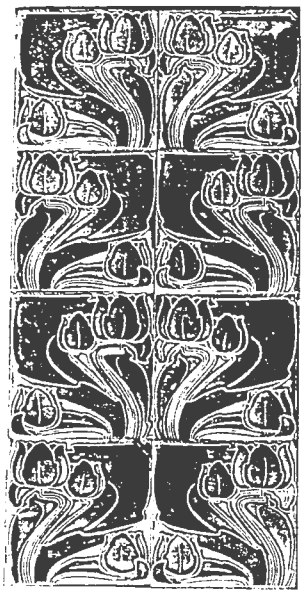
[60] Ibid., pp. 296-7.

[61] Anon., 'The Ceramic Work of the Burslem School of Art', *Studio*, Volume 36, 1905, pp. 333-9. There are a number of illustrations that have distinct Art Nouveau characteristics.

Fig. 1.2

Ceramic Work of the Burslem Art School

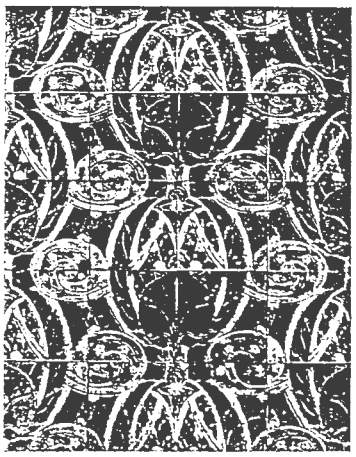


RAISED LINE TILES BY H. TITTENSOR

We are living in times when the claims of scientific and artistic education as applied to industry must be recognised, for if we are to maintain our commercial supremacy, science and art must be united with industry in a greater degree than hitherto. In regard to the production of pottery this is being appreciated more and more, for scientifically skilful potters and artistically trained designers are gradually being sought after.

Considering the interest which attaches to the ceramic department of artistic craftsmanship, some description of the school's method of designing and producing a few specimens of pottery may be here justified. THE STUDIO critic of the last National Competition of Schools of Art regretted "that the excellent practice of carrying out a design to its issue in material, and showing something (at least) of all its stages, from sketch to final execution, has not been encouraged as fully as it should," but it may here be pointed out that frequently this is impracticable in the designing and executing of pottery. Until recently, the Board of Education required students to submit both the design on paper and the design in actual material, but the adoption by the Board of more practical views has resulted in their receiving this regulation, because when a design worked out in material has been submitted, the need of a working drawing has frequently been made, merely to satisfy the Board's requirements. In decorating pieces of useful pottery, for instance, the design is almost invariably worked out on the article it is proposed to decorate. The form and contour of the article to be enriched are the first considerations of the designer, and this being so, he can the more readily make the design appropriate and practical by sketching it on the surface to be decorated.

Taking a plate as an example of useful pottery, it may be explained that the student works out his design upon it, using for the purpose a pigment which will entirely disappear when the plate is fired, and repeating the unit, if necessary, by the process known as pouncing. The decorative idea having thus been worked out on the plate, it is executed in one of the various processes. So numerous are these that it would be impossible to detail them in a short article of this description, but one of the simplest is that of decorating on the glaze. When adopting that method, the student simply paints over the design—already sketched out—in specially prepared potters' colours and sends the plate to be



RAISED LINE TILES BY ALBERT HACKNEY

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STUDIO, *CERAMIC WORK OF THE BURSLEM SCHHOL OF ART*, VOLUME 36, 1905, PAGE 335

The *Studio*, while illustrating student work and competition entries, with distinct Art Nouveau characteristics, nevertheless refused to use the words Art Nouveau

An article in the American magazine *The Craftsman* [62] is much more explicit in naming an English Art Nouveau. This was by the Professor of Architecture at Chicago University, A Hamlin. The only English work specifically mentioned is the Horniman Museum in South London, which Hamlin considers to be the quiet and conservative way in which the principles of the 'New Art' are applied to buildings in London. On a more general level he points to the designs which students were producing at the time, "...In every provincial art school...the inevitable 'New Art' curves blended in doylies, book covers and book plates."[63]

For Hamlin English Art Nouveau showed greater spontaneity being less freakish and extreme than the Continental. He states, "On the whole it can hardly be denied that the 'New Art' in a quiet way more deeply affected the popular taste in England than anywhere else in Europe because it is more solid and moderate."[64]

Here we have an American professor almost echoing the words of Lewis Day. Without doubt Art Nouveau penetrated the consciousness of English artists far more than the art literature, at the time and today, might suggest. My contention is that while there was a failure to acknowledge the validity of Art Nouveau this did not mean that it was totally unacceptable, indeed for many of the young, it would appear to have been a way forward. It would appear that students were more prepared to accept the validity of the 'New Art' than were their elders.

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[62] Hamlin, A., 'L'Art Nouveau: Its Origins and Development', *Craftsman*, December 1902, pp. 129-143.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.

Siegfried Bing, in a follow up article, agreed with Hamlin saying, "Latterly England has taken a new direction. This was under the guidance of artists the most noted of whom are mentioned by Hamlin."[65] Bing was probably referring to English artistic developments rather than Art Nouveau. Bing's Paris shop, like Liberty in London, was eclectic in its range of available merchandise.

It is surprising to find that there is virtually no mention of Liberty and Company at the time in the decorative arts press that I have examined. Today we recognise the company's impact on design consciousness and the development of a certain taste, but at the height of Liberty's undoubted influence, there is silence.[66] This silence is the more remarkable given the fact that its work was well received both in England and on the Continent of Europe. Italian Art Nouveau was often referred to as *Stile Liberty* in recognition of the firm's perceived modernity.

The *Studio* often gave space to artists in recognition of their achievement. The only significant Liberty designer considered was Arthur Silver. [67] Neither article devoted to his work mentions his association with Liberty and Company. However, this was no more than Company policy which was for anonymity for its designers. Even the gifted Archibald Knox, who became a major designer for the Company, was totally ignored in the artistic press.[68]

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[65] Bing, Siegfried,' L' Art Nouveau', *Craftsman,* October 1903, pp. 1-15.
[66] See for example: Amaya, Mario, *Art Nouveau,* London: Studio Vista, 1966, pp. 58-66.
Arwas, Victor, *Art Nouveau: From Mackintosh to Liberty: The Birth of a Style,* London: Andreas Papadakis, 2000 pp. 90-152.
[67] Anon., 'Studio of Design: An interview with Mr. Arthur Silver', *Studio,* Volume 3, 1894, p. 119,sq.
Anon., 'Stencilled Fabrics for Decorative Wall Hangings', *Studio,* Volume 5, 1895, pp. 181-5.
[68] Hendon, Zoë, *Archibald Knox at the Silver Studio,* London: M.O.D.A., 2000 p. 2. Jackson, Jeff, *Liberty Style,* London: Millinery Works, pp. 2-3. Turner, Mark, *Art Nouveau Designs from the Silver Studio Collection,* London: Middlesex Polytechnic, pp. 8-13.

It may be said that the reason for the failure to acknowledge an English Art Nouveau was a lack of knowledge. However, *The Studio,* in particular, had correspondents scattered throughout the European capitals, and there can be little doubt that it recognised the strength of the 'New Art' Movement. While articles appeared on some of its major protagonists, consideration was invariably devoted to the technical rather than the aesthetic. This particularly applied to English work.

An example of this is found in an article on Mackmurdo in *The Studio.* Illustrations are presented of his 1881 chair; his embroidered screen of 1884 and writing table of 1886. There is no accompanying reference to these in the text.[69] It is easy of course to be wise in hindsight but it must be said that such work was very different to anything else at the time. The text moreover is predominantly an exploration of Mackmurdo's classical leanings that he developed while he was in Florence. The impression given in the article is that of a Gothicist moving towards the classical. Alfred Gilbert, similarly, has sometimes been seen as having distinct Art Nouveau tendencies in his sculptural work, particularly the Shaftesbury Memorial in Piccadilly Circus.[70] There was a *Studio* supplement devoted to him in 1903.[71] In it there is no suggestion that his work was any way influenced by the 'New Art' Movement.

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[69] Vallance, Aymer, 'A. H. Macmurdo', *Studio*, Volume 16, 1899, pp. 184-192.
[70] Madsen, (1967), Op. Cit., p. 229.
[71] Hatton, J., 'Albert Gilbert', *Art Journal*, Easter Special, 1903.

A further illustration of the tendency not to relate illustrations to the text, and, either intentionally or unintentionally, not to recognise Art Nouveau characteristics, is in a *Studio* article on Charles Voysey. A Snake wallpaper is illustrated with lines appearing to go anywhere and everywhere that was far from the formalised patterns of William Morris. The lines are uncontrolled and appear uncontrollable and they have a definite Art Nouveau *whiplash* tendency. However, the text states, "In it we have a most beautiful arrangement of lines, the subtle curves of the foliage contrasting with the more accentuated texture of the snake forms but no less exquisite arrangement of colours."[72]

The *Studio* seemed more at home when it considered Arts and Crafts work. Charles Ashbee and Charles Voysey were portrayed as epitomising Arts and Crafts values. In an interview that appeared in the first edition of *The Studio* in 1893, Arts and Crafts predilections are well expressed. There was an over-riding concern throughout the interview with the expressed need to return to simplicity and move away from what may be termed 'Victorian ornamental clutter':

> We must acquire a complete knowledge of our material. The danger today lies in overt decoration. In place of copying Greece and Rome we shall try to make English homes beautiful with the subtle qualities of proportion and the absence of mere ornament that masked the best classic period and in doing so we may perhaps discover that natural style which is already beginning to attract attention.[73]

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[72] Anon., 'Some Recent Designs by Voysey', *Studio,* Volume 7, 1896, p. 209 sq.
[73] Anon., 'An Interview with Mr. Charles Voysey', *Studio,* Volume 1, 1893, pp. 231-7.

The 'natural' was to be characterised by simplicity and understatement. This was far removed from the original designs developed by the enigmatic Aubrey Beardsley who attracted considerable attention despite the brevity of his working life. Again it was the technical accomplishments and not his 'modernism' that was highlighted in numerous articles.[74]

Aymer Vallance, a biographer and admirer of William Morris, and frequent contributor to *The Studio* on Arts and Crafts, while displaying his inclinations and values is nonetheless most sympathetic to Beardsley's cause. In a *Magazine of Art* valedictory article, he points to deterioration from the early promise of the *Morte D' Arthur* drawings and suggests, "The charlatans have now got hold of Beardsley, leading to the French decadents and inevitable decay."[75] Again we find intimation without explicit reference. Who in fact are the charlatans?[76]

Within the literature may be found comments relating to his affinity to French Decadents and his debt to the Japanese led Aesthetic Movement and the influence of English Pre Raphaelites.[77] However, there is no hint of any more than this. It was his creative imagination and ability to bring together discrete sources that gave him such high standing among the contemporary art critics. He was regarded as an artist of outstanding talent.

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[74] Pennell, Joseph, 'A New Illustrator Aubrey Beardsley', *Studio,* Volume 1, 1893, pp. 16-18 Anon., *Studio* ,Volume 3, 1893, pp. 183-5. Anon., 'Aubrey Beardsley in Memoriam', *Studio,* Volume 13, 1898, pp. 252-261. Armour, Margaret, 'Aubrey Beardsley and the Decadents', *Magazine of Art,* 1896, pp.9-12. Vallance, Aymer, 'The Invention of Aubrey Beardsley', *Magazine of Art*, 1897, pp. 362-368.
[75] Ibid., p. 366.
[76] The early Morte D'Arthur drawings were close in style to the Morris circle, particularly Burne Jones, who assisted Beardsley in his early career.
[77] See: Madsen, (1967), Op. Cit., pp. 80-81.

Without doubt *The Studio* played an important part in bringing Beardsley's art into the consciousness of the time. He designed the *Studio's* first cover in 1893. In this issue there is a positive article by Joseph Pennell, with the technical aspects, both mechanical and aesthetic, emphasised. Pennell draws attention to the significance of Beardsley's line, "with which he weaves his drawings into a harmonious whole."[78]

In 1897 the *Studio* published its valedictory to Beardsley. Here more controversial aspects of his work are considered, notably the overtly sexual. The article concludes by showing the difficulty of categorising his work, "Beardsley stood and needs to stand alone. He is remote from the Pre Raphaelites and the so called Decorative School."[79] It seems likely that the reviewer here was alluding to Art Nouveau without being prepared to name it. It was as if a revolution had occurred, but the Nelson eye was turned to it, with the heart conspiring against the brain.

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[78] Anon., *Studio*, 1893, Op. Cit. p.17.
[79] Anon., *Studio*, 1898, Op. Cit. p. 252.

ENGLISH ART NOUVEAU: POST 1945 SECONDARY SOURCES

Here I shall examine some of the major secondary sources. Chronologically three broad outlines may be discerned which relate to changes in emphasis. The post 1945 authors who approached the question of Art Nouveau with academic rigour such as Peter Selz, Robert Schmutzler and Stefan Madsen gave way to more specialised studies in the 1970s and 1980s and more recently the accent has increasingly been on the vernacular.

The early authors considered later nineteenth century developments that led to the emergence of the Art Nouveau style. In doing so, they recognised an English contribution to the development of the style. However, they did not consider how far the English were prepared to accept the Art Nouveau; but were prepared to examine some English work, in order to see if it could be given the label Art Nouveau.

Nikolaus Pevsner was one of the first to consider Art Nouveau as a movement in its own right. In 1938 he published *Pioneers of the Modern Movement.* In the 1949 second edition published in New York the title was amended to *Pioneers of Modern Design.* In 1960 a revised and partly re – written edition was published in London. This was reprinted with further revisions in 1974 and is the one that will be used in considering Pevsner's position in relation to English Art Nouveau.[80]

[80] Pevsner, Nikolaus, *Pioneers of Modern Design,* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974.

Pevsner has been criticised for being over concerned with analysing the historic links that led to the emergence of what became known as the 'International Style' or sometimes referred to as the 'Modern Movement'. [81] In the 1974 edition of the *Pioneers* there is an allusion to Art Nouveau in the analysis of book illustrators. In particular Pevsner highlights the work of Charles Shannon and Charles Ricketts and the designer/decorator Heywood Sumner. He comments, "The Morrisite style of the Arts and Crafts Movement could easily be given an Art Nouveau twist".[82]

Chapter four of the *Pioneers* has the heading 'Art Nouveau'. Pevsner considers Aubrey Beardsley's work at some length but is unprepared to going beyond a technical description. He states, "The arrangement of short C-curves, little flowers, lines of minute dots, is different from the manner of any other artist. His concern is with decoration, an elegant display of intricate draughtsmanship.[83] He is not prepared to see him as an Art Nouveau artist.

A leading pioneer was Stefan Tschudi Madsen, who initially published his *Sources Of Art Nouveau,* in 1953. This was the first major book on the subject translated into English. Madsen, a Norwegian, who had spent some time in England on the book's preparation, was primarily concerned with the English contribution to the subsequent development of Art Nouveau, and he advanced the concept of Proto Art Nouveau.[84] This was to relate the extent of the English involvement in the development of the forms that subsequently arose on the Continent of Europe.

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[81] See Watkin, David, *Morality and Architecture,* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977, pp. 91-92.
[82] Ibid., p. 91. The narrow line dividing late Arts and Crafts and Art Nouveau will be considered in the following chapter in the discussion of Great Warley Church.
[83] Ibid., p. 93.
[84] Madsen (1962), Op. Cit., pp. 148-163.

Much of the text deals with English involvement in the 'New Art' Movement in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Madsen examines the work of a number of English artists of the time including Lewis Day, Alexander Fisher, Christopher Dresser, Walter Crane and Harrison Townsend and finds little that can be considered Art Nouveau. He does acknowledge the stylistic development of Crane's two-dimensional work, which evolved from the rigid formalised patterns of his mentor William Morris. He argues that Morris's tendril composition is always symmetrical; while Crane's, on the other hand, is asymmetrical showing a characteristic reflex movement where it terminates.[85] He considers that both Albert Gilbert and Aubrey Beardsey worked within the spirit of Art Nouveau and had similarities with the decorative characteristics of Hector Guimard's metro stations.[86]

Charles Ashbee receives some, if limited, recognition as an Art Nouveau artist. Ashbee's use of thin serpentine legs is particularly singled out for approximation to the style. Madsen illustrates a silver cup which he describes as being, "One of the works that best illustrates British Art Nouveau as far as work in silver is concerned."[87]

For Madsen, it was in metalwork and ornamental mounting among the Arts and Crafts artists that a decoration is found which recalls Art Nouveau. He gives as an example the choir rails and lectern at *St. Cuthbert's,* Philbeach Gardens, Kensington. However, he makes the important proviso:

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[85] Ibid., p.150.
[86] Ibid., Alfred Gilbert is discussed on p. 120 and Aubrey Beardsley on p. 240.
[87] Ibid., p. 275.

From a Continental point of view it would be out of the question to call this Art Nouveau and yet it is in metalwork of this nature that the English approached Art Nouveau as far as their tradition and feeling of independence admitted.[88]

In his second book Madsen was more prepared to consider some English work as being Art Nouveau.[89] Charles Voysey was brought into the fold, "many of his designs in the early period were in fact Art Nouveau".[90] Voysey's furniture was also recognised as having features of Art Nouveau.[91] The Horniman Museum by Harrison Townsend is described as being, "a worthy but somewhat isolated example of English Art Nouveau architecture".[92]

Here Madsen says of Charles Ashbee's silverware, "The usually sophisticated and linear version of the Art Nouveau style probably reached its noblest expression in silverware in the work of Charles Ashbee".[93] He continues, "Yet, though Ashbee was the most important, he was not the first. Alfred Gilbert had already turned out jewellery in the Art Nouveau style". [94] Madsen says of Gilbert's Eros Fountain, "A style was developed in sculptural details which bore unmistakable traces of Art Nouveau"[95] and Gilbert's Queen Alexandria Memorial, Marlborough Gate, Kensington completed as late as 1922 was recognised as having Art Nouveau sculptural influence. [96]

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[88] Ibid., p. 275.
[89] Madsen (1967), Op. Cit.
[90] Ibid., p. 79.
[91] Ibid., p. 165.
[92] Ibid., p. 127.
[93] Ibid., p. 170.
[94] Ibid., p. 85. The point is made by Charlotte Gere. See Gere, Charlotte, 'Alfred Gilbert as a Jeweller and Goldsmith', *Alfred Gilbert Sculptor and Goldsmith* (Ed.) Richard Dorment, London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1966, p. 30. Gere states, "It was with the Epergne (The army officers Jubilee gift for Queen Victoria) that Gilbert came closest to being inextricably identified with the Art Nouveau Movement".
[95] Ibid., p. 85.
[96] Ibid., p. 230.

Madsen did, however, perceive an essential difference between Continental Art Nouveau and English work. He describes the latter as being, "unusually sophisticated, linear in its essence, and developed especially on the two dimensional plane."[97]

It was in some of the work of Liberty and Company that Madsen saw English Art Nouveau as coming close to the Continental model, he states, "It is in Birmingham that we find a group of designers [referring to Hassler and Company, a major supplier of Liberty] who probably came closer to Continental High Art Nouveau than anywhere else in England."[98]

The next major secondary source was Robert Schmutzler's *Art Nouveau* which was first published in Germany in 1962. It came half way in time between the two texts by Madsen. Schmutzler covers similar ground to Madsen, but there is a considerable difference in emphasis. The English origins of Art Nouveau are again examined, in considerable detail, particularly relating to the influence of William Blake. While Madsen, in his second text, makes a shift from his somewhat rigid insistence on the concept of Proto Art Nouveau, Schmutzler places the dominant English artists of the time squarely in the realms of Art Nouveau.

In 1955 Schmutzler argued:

> England had at that time no Art Nouveau. She objected to the enthusiastic excesses of the fashion, especially because with more moderation she already possessed so much of the new style. But it was not enough to state this in general terms; concrete examples are to be found.[99]

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[97] Ibid., p. 165.
[98] Ibid., p. 171.
[99] Schmutzler, Robert, 'The English Origins of Art Nouveau', *Architectural Review*, 1955, pp. 109-117.

Beardsley was identified as the major English Art Nouveau artist. Schmutzler relates how in 1893 Beardsley presented to the public a book in which, 'melodious lines accompany the swirling contours of a floating T in a flame-like undulating movement unmistakably Art Nouveau."[100]

Following the 1955 *Architectural Review* article in the subsequent book of 1962 he opens with a definition of Art Nouveau derived from Pevsner, whose contribution he acknowledges.[101] This emphasises the importance of the line for Art Nouveau. The definition, for Schmutzler, opened the door to the acceptance of some English artists and craftsmen as purveyors of Art Nouveau.

Mackmurdo, Ricketts and Voysey are recognised as having high Art Nouveau characteristics in their work. However, he also sees a stylistic shift towards the classical, which had appeared in their work in the latter part of the 1880s. He states, "Nothing could be more remote from English Art Nouveau than the fashionable elegance of Guimard's metro stations."[102]

However, Schmutzler has no illusions regarding the major differences between such English work and that being developed in Europe. He makes the important point that there was nothing produced in England comparable to Horta's curved iron structures and Gaudi's highly plastic architecture. He states, "Such work represents, both personal/

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[100] Ibid., p.109.
[101] Schmutzler, Robert. (1962) *Art Nouveau and Jugenstil,* London: Thames & Hudson, 1971. The Pevsner text quoted is *Pioneers of Modern Design,* New York: Museum of Modern Art. 1949 p.55.
[102] Ibid., p.172.

and national elements.[103] For Schmutzler English Art Nouveau was a distinct phenomenon but nonetheless Art Nouveau. He related it to what he perceived as peculiar English characteristics:

> English Art Nouveau of the last decade of the Nineteenth Century bears the characteristics of the traditional English gentleman, suggesting great reserve and equanimity and addicted to understatement."[104]

He maintains, "English Art Nouveau still existed in the last decade of the Nineteenth Century and continued for some years after1900 when it achieved a full blown quality of its own."[105] He acknowledged that the English exclusion of the Rococo led to an essentially two-dimensional expression of English Art Nouveau.

He considers Beardsley's art difficult to categorise and posed the question, "Could Beardsley's art be considered anything but an example of Art Nouveau?"[106] He says that distinct signs of Art Nouveau are to be found in the work of Alfred Gilbert, Christopher Dresser, Charles Ricketts and Charles Craig. In retrospect such an analysis was a watershed in the historiography of English Art Nouveau; following Amaya's text three years later there was almost complete silence regarding English Art Nouveau.

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[103] Ibid., p. 173.
[104] Ibid., p. 117.
[105] Ibid., p. 118.
[106] Ibid., p.183.

For Mario Amaya (1966) it was the curvilinear that determined Art Nouveau[107] and his definition gave rise to varied examples of English Art Nouveau artists. Ashbee[108] is seen as being semi Art Nouveau while in essence an Arts and Crafts artist. It is suggested that Voysey[109] is on the functional side of Art Nouveau. Baillie Scott is also included and Amaya uses his curvilinear definition to justify this inclusion saying, "Here again was the rational approach to Art Nouveau with the curvilinear or floral abstraction used as playful relief to conventional form."[110]

Amaya is one of the few authors to illustrate less well known and anonymous work as having features that suggest Art Nouveau style. A Kate Harris scent bottle and a David Veazey comb[111] are among a number of examples illustrated. However, there is no reference to them in the text. Following Schmutzler and Pevsner, Amaya highlights the work of Charles Ricketts, particularly his designs for the magazine *The Dial.* Other illustrators discussed include Heywood Sumner, Walter Crane and Frederick Shields, who with their strong linear motifs, are seen as providing a stylistic source for contemporary continental illustrators. Amaya considers the Mackmurdo influenced magazine *The Hobby Horse* as being the most inventive of such Art Nouveau work and suggests that besides the illustrations, "the earliest and most important carriers of the new style were textiles; and it was here that Liberty Company of Regent Street excelled."[112]

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[107] Amaya, Op. Cit. p. 6.
[108] Ibid., p. 43.
[109] Ibid., p. 43.
[110] Ibid., p. 49.
[111] Ibid., p.48.
[112] Ibid., p.58.

books at this time, and produced the first Art Nouveau magazines seen on the Continent and in America. *The Studio*, which began in 1893, with its first issue enlivened by a series of Beardsley illustrations, was followed by a number of continental equivalents towards the end of the century. *The Studio*, however, remained in the forefront by reporting on the latest trends in a style that seemed to be competing with itself to remain original and new; and one issue after another from 1895 to 1910 is like an endless serial of Art Nouveau, rather than a magazine of the fine and applied arts.

English
Advertisement for 'new and artistic' fireplaces, made by R. W. Crosthwate, Thornby-on-Tees and showing an armchair by Louis Majorelle (French) 1900—bought for the George Donaldson Collection from the Paris Exhibition that year and exhibited at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1901
From *The Studio*, August, 1902

Fig. 1.3 41a

English; Designer unknown 1896(?)
Fireplace tile in green, orange and yellow

English; Designer unknown
Advertisement for Doulton's 'New Century Art Ware'
From *The Studio*, special number 'Modern British Domestic Architecture and Decoration'

MARIO AMAYA, *ART NOUVEAU*, LONDON: STUDIO VISTA, 1966. pp. 56-7

Amaya's illustrations show distinct Art Nouveau characteristics but there is no reference to them within the text

Amaya sees their fabric designs as reminiscent of Mackmurdo. He considers that "they increasingly became a status symbol for the Avant Garde and did more to spread the message of Art Nouveau curvilinear design than anything else produced at the time."[113] If this is so there was a contemporary acceptance of Art Nouveau not merely an acknowledgement of its existence.

Amaya's judgement was reinforced a decade later by Millikin and Benton who perceived a strong stylistic affinity to Art Nouveau in Liberty and Company's textiles, and they maintained that the fabrics were among the most characteristically Art Nouveau designs to emerge from England.[114]

Millikin and Benton however, have severe reservations regarding the association of Liberty's furniture to Art Nouveau.[115] Mario Amaya on the other hand has no hesitation in labelling all its products Art Nouveau. This may be seen in the following excerpt in which he discusses the firm's policy of anonymity. "It seems likely that the firm wanted to be its own self advertisement for Art Nouveau, rather than the promoter of personal reputations."[116]

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[113] Ibid., p.66.
[114] Benton,Tim, and Sandra. Millikin, *Art Nouveau,* Milton Keynes, Open University Press, 1974, p. 18
[115] Ibid., 8.
[116] Amaya, Op. Cit., p. 65.

Amaya suggests that Liberty opened the door to consumption of such products to new market segments. He describes how Arthur Silver's fabrics, with their relatively cheap materials, opened the market for the lower reaches of the middle classes and indeed for some within the working class.[117] Here we reach the heart of the debate regarding English Art Nouveau. While it is difficult to be precise we can be certain that English textiles influenced work on the continent (this was readily acknowledged by a master of the style Henry Van de Velde[118]) and in turn they were influenced by continental developments.

Whether the products marketed by Liberty were Art Nouveau, Arts and Crafts or oriental in some form, has provoked considerable debate and justifies Schmutzler's assertion that rigid stylistic divisions are difficult to make. He states, "Seen in retrospect styles generally appear rigorously defined. In reality, however, their frontiers were often uncertain representing a slow transition rather a sudden break."[119] An attempt to unravel the complexity, in determining Liberty style, was made by Millikin and Benton. In a consideration of Liberty's jewellery they discerned a continuum from unquestioned Arts and Crafts at one end to Art Nouveau at the other:

> At one extreme there were very few 'crafty' designs with plenty of little scrolls and medieval hinges and locks. At the other extreme, particularly among the jewellery designs were some, which fell directly within the sphere of Art Nouveau.[120]

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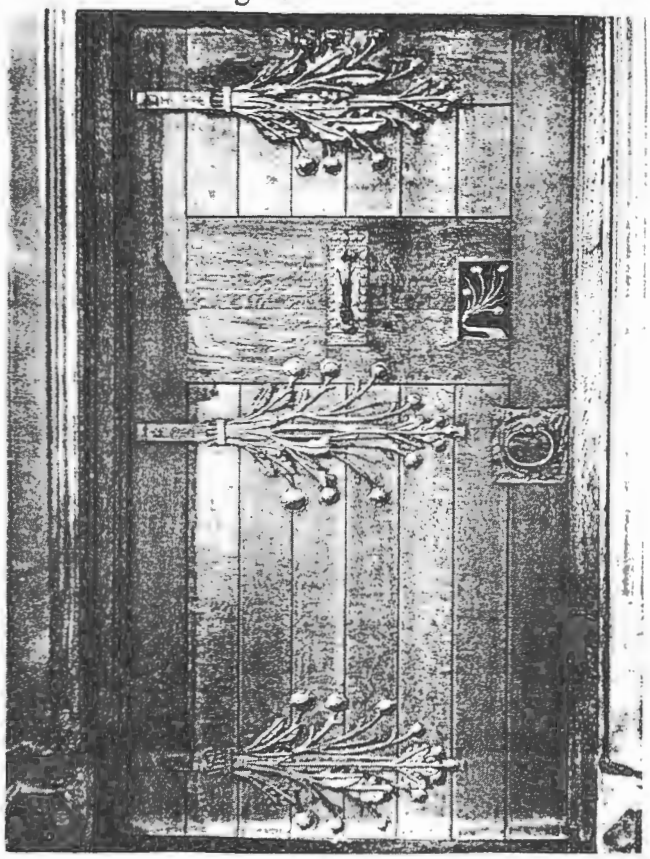
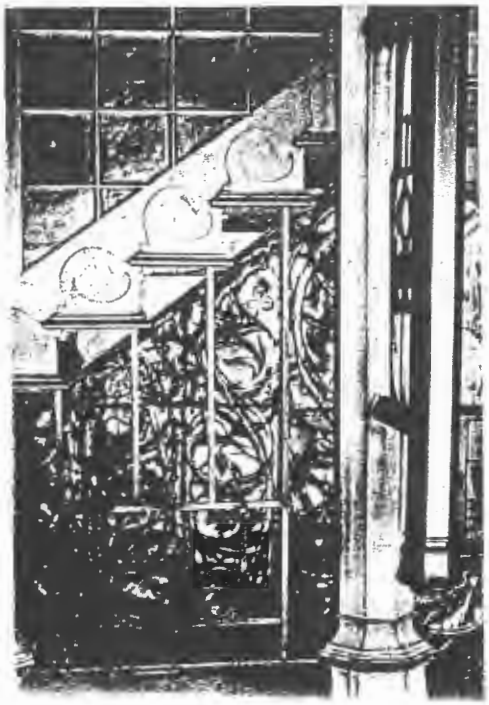
[117] Ibid., p. 62
[118] De Velde, 'Memories 1891-1900', *Architectural Review*, 1952, p.147.
[119] Schmutzler, Op. Cit., p. 7.
[120] Benton and Millikin, Op. Cit., p. 18.

Fig. 1.4



1



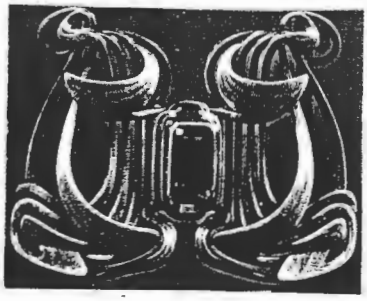
4

43a

Piano Front in Silver. By Miss Esther Moore.

2

3



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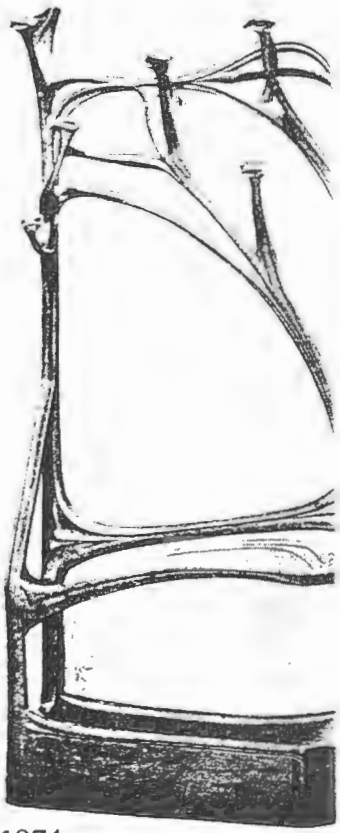

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THE CONTINUUM ARTS AND CRAFTS.....ART NOUVEAU

1 CENTURY GUILD DOOR 1896, BENTON & MILLIKIN, *ART NOUVEAU,* 1974.

2 ESHER MOORE SILVER PIANO FRONT, *ART JOURNAL,* 1898, p. 28.

3 C. ASHBEE, SILVER DISH, BENTON & MILLIKIN, *ART NOUVEAU,* 1974.

4 GUILD OF HANDICRAFT DECORATION, G. NAYLOR, *ARTS AND CRAFTS,* 1971.

5 DE VELDE, SILVER CLASP, L.V. MASINI, *ART NOUVEAU,* 1976.

6 H. GUIMARD, HATSTAND, BENTON & MILLIKIN, *ART NOUVEAU* 1974.

They discern a hybrid mixture of Arts and Crafts, exaggerated Celtic entrelac decoration, symbolism and an overall flavour that suggests to them Art Nouveau.

Shirley Bury, a decade earlier, had maintained that, "Liberty silver was strongly influenced by the English Arts and Crafts and Continental Art Nouveau".[121] She relates how mass production methods were used by Liberty's supplier, Hassler and Company of Birmingham, and states, "It is ironic that the impact of Art Nouveau should have been felt in this country mainly on the level of commercial production."[122] Ironic or not, it does suggest that Art Nouveau was consumed, given the cost, by a middle class market[123], indeed it penetrated most sections of the community.[124] Such insights relating to English acceptance of Art Nouveau are hard to find in the secondary literature. Shirley Bury maintains that few firms were seen to produce anything other than a cheap imitation of Art Nouveau. However, while Bury deserves her reputation for her researches at the time, it may be argued that the language used has traces of condescension.[125] It may help to explain why the literature

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[121] Bury, Shirley, 'Liberty Metalwork' , *Architectural Review,* 1963, pp. 108-111.
[122] Ibid., p. 108.
[123] Mark Taylor states, "The development of British Art Nouveau went hand-in-hand with the growing prosperity and gradual emancipation of the middle class housewife. Interior decoration was one of the few outlets she had for self expression and in this she was abetted, from the 1880s onwards, by many books on the decoration of the home-mostly written by women of a similar background. See *Art Nouveau Designs from the Silver Studio Collection 1885-1910*, London: Middlesex Polytechnic, p. 9.
[124] However, I have severe reservations regarding any consumption by male members of the bourgeois establishment. The only exception to this being up to date, fashionable jewellery, bought by the husband for consumption by his wife displaying conspicuous consumption. See pp.169-170 of this study.
[125] The Oxford Dictionary defines irony as embodying a sense of ridicule and mockery. See *The Concise Oxford Dictionary,* Oxford, Oxford University Press, p. 572. It bears out Robert Schmutzler's point that Art Nouveau was primarily an art form for the rich and is seen as such. However, I maintain that it is a question of values that determines the response towards the acceptance of small scale mass produced Art Nouveau influenced metalwork at the time. Schmutzler, Op. Cit., p. 212. He states, "It was the ideal world of a select group. It is indeed a style of the upper bourgeoisie".

failed to address the question of English acceptance. My contention is that whether goods were hand made or machine made is irrelevant. It is the style that is important and the evidence points to the style having some acceptance by the English at the time.

While the stylistic and production aspects of the *Liberty Style* have given rise to debate, no question mark hangs over Liberty's success in marketing and selling a wide range of domestic products. Amaya summarises the proprietor's objective: "Liberty presents a clear picture of what a wide middle class might be willing to buy for Liberty was clever enough at business to titillate with the new without exasperating his public."[126]

It was in the realm of architecture, especially in the early work of Horta, that Art Nouveau made its mark on an unsuspecting public. The only English architect of note who was seen to have any affinity to Art Nouveau, is Harrison Townsend. However, he is very difficult to categorise. Alastair Service is quite explicit that Townsend's work may not be classified as Art Nouveau. "Many historians have been tempted to dub the more complex Free Style architecture as Art Nouveau but the only justification for this seems to lie in the occasional similarity of decorative detail."[127]

In his earlier work, (1975) Alastair Service argued that the key to Art Nouveau was Anti Rationalism. And that by such a criterion Art Nouveau architecture in Britain was almost non-existent. However, he was prepared to say: L'Art Nouveau of France and Belgium produced buildings in those countries and some others which are quite

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[126] Op. Cit., Amaya, p. 66.
[127] Service, Alastair, *Edwardian Architecture*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1977, p. 51.

unmistakeable. The style, which was partly derived from the tendrils of William Morris's decorative manner, in turn influenced some British artists, designers and decorators and hints of it appear in designs by Townsend, Edgar wood and notably Mackintosh.[128]

We have seen that the interest of commentators has changed over time. Origins became increasingly less of a preoccupation. Recently their prime concern has been regional variations with the folk/vernacular highlighted as I have argued earlier. Today Art Nouveau motifs may be seen in manufactured articles, especially in metal work. Such objects are illustrated in Mario Amaya's book of 1967. He shows photograph frames, tiles, clocks, book covers, scent bottles. These were anonymously designed, mass produced and incorporated features that could only have been manufactured in the period 1895-1910. There is far more than just a suggestion of the English acceptance of Art Nouveau and as will be seen in chapter four (on ceramics) a considerable number of firms were prepared to produce objects with distinct Art Nouveau stylistic motifs. They saw a market for the modern, 'New Art' which they were more than willing to exploit.

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[128] Service, Alastair, (Ed.) *Edwardian Architecture and its Origins,* London: The Architectural Press, p. 124.

CHAPTER 2

AN ANALYSIS OF THREE EXAMPLES OF ENGLISH ART NOUVEAU.

GREAT WARLEY CHURCH, BRENTWOOD ESSEX.
BLACK FRIAR PUBLIC HOUSE, LONDON.
THE MORTUARY CHAPEL, COMPTON SURREY.

INTRODUCTION

Three examples of English Art Nouveau will now be examined in detail. I have argued that a basic problem is a question of defining Art Nouveau. Here the three examples will be matched against those that are generally acceptable. All three are in the public domain and this is a significant factor in itself.

The emphasis within the secondary literature has shifted to recognise the fact that Art Nouveau penetrated into geographic areas previously unexplored. Concurrently there is an increasing awareness that Art Nouveau had many and varied manifestations. This study will show that there is a distinctive English contribution to the style that relates to English cultural traditions. It will be seen that the three examples mirror the secondary literature, in how authors have increasingly ignored the possibility of English Art Nouveau.[1] Two of the three examples received were analysed in the early Art Nouveau texts by Madsen, Schmutzler and Pevsner.

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[1] See Chapter 1 p.8. The examples examined were by Alastair Duncan and Klaus-Jurge Sembach.

Today the three are ignored, most notably so in the *Art Nouveau,* Victoria & Albert Museum 2000 Exhibition and Catalogue, edited by Paul Greenhalgh. A common link between the three may be found in the *Anti Rationalists*, a series of essays, edited by N. Pevsner and J.M. Richards, and published in 1973. They appear in three consecutive chapters and in their different ways were seen to incorporate Art Nouveau characteristics.[2]

The three also share a religious background. The Black Friar, a public house, may on the surface appear to be essentially different. However, it was built on the site of a Dominican Priory, and the fact was most influential in the refurbishment of the building in 1896. A little known architect, H. Fuller Clark, executed this with additional sculptural decorations by Henry Poole. Both Great Warley Church and the Compton Chapel serve as memorial buildings. Evelyn Heseltine as a memorial to his brother commissioned great Warley near Brentwood in Essex. He determined that everything in the conception of church and surroundings should be subordinated to the purpose of symbolising and illustrating one idea, that of resurrection. The architect chosen was Charles Harrison Townsend, with the interior designs by William Reynolds Stephens.

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[2] Pevsner, Nikolaus, and J.M. Richards, (Eds.) *The Anti Rationalists,* London: Architectural Press, 1976. These three chapters together with those by Robert Melville 'The Soft Jewellery of Art Nouveau' and the *Architectural Review* article by Shirley Bury (1963), which was reprinted in the *Anti Rationalists,* may be seen as the major contribution towards the exploration of an indigenous English Art Nouveau in the 1970s.

Mary Watts, the wife of the famous Victorian symbolist painter G. F. Watts (whose work funded the project) offered to design and build a mortuary chapel for the newly established burial ground. The parish council accepted this. Mary Watts was able to persuade many of the villagers to give of their time and energy to build the chapel under her direct supervision. In some respects the chapel was to become a shrine for her husband, who died in 1904, soon after the chapel's completion. At his death his ashes lay in a casket inside the chapel's interior.

Symbolism is at the heart of each decorative scheme. In the Black Friar examples of medieval wilfulness appear in scenes including monks with vast paunches and knowing grins. In the exterior there are monks, a little worse for drink, pointing to the entrance. Devils, beasts and grotesque animals abound. It is as if the ghosts of the medieval gargoyles had risen from the depths. Likewise at Compton the symbolism is overpowering but here it takes a much more intense form. Veronica Gould states, "Every structural detail of the mortuary chapel, from its circular cruciform shape to the buttresses, pillars, vaults and corbels exudes symbolic meaning."[3]

In 1898 Mary Watts published an explanation for the symbolism which she called *'The Word in the Pattern.'* The following extract indicates the direct link from her ideas to those that underpin Art Nouveau, particularly those relating to its organic form.

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[3] Gould, Veronica, *Mary Seton Watts 1849-1938: Unsung Heroine of the Art Nouveau*, Guildford: Watts Gallery, 1998, p. 45. Gould, p. 68, footnote 77, quotes from Veronica Franklin, *The Watts Chapel: An Arts and Crafts Memorial*, 1993.

A symbol may well be compared to a magic key. In one hand it is nothing more than a piece of quaintly wrought iron, in another it unlocks a door into a world of enchantment. 'Of human life in its relation to nature, rising upwards, the Eternal relation of man with God' these patterns would speak. And the Tree of Life, spreading its all-embracing branches against the blue of heaven, carries the root upwards the thought that inspired the design - the whole woven as it were into a mystical garment.[4]

The symbolism at Great Warley is more specific, relating as it does to the concept of Resurrection. When the church was dedicated, it too, had an explanatory booklet, that explained the theme of the design, in the following terms, "The primary object of Mr Reynolds-Stephens in his designs has been to lead the thoughts of the worshippers onward through his decorations to the glorified and risen Christ, whose Form in the centre of the rederos is the keystone of the whole scheme."[5] This shared symbolism will be explored further in considering each individual decorative scheme.

Robert Schmutzler (1962) perceived Art Nouveau as primarily a form of decoration and it is in the decorative work within the interiors that Art Nouveau characteristics may be discerned. Schmutzler's 1962 definition of Art Nouveau, in which he acknowledges his debt to Pevsner and which Greenhalgh, (2000) reused. It provides an analytical base for the exploration of the three examples.[6]

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[4] Watts, Mary Seton, (1898) *The Word in the Pattern*, Guildford: Watts Gallery, 2000.

[5] Wellings, A.W., *Great Warley Church*, (Church Guide: Unknown Publisher) p.20. The quotation is taken from the commemorative booklet published in 1904 to explain the theme of the design.

[6] Schmutzler, states, "Art Nouveau is the term generally used for defining the style of art which around 1900 had as its main theme a long sensitive sinuous line that reminds us of seaweed or of creeping plants. Such a line might be suggested by a flick of a whiplash or flaring up." Quoting from Pevsner, (1949) p. 55. Schmutzler, Robert, (1962) '*Art Nouveau and Jugenstil*', London: Thames & Hudson, 1964, p. 7.
Greenhalgh, Paul, (Ed.) *Art Nouveau*, London: Victoria & Albert Museum Publications, p. 15.

T. Benton and S.Millikin argue that there is a continuum from Arts and Crafts at one end of the spectrum to Art Nouveau at the other.[7] They suggest that there is considerable difficulty in interpreting the narrow differences between perceptions of Art Nouveau and English Arts and Crafts. Such insight and analytical solution will be used as a basis for a fuller understanding of the three selected examples.

[7] Benton, Tim and Sandra Millikin, *Art Nouveau,* Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1974, p.18.

WATTS MORTUARY CHAPEL GUILDFORD SURREY 1904

The chapel is exquisitely located and this is well expressed by Veronica Gould in her guide to the chapel, "Set among trees in the hillside overlooking the village of Compton, the Watts Chapel is at its most sublime in the early evening when the sun lights up the entire western wall and deep shadows enrich the intricate Celtic terracotta ornament."[8]

The exterior in Romano/Byzantine style was completed in 1898. It depicts a Greek cross with four curved walls between the arms. It has many bands of terracotta ornament all with elaborate symbolic intention. The ornament is derived from Celtic manuscripts. As Veronica Gould explains, "The prehistoric plan of the Eternal Circle intersected by the Cross of Faith, symbolises redeeming love reaching out to the four quarters of the earth."[9]

It is difficult to find suggestions of Art Nouveau in the exterior of the chapel.[10] Yet, in his introduction to the *Anti Rationalists* Pevsner sees the exterior as Art Nouveau. He writes, "Celtic is certainly one of the ingredients of the giddy mixture that is Mary Watts's chapel at Compton in Surrey. The other ingredients are Oriental-from Egypt to India-and some Romanesque. But the result is unquestionably Art Nouveau, though of a wholly individual kind."[11] However, in the Surrey edition of the *Buildings of England* series it is described in the following manner, "The outside of the chapel is a

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[8] Gould, Veronica, Op. Cit., p.7.
[9] Ibid. p. 7.
[10] Ibid.,p. 7. Gould suggests that the terracotta tendrils of Art Nouveau are interlaced with the Celtic cord.
[11] Pevsner and Richards, Op. Cit., p. 6.

mixture of Italian Romanesque motifs and ornament derived from Celtic manuscripts. The obvious style would have been Art Nouveau".[12] Despite such apparent contradictions there can be no doubt that the exterior is not Art Nouveau.

The interior is completely decorated and is covered with gesso (fibre soaked in plaster of Paris) panels. As Pevsner observed; "Elongated angels hold cameos in ornate frames looped downwards and linked to form a chain, cherubs' heads on the vaulting ribs, any spare place filled with Art Nouveau curves."[13] Veronica Gould maintains that there is a suggestion of the Rococo,"with the constant flowing in a continuous pattern from motif to motif."[14]However, she points to the symmetry of the composition which is at variance with the Rococo and Art Nouveau despite the fact that she states, "Her [Mary Watts's] exuberant whiplash [is] almost reminiscent of Horta".[15]

Gould suggests that the interior is close in spirit to the Arts and Crafts designer Phoebe Traquair, whose symbolic mural decoration of a mortuary chapel for the Royal Hospital for Sick Children in Edinburgh, was inspired by medieval illuminations and the art of Dante Gabriel Rossetti.[16] Gould therefore reluctantly accepts the chapel as a work of English Art Nouveau. As we shall see, other commentators, such as Pevsner, did not have such reservations.

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[12] Pevsner, Nikolaus. and Ian Nairn, (1962) *Surrey: Buildings of England,* revised Bridget Cherry, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971, p. 170.
[13] Ibid., p.171.
[14] Gould,Veronica, *Watts Chapel,* Watts Gallery, Guildford, p. 30.
[15] Ibid. p. 30.
[16] Ibid. p. 33.

Mary Watts was the undoubted driving force behind the scheme. She had been trained at the National Art Training School and the Slade and had been involved in running clay-modelling classes for disadvantaged shoeblacks in Whitechapel. She saw the opportunity of involving the whole village in the project and began clay-modelling classes in 1895. In the chapel interior her originality found its greatest expression. The gesso panels made by villagers in the workshops filled all the walls and led up to the ceiling. Some of the early panels were illustrated in the *Studio.*[17] They were described as being among the finest of the exhibits and were said to show delightful invention of Celtic interlaced straps and grotesque figures.

A further review in *The Artist* made similar points. It too referred to the Celtic origins, suitability of design to materials, and the symbolism which was described as being strange and yet, "quite as much a part of ourselves as the styles exemplified in Gothic cathedrals."[18] However, it is noteworthy that in none of the contemporary articles is there any suggestion of an affinity to Art Nouveau. The *Studio*[19] devoted five pages to the exterior in 1898 with no reference to Art Nouveau style.

The first indication of its importance, as an example of English Art Nouveau, was an article in the *Architectural Review* reproduced in the *Anti Rationalists* (1976). The author was in little doubt that this was a work of Art Nouveau on English soil, "The decoration of the interior suggests a woven tapestry. Each inch of the interior is decorated. Angel medallions, take their place in an orderly but flowing design of

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[17] Wood, Esher, 'Home Arts and Industries Association', *Studio*, Volume 24, June 1902, p. 129.
[18] Anon.,' Home Arts and Industries', *Artist,* Volume 31,1901, p.135.
[19] Anon., 'A Mortuary Chapel: Designed by Mrs G.F.Watts', *Studio*, Volume 18, 189, pp. 235-240.

4. A drawing of the interior by John Furnival.

COMPTON CHAPEL, N. PEVSNER & J.M. RICHARDS (Eds.) *THE ANTI RATIONALISTS'*, LONDON: THE ARCHITECTURAL PRESS, 1973. p. 172
The line can be seen to arise from the roots, wilful and uncontrollable, however its behaviour is within a pre-determined framework.

abstract patterns of *Art Nouveau* in low relief."[20] A brief *Guardian* article was one of the first analytic assessments that considered the chapel to be Art Nouveau. It stated, "The Watts Chapel is conceived in total Art Nouveau. The twelve angels which look forward from the circular wall have no feet; they end in points which are worked gracefully into an endlessly entwining pattern of roots and vines with rather smaller bunches of grapes."[21]

At Compton the roots, branches and tendrils are rampant; it requires much concentration to follow the flow. Little imagination is required to see a link between the interior and the work of Obrist or Horta. The panels, while self-contained, have sweeping lines, that all but penetrate each other and they fill virtually all the remaining space. The Art Nouveau dictate to 'democratise nature' is well illustrated here.

It is the organic aspect of growth that is fundamental to the total conception. The stylised grapes and roses are virtually submerged within the tendrils, whereas at Great Warley, as we shall now see, the emphasis is somewhat different. Above all, it is the flowing abandon that is so fundamental to Art Nouveau that distinguishes Compton from Great Warley and makes the Compton chapel a unique English building interior clearly within the Art Nouveau style. Its comparative neglect is an enigma at a time when the vernacular conceptions of Art Nouveau are to the forefront of analysis.

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[20] Beazley, Elizabeth, Watts Chapel in (Eds.) Pevsner, N and J.M. Richards, *Anti Rationalists,* London: Architectural Press, 1976, p. 170.
[21] *Manchester Guardian*, 13th August 1964, (Watts Gallery Archive, Compton, Surrey)

GREAT WARLEY CHURCH BRENTWOOD ESSEX.

The exterior of Great Warley may be termed 'adapted vernacular' and is close in stylistic spirit to Harrison Townsend's earlier church, St. Martin's at Blackheath, near Guildford in Surrey. After the consecration *The Studio* had a long article dedicated to it by A.L.Baldry. Within an Arts and Crafts framework he concentrated on the unity of architect and decorator and noted the appropriate use of materials. Baldry barely mentions the exterior summarising it, "quaintness of exterior...with its simplicity wholly free from any archaic affectation." It [the architecture] provides an absolutely appropriate setting for the intricate piece of ornamentation which it enshrines". Baldry makes considerable play of the symbolism and discusses its affinity to the resurrection.[22]

Much of the analysis explores the relation of the parts to the whole. There is no suggestion that the decorative effects are within an Art Nouveau framework. This is despite the fact that, at the inaugural parochial church council meeting that authorised the building, it was said, "Reynolds-Stephens and Harrison Townsend could be expected faithfully to reproduce the very modern Art Nouveau styling."[23]

It is not known what was actually meant by this, whether the Arts and Crafts principles that were put into effect by accepted Art Nouveau designers or an English version of Art Nouveau style. However, the fact remains that, unlike *The Studio,* the Parish Council was prepared to use the words Art Nouveau for a public building, and

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[22] Baldry, A.S., 'A Notable Decorative Achievement by W. Reynolds Stephens', *Studio,* Volume 34, 1905, pp. 3-13.

[23] This is quoted in the official church guide p. 14. This is within a digest of church and village history. It also says that with Council meetings held but once a year, authentic information concerning the new building is hard to come by.

illustrates the fact that there was no unanimity of view at the time in England as to what constituted Art Nouveau.

Harrison Townsend gives an illuminating insight into the problems faced by the 'original' artist at the time. A reading of the talk given to the Federation of Builders produces a strong feeling that here was a man trying to justify his actions but ill at ease and defensive. "I am no despiser of that accumulated experience we call tradition. I am begging you not to copy. Our language comes to us enriched by that of other days yet it has the distinct impress of its own".[24] The chairman in his vote of thanks emphasised, "We must remember the limitations placed by our clients".[25] There were few clients prepared to request a building in the Art Nouveau style.

One of the major aims of Art Nouveau architects such as Horta was to create a unity of ensemble and this was achieved at Great Warley with remarkable effect. On entering the church the eyes are led through the screen to the apse. The totality of the ensemble has an immediate impact with the parts relating to the whole. The painstaking detail gradually becomes apparent within the totality of the whole. It is such detail that led Robert Schmutzler in 1962, in the first account since Baldry's *Studio* article in 1905, to state quite boldly that this is indeed an Art Nouveau interior. Schmutzler says, "Its interior offers us England's most complete example extant of a unified Art Nouveau ensemble".[26]

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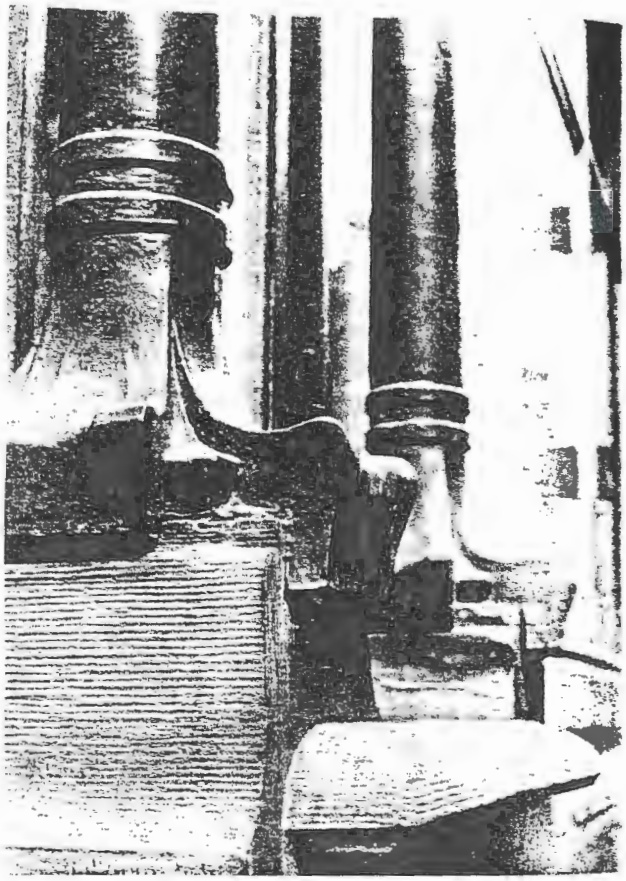
[24] Townsend, Charles Harrison,' Originality in Architectural Design', *Builder*, February 8th 1902, pp. 133-4.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Schmutzler, Op. Cit., p. 189.

Fig. 2.2



TOP LEFT: Victor Horta; Detail of the façade of the Maison Du Peuple, Brussels
TOP RIGHT: The square forms of the pillars at Great Warley.
The Comparison made by **ROBERT SCHMUTZLER, 'ART NOUVEAU'**
London: THAMES & HUDSON, 1978, Page 189.

He proceeds to detail a number of specific examples to justify his claim. Schmutzler makes the distinction, detailed in his book, between High and Late Art Nouveau. High is the organic, which he calls botanical curvilinear style that emanated from France and Belgium. He maintains that Late Art Nouveau had its roots in Glasgow and Vienna. Within the former he found, "a hint of the 'Belgian line' in the crowning foliage in the blossoming trees that represent the pillars which divide the main aisle from neighbouring areas."[27] He says that the curvilinear may also be seen in the bases of the pillars of the principal screens. Here he makes a valid comparison with Horta's work which he illustrates in his book.[28]

He maintains that the late Art Nouveau period is seen within the square forms of the pillars, the stereometric form of the baptismal font and lectern and the squares and rectangles of inlaid marble and glazed enamel. He concludes, " The common genetic origin of High and late Art Nouveau resulting from the Pre Raphaelite period can be seen at Great Warley more than anywhere else."[29]

Madsen in his second book of 1967, does not go as far as Schmutzler and states, "with its rare traces of Art Nouveau, Great Warley held a unique position in English architecture"[30]. Like Schmutzler Madsen was struck by how the details and materials blended to produce a decorative whole. He described how the panels of lilies, rising from their bulbs, ran to the top of the wall.[31] Such a description is relevant to the organic side of Art Nouveau.

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[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid., pp. 180-181, plate191 and plate 192.
[29] Ibid., p.189.
[30] Madsen, Stephan Tschudi, *Art Nouveau,* London: Studio Vista, 1967, pp. 128-9.
[31] Ibid., p. 127.

Fig. 2.3 58a

GREAT WARLEY, N.PEVSNER & J.M. RICHARDS (EDS.) 'THE ANTI RATIONALISTS (LONDON: THE ARCHITECTURAL PRESS 1973) p. 164

The drawing clearly illustrates how the details and materials of Great Warleyt blended to produce a decorative whole.

John Maltby in the '*Anti Rationalists*' follows and develops the earlier *Studio* account. He too barely mentions Art Nouveau. Like Baldry he makes much of the symbolism and the problems of applying it in a House of Worship. It is essentially a descriptive account and the only reference to Art Nouveau is a bland generalised statement, "The system of ornamentation developed by the followers of Art Nouveau involved great use of natural forms out of which they tried to evolve a new language of ornament and decoration."[32] He is, however, more specific in suggesting that the side chapel screen is perhaps the most completely Art Nouveau item within the church.

Other notable references are found in two comprehensive guides to English Parish Churches. The entry in John Betjeman's Guide of 1959 reads, "An excellent example of the Art Nouveau period: A unique church of the Arts and Crafts Movement."[33] In the 1993 revision, edited by John Kerr, the entry was amended to state, "an excellent example of Art Nouveau in the Arts and Crafts manner".[34]

Further ambiguity may be seen in Simon Jenkins entry to his *England's Thousand Best Churches.* He states, "It [Great Warley] is as complete a programme of early twentieth century design as anything achieved by Charles Rennie Mackintosh or Otto Wagner". He proceeds to list it as an Arts and Crafts church and describes it as one of the most exciting Arts and Crafts interiors in England.[35]

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[32] Malton, John, *Art Nouveau in Essex,* in Pevsner and Richards Op. Cit., 159-167.
[33] Betjamin, John, (Ed.) *Collins Guide to English Parish Churches*, London: Collins, 1959, p.162.
[34] Kerr, John, (Ed.) *Collins Guide to English Parish Churches*, London: Collins, 1993.
[35] Jenkins, Simon, *England's Thousand Best Churches,* London: Allen Lane, 2000, p. 1888.

The occasional ambiguity in the literature may be explained by the fact that Art Nouveau is now generally recognised as having its roots in the English Arts and Crafts Movement. The philosophical basis developed by Van de Velde was readily acknowledged as being derived from English antecedents. In his *Memoirs* he stated:

> Our chief task now was to make ourselves thoroughly familiar with all the details of the recent revival of handicrafts in England and complete our documentation on the subject in order to be able to explain and enlarge upon the results it had produced. This revival was already calling forth a spontaneous echo in Belgium. Serrurier was the first on the Continent to recognise the revolutionary importance of the work of British designers and manufacturers.[36]

Great Warley is therefore an example of the blurred distinctions between Arts and Crafts and Art Nouveau and it is unsurprising that there are analytic variations as to whether Great Warley should be seen as Arts and Crafts or Art Nouveau. There is, however, no disagreement regarding the decorative unity of the whole. Madsen states, "Within the interior all the details and materials blend superbly to produce a decorative whole.[37] The problem is that some see the detail as inspired by Arts and Crafts, while others sense a distinct development towards the 'New Art'. Without doubt, however, Townsend and Stephens had achieved Townsend's desire for originality.

Incorporation of Arts and Crafts principles and Art Nouveau decorative detail may be observed in the copper decorative panels on either side at the bottom of the organ case. The one on the right hand side is a pastoral scene. Here the line is static whereas

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[36] Velde, Henry van de, ' Memoirs 1891-1901', *Architectural Review*, September 1952, p. 147.
[37] Madsen, (1967) Op. Cit., p 129.

on the other side the symbolism involves fishes and the line is dynamic, much movement can be discerned, and there is a feeling of restlessness. This has an affinity to Madsen's definition of Art Nouveau, "The asymmetrical undulating line terminating in a whip line energy. The ornamentation is always alive, restless and at the same time balanced."[38]

Schmutzler maintains that throughout the church there is appropriate use of metals. This is of course one of the mainstays of Arts and Crafts philosophy. He says:

> The sensitive contrasting harmony of brass, copper and steel produce no ostentatious pomp. Nowhere is there an illusion of gold. On the contrary the simpler and cooler metals can be easily identified for what they are and for the first time aluminium is used here in decoration.[39]

Clear Arts and Crafts derivation may be seen in the altar rail which is fashioned in metal and is supported by slab pillars of marble. On either side of the opening are crowns of thorns in brass with triple rose flowers. These are stylised and static in the true Arts and Crafts manner. A further example may be found in the Rood Screen where there are exposed rivets.

However the rood screen and pulpit have distinct Art Nouveau characteristics. The rood screen is composed of brass rose trees, root and branch, flower and fruit. The six trees that comprise the screen bear six angels holding banners on which are inscribed the fruits of the spirit. Here is the symbolism of Art Nouveau, with the exploration of

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[38] Ibid., p.16.
[39] Schmutzler, Op. Cit., p. 189.

the organic, but not the movement that underpins Schmutzler's definition. All is controlled and the unity is all-important. Madsen may be thought to be describing Great Warley when he wrote:

> The budding, growing ornamentation reflects essential elements of Art Nouveau-the very force and creative ability of the style. Various natural elements are selected; the sappy shoot, the young tree and the bud being the most important. Within this ornamental world an entire iconography is developed. [40]

In fact he is defining Art Nouveau. Allusions to what Schmutzler terms organic or botanical Art Nouveau may also be seen at Great Warley. The vault of the apse is decorated with a vine rising in four pairs of canes from the main member culminating in a broad array at the head of the vault. On the flanks of the pulpit there are trees which spring from common roots.

Great Warley needs to be seen as a variation of Art Nouveau. The movement did not give rise to homogeneous stylistic expression. In France there was wide variation within the organic side of the movement emanating from Nancy and the curvilinear from Brussels and Paris. Van de Velde eschewed both nature and ornament. Influenced by the English Arts and Crafts he took on board the undulating line with its emphasis on curvature and simplified it making it sophisticated and refined. It is this form of Art Nouveau that was recognised by John Maltby, who saw the side chapel screen curves as having Art Nouveau characteristics.

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[40] Madsen, Op. Cit., (1967), p.16. See too p. 35, 'Symbolism of 'Tree of Life' and 'Organic Form of The Plant' pp.51-3.

THE BLACK FRIAR

The only original *Anti Rationalists* chapter was devoted to the Black Friar. This was written at a time when the public house was under threat of demolition. It is situated just to the north of Blackfriars Bridge, close to the City of London and at the time, in the 1960s, the area was 'ripe' for redevelopment. The Black Friar displays no more than an occasional hint of Art Nouveau. The exterior and interior both display the predominance of the Arts and Crafts Movement.

The exterior is typical of the area and is described by Pevsner as, "An innocuous Italianate block of about 1863".[41] In 1904 the interiors were completely refurbished and Pevsner in the *Anti Rationalists*' introduction describes them as: "A highly successful attempt to create a popular version of the Arts and Crafts decorative style."[42] This is reinforced in the City of London entry; "The best pub in the Arts and Crafts manner in London."[43]

Nicholas Taylor in the *Anti Rationalists*, essentially agrees with this, but maintains that in the exterior there are hints of Art Nouveau. He states that the entry doorway displays, "the familiar chunky forms of English Art Nouveau."[44] In addition he cites the massive flanking piers of the segmented doorways, the neat-arcaded vents to the cellar and some of the sculptural enrichment as having stylistic evidence of Art Nouveau.

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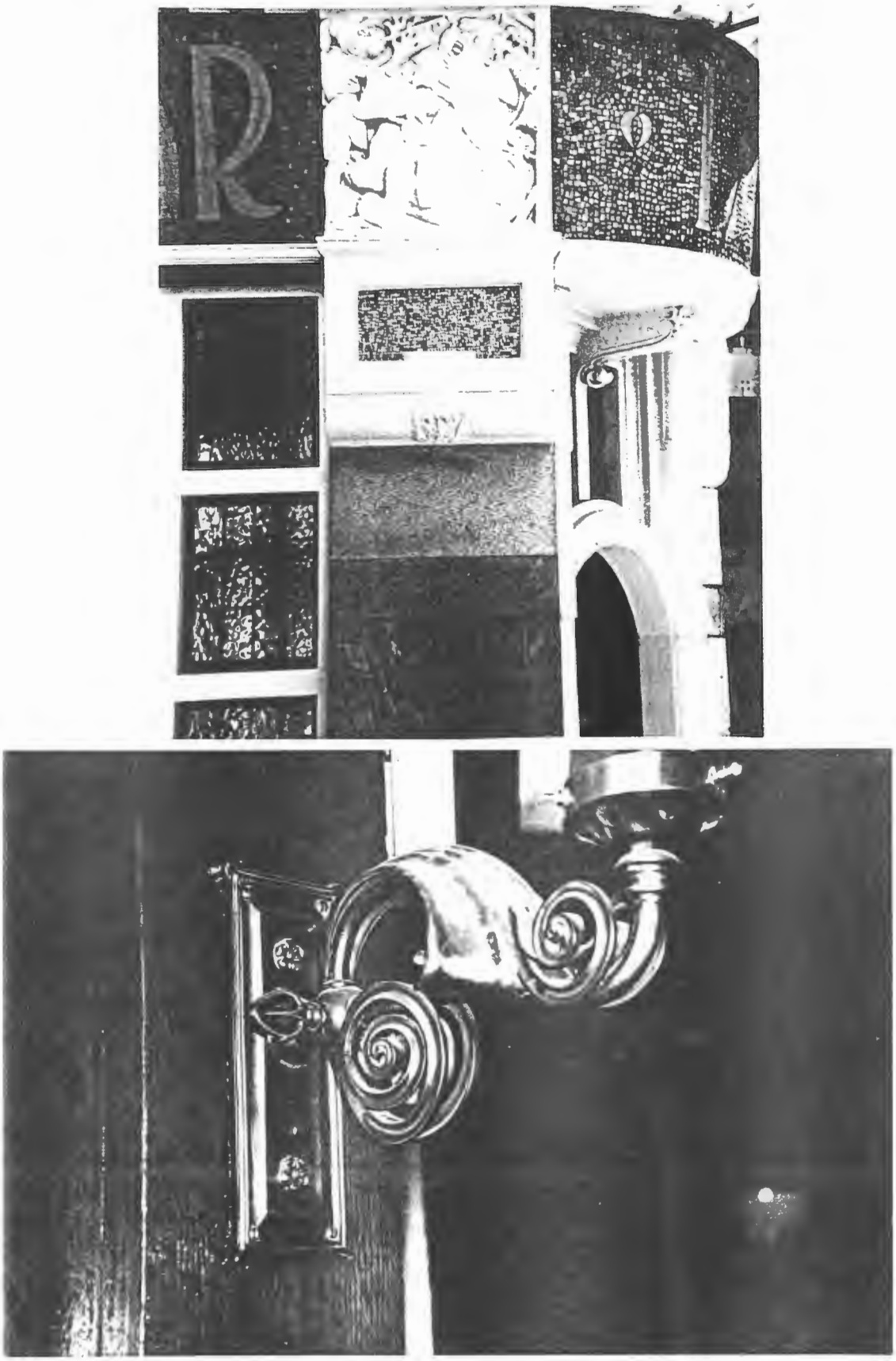
[41] Pevsner, Nikolaus, '*The Buildings of England: City of London*', Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985. p. 283.
[42] Pevsner and Richards, Op. Cit., p. 8.
[43] Pevsner, Op. Cit.,, p. 283.
[44] Pevsner and Richards, Op. Cit., pp. 181-7. Taylor uses a similar phrase in his analysis of St. Bartholomew at Brighton. See Taylor, N., (Ed.) A Service, *Edwardian Architecture*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1977, pp. 286-7.

Fig 2.4 63a



BLACKFRIAR: EXTERIOR DOORWAY & INTERIOR CANDLE (THE AUTHOR)

The two examples illustrate the few hints of Art Nouveau at The Blackfriar

It is difficult to relate Taylor's examples to conventional definitions of Art Nouveau. However some Art Nouveau derivation may be found in the copper gas lamp bracket in the saloon bar and a similar swirling curving movement, with rounded off corners may be discerned in the bracket above the entrance doorway. Here there is a similarity to the side chapel screen at Great Warley and, as there, a comparison with de Velde's rounded edges, is quite instructive, in showing some English affinity to a form of Continental Art Nouveau.

ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

Of the three architectural examples of possible English Art Nouveau, the one that comes nearest to the spirit[45] of the continental model is the interior of the Watts Chapel at Compton. It corresponds to the Pevsner/Schmutzler definition that was used as recently as 2000 by Paul Greenhalgh. However, Great Warley is particularly difficult to categorise, and it illustrates the narrow line between late Arts and Crafts and what is seen by Stefan Madsen as the English expression of Art Nouveau.

Madsen maintains that Great Warley occupies a unique position in English ecclesiastical art, with all the details and materials blending superbly to produce a decorative whole. He states that Art Nouveau-like tendencies in metalwork may be occasionally encountered in other contemporary churches. For Madsen "It is in metalwork of this nature, that within the limits of national tradition the English approached the style".[46] The use of aluminium at Great Warley is a striking illustration of how modern technology was adopted. Such a fact is far removed from the Morris led Arts and Crafts reverence for the medieval.

What Madsen meant by English national tradition is the key to my approach and I shall explore this in some detail in the later chapters on taste and gender.

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[45] Arts Council, *Art Nouveau,* London: 1965, pp 1-2. In the introduction Pevsner maintains that it is essential to get beyond the motifs to the spirit of the years of Art Nouveau.
[46] Madsen, (1967), Op. Cit., pp. 127-9.

T. Benton and S. Millikin's analytical schemata are a useful tool to overcome such definitional problems. Within their Arts and Crafts/ Art Nouveau divide Great Warley must necessarily be placed somewhere in the middle. The Black Friar, however, has to be placed towards the very end of the Arts and Crafts/ Art Nouveau polarity. Here there are no more than hints of Art Nouveau.The Black Friar's interior is derived from a free interpretation of its medieval past. There are occasional excursions into the 'New' but otherwise there is little to suggest that it is other than an Arts and Crafts interior.

For Benton and Millikin the dividing lines between the styles may at times be difficult to determine. They see Compton as giving expression to this. The exterior is seen as rather rigid in its neo Celtic derivation whereas the interior, with the interleaving tendrils, is seen as taking us directly into the English version of Art Nouveau with its adaptation of decorative motifs and understatement. However as they say, "There is a narrow border between revivalism and something much more strange and exotic."[47]

There is only one area where there is a direct comparison between Great Warley and Compton. This is within the apse of the former. The vault of the apse is decorated with a low relief treatment of the vine rising in four pairs of canes from a main member. The vine culminates in a broad array at the head of the vault with the fruit picked out in colour. The vine at Great Warley is essentially static with arts and crafts characteristics.

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[47] Benton, Tim and Sandra Millikin, Op. Cit., p. 7.

Robert Schmutzler, *Art Nouveau,*
London: Thames & Hudson,
1978, p. 149

GREAT WARLEY CHURCH

The Author

THE BLACK FRIAR

The Burial Chapel at Compton

Some Recent Art Books
Mary Watts: 'The Word in the Pattern
The Art Journal, 1899, p.256.

COMPTON CHAPEL

The exterior views of Great Warley, Black Friar, and Compton have no suggestion of Art Nouveau and are tradition in spirit and application

On the other hand at Compton it is curvilinear and free flowing with the roots, branches and tendrils quite rampant. The organic aspect of growth, and its associated symbolism is fundamental to the total conception.

The Compton interior has numerous long sinuous lines, the tendrils, in fact, of creeping plants. There are distinct characteristics of Schmutzler's High Art Nouveau. Therefore Compton has to be placed high on the Art Nouveau side of Benton and Millikin's polarity. At Great Warley the vine is seen growing from its roots, however, all is under close control and supervision.

A final point is that church, chapel and public house have free public access. Indeed Compton, with the strongest Art Nouveau characteristics of the three, was built and assembled by those living in the village. There is no known contemporary criticism of the style employed at the time. This was also true of Great Warley.

It was the interiors that acknowledged the 'New Art'. The exteriors were too much in the public sphere. There remains the fact that, with the exception of these examples, there was nothing built at the time that could be labelled Art Nouveau in applying the Pevsner/Schmutzler/Greenhalgh definition. The English might have accepted Charles Ricketts's book illustrations[48] but there are no street posters comparable to those produced by the French. Not only did the English forsake Art Nouveau in the public domain at the time and within the literature the few completed examples have suffered from comparative neglect.

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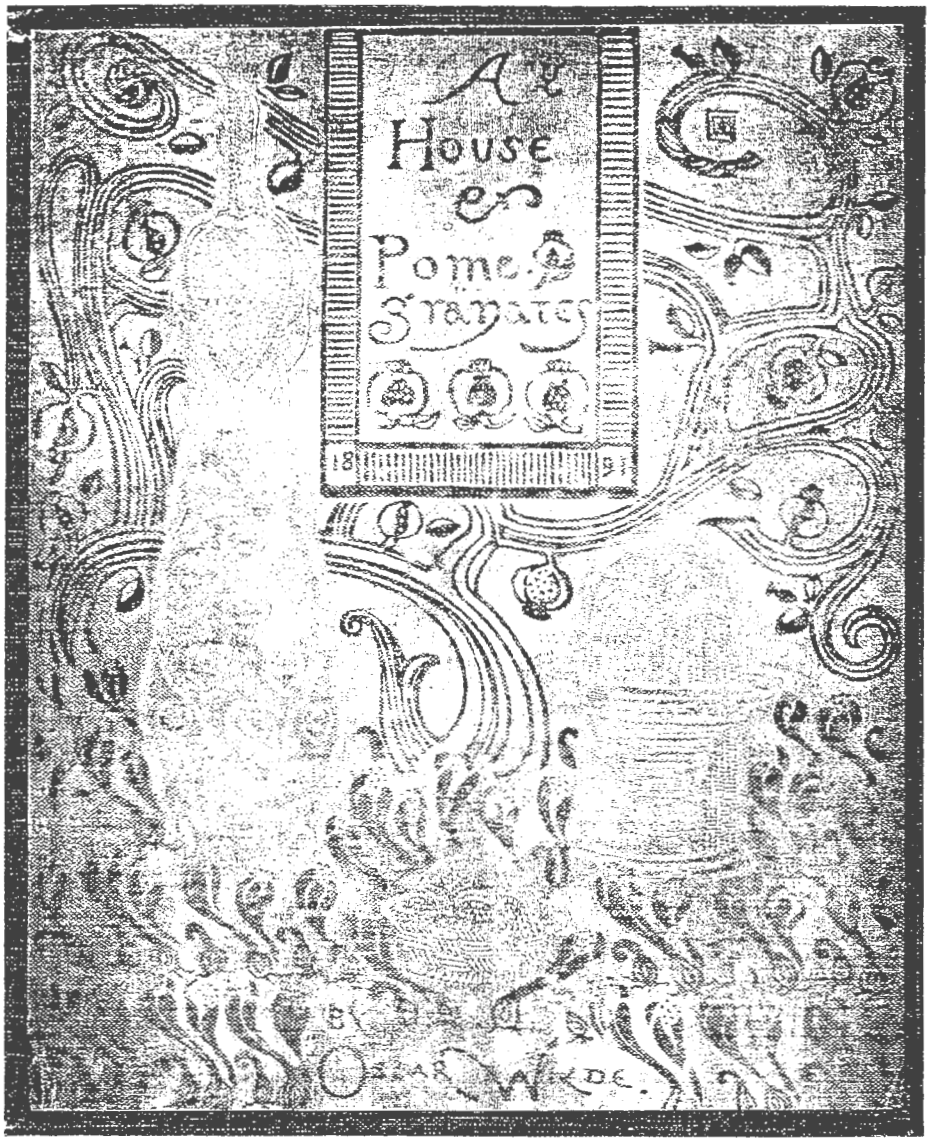
[48] Haslam, Malcolm, *In The Art Nouveau Style*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1989, p. 83.

Fig. 2.6



Binding for Oscar Wilde's *A House of Pomegranates*

Charles Ricketts, 1891; stamped linen; 8 1/4 x 7 1/8 in. (21 x 18.1 cm). British Museum, London.

For this book cover, Ricketts created a decorative design with branches of a stylized pomegranate tree and a carpet of crocus flowers. He overlaid this with the symbols of a peacock, a bowl of pomegranates, and a fountain. Critics were outraged by the design, and compared his fountain to an upside-down top hat, but his friend Oscar Wilde maintained that there were only two people it had to please, himself and Charles Ricketts.

Malcolm Haslam, *In The Art Nouveau Style,* London: Thames & Hudson, 1989, p.83.

Haslam maintains that it is in the work of book illustrators such as Charles Ricketts that England came closest to Continental Art Nouveau.

Why this should be so requires explanation. One major reason is continuing male hegemony. There are too issues arising from a fairly rigid class system. These concepts will be examined later in chapters five and six. I shall now move on to explore what happened when there was a public display of Art Nouveau furniture and other artefacts at a Government funded institution in 1901.

CHAPTER 3

SIR GEORGE DONALDSON AND THE VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM 'NEW ART' FURNITURE COLLECTION

In this chapter I will consider the Bequest of 'New Art' Furniture to the Victoria and Albert Museum by Sir George Donaldson in 1900. Donaldson bought a selection of furniture, at his own expense, from the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1900. This Bequest had direct implications for the acceptance of Art Nouveau in England at the time. The chain of events following the Bequest will be detailed with contemporary and modern perceptions examined and analysed. I will consider the Victoria and Albert Museum archives at Blythe House. In particular I will examine those on the 'New Art Furniture', Sir George Donaldson, Alan Cole and Walter Crane.

Sir George Donaldson was a dealer by profession who had acquired an impressive collection of works of art.[1] The South Kensington Museum made its first purchase from him in 1884 and subsequently he made numerous purchases on behalf of the Museum. His major interest was in furniture. His eminence in the field led to international recognition and he had the distinction of being the only English judge at the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1900. He realised that the 'New Art' that he saw at the Exposition was a stylistic revolution which would affect English furniture makers. Elizabeth Aslin suggests that previous international exhibitions had proved something

[1] On retirement he opened a gallery in Hove for their display.

of a disappointment to him and he considered that this fresh style could give enormous mercantile advantage to the producers.[2]

The events that unfolded following the Bequest were to some extent determined by the original vision of the Museum's pioneers particularly their aims and purchasing objectives. These will be briefly considered together with questions relating to display and the relation of the Museum to the training school.

Following, the retirement of the director Sir Henry Cole in 1873 the Museum experienced increasing difficulties. Anna Somers Cocks talks of administrative chaos that prevailed and Anthony Burton states that the Museum had a shattered reputation[3] In 1896, five years before the Bequest, the problems which beset the South Kensington complex were investigated by a Select Committee of the House of Commons. The whole management of the Museum and the art training School was found to be honeycombed with incompetence and lack of judgement.[4]

There were too questions relating to the impact of foreign competition, the restraints of a bureaucratic institution, the eclecticism of the Museum's growing collection and more general issues relating to class, taste and gender. The late nineteenth century was a time of a general movement towards feelings of national pride. This had an

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[2] Aslin, Elizabeth,' Sir George Donaldson and Art Nouveau at South Kensington', *Decorative Arts Society Journal*, No. 7, p. 11.
[3] Burton, Anthony, *Vision and Accident: The Story of the Victoria and Albert Museum,* London: Victoria and Albert Museum Publications, 1999, p. 133. Somers Cocks, Anna, *The Victoria and Albert Museum: The Making of A Collection,* London: Windward, 1980, p. 13.
[4] Anon., 'The Exposure at South Kensington', *Art Journal,* 1898, pp. 316-7.

impact in England. Such changes will be seen to have some bearing on the underlying question of the acceptance of Art Nouveau in England.

In the period 1895-1910 the English Arts and Crafts movement was moving towards maturity and its leading practitioners' attitude towards the 'New Art' was to be a significant factor in the reception of the Donaldson Bequest. But above all it was the relationship between the South Kensington School and the museum that was to prove decisive in determining the train of events.

The Victoria and Albert Museum's own archives are by no means complete, and at critical moments the records are totally absent. A transcript of what is available today will be found in the first section of the appendix.[5]

[5] Page references to the transcript will be made where it is seen as relevant within the text.

2 THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

To an extent the events that unfolded in the early 1900s were determined by the South Kensington Museum's complex origins. It particular there was its role as both school of design and a repository of artefacts. The Museum's dual role had its origins as early as 1835. In the 1830s there was a widely shared view that British exports of manufactured goods were deficient in principles of design. It was argued that the manufacturing population required training so that Britain would be better equipped to outdistance her international rivals.[6] A Select Committee of the House of Commons was set up to explore the issues involved.

Before its report was formally published, the government, sensing the direction in which the wind was 'blowing', decided to set up a School of Design at Somerset House with a study area where relevant specimens could be examined. A small budget was made available so that students could see good practice at first hand.

The Select Committee had accepted the argument relating to economic competition and this was to play a part in the debate at the turn of the century. Their Report stated. "To us a peculiarly manufacturing nation the connection between art and manufacturers is most important and for this merely economical reason it equally imports us to encourage art in its loftier attributes".[7] Later, the Committee's view was

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[6] Cardoso Denis, R., 'Teaching by Example: Education and the Formation of South Kensington's Museums', in *A Grand Design,* (Eds.) Baker, Malcolm, and Brenda Richardson, London: Victoria and Albert Museum Publications, 1997 p.107.

[7] Burton, Op. Cit., p. 18. He makes a similar point. "The Committee ascribed Britain's failure to produced well designed goods to the want of instruction in design and the absence of freely open galleries containing approved specimens of art,"

reinforced in 1853 by the Privy Council who saw the relationship of School and Museum as being, "A London based Museum with the most perfect illustrations and models connected with a School to support a system of local schools all calculated to aid competition in the great neutral markets of the world".[8] By 1851 there were fifteen schools.

The 1835 Select Committee was also impressed by the newly appointed Director of the Altes Museum in Berlin who came before it to argue that accessible collections were the answer to the problem of extending taste and knowledge among the public thus giving it the opportunity of seeing the most beautiful objects at first hand.[9] Such views were strongly held by Henry Cole, a civil servant who had assisted with the preparations for the 1851 Great Exhibition.

By 1851 there were severe criticisms of the system then in place at Somerset House and after the dismissal of three directors in quick succession Cole was appointed to head a Department of Practical Art and act as Joint Secretary. The other secretary appointed was Richard Redgrave whose major responsibilities were the provincial art schools and overseeing the museum's purchasing policy.[10]

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[8] Conforti, Michael, 'The Idealist Enterprise and the Applied Arts', in Baker and Richardson, Op. Cit., p. 28. Quoted from the Privy Council Report 1853.
[9] Ibid., p. 26.
[10] Burton, Op. Cit., p. 27.

The duality of Art Schools and Museum persisted through the Marlborough House period, which replaced Somerset House in 1852. This continued at South Kensington, the new home in 1857, and finally came to an end with the founding of the Royal College of Art in 1898.[11]

Henry Cole's basic aim was to promote good taste among the manufacturing population. The Museum was to fulfil this function by providing a forum for the consideration of what was perceived to be beautiful work. It was argued that through this the general standard of taste would be raised and powers of discrimination achieved. The public's increasing awareness would lead them to want something better from the manufacturer and this would ultimately lead to improvements in design.[12]

Cole's underlying philosophy that there should be the greatest happiness for the greatest number derived from Jeremy Bentham. Such happiness was seen to stem from knowledge leading to greater awareness. He was conscious too that there was a direct link between greater knowledge and the general needs of the economy. Michael Conforti states, "He [Cole] spoke of his institution as being directed by workmen of every vocation. Such educational efforts can be considered commercially purposeful- to indoctrinate the present and future consumer while also training the maker."[13]

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[11] However, as will be shown, the ties at this time were not entirely broken and the long and intimate legacy of School and Museum (they had adjacent offices at South Kensington) had critical repercussions for the destiny of the Donaldson Bequest.

[12] See Cole's answer to Select Committee question in Trippi, Peter, ' Industrial Arts and the Exhibition Ideal', Op. Cit., (Baker & Richardson), p. 87.

[13] Conforti, in Baker and Richardson Op. Cit., p. 29.

While Cole fundamentally believed in improving the taste of present and future consumers, Conforti maintains that, "Cole and his colleagues believed deeply in the reformative power of the exquisite and the old."[14]

However, Cole was a civil servant and to maintain the Museum's buying power he had to reconcile his own inclinations with those of his paymasters. The evolution of the collection owed as much to pragmatism as to conscious design. There were few objects for study at Somerset House and these were mainly reproduction plaster casts.

Following the Great Exhibition of 1851 the Board of Trade provided the finance for the purchase of suitable objects for a more expansive display. A committee consisting of Cole, Richard Redgrave, Owen Jones and A.W.N. Pugin purchased a range of articles from the Exhibition. What was acquired formed the backbone of a transformation in 1852 of the study collection into a Museum of Manufactures. Carduso Denis maintains that, "[this] introduced a public display role which was to endure far longer than the sporadic attempts at education in design". He adds, "[It] signalled a bold decision to use the collections to foster public taste quite apart from the purposes of applied industrial instruction." [15]

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[14] Ibid p., 30.
Questions related to taste, the consumer, together with the issue of ancient or modern were particularly pertinent at the time of the Donaldson Bequest and will be addressed later in the chapter.
[15] Cardoso Denis, in Baker and Richardson Op. Cit., p. 108.

However, the variety of exhibits that evolved may be seen as an accident of history. Petri Trippi states that at the 1851 Great Exhibition the objects were classified by the Commision into four groups reflecting the cycle of production [raw materials, machinery, mechanical invention, manufacture, sculpture and plastic art.] Prince Albert had an influential voice on the Commission and when the question of expansion arose he made Marlborough House (A Royal Residence) available on the condition that Cole concurred with plans which he was preparing for perpetuating the benefits of the Great Exhibition. His classification was similar to the Commissions consisting of nature including raw materials; the machinery involved in their transformation into manufactured articles and finally the art used in this achievement. [16] This meant that as nature was equated to food this should be in the Museum. Burton well summarises the situation, "The South Kensington Museum had such an extraordinary range of contents that it was difficult to assess and dismiss it as incoherent."[17]

There were numerous donations and legacies which further added to the confusion and Conforti states that "Cole bemoaned the fact that South Kensington had become a refuge for destitute collections."[18] He had early in his career shown an inclination towards the old and exquisite and increasingly this became the preference for the

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[16] Burton, Anthony, Op. Cit., p. 53. Conforti, in Baker and Richardson Op. Cit., p. 25 notes that the Museum's first permanent exhibitions had brought together collections of art and science, food stuffs and animal products.
[17] Burton, Op. Cit., p.53.
[18] Conforti, Op. Cit., in Baker and Richardson p. 45.

Museum, which led to a change in name from Museum of Manufactures to Museum of Ornamental Art.[19]

The change in name predates the appointment of Charles Robinson in 1853 to the position of museum curator. Robinson, a scholar and intellectual, had been heavily influenced by the French museum at Cluny. Burton states that Robinson had a strong feeling for objects as historical evidence rather than evidence of design standards.[20]

The question of ancient or modern was to figure prominently following the Donaldson Bequest, and had direct impact on the acceptance of Art Nouveau in England and was resolved relatively early in the Museum's history in favour of the old. Another important issue later in the century was how far the Museum should reflect the English tradition within the decorative arts.

In 1851 given the concern for the perceived poor state of English industrial design it is perhaps unsurprising that of the five thousand pounds allocated by Parliament for works purchased from the 1851 Great Exhibition less than one thousand pounds was spent on English work[21] and Burton points to the fact that there was an initial

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[19] Trippi Peter and Timothy Stevens, 'An Encyclopedia of Treasures: The Idea of the Great Collection,'in Baker and Richardson, Op. Cit., p. 151.

[20] Burton, A., Op. Cit., p. 59. Burton adds, "He was seen to have penetrating taste". Conforti, in Baker and Richardson, Op. Cit., maintains that the Museum by this time had virtually cornered the European market on important medieval and Renaissance sculpture and decorative arts, p. 28. Burton further maintains that purchasing at the time was for what was regarded as the best. He states, "The Museum's inclination was towards 'High Art', p. 79.

[21] Trippi, Peter, in Baker and Richardson, Op. Cit., p. 85. Trippi further maintains that between 1852 and 1900 the Museum's creators came to see International Exhibitions as key opportunities for acquiring contemporary manufacturers. Conforti in Baker and Richardson Op. Cit., (Baker and Richardson quotes Charles Robinson's response to a Select Committee's question in 1860 which bears on this point. Robinson said," I think that manufacturers, workmen and students get a general education at the Museum for having fine examples before them. Good intuitive good taste comes to certain

commitment to universal standards of good design and that the Museum tended to acquire foreign work in preference to the English."[22]

Michael Conforti senses that, despite early achievements and success, the Museum began to lose its way following the retirement of Henry Cole in 1873 and that the house of cards he balanced began to dissolve under the oversight of lesser men.[23] The changes were to have an impact on the destiny of the Donaldson Bequest a generation later and some impact on the English reaction to Art Nouveau. These will now be considered.

There were new forces at work and new challenges to be met. There was a general growth of national consciousness throughout Europe. In England the Arts and Crafts Movement was evolving, allied to increasing public interest in old English crafts including pewter, ironwork and oak furniture.[24] Charles Saumerez Smith maintains that such changing attitudes had an impact on the Museum in its collecting.[25] Between 1880 and 1910 the Museum slowly reconditioned itself focussing its attention and redefining its objectives on its varied collections. The institutional reconditioning

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continental peoples familiar from childhood with the most refined works of art". This is quoted in a footnote p. 396

[22] Burton, Op. Cit., p.128.

[23] Ibid., p.45.

[24] Liberty and Company were more than willing to capitalise on this.

[25] Smith, Charles, Saumarez, 'National Consciousness, National Heritage, and the idea of "Englishness,' in Baker and Richardson, Op. Cit., pp. 277-279. He points to bequests of old English work such as that by Lady Dorothy Nevill. Smith also states that there was a growing professionalism in the writing and documentation of English History. He makes the interesting observation that the Museum's Department of Furniture had close contact with landowners and viewed the country house as a cradle of fine design. If this is so it may be seen as having direct impact on the destiny of the Donaldson Bequest of 'New Art' Furniture, especially so given the fact that Smith points to an increasing appreciation of later Tudor and Jacobean furniture. The recreation of a Jacobean manor house by Edwin Lutyens for the 1900 Paris Exposition gives an indication of English taste preferences at the time.

began in 1880 with the removal of some modern objects to the sister Museum at Bethnal Green.[26]

In the early days in the 1850s the administration of the Museum was small scale with weekly meetings involving the major participants.[27] Charles Robinson was the major purchaser.[28] However, personality clashes with Cole led to his dismissal in 1868,[29] and made Cole wary of the intellectual.

Burton relates a catalogue of problems arising, as a consequence of the Museum's purchasing policies, in the eighteen eighties and nineties. Curators and directors were judged inadequate to their task and Art Referees (these were the nominated specialists) were now drawn mainly from the fine art of painting and they were rarely consulted.

It would appear that Thomas Armstrong, the Director of Art at the time, (whose main responsibility was supervision of the design school network) was now the major purchaser. Burton states that Armstrong was often employed in taking the initiative in

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[26]Burton, Op. Cit., p. 121 and p. 129. Burton maintains on page 129 that it was, a temporary transfer which for most of the material, was to last a hundred years. He refers to a *Times* letter which highlighted the issue of old art, which was seen as admirable and precious, as against modern art which was seen as disagreeable.

[27] Ibid., pp. 80-8. Burton stated, "Because he so hated large committees Cole made sure that he worked directly to his minister at a very small board meeting consisting of the President, Vice President, Inspector General For Art [Redgrave] and the Assistant Secretary. Cole emphasised that every decision was approved by a minister even to the employment of an umbrella taker. .

[28] See Stevens, Timothy and Peter Trippi, in Baker and Richardson Op. Cit., particularly pp.151-54 and 157-59 where they discuss Robinson's preference for buying ancient artefacts. However, they do suggest that he, given his previous appointment in Stoke-On-Trent, was on friendly terms with Minton and Co. and was not entirely hostile to the Museum's original mission of applying art to industry.

[29] Ibid., p. 80. He was Cole's appointee as superintendent of purchases. Burton states that Robinson was dismissed following various disputes with Cole but more importantly as a consequence of personality clashes

purchasing for the museum. Mistakes were made including the purchases of potential forgeries.[30] Such happenings were music to the ears of Robinson who never lost an opportunity to lament the collapse of scholarship at South Kensington and its replacement by a mechanical system.[31]

Cunliffe Owen succeeded the charismatic Cole in 1868. Owen had been gradually promoted from a junior clerk, as he was seen as a good administrator, and Cole's protégé Donnelly, an ex Royal Engineer, became ever more powerful following Cole's retirement. Burton illustrates[32] how Donnelly interfered with the accepted specialists, especially the librarian Weale. He was given little licence in the purchase of books, and with Robinson became a major critic of the museum. There was also the question of nepotism. Among a number of family relationships there was Henry Cole's son Alan, who was to play a significant role in 1901. He was appointed in May 1863 and remained at the complex for forty years.[33]

Cunliffe Owen was succeeded by professor Middleton, a scholar but a man temperamentally unsuited to coping with warring factions. In 1896 Professor Middleton committed suicide.[34] Burton discusses the institutional politics leading to this and in particular how Middleton was caught in the middle. Burton maintains that the

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[30] Ibid., pp.133 and 143. '[These included] Molinari Gateway, which proved to be much rebuilt bought by Armstrong and a modern bust recommended for purchase as original by Armstrong, Alma-Tadema and Leighton.'
[31] Ibid., p. 142.
[32] Ibid., p. 136 and p. 143.
[33] Ibid., p. 83.
[34] Ibid., Burton states, " On June 10th. 1896 Professor Middleton was found unconscious with a bottle of laudanum and a glass beside him. He died hours afterwards. A verdict of death by misadventure was returned but suicide was suspected", p. 137.

tensions at the museum led to Middleton's health problems and for a man such as Middleton failure was inadmissible. There was an obvious absence of social solidarity within the museum at the time. Burton refers to Middleton's death as being a disaster and he says that Purdon Clarke [Middleton's successor] took over at a bad moment with more tribulations ahead.[35]

Burton shows that problems began to build up from the latter part of Cole's reign. These included the inaccurate labelling of objects, secrecy and distrust. [36] Tribulations at the time included vacillating between several possible audiences with a conflict between the museum's role as a centre of scholarship and its role to build a collection. Arts and Crafts artists such as John Sedding railed against the Henry Cole policy of 'all and sundry'. For him and others the Englishness of English art was of supreme importance and the museum was seen as failing in its mission to make adequate provision for this.[37]

The mounting problems at the Museum, led to considerable agitation in the press and eventually the Government accepted the need for a House of Commons Select Committee Report. The Committee met in 1897 and many inefficiencies were revealed. Above all it was the failure to apply basic bureaucratic procedures that dominated the findings. *The Art Journal* relates extracts from the Report," The general administration is based on faulty and defective organisation. The financial accounts are confused and confusing, important papers have a trick of disappearing ;

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[35] Ibid., p. 134.
[36] Ibid., p. 126.
[37] Ibid., p.128.

imperfect records or none at all are kept of breakages. The library is without specialist staff; worked by assistants drawn from the ordinary staff of the Museum" [38]

At the enquiry Purdon Clarke was asked to explain purchasing procedure. His response was that the director had no independent power of purchase.[39] Clarke followed this through rigorously during the time of the Donaldson Bequest. This was at variance with what had become general practice especially during the time of his predecessor Professor Middleton. It is instructive to consider the fact that the Donaldson Bequest was to be three years hence and the museum's dirty linen had been washed in public with a critical press rampant at the time.[40]

The evidence would indicate, if not total breakdown at the museum, then considerable malaise.[41] This was hardly a time or atmosphere for a new revolutionary range of objects to be exhibited at the Museum. The range had the added disadvantage of coming from the continent. The fact that it predominantly related to furniture was another negative factor. The acceptability of the 'New Art' could not have been put to a more acid test. The events surrounding the Donaldson Bequest will now be detailed.

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[38] Anon., 'The Exposure at South Kensingto0n', *Art Journal,* 1898, pp. 316-317.
[39] Burton, Op. Cit., p. 119, stated that the Museum Director had to obtain approval from the Director of Art and then recommend the approval of the purchase to the Secretary of the Department who then passed it on to the President or Vice President of the Board of Education.
[40] At the turn of the century Emile Durkheim, a French Sociologist, was concerned that industrialisation could lead to social disintegration. He perceived that tradition was being uprooted with a potential for social disorder. In his classic *Suicide* 1897 he established a causal link between social solidarity and suicide.
[41] Talcott Parsons in a reformulation of Durkheim's concept stated, "Anomie as a construct may be the basis of a continuum from which social predicaments may be investigated." Coser, Lewis and Bernard Rosenberg, *Sociological Theory,* Toronto; Collier Macmillan, 1964, p. 480. It may be argued that the South Kensington Museum at the time was such a predicament.

'NEW ART' FURNITURE

The Museum (having been renamed Victoria and Albert in 1899) often employed consultants to assist with acquisitions. One such was George Donaldson, a Bond Street dealer. From 1883 onwards Donaldson had purchased items on behalf of the Museum and had loaned some of his own collection for exhibition there. Donaldson had been a Vice President of the jury for the furniture section at the Paris Exposition in 1889.[42] He had accepted the offer of a similar role at the 1900 Paris Exposition. He was therefore a man of considerable knowledge and awareness in matters relating to furniture.

The Museum had allocated £500 for the purchase of representative objects from the Exposition and the Art Director Purdon Clarke had visited Paris and selected a piece for the Museum. At this point Donaldson cabled the Board of Education with an offer to purchase expensive pieces of furniture that would be beyond the scope of the £500 limit set by the Museum. Purdon Clarke was enthusiastic and a memo from him to Sir William Albury indicates the extent of Donaldson's generosity.[43]

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[42] The presidents of all the juries were drawn from French nationals.

[43] "He [Donaldson] informed me that after three weeks daily study of the furniture in the various sections he was strongly impressed with the idea that all our manufacturers, designers and artisans in the furniture trade should visit the exhibition and mark the progress made within the last few years, but as it is impossible to bring the people to see the work, he considered the next best thing would be to make a good selection, which through our circulation department could be sent to the great centres of trade in England, commencing with Bethnal Green". The reference to Bethnal Green is quite significant in subsequent developments of the saga. The letter is in the 'New Art' Furniture Archive at Blythe House. This is included in the first section of the appendix p.1

The initiative for the acquisitions therefore came from George Donaldson. He considered that the £500 allocated by the Museum was no more than an arbitrary figure when there were such radical changes in design.[44] His major argument to justify his munificence was that the country needed to keep in touch with the work of its major competitors. As will be seen this was an argument put forward with effect, by the *Pottery and Glass Trades Gazette.*[45] However, issues relating to good design were to bedevil the acquisitions.

The 'New Art' examples were duly purchased. The question now arose as to where they should be displayed. Donaldson's suggestion that they should go to the provinces, in order to be seen by as many people as possible, was readily taken up and soon requests were received from Dublin, Edinburgh, Liverpool and Birmingham. Various administrative difficulties were put forward to prevent the artefacts being sent to Birmingham. This led to intervention by Sir John Gorst's office. Gorst was at the time the Vice President of the Education Department and as such the minister responsible for education in the House of Commons.[46] While the Birmingham exhibition went ahead the visit to Liverpool was cancelled due to insurance problems.

The archives at the Victoria and Albert Museum have a detailed account of the Museum's invoices for their purchases at the 1900 Paris Exposition. However significant events are virtually unrecorded. It is therefore difficult to unravel the complexity of what occurred. A letter dated 26th December 1900 suggests that the

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[44] Only half of the allocated £500 was in fact spent by the Museum on purchases from the exhibition. See p. 3 of the archive appendix.
[45] Anon., 'New Art in the Potteries', *Pottery Gazette*, December 1908, p.1428.
[46] It is noteworthy fact, that at the correspondence regarding the Birmingham visit, was signed by Henry Cole's son Alan, who would seem to have played a significant role throughout the whole affair.

'New Art' furniture would be going to the provinces before their exhibition at the Museum.[47]

Then came the bombshell and its significance cannot be over-emphasised. A letter dated 22nd June 1901 was received from the council of the Royal College of Art. There are three paragraphs. The middle one considers the perceived technical imperfections of the furniture while the first and last highlight the inadequacy of the administrative decision. It does not state that the furniture was already on display, but it *may* be surmised that this was the case, in that it refers to the removal of tapestries, to make way for the furniture. A number of the tapestries had been purchased by William Morris, on behalf of the Museum, and arranged by the late Director Professor Middleton.[48]

It needs to be emphasised that there is nothing in the archives relating to this decision for the display of the furniture in the Museum's Tapestry Court. There is though evidence that some senior staff were aware of what was going on. There is a leaflet in the archives that was produced to explain the exhibits at their public display. This has a number of revisions and the final version has a note attached, which is hand written, and signed by Sir Robert Morant, who was the Private Secretary to the Vice President of The Board of Education, Sir John Gorst. In it Morant says, "The V.P. agrees to this as slightly altered." There must have been considerable consultation for this level to have been reached. On the following page is a copy of the guide to accompany the exhibition and the agreement to its revisions signed by Sir Robert Morant.

See p.4 of the archives within the appendix.

[48] The letter is given in full in the appendix.

Fig.3.1 85a

THE LEAFLET PRODUCED TO ACCOMPANY THE 'NEW ART' FURNITURE COLLECTION AT THEIR EXHIBITION AT THE MUSEUM

NEW ART FURNITURE AT THE VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM

SOUTH KENSINGTON

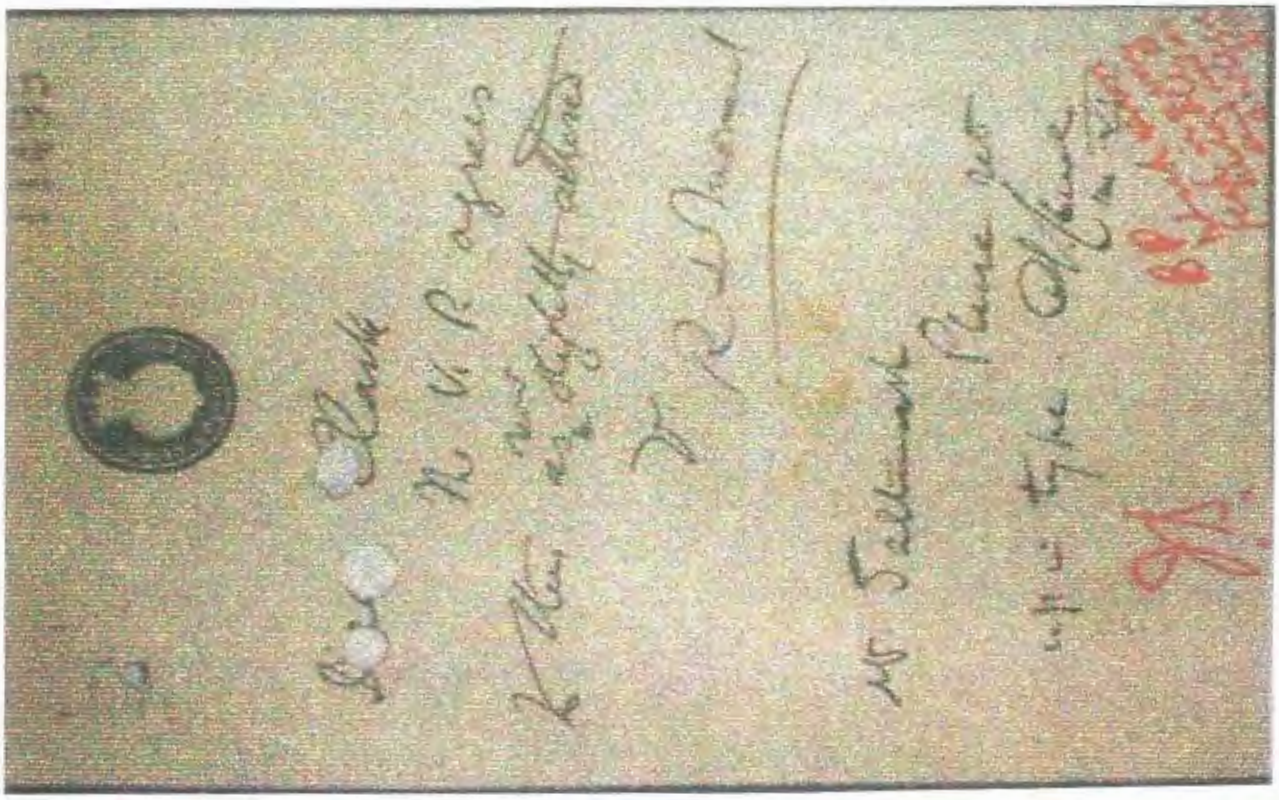
The nation is indebted to Mr George Donaldson for his generosity in presenting to the Victoria and Albert Museum a collection of 'New Art' Furniture. Mr Donaldson, who is an accepted authority in all matters pertaining to furniture modern and old was in 1889 elected Vice President of the jury of awards for furniture at the Paris Exhibition, and was unanimously chosen again last year as Vice President of the recent Paris Universal Exhibition. In the process of making the awards Mr Donaldson noticed that in the past eleven years a remarkable and distinct development had taken place all over Europe, causing a mercantile change of quite exceptional proportions, but one of which England was practically unconscious.

On learning that the Victoria and Albert Museum had insufficient funds for allocation to this particular branch of art and could not therefore place before English designers, craftsmen and manufacturers, the choicest European examples of the 'New Art' production in furniture, Mr Donaldson wrote to the President of the Board of Education and offered to purchase a selection of the best examples of the 'New Art' furniture in the Paris Exhibition of 1900 and to present them to the Victoria and Albert Museum. His object was to exhibit them in the first instance at the Museum and then to send them for exhibition successively to our manufacturing towns in order that the manufacturers and artisans of the country could see what other nations are striving for in the direction of original design not based on past production.

The largest and most striking example seen on entering is the side of a room with a settle in marquetry with ingenious selections of natural woods lending themselves by their grain or marking to the designs of the trees, figures etc. The work is German and made by Herr J.J.Graf of Strasbourg. The marquetry is by Herr C. Spindler and presents subjects taken from old Alsatian legends.

Fig. 3.2

85b



THE AGREEMENT BY R. MORANT TO THE REVISIONS FOR THE V&A EXHIBITION GUIDE TOGETHER WITH THE REVISED DOCUMENT

There is no indication in the guide as to where the display took place. Both Clarke and Donaldson had agreed that the furniture should be exhibited at Bethnal Green prior to the regional tour.[49] From the evidence available it is therefore not possible to know who in fact made the decision for the display in the Tapestry Court and who agreed to it. Certainly the Royal College knew something. One of their students was mentioned by the leaflet in the final paragraph, as having been involved, in the decoration of the exhibition room.

As will be seen few subsequent commentators refer to the Tapestry Court or the Royal College Council letter. The Council itself had been but a year in operation and within its constitution there was the continuance of the historic link to the Museum. The third paragraph details this and it may be argued that a decision to display anything in the Tapestry Court, without adequate consultation at the time, would have brought down wrath from the Council.[50]

On receipt of the letter Purdon Clarke requested comments from his masters Sir William Albury and Sir John Gorst.[51] The responses relate to the placing of the

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[49]Ibid., The archive file p. 1. "The collection, through our circulation department, could be sent to the great manufacturing centres starting at Bethnal Green".

[50] Parry, Linda, in Baker and R ichardson Op. Cit., p. 339, makes an interesting reference to an earlier suggestion that the tapestries be removed. She states, "One of his [William Morris] last public acts was a series of letters to the press vehemently opposing the removal of medieval tapestries [many of which he had helped the Museum to acquire] from their important central display area near the main entrance on the ground floor of the Museum to make way for a permanent exhibition of plaster casts".

[51] The replies from both Gorst and Albury referred to the insensitivity of placing the exhibits in the Tapestry Court. Gorst, "I should have objected to the Tapestry Court myself if I had been in England. I think it should have been in a place by itself. At any rate it should not have been where it is. Albury's response was also quite illuminating. "It appears from what I hear there is a good deal of strong feeling on the point. Should it be possible to have the collection removed to say the space which was used for the exhibition of modern illustration?" See the archive file in the appendix.

exhibits and not the imperfect workmanship and suggested lack of taste contained in the second part of the Council letter. Albury's response might suggest that he was aware of what was going on especially given the limited time between the arrival of the letter and his response.

There is the fact that Purdon Clarke detailed the bureaucratic process of the chain of command at the 1897 House of Commons Select Committee.[52] However, in what was seen as a most sensitive issue, the exchanges outlined would suggest that those at the top of the hierarchy were not consulted, and there must be a question mark too as to whether Purdon Clarke himself knew about the decision to display the furniture in the Tapestry Court.[53]

On July 1st Alan Cole, whose position in the hierarchy is difficult to determine from the archives, sent a memo to Purdon Clarke suggesting that the loans to Edinburgh and Dublin be put on hold given the expressed reservations of the Council. Purdon Clarke replied that pledges had been made and added, "it will be well to take into consideration the fact that the selection was made chiefly from examples to which the International Jury of 1900 awarded the highest honours."

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[52] Burton, Op. Cit., p. 119. "Clarke stated that the Director had no independent power of purchase. He had to get approval from the Director of Art then recommend the approval the purchase to the Secretary of the Department who would then pass it for approval to the President or Vice President of the Board." This was seen to be the case during Cole's reign, however Middleton made purchases independently. The leaflet prepared to accompany the exhibits does show that this bureaucratic operation was put into effect.

[53] Up to this point the archives show him to be punctilious in following the official administrative route. However, Burton does suggest that Clarke may have been the mole at the Museum during the controversy that took place a decade before involving Robinson and Weale.

Clarke in a further memo dated July 8th displayed a conciliatory tone in stating, "There is nothing to prevent a manifesto from the Council being printed in large type displayed with the collection directing attention to the errors in construction and design. In the face of the heavy purchase of 'New Art' furniture by the continental museums we cannot afford to ignore it and deny our citizens a chance of seeing it."[54] This addressed some of the criticism in the second paragraph of the Royal Council letter.

In the following chapter on ceramics we will see the expression of similar sentiments by commercial manufacturers. There was a conscious effort 'not to be left behind'. The *Pottery and Glass Trades Gazette* went as far as describing some manufacturers as 'decadent', in their refusal to abandon their traditional forms of decoration and shape, and to move with the times. It advocated a home-grown English version of the style which some manufacturers readily explored. Purdon Clarke throughout the exchanges shows a resolution to proceed with the Bequest as agreed at the outset. The role of Alan Cole, however, is more ambiguous and will now be considered. It may be significant that in the archives[55] Alan Cole is listed as being an expert on lace, embroidery and tapestry!

Alan Cole on his appointment to the Department of Science and Art at South Kensington was attached to the training school that was to become the Royal College of Art. He was an official examiner in art and upon the death of the Art Director

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[54] Examples of such purchases by the Museum at Trondheim are to be found in Amaya, Mario, *Art Nouveau*, London: Studio Vista, 1966. p. 85. See too Burton, Op. Cit., p. 159. "The Hamburg Museum acquired a room setting in the Art Nouveau style from the Paris Exhibition of 1900".

[55] Alan Cole file (MA/1/c/2050), Victoria and Albert Museum archive, Blythe House.

THE FINAL PARAGRAPHS OF THE NOTE ATTACHED TO THE EXHIBITS FOR THEIR DISPLAY DURING THE PROVINCIAL TOUR AS SUGGESTED BY PURDON CLARKE.

It should be remembered that the Art Collections of this Museum are formed to demonstrate fine art applied to objects of utility and decorative art generally in respect of all periods and countries and this is to present to students, producers and consumers an opportunity of studying, in various series, representative examples from which impressions may be obtained and principles may be deducted with respect to the contribution and decoration of objects of utility. Such impressions and principles should tend to assist the cultivation of a good standard of taste.....they [the exhibits] display characteristics of an existent phase of design in European art applied to purposes of utility and as such these examples are included in the art collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum.

Much of the modern continental furniture, however, exhibits a style, which is not consistent with the teaching in art schools in the United Kingdom. It is therefore necessary that students inspecting the examples in this collection should be guided in forming an opinion as to their merits and obvious faults, by instructors who have given attention to such objects as Historic Ornament, Principles of Ornament and Architecture

Fig. 3.1 b

Visitors to the Paris Exhibition will remember the rooms furnished in the new style by Monsieur Bing and will recognise the chairs and table as coming from his workshop.

The bedroom suite consisting of a bedstead, wardrobe and commode all enriched with carving and inlay of flowers was manufactured by Monsieur Perol Freres.

The work of Monsieur Louis Majorelle of Nancy, who has obtained the highest distinction in France, is represented by three cabinets of unique form, a table, an arm chair and two trays.

Three chairs with seats and backs of leather cut and embossed with 'New Art' ornament are from the hand of Monsieur A. Darras.

Monsieur Emile Galle of Nancy, so well known for his admirable work in glass has been turning his attention to the manufacture of furniture in the new style and his work may be seen in five specimens of furniture, namely a tea table, a chest of drawers, a lady's work table, a screen and a tray all inlaid with flowers and leaves. The chest of drawers is further inlaid with a large butterfly partly in mother of pearl.

Fig. 3.1 c

A writing table, two chairs and a stool in light wood with gilt metal mounts and plush coverings are from the workshop of monsieur E. Baques.

One end of the room is given up to furniture from Hungary and Norway. The work of the former country is represented by two large cabinets, a table and two chairs, designed by Herr Farago, while the characteristic art of Norway is clearly seen in the two chairs by C. G. Christensen.

Between the Hungarian cabinets is a large open tapestry hanging from the tapestry works at Kristiania and over Monsieur Galle's furniture is a woven picture of spring after a design by Monsieur E. Grasset.

The four show cases contain small objects of art, pottery and glass illustrating the new movement. One of the cases is filled with the lusted glass of Lotze and the painted and cut glass of Monsieur Emile Galle of Nancy. A second case contains examples of wares made by Herr Zsolnay and Professor Max Lauger. The third case has a miscellaneous collection of pottery from Copenhagen (Royal Porcelain Factory) Rostrand, Rockwood and Boston Grueby ware. The work of the French potters M.M. Chapelet and Bigot is also represented in this case. The fourth case is filled with metalwork chiefly in the form of door furniture, many of the designs are by Monsieur Charpentier. The specimens of silver mounts for bedroom furniture are made by Monsieur Bing after designs by M. Colonna.

The Large stoneware vase on the pedestal is from the factory of M. Hoentschel and the modelling is by M. Deschamps. The stencilled frieze around the room has been designed and made by Mr. T.T. Blaycock, a student in training in the Royal College of Art, South Kensington.

Professor Middleton his name was put forward as a potential successor. Anthony Burton states, "It seems there was an attempt to pitchfork Alan Cole into the directorship of the Museum. Purdon Clarke, the Assistant Director, then put his name forward for the vacancy in order to stop any movement in favour of Alan Cole and was successful".[56] Burton quotes Clarke as saying, "It was a close run thing".[57]

This indicates that Cole must have had considerable support within the complex at the time. In 1898 he assisted Walter Crane, the newly appointed Principal at the recently established Royal College of Art. Together they prepared a plan for the total restructuring of the College. Within this it was recommended that a system of visitors be replaced with a Council of Advice for Art with a remit to advise on the syllabus of instruction and examination. This was to include four practitioners expert in their respective fields. The specific brief of the Council was to advise on the curriculum and the principles that governed its teaching. The position was to be held for three years with a hundred guineas retaining fee.

The Department of Education did not accept the restructuring plan but the Council did come into being. Crane resigned from his post as Principal the following year and he accepted membership of the Council. Some changes were made and these included the appointment of four professors with responsibility for the major areas of work with each area, or school, shadowed by a Council member. The letter of June 22nd relating to the display of the Donaldson Bequest in the Tapestry Court was therefore one of the first major acts undertaken by the newly formed Council.

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[56] Burton, Op. Cit., p.137.
[57] Ibid., p. 137.

W.R.Lethaby became the Professor of Design at the Royal College and he appointed to his teaching staff some of the most well known Arts and Crafts designers including W.A.S. Benson and Henry Wilson. Lethaby was involved in the appointment of Beresford Pite as Professor of Architecture, whose commitment to the cause of Arts and Crafts may be seen in the *R.I.B.A. Journal.*[58]

'Modern' for Pite meant Arts and Crafts and he eulogised the work of William Morris. It would appear that Alan Cole was in a position potentially to have a strong impact on the course of events, given his Royal College connections. Some of his exchanges with Purdon Clarke display a certain antagonism, if not hostility between the two. His language does not suggest the easy acceptance of a subordinate relationship. In a memo he stated, "The Vice President has decided that English manufacturing places are to have consideration before Edinburgh and Dublin but every application for the 'New Art' collection must be brought before him for decision"

There is much that is not known. What we do know from the archives is that Sir William Albury wrote of misgivings by many regarding the display in the Tapestry Court; that Alan Cole had a long and intimate involvement with the Royal College, which at the time was dominated by the Arts and Crafts Movement, and that the death of Middleton had been a shock.

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[58] Pite, Beresford, 'A Review of the Tendencies of the Modern School of Architecture', *R.I.B.A. Journal*, December 1900.

The descriptive leaflet accompanying the exhibition shows that there was involvement by the Royal College. Prominent members of the college and museum worked side by side on the same complex. They must have known what was going on and none more so than Alan Cole.

The question relating to the Museum's acceptance of the 'New Art' is easier to answer. Purdon Clarke, the Director, throughout gives his whole-hearted support. At no time did the Department show hesitancy in accepting Donaldson's offer. As seen it was the placing of the exhibition in the Tapestry Court that provoked as strong a reaction as the artefacts themselves. There was too the question of the Arts and Crafts establishment's concern that they might lose out to the 'New Art'. However, as we shall now see, it was to be the initial *Times* letter which was to figure prominently in the post 1945 commentaries.

REACTIONS OF CONTEMPORARY COMMENTATORS

The Magazine of Art 1904 Symposium on Art Nouveau convincingly shows the Bequest was exhibited at the museum. T.G. Jackson, one of the signatories to the Royal College letter wrote, "After the Paris Exhibition a collection of this new style was shown at the South Kensington Museum and afterwards circulated through the country at the various centres of industry, to inspire them with new ideas".[59] He added, "The propaganda has done its mischievous work, and the 'Squirm' is now the fashion in design."[60]

The words 'to inspire with new ideas' are similar to those used in the leaflet drawn up to accompany the display in the Tapestry Court.[61] This gives credence to the fact that the exhibition did take place. Further evidence for the display having taken place is in the *Architectural Review.*[62]

The article displayed marked hostility to the whole question of Art Nouveau. It denigrated the exhibits as being, not only poor in quality, but also bad examples of the style. It states, "Not only are the things wretched in design and construction and indifferent in workmanship but they are not even typical and original examples of a bad fashion".[63] As Majorelle and Galle were the major designers of the pieces purchased by Donaldson we must assume that the reviewer had given vent to his more general feelings towards the new style.

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[59] Jackson, T.G., 'Art Nouveau Symposium', *Magazine of Art,* 1904, p. 210.
[60] Ibid p., 210.
[61] See the appendix for the full version.
[62] Pillory, 'L' Art Nouveau at South Kensington', *Architectural Review,* 1901, p. 104.
It states, "The notice in the gallery explains that Mr. Donaldson selected these objects in the recent exhibition and presented them to the Victoria and Albert to show developments in this direction to British furniture designers". Identical words are used in the *Artist,* Volume 32, 1901, p. 164.
[63] Ibid., p.104. It proceeds to say that the originators of the fashion, the Belgian and French are not represented and it states, "We have merely the commercial hackneying up and down Europe of motives at a fifth, sixth...and tenth remove from an unhappy original".

There are five letters to the *Times* that relate to the collection. The first by John Belcher and three other members of the R.I.B.A. Council is critical of the showing of the Bequest at the museum. It says, "It is much to be regretted that the authorities at South Kensington have introduced into the museum specimens of the work styled L'Art Nouveau. [64] Vernon Handley in the second writes of "one who spent some part of yesterday afternoon and saw these latest additions to our national collection".[65] He argues that museums of art should only contain things that have stood the test of time. A third critical letter appeared a week later from Vincent Robinson. He wrote, "Their space and funds are limited. There are plenty of solid ways of expending both without wasting opportunities on obvious shams."[66] The writer was obviously ignorant in regard to the nature of the Bequest.

There was also support for the Museum. On 15th August the editor of the *Magazine of Art* wrote to the *Times*, "It should be first observed that it is wrong to speak of the collection as exclusively French. It received its first impulse from the efforts of Morris, Crane and their associates of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society which cannot be denied. To regard this new art as foreign and the introduction of it as 'unpatriotic' is therefore incorrect."[67] We may see here an allusion to the perceived nationalism of the time. In August 1901 *The Magazine of Art* carried an explanation of his Bequest by Donaldson.[68]

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[64] *Times*, July 15th 1901. The five letters are in the appendix.
[65] *Times*, August 10th 1901.
[66] *Times*, August 17th 1901.
[67] *Times*, August 15th 1901.
[68] Anthony Burton shows that one of the major critics of the Museum in the mid 1890s was Speilmam the editor of the *Magazine of Art*. With the librarian Weale and the ex Art Director Robinson they were at the centre of the campaign to reform existing practice and were instrumental in the setting up of the 1897 Select Committee. As noted earlier Burton points to Donaldson as their mole within the establishment. It is therefore not surprising that Clarke and Donaldson should receive such support

The *Studio* in September 1901 was markedly cool in its response to the Bequest:

It is to be regretted that the Victoria and Albert Museum should have adopted the title of 'New Art' in describing the furniture purchased by George Donaldson and generously presented by him to the Museum. The objects should be criticised on their own merits ....The Ornamental details are in some cases decidedly weak and show a lack of decorative knowledge on the part of the designers.[69]

In the next issue the magazine showed a more positive approach. It took to task the *Times* architects' letter of July 15th as being no more than chauvinism with a fear of the unknown. The telling point was made that English art had long been influenced by French art and that it was discourteous to dismiss it when it changed direction. Here is a sample of the response.

If a certain number of men detest originality and pride themselves on the tame modifications of old styles I think we ought to be glad when they court ridicule by writing to the newspapers.[70]

The Journal of Decorative Art, in successive issues for August and September 1901, displayed a similar schizoid stance. The August issue was particularly critical:

No greater disservice has been done to the cause of true art education for a long time past in this country than the acceptance by the authorities in South Kensington of the gift by Mr. George Donaldson of the samples collected by that gentleman at the recent Exhibition in Paris of German and French furniture of the style known as L'Art Nouveau.[71]

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from the Magazine when they pursued, what was seen by the architectural establishment, as being a too radical agenda. The critical *Times* letters all had an architectural origin.

[69] Anon., Studio Talk, *Studio,* Volume 23, 1901, p. 269.

[70] Anon., Lay Figure, 'International Courtesy in Art', *Studio,* Volume 24, p. 80. By 1904 the *Studio* was able to present a reasoned argument for and against the new style that does credit to the magazine's analytic insight. See The Lay Figure, 'L' Art Nouveau', *Studio,* Volume 34, 1904, p. 278.

[71] Anon., *Journal of Decorative Arts,* 1901, p.196 & p. 237. The article concludes by echoing the words of the 22nd June from the Royal College Council letter, "Now the examples of the bad and tawdry stuff which is called the 'New Art' furniture receives the imprimatur of the National Art Museum. [They] are put there to be studied and copied to the detriment of our own artisans and [worse still] are, so we are told, to be sent round to the provinces, so that the taste of the provincial art workers may alike be corrupted. This is not what the South Kensington Museum was founded for; it was to be the storehouse of the best art not for the showroom of vagaries in design".

An article markedly different in tone appeared in the next issue. It suggests that the 'New Art' far from being Gallic in derivation, was in fact, of English derivation. It quotes in full the July letter to the *Times* and proceeds by quoting an alternative view taken by the *Morning Leader.*

> Is nothing new to be exhibited in the Museum at South Kensington by what may be studied and emulated by students as a model of good taste. Are all works of merely historical interest to be excluded? If not a few objects, old and new, will have to be weeded out along with those 'specimens of the work' style called L'Art Nouveau.[72]

The author also suggests that some of the current Arts and Crafts work leaves much to be desired. "Much of the work exhibited at the English Arts and Crafts was equally wrong in taste and infinitely duller."[73]

We have seen that the reaction towards the display at the Victoria and Albert Museum often drifted towards a consideration of Art Nouveau in general. The reception was more negative than positive. Nonetheless, about a third were quite generous towards 'The New' and it does suggest some endorsement of Art Nouveau.

The Bequest was essentially of furniture. Furniture, especially hand made, was necessarily expensive, and was only readily affordable by a few at the time. In later chapters, questions of taste, gender, class, emulation, traditional and modern and Englishness will be addressed and these were to be significant in determining English acceptance of Art Nouveau.

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[72] Anon., *Journal of Decorative Arts*, September 1901, p. 237. There is no date reference to the original *Morning Leader* quotation.
[73] Ibid., p. 237.

POST 1945 CRITICAL ASSESSMENTS

It is important to keep in mind the exact chronology of events. The letter from the Council of the Royal College was sent on June 22nd 1901 and the first *Times* letter was published on July 15th 1901. Both letters were to have considerable impact on the events that unfolded. They also were to impact on post 1945 commentators.

Stephan Madsen (1956) was the first post war writer to draw attention to the Bequest. He dates the architects's letter to April 15th 1901.[74] This meant that the *Times* letter was seen as the first on the subject. Nikolaus Pevsner in his review of Madsen's book states that the gifts were accepted and made accessible in early 1901 and that no sooner had this happened than a letter appeared in the *Times.*[75] In his 1974 edition of Pioneers *Of Modern Design* Pevsner refers to the Bequest with no more than an undated full version of the July 15th *Times* letter. Thus it was to be the *Times* rather than the Royal College letter which was given prominence from the outset.

Two of the most detailed accounts of the Bequest are by Elizabeth Aslin, who was the post war curator at Bethnal Green, and Judith Neiswander who also put the *Times* letter at the centre of events. Aslin does make reference to the one from the Royal College but the chronology of writing gives the impression that the *Times* letter preceded the one from the Royal College as the catalyst in determining future events. She states:

> It was at this point in 1901 when the generous gift had reached South Kensington that the difficulties began. A letter appeared in the *Times* protesting against the introduction of such work into a national Museum. The Council of the Royal College

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[74] Madsen, Op. Cit., p. 301
[75] Pevsner, Nikalous, 'Beautiful and Need be Useful', *Architectural Review,* 1957, p. 298.

of Art complained that William Morris tapestries had been removed, to make way for the so called 'New Art' collection"[76]

Neiswander opens her account with the *Times* letter and states, "In July of 1901 the publication of this brief letter sparked a controversy that would convulse the art press for months to come."[77] The question of display was equally controversial. Aslin maintains that the collection was shown temporarily in the North Court of the Museum prior to its provincial travels. She further states that it was put on temporary display before being consigned to the depot for many years.[78] Judith Neiswander also maintains that it was banished to Bethnal Green, "and then to storage where it remained for three quarters of a century."[79] This is without doubt questionable. The collection was at Bethnal Green in 1968 as Pevsner lists the exhibits at that time.[80] Victor Arwas concurs with Neiswander, stating that the collection was put on temporary display before being consigned to the depot for many years. [81]

Within the modern texts the question of the reception of Art Nouveau in England is addressed to some extent. In his section on the Bequest Madsen moves to consider more general criticisms of 'The New Art'. He states, "Against such compact resistance Art Nouveau had little chance of gaining popularity."[82]

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[76] Aslin, Elizabeth, 'Sir George Donaldson and Art Nouveau at South Kensington', *Decorative Arts Society Journal,* No. 7 p. 11.
[77] Neiswander, Judith A., 'Fantastic Malady or Competitive Edge? English Outrage at Art Nouveau in 1901', *Apollo,* Volume CXXV111, No. 321, November 1989, p.310.
[78] Aslin, Op. Cit., p.11.
[79] Neiswander, Op. Cit., p. 313.
[80] Pevsner, Nikalaus, '*The Sources of Modern Architecture and Design*', London: Thames & Hudson, 1968, p.302.
[81] Arwas, Victor, '*Art Nouveau*', London: Papadakis, 2000, p. 9.
[82] Madsen, Op. Cit., pp. 301-302. See for example the Lewis Day 1901 *Art Journal* article.

Pevsner too maintains that, "The reception of Art Nouveau in England was not enthusiastic."[83] He relates this statement to a full exposition of the first *Times* letter. In her conclusion Elizabeth Aslin states, "In retrospect it would appear that the collection had very little influence on contemporary design in the first decade of the century."[84] It is difficult to assess the validity of this proposition, as there is no mention of the provincial displays in the contemporary press, or within the subsequent literature. What may be said is that such provincial tours had a long history. Timothy Stevens and Peter Trippi point out that, "Robinson worked with Cole to create in 1854 a system of circulating artworks to provincial institutions, where more students, designers, and laymen could learn from them."[85]

Aslin had been one of the first to discuss the Royal College letter in relation to the historic and administrative link between the college and museum. Further reference to this is by Christopher Wilk in *A Grand Design.* He states,

> His gift of 38 pieces...was welcomed by the Museum [but] by the time that the collection was shown at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1901, it was subject to venomous attacks. Despite support and interest from some of the art press, British architects in particular fulminated in the pages of the *Times.* Significantly, the purchase was vehemently attacked by the Council of the Royal College of Art and it was this criticism- from an influential body closely allied to the museum by history, and by the structure of government administration that was particularly damaging.[86]

However, within the same publication it was stated that the reaction to the collection in Britain, and significantly, at the museum was astonishingly hostile.[87]

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[83] Pevsner, Nikalous, *'Pioneers of Modern Design'*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974, p. 248.
[84] Aslin, Op. Cit., p. 14.
[85] Stevens, Timothy and Peter Trippi, *' An Encyclopaedia of Treasures: The Idea of a Great Collection'*, in Baker and Richardson, Op. Cit., p. 151.
[86] Wilk, Christopher, 'Collecting the Twentieth Century', in Baker and Richardson, Op. Cit., p. 345.
[87] Ibid., p. 357.

Jennifer Opie points to the fact that the Museum's own choices, which in the event, were little over half of the five hundred pounds allocation were more conservative in design than those chosen by Donaldson.[88]

Neiswander is the only writer to attempt to relate the Bequest to the culture of the time. In doing so, like others before her, she tends to explore the reception of Art Nouveau in general rather than the impact of the collection. To sustain her argument she draws on primary sources particularly those from the *Architectural Review* and the *Artist* from which she addresses the issue of decadence. She sees the collection as symbolising the forces that led to a perception of Art Nouveau as the foreign import of disease.

At the same time foreign competition is considered and she links the two to suggest that taken together they brought a feeling of introspection. She uses two 'Lay Figure' *Studio* articles to support her case and suggests that the *Studio* was the only journal that consistently defended Donaldson's generosity. However, the critical account that appeared in 1901 was not considered.[89] Neiswander concludes by suggesting that the atmosphere of economic uncertainty and international suspicion struck a sensitive nerve and polarised the various factions of the artistic community.

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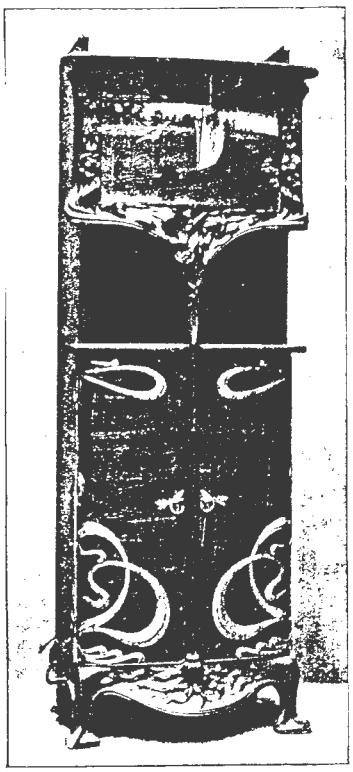
[88] Ibid., p. 358.

[89] Anon.,' Studio Talk', *Studio,* Volume 23, 1901, pp. 269-27. This was discussed in the previous section and the Lay Figure article on Art Nouveau was a balanced account which put the argument for and against.

Fig. 3.4 99a

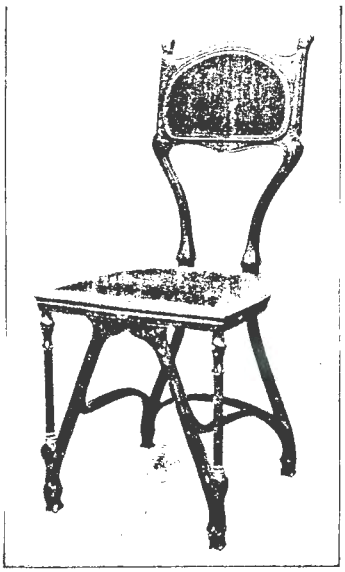
PURCHASES FROM 1900 PARIS EXPOSITION

167.



L'ART NOUVEAU: A CABINET.

BY LOUIS MAJORELLE. ONE OF THE PIECES EXHIBITED AT SOUTH KENSINGTON.



L'ART NOUVEAU: A CHAIR.

BY E. BAGUÈS. ONE OF THE PIECES EXHIBITED AT SOUTH KENSINGTON.

Left Gallé vase purchased for £7 19s 6d. from the Museum's own funds
Right Two pieces of furniture purchased by Sir George Donaldson.

M. Baker & B. Richardson (eds) *A Grand Design*, London: V & A Publications 1977
p. 357
Art Nouveau Symposium, *Magazine of Art*, p. 210

Jennifer Opie's suggestion that the Museum's own choices from the Paris Exposition were more conservative in spirit than those of Donaldson is well illustrated here.

CRITICAL REVIEW AND ANALYSIS

The Donaldson Bequest has been explored at some length but doubts remain. Some events relating to the unfolding picture have been established, however, there are still significant gaps. Questions relating to taste, reception and the problems of the time have been explored but some basic questions remain unanswered. The work that follows will refer to this.

The early history of the Victoria and Albert Museum left a legacy that still had an impact at the time of the Donaldson Bequest. As shown the Museum's chequered history led to contradictions in its collecting policy. In some respects the Donaldson Bequest was a return to the original mission and the language used by Purdon Clarke, in defence of the Bequest, is illustrative of this. It bears repetition that Clarke had been one of the group supporting Robinson in the 1890s and saw the need for reform at the time. It was Clarke, who suggested to Alan Cole, that there should be a leaflet to accompany the exhibits on their provincial tour. The language used relating to the Museum's origins is close in spirit to that of the Royal College letter.[90]

[90] The full note is in the appendix relating to the 'New Art' furniture section five. It begins, " It should be remembered that the Art Collections of this Museum are formed to demonstrate fine art applied to objects of utility and decorative art generally in respect of all periods and countries and to present to students, producers and consumers an opportunity of studying." It continues, " Much of the continental furniture, however, exhibits a style which is not consistent with the teaching in art schools in the United Kingdom." The Royal College letter stated, "The Council can recommend hardly any of these exhibits as useful examples for students".

Within the secondary sources there is a lack of agreement as to the museum's reception of the collection. My contention is, while there may have been divisive elements at work, the top of the administrative hierarchy gave it its full support throughout. Indeed it may be argued that it went out of its way to support the Bequest. There is also the fact that the original intention was to start the provincial tour from an exhibition at Bethnal Green. It had been Museum policy to exhibit new work at Bethnal Green since 1880.

Neiswander is surely right in asserting that it was a time of economic uncertainty and international suspicion. The Arts and Crafts establishment was conscious of their difficulties and Ashbee demonstrated some of the problems at Chipping Camden[91]. However, Burton questions the general influence of the Arts and Crafts Movement and makes the point, "The Arts and Crafts Movement was hardly the voice of the nation, "It was a minority movement of recoil and retreat."[92]

There was only a gap of three years between the Select Committee Report of 1897 and the Donaldson Bequest. It was a time when any error of judgement would rapidly have made the headlines. The archives do indicate how Purdon Clarke in particular was sensitive and thorough throughout the period in question and Donaldson himself was most careful not to inflame the passions that were all too obviously under the surface. His account in the *Magazine of Art* is conciliatory in tone. He agrees with the critics that the workmanship of some of the furniture leaves much to be desired.

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[91] Ashbee, in particular, suffered as a consequence of the competition from Liberty. His hand-made articles were unable to compete with Liberty's mass produced work. This led to him having to abandon the co-operative he had established at Chipping Camden. The mass produced small articles that we may see today are further illustration of the competition that the hand made had to face at the time.
[92] Burton, Op. Cit., p. 43.

The tensions that preceded the Select Committee Report together with the death of Professor Middleton undoubtedly left their mark and my view is that feelings were still strong at the time. Alan Cole in particular, given his position as art examiner at the Royal College must have known about the Tapestry Court display and the fact that the accompanying leaflet mentions student involvement strongly indicates that he was not the only one. Cole seems to have exerted considerable influence at the time with the majority of letters going out under his signature.

There were controversies between the Arts and Crafts establishment and manufacturers who produced those pieces that were mass-produced Art Nouveau. The latter did find some acceptance in England, whether they came from the Continent or were manufactured in England. There was some feeling of antagonism towards the French, although this should not be over estimated as Lady Dorothy Nevill illustrates.[93] A further issue at the time was the question of 'good' rather than 'poor' design and this was the central issue that led to the note to accompany the exhibits on their provincial tour.

A hint as to what was going on may be seen in the exchanges between Purdon Clarke and Alan Cole following the Council letter. Cole suggested that given the strong views expressed by the Council the proposed provincial tours should be put on hold. Clarke rejected this but added the conciliatory note, "As we are not pledged to any other museum at present the Council will have an opportunity of considering any further circulation of the collection."

[93] This point relating to some suggestions that the English were antagonistic to consuming French artefacts, at the time, and consequently affecting French inspired Art Nouveau is considered in the concluding chapter.

Elizabeth Aslin's assertion that the collection had little impact on design is difficult to assess.[94] The reception of the collection was bitterly negative in sections of the artistic establishment, however such influence was probably weakening at a time when democratic movements were challenging traditional orthodoxy. It is too simplistic to suggest that there was a homogeneous culture at the time determined by an artistic establishment and sustained by emulation and hegemony. The 'New Art' artefacts available today do show that at the time there was ready acceptance by a number in the country.

In isolation the impact of the Bequest is difficult to measure; the more so as the evidence relating to it is far from complete. All that may be said is that it might have made a contribution to those segments of the population prepared to consume regardless of what were perceived as official criteria of taste.

The art establishment, particularly those involved in the Arts and Crafts Movement and architecture, may have attempted to subvert the acceptance of Art Nouveau in England. The fact that they were not successful in achieving this aim may be seen today in auction houses. I shall now look at the ceramics industry, in order to examine how far manufacturers were prepared to go down the path towards 'Art Nouveau'.

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[94] Aslin, Op. Cit., p. 14.

CHAPTER 4

ENGLISH CERAMICS AND ART NOUVEAU 1900-1910

In this chapter I shall consider the acceptance of Art Nouveau in England from two perspectives. These are issues relating to the English as consumers and to the wider question of ceramic manufacturers producing for both domestic and export markets.

Primary sources will be examined, in particular, *The Pottery and Glass Trades Gazette* in the years from 1900 to1914. Another major source will be archives at Royal Doulton and Josiah Wedgwood. At the time there were many and varied manufacturers. However, over the course of time the industry has contracted and consolidated and today there are few independent firms outside the Doulton/Wedgwood umbrella. A notable example of this trend is the case of Minton, a major manufacturer at the opening of the twentieth century, and taken over by Doulton in 1968. Their old factory was demolished in 2000 and their archives are now at Royal Doulton

The *Pottery Gazette and Glass Trade Review,* first published in 1879, was a trade magazine seeing its role as the intermediary between the producer, trade (agent) or sales representative and the retailer. In some respects it acted as an intermediary between the producer and consumer. It was produced monthly at the cost of one shilling (five pence) and had a strict and regular pattern. There was a feature on retail outlets that was often based on region. They were invariably descriptive without consideration of consumption trends. There was also a feature on new production lines and these were invariably positive in outlook, reflecting the journal's reliance on

advertising revenue. The reviews related to the producer's latest wares, which were displayed within their London showrooms. Half of the pages were devoted to advertising and much of the remainder related to problems faced by the industry such as lead pollution, American tariffs and the high cost and general inefficiency of the railways. We shall see that the *Gazette* had distinctive views regarding Art Nouveau.

In the early years of the twentieth century the *Gazette* had a number of articles on the Minton Secessionist range.[1] The first of these in 1901 comments on a toilet set as having a 'New Art' character and states that the unconventional decoration is exceedingly pleasing.[2] In 1904 the *Gazette* could do no more than describe the designs as erratic and pointed to the classical outline of the new vases.[3] By 1911 in the third *Buyers Notes* on Minton there was no reference to the style in the text. This was dominated by a consideration of the arrangements of the exhibits. Although three Secessionist vases with a discernible Art Nouveau derivation are illustrated, it is the pâte-sur-pâte by A. Birks that is considered.[4]

Pottery and Glass Trades Gazette footnotes will refer to the anonymous Buyers' Notes unless otherwise stated and the abbreviation *Pottery Gazette* will be used.

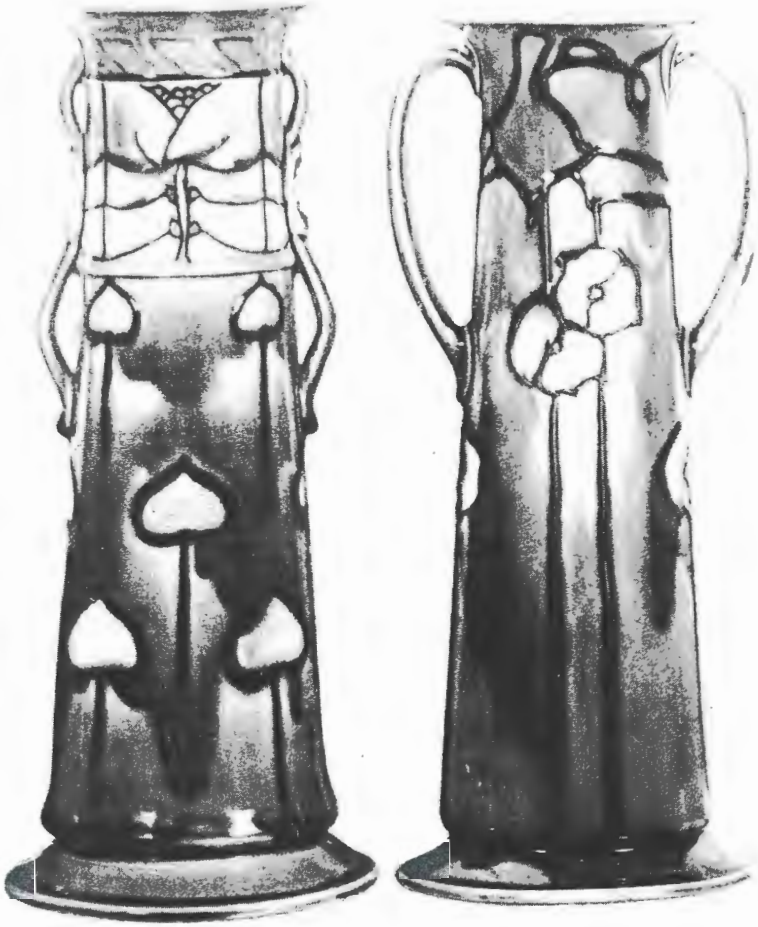
[1] This was named after the style of Art Nouveau, which developed in Austria 1897-8. The style was geometrically inspired composed of rectangles and squares and had a hostility to ornament which often characterised Franco-Belgium Art Nouveau. The word secede means to defect or break and the secessionist style was both a break with what were perceived as 'worn out' historical styles and also disaffiliation from the style which saw itself as the 'New Art' at the turn of the century. The range often used raised slip outlines to incorporate geometric motifs. However, it needs to be emphasised that the name given to the range was more of a marketing ploy than an attempt to follow the lead from Vienna and many designs within the range were in fact traditional in both shape and decoration.

[2] *Pottery Gazette*, January 1901, p. 57.

[3] *Pottery Gazette*, August 1904, p. 869.

[4] *Pottery Gazette*, January 1911, p. 57.

Fig. 4.1



MINTONS LIMITED
STOKE-ON-TRENT

HEIGHT 11"

A SAMPLE PAGE FROM THE MINTON SECESSIONIST CATALOGUE MINTON ARCHIVES

The Secessionist range was eclectic and sometimes had affinity to the rectilinear Art Nouveau of the Vienna School.

The Secessionist range had been developed at a time when the firm was experiencing severe financial difficulty. Joan Jones in her history of Minton maintains that, "Despite, or perhaps because of, the company's financial position, the decision was made to participate in the new art movement".[5] Traditionally Minton had targeted the upper end of the market. Their aim now was to produce industrial art ware, which was not confined exclusively to art pottery, and was affordable to the growing middle class.

Early in the century Minton considered some of the decorative possibilities of the 'New Art', in particular raised slip techniques. "Between 1897 and 1899 tiles, vases, plates, and other wares with raised outline decoration began to appear regularly in the modelling books, using both slip trailed and mould cast techniques"[6]. Further ranges were introduced and their success may be seen in the fact that in 1902 the raised slip outline wares were rationalised and marketed under the generic name of Secessionist.

In spite of the name the range was eclectic. There were a variety of decorative patterns employed ranging from traditional floral to arts and crafts and to patterns that had their origins in Glasgow and Vienna. There was in fact an endless variety of hand worked patterns. Shapes too shared this eclecticism and ran from older established shapes to ones freshly conceived for the range.

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[5] Jones, Joan, *Minton: The First Two Hundred Years of Design and Production*, Shrewsbury: Swan Hill Press, 1993, p.237 sq.

[6] Atterbury, Paul, and Maureen Batkin, *Dictionary of Minton*, Woodbridge : Antique Collectors Club, 1993, p. 29.

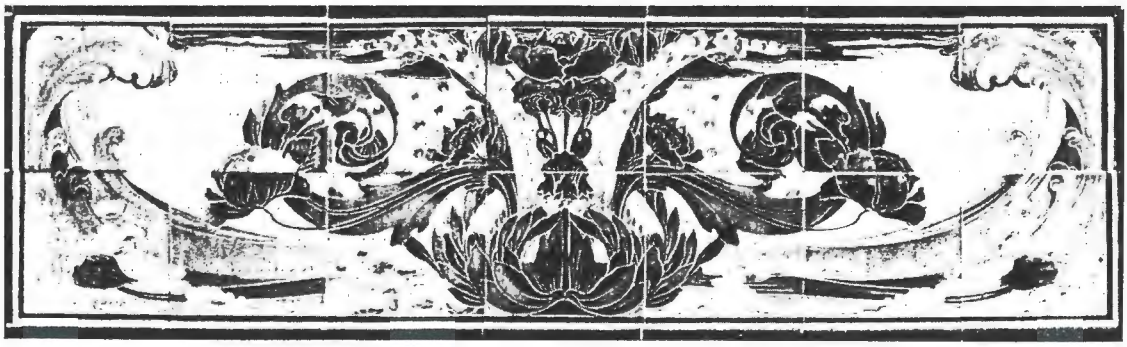
KLYSO WARE: ONE OF THE RANGES SUBSUMED INTO THE SECESSIONIST RANGE AT ITS INTRODUCTION
MINTON ARCHIVE

Fig. 4.3

which were those executed in pastel, a medium in which she has long excelled. Mr. Havell was represented by landscapes and figure subjects, the results of a long stay in Capri, Venice, and other parts of Italy.

There are not many South Kensington students who make a reputation as designers before they complete their course in the Schools. But the name of Leon V. Solon, although he has ceased to be a student but a few months, attached to work of considerable promise, has frequently appeared in THE STUDIO. It is interesting in such a case to see the practical outcome of the experiments which belong to the days of pupilage. And now that he is associated with Messrs. Minton, a firm with whom his father has been so long connected, it is pleasant to see that the master of *pâte-sur-pâte* has a worthy successor in other branches of applied art. The tile-designs which we are permitted to illustrate, deprived of their colour must needs lose much of their true effect, yet the plan and arrangement of their decoration is good and fresh. The manner in which the naturalistic detail of the lilies is subordinated to architectural lines, and the harmonious convention in the other panels of flowers, reveal a distinctly accomplished mastery of the material.

One can but hope that the ordinary



TILES DESIGNED BY LEON V. SOLON — MANUFACTURED BY MESSRS. MINTON

EARLY WORK BY LEON SOLON
STUDIO, 'STUDIO-TALK' (VOLUME 9 1896)

Solon was possibly influenced by Christopher Dresser designs. See for example Stuart Durant, *Christopher Dresser,* London: Ernst & Sohn, p. 113.

The principal designer was Lèon Victor Solon, the son of Louis Marc Solon, who had been associated with the introduction of the pâte-sur-pâte technique to the company a generation before[7]. Solon produced designs for the new range in raised slip outlines. Slip trailing has had a long tradition in English ceramics and country potteries were still applying techniques that had been used for centuries. This process of slip trailing was considerably refined in the late nineteenth century with the use of a fine nozzle which gave delicate raised lines. The areas between these lines were then filled with coloured glazes. Here Minton excelled and, at the time as is the case today, their rich and varied majolica glazes were recognised as probably the finest in the industry.

The technique of slip trailing was particularly popular among art potters at this date and came to prominence in the work of William Moorcroft in the decorative wares for James Macintyre and later at his own works in Burslem. Other designers employing this technique at the time included Harry Barnard, at Doulton Lambeth, and later at Wedgwood. Another prominent practitioner of this technique was George Cartlidge.[8]

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[7] See, Studio Talk, *Studio,* Volume 9, 1896, p. 113, for illustrations of some early tile panels which although by no means Art Nouveau do suggest movement and flow.

[8] See, Bergesen, Victoria, *Encyclopaedia of British Art Pottery,* London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1991, p. 56. Carlidge's career is briefly outlined and there is a particularly good example of a raised slip outlined plaque that has distinct hints of Art Nouveau. Some of the artists working at Doulton Lambeth also used raised slip outline decoration. Eliza Simmance is particularly associated with this technique. Bergesen maintains that she was for a time influenced by Art Nouveau but developed a distinctive style after 1900. Today her work is highly regarded and sought after and commands high prices at auctions.

A number of companies were also producing raised slip tiles. Here it was an effective way of putting sinuous patterns on the flat rectilinear tiles. Specialist tile companies such as Maw and Company, Craven Dunhill, Marsden and Richards competed with the larger manufacturers like Minton, Pilkington, Wedgwood and Doulton where the major designer was Willliam Neatby.[9] There were also a number of specialist manufacturers who made machine-moulded Art Nouveau tiles for the mass market. Examples are the firms of J Barrett & Co., T & R Boote, Sherwin & Cotton and Minton & Hollins. Popular at the time were fireplace surrounds which often incorporated tiles. Similarly tiles might also be found in porches.

While tiles were extensively used in the public domain, at the time, particularly in the late Victorian public swimming pools and public toilets there are comparatively few examples of any suggestion of the Art Nouveau motifs, which are found in the domestic fireplace surrounds. It would seem that, while there was some acceptability of the 'New Art' in the home, social forces precluded this from extending to the public domain. Unlike the architectural profession, builders were prepared to be seen as modern and to utilise motifs drawn from the 'New Art'. Examples of this may be seen in numerous speculatively built houses from the period 1900-1910.

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[9] Neatby's major works are generally recognised as being the Food Hall at Harrods and the Everard Building of 1901 in Bristol. The latter has a polychrome tiled exterior celebrating the printer's craft. However, it is difficult to find any empathy to the style of Art Nouveau. See Van Lemmen, Hans and Chris Blanchett, *20th Century Tiles*, Princess Risborough: Shire Publications, 1999, pp. 73-80. Van Lemmen, Hans and Bart Verbrugge, *Art Nouveau Tiles.*, London: Laurence King, 1999, pp. 73-80. Both works show the problems of recognising Art Nouveau without an adequate definition of the style. A number of examples illustrated have little affinity to Art Nouveau. A notable example of this is the tile panel on the exterior of the Michelin building in London completed in 1909.

Relief moulding, used extensively in tile production, is a cheaper variant of tube lining and was often used by Minton in their *Secessionist* ware. In this process the embossed designs, in which the relief pattern is cast are applied directly on to the surface during moulding and this gives regularity to the raised outlines. While more expensive than their other earthenware the cost to the purchaser was far lower than the comparable *Florian* range produced by Macintyre's. Grant Muter states that a comparable piece of *Florian* cost four or five times as much as the *Secessionist.*[10]

The ethical purity of the hand made Arts and Crafts piece was thus put at risk and might have been another contributory factor in the artists' and craftsmen's general disdain for both mechanisation and the 'New Art'. As we have seen, this issue was significant at the time, this was especially so, given the success of Liberty's mass produced products. The market was changing and the improvements in mass production techniques were beginning to impact on the consumer.

Frederick Rhead, another important designer at the time, berated the Arts and Crafts Society for their innate conservatism.[11] However, in both the *Art Journal* in 1903 and *Magazine of Art* in 1899, magazines devoted to art rather than mass production or commercial success, there was lavish praise for the hand made achievements of William Moorcroft. Within these magazines there was no such analysis of Solon's success with the *Secessionist* ware.

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[10] Muter, Grant, 'Lèon Solon and John Wadsworth: Joint Designers of Minton's Secessionist Ware,' *Journal of the Decorative Arts Society*, Volume 9, page 41.
[11] Rhead, Frederick, 'Pottery Decoration', *Artist*, Volume19, 1897, pp. 281-7.

The *Pottery Gazette* did make reference to the Minton ware. However, the copious praise given to Macintyre and Moorcroft in their use of hand production methods may be seen as at variance to their obligations to the manufacturers they served and the economic necessity for mass produced ceramics. An example of the tone may be given. The *Pottery Gazette,* in discussing the *Florian* range, said,

> The secret of the beautiful and graceful *Florian* ware is that the particular grace and beauty pertaining to these pieces were conceived by the artist potter in the beginning and have been steadily kept in view through every stage. They [the pots] are simply thrown and turned, the shapes having been designed by Mr Moorcroft himself. [12]

This is at total variance to Frederick Rhead's injunction, "It is the desire of the Arts and Crafts Society totally or only partially to eliminate machinery as a factor in the production of manufactured goods".[13] He continues, "The professional ceramic designer is hampered by tradition and obstructed by custom. He caters for the manufacturer who produces what he thinks the dealer thinks the public desires."[14]

He further maintains that at the Society's Exhibition there was no pottery displayed of ordinary domestic utility.[15] However, the Secessionist Wares were not only decorative but utilitarian too.

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[12] *Pottery Gazette*, October 1904, p.1115.
[13] Rhead, Op. Cit.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid., p. 282.

Such considerations as expressed by Rhead were alluded to in a consultant's report which was commissioned as a direct consequence of Minton's financial difficulties. The consultants were asked to consider the product range for the firm's major European export markets. This resulted in a report by Currall and Stressor of 1902 which highlighted the general downturn in economic activity, and made the observation that England was not the only country suffering from trade depression. Their report covered the major continental outlets for Minton ware.

The Currall and Strasser Report illustrates the polarised attitudes found in England towards the hand made and the machine made Art Nouveau that had been highlighted by Rhead. On the one hand there is seen to be an open acceptance of the need for the new; on the other there is a conservative reaction that is well expressed in the review, of their Frankfurt outlet, "These people being exceedingly conservative are not readily prepared to take up new patterns. They are faithful customers of the old".[16] At the retail outlet in Cologne and also at Karlrushe there were old fashioned firms which was not prepared to take up anything new. In contrast at Breslau the 'good faithful customers' were always open to new lines.

A new range, designed by Rhead for Wileman, called *Intarsio*, had strong elements of the curvilinear side of Art Nouveau, with some hints of organic growth. As in the Secessionist range of Minton the *Intarsio* pattern book displays considerable eclecticism. Some patterns have readily discernible elements of Art Nouveau while

[16] Currall & Strasser, Report for 1902 (C & E) *Minton Manuscript,* 1331. The Report was held at the Doulton archive, Nile Street, Burslem, Stoke On Trent.

Cassel : visited May.

E. C. Wagenmüller – very dead-alive concern. Saw patterns but would not take-up any new ones. Promised to come to Berlin, but did not.

Bonn : visited June.

"Wessel's Porcelain Works" – saw samples but did not take-up anything fresh. Very difficult to do business with, except for matchings, as they buy used to no 8'ware, and China they make themselves.

F. Van Hauten & C° : hope to get in with their prices although did not succeed this time; was promised to come to Berlin.

Cologne : visited in May.

Hockeim / Dören } had both only recently received the
J. Oberbeck Sohn } goods ordered in Nov previous, hence nothing wanted for the moment

H. & D. – one of the best customers we have – always open to take-up new lines but says Minton's have not kept abreast with other firms in production; likes to visit London Show-room in the autumn (in company with our Mr. C.) & place order then – same as in 1901, – but in 1902, Mr. C, being laid up when Mr. D came over, could not meet him

Oberbeck : very old fashioned concern, run by two old maiden ladies; have to be very careful to avoid clashing with H & D

MINTON ARCHIVE: SPECIMEN PAGE FROM CONSULTANTS' REPORT

Here we see counter arguments for the 'New Art' which informed opinion not only in England but also in Continental Europe.

others are so original that it is difficult to pinpoint a stylistic origin. This is true too of the pattern range called *Urbato.*

It would seem that the availability of a wide range of patterns was no more than a strategy to meet the many and varied market segments which the Currall and Stresser Report illustrates. The power held by the retail outlet is undoubted. The attitude and taste of the retailer would seem to be a major factor in the success or failure of a pattern.

The tension between the traditional expressions of Arts and Crafts practitioners and the requirements of commerce has been seen in the responses to the 'Donaldson Bequest' and, as we shall now see, was present in attitudes towards the 'New Art' among senior management both at Wedgwood and at Macintyres. However, above all, it was economic necessity; indeed the need for survival (Minton was put up for sale in 1901),[17] that determined design and marketing policies.

On the surface Josiah Wedgwood may be seen as one of the major traditional pottery firms, however, historically it has always been one of the most innovative and this may be seen in the firm's development of an Art Nouveau range. In 1902 Kennard Wedgwood, one of the company's three co-directors wrote to Courtnay Lindsay, an independent designer, who had previously designed tiles for the company. In this he requested designs on 'New Art' lines and suggested something on the lines of the Rosenberg Decoration.

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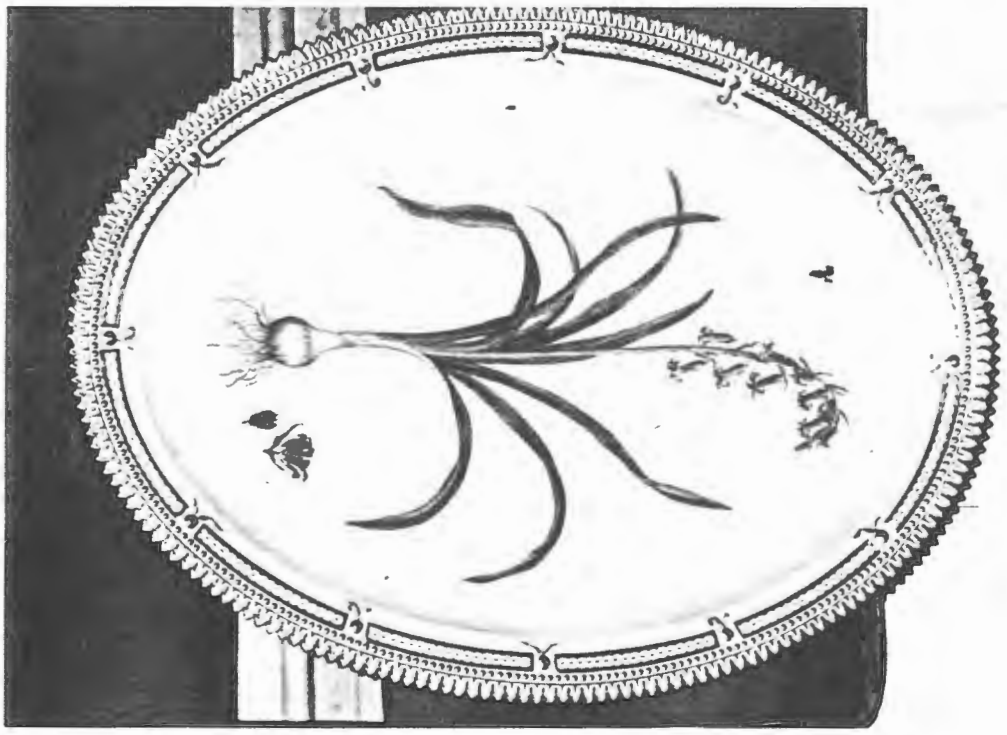
[17] Jones, Joan, Op. Cit., p. 237.

THE ROSENBERG SERVICE

William Burton (A General History of Porcelain, London: Cassell, 1921, page 183) maintains that Copenhagen flower painting in natural colours reached its peak in the 'Flora Danica' service presented by the Crown Prince Frederick to Catherine 11 of Russia. The service is now preserved in the castle of Rosenberg near Copenhagen.

In 1761 it was planned that each European country should contribute to a series of volumes illustrating the flora of Europe. Denmark embraced the idea with enthusiasm and led to the Royal Copenhagen factory receiving the commission from Prince Frederick. Arthur Hayden ('The Flora Danica Service', London: Fisher Unwin, 1911) states, "The modern spirit was in the air, the new style was *realistic* and tinged with a scientific motif".

Given the basis of the commission, relating as it does to the totality of natural forms including, roots, tendrils and branches the pieces may be seen to relate to the organic side of Art Nouveau and this was probably the basis of Kennard Wedgwood's request to Lindsay. There were too, strong family links, uniting the Wedgwood and Darwin families and a history dissent in the Wedgwood family. The illustrated plate below shows no attempt to achieve aesthetic beauty but a accurate representation of nature. See (S.T. Madsen, Art Nouveau, London: Studio Vista, 1997, p. 51. 'The Organic Form of the Plant').



'Flora Danica' Serving Plate: Wedgwood Museum, Barlaston, Stoke On Trent.
The plate was a centenary gift from Royal Copenhagen to Wedgwood in 1997

Within the archives there is also a letter from Kennard Wedgwood to Lethaby, formerly at the Royal College, and at the time Art Director at the Central School, with a request for a decorator for the 'New Art' range of toilet ware which the company intended to develop.

The letters' file in the archives has only those sent from Wedgwood, so that we do not have Lethaby's response. There is a further letter that sees Art Nouveau in negative terms from Cecil Wedgwood, Kennard Wedgwood's cousin and co-director. The two letters reflect quite well the prevailing attitudes towards Art Nouveau at the time. On the one hand Kennard Wedgwood is keen to embrace it for commercial reasons. On the other hand Cecil Wedgwood did not like it on grounds of taste. The Lindsay ware was put into production and Kennard Wedgwood, while no doubt knowing his cousin's antipathy towards the new, none the less was quite content to leave the matter in his hands when he went to South Africa.

The range was reviewed in the *Pottery Gazette* in 1902. The review stated, "[There is] a treatment of remarkable freedom: It contains features of that indescribable unconventionality which seems to be the base of the 'New Art".[18]A review of Wedgwood products in 1904 illustrates the firm's desire to aim at the middle of the market. This was economic necessity at a time of uncertainty and intense competition.

> Since people will not so largely pay the price of Wedgwood's highest class of ware, the company are meeting them by providing goods at more reasonable prices. They are showing some new toilet sets, quite on the lines of modern art and taste.[19]

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[18] *Pottery Gazette*, April 1902, p. 371.
[19] *Pottery Gazette*, May 1904, p. 540.

Fig. 4.6 113a

WEDGWOOD PRIVATE LETTER BOOK

September 7th 1902 letter to Lethaby, Art Director Central School of Arts & Crafts From Kennard Wedgwood, one of the three Wedgwood cousins who were co-directors of the company at the time.

Dear Sir,

We intend to bring out a new line of toilet ware and are looking for someone to do decoration for us. The general style of treatment we intend to adopt is broadly speaking 'Modern Art' on large simple lines, in which bold colour washes, will be a feature, but it will be essential for us to find someone in touch with the feeling for Modern Art and a rapid and resolute worker, as we shall want to put this line on the market at commercial prices, for although there may be a demand for high grade goods of the description, we shall have to satisfy one for the medium and lower grade. Should you know of any young fellow likely to fill our requirements in this direction we should be very much obliged if you would put us in communication with him.

P.S. What we require in fact is not a designer but a designing decorator.

A further letter appears dated October 7th from Cecil Wedgwood, another of the Co-Director cousins in reply to Lethaby's response which is not available.

Dear Sir,

I regret that your letter of September 24th has remained long unanswered. My cousin, who wrote to you in the first place handed it over to me to deal with as he was just sailing to Africa but I went down with influenza the same day and have just returned to work. As we are not at all wedded to the 'New Art' in fact personally speaking I think a great deal of it is very small. What we want is some youngish man who is clever at adapting with which we should supply him, and who could, if the venture proves a success, educate hands to work under him. If you are ever down our part of the world we should be very pleased indeed to show you over the works. The difficulty that we find is that not one out of a hundred of the purchasing public has really good taste. As long as a thing is 'new' it may be as ugly as sin but I suppose this has always been the case.

There is a further letter from Kennard Wedgwood dated November 2nd 1900 which was sent to the Macclesfield designer Courtney Lindsay.

After apologising for late payment for the design of some tiles Kennard Wedgwood continues. "I am now anxious to get up a line of vases on New Art lines and should be glad if you would submit a few sketches or perhaps it would be best if you could make it convenient to call and see me here and talk the matter over, next time you are in the district which I hope will be soon. The idea is rather that colouring effect should be first object, the signs only secondary. Something on the lines of the Rosenberg Decoration with which I daresay you are familiar.

Fig. 4.7

113b

LINDSAY WARE. Queen's ware 'Lindsay Ware' vase decorated with enamelled butterflies and leaves on a darker ground. Height 5in., c.1901. *Wedgwood Museum*

Messrs. Josiah Wedgwood & Sons, Limited, Etruria, have a fine show of their special lines at the London rooms, 108, Hatton-garden, E.C. I saw Mr. Harry Barnard, their representative, a few days ago, and he was then expecting a further consignment of new samples from the works. To judge from the appearance of the rooms one would not think that any new samples were needed. But the incessant demand of the trade (far more than the public) for something new must be met. Messrs. Josiah Wedgwood & Sons do a little more than "meet the demand" in the ordinary acceptation of that term. They endeavour, in fact, to keep a little in *advance* of it. They are makers of all kinds of useful and ornamental china and jasper and earthenware. Nearly the whole of Messrs. Wedgwood & Sons' new samples may be described as "up to date"—that is to say, in accordance with the taste of to-day. Naturally a firm with the long reputation of Wedgwood & Sons are making many things that amateurs would perhaps describe as old-fashioned—that is to say, things that are not in keeping with the prevailing fashion. But such forms and decorations of a past period as the firm are still making have claims far higher than that of "novelty." They are artistic, and art never dies—never becomes obsolete. But the firm, like most others, exist for commercial purposes, as well as artistic. They want to sell their productions, and as more persons are buying medium-priced than high-priced goods Messrs. Wedgwood & Sons are making them. Since people will not so largely pay the price of Wedgwood's highest classes of ware, the company are meeting them by providing goods at more reasonable prices. This is noticeable in the varied samples of dinner ware and tea services, "real Wedgwood," at moderate rates. They are showing some new toilet sets, quite on the lines of modern art and modern taste. On dinner ware and tea ware the company are showing new arrangements of old decorations and shapes quite in the style of to-day.

Reilly, R. *Wedgwood*: The New Illustrated Dictionary, Woodbridge: Antique Collectors Club, 1995 p. 27.

POTTERY GAZETTE 1904 p. 540 Buyers' Notes: Wedgwood.

The above design shows little affinity to Art Nouveau, however, it is not known whether other designs in the range did so. The priority of commercial considerations in the design of ceramic patterns at the time is clearly seen in the *Pottery Gazette's* Review of the latest Wedgwood ware.

In 1898 Harry Barnard joined Wedgwood. He had previously worked at Doulton Lambeth, where he was the assistant to Mark Marshall, and at Macintyre, which he had joined in 1895. Bergesen states:

> At Macintyre he was engaged to supervise the development of new slip decorated art ware. This was Gesso Faience, a variety of pâte sur pâte adapted by Bernard for factory production, the slip being applied free hand over a stencilled pattern. His surface patterns were a combination of revived rococo and Art Nouveau which were refined under William Moorcroft.[20]

This refinement was to lead to the *Florian Range.* At Wedgwood Barnard developed his tube lining techniques on a variety of ranges which may be labelled 'commercial art ware'. Some of the designs display an affinity to Art Nouveau; others have no more than hints. His toilet ware was pierced, tube lined and often the jugs had free flowing handles.

The ranges developed by Barnard had limited commercial success and eventually he became head of the tile department, where the patterns remained traditional. On the department's closure he became the company's London representative and manager of the London showroom. As in the *Secessionist* range of Minton and Rhead's *Intarsio* at Wileman, Barnard's are eclectic with some relating to continental Art Nouveau.

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[20] Bergesen, Op. Cit., p. 166.

Surviving material in the archives at Royal Doulton (Minton/Wileman) and Wedgwood is geared to production. Pattern books and costing data are the major sources available and there is little to assist in the understanding of consumption patterns at the time. However, within the Minton archives there is the consultants' report that highlights the economic problems facing European retailers at the time [21].

The Secessionist Ware introduced by Minton was seen in the secondary literature as a positive step to combat the Company's severe financial problems. It was marketed at a competitive price, with the deliberate intention to compete with its continental rivals, who had established a segment in the market for 'New Art' work. Its flexibility of varied designs meant that it could also appeal to more conservative elements.

Wedgwood was also encountering financial difficulties with the tile section being closed as a consequence. The Company, with its historic liberal ethos, mirrored the reactions of many companies to the arrival of the 'New Art' at a time of a downturn in the market. The designs of Henry Barnard reflect the influence of the 'New'.

As in the Secessionist ware there was flexibility, with the potential of customer choice, in ranges that kept within the bounds of acceptability. There were no eccentricities or extravagancies here. This was true too of Macintyre/ Moorcroft's slip trailed *Florian* ware. There was none of the, "extravagance, exaggeration, formerly 'squirming lines', blobs and wiggles [that] now appear the only means used."[22]

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[21] Currall and Strasser, Op. Cit. p.111, note 16.
[22] This is one of the numerous criticisms found in the *Magazine of Art* 1904, ' Symposium on L' Art Nouveau.' The quotation is from Gascombe John p.212.

While the proposed Lindsay range did provoke some disagreement among the Company's hierarchy, the fact remains that economic considerations prevailed over matters of individual taste. In the Donaldson chapter we have seen similar considerations. A further example is found in the recent history of Macintyre/Moorcroft. A note from the managing director of Macintyre's Henry Watkin to William Moorcroft stated, "I'll be frank. The real money is in the fittings we make for the electricity companies. But there's all this Arts and Crafts stuff, Art Nouveau, what have you. Other potteries are doing well with that and we can't afford to be left out."[23]

The *Pottery Gazette,* while maintaining its stance of actively pushing manufacturers' concerns and giving a positive endorsement to new products, does show an ambiguity towards the 'New Art'. Its whole-hearted support to Macintyre/Moorcroft, endorsed by *The Magazine of Art* and *The Art Journal,* is symptomatic of a general feeling towards the principles underlying the Arts and Crafts Movement at the time. Like Rhead the *Pottery Gazette* also displayed concern at its perception of a basic conservatism within the ceramics industry. The *Gazette's* brief analysis of the 1900 Paris exposition is brief and to the point, "In no single section did Great Britain appear at her best. Tens of thousands are now reading about the Exhibition in foreign journals and are having that view of our decadence placed before them.[24]

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[23] Swindells, Neil, 'William Moorcroft Story', *Moorcroft Collectors Club,* Newsletter, No. 21, 1999, p.13.
[24] *Pottery Gazette*, December 1900, p. 1331.

The *Gazette* appears to have difficulty in defining the 'The New Art'. A review in 1901 said, "Everyone in the trade by this time knows but probably like ourselves are unable to describe it"[25]. In 1904 a similar comment appeared. "Modern art, the English equivalent of French Art Nouveau is now pretty well known but not easily described"[26] Loie Fuller was recognised as embodying the spirit of the new. However, the reviewer expressed uncertainty as to what the 'New Art' entailed.

> We all more or less like to be in the fashion and ever since Miss Loie Fuller turned the heads of our designers and modellers with the graceful curvings of her loose robes in her famous skirt dance; bold flowing lines have been introduced for everyday decorative purpose. The 'New Art' primarily consists of the judicious use of absolutely freehand work. I have never yet read or heard any definite description of what Art Nouveau really is.[27]

The May 1903 *Buyer's Notes* on the importers Franz and Rathausky illustrates figurines of sensuous female forms and the text says no more than, "They are showing the very newest of 'New Art' Wares.[28] Such female sensuousness, was particularly repugnant to English sensibilities as will be seen in the following chapter. It became a significant aspect of Continental Art Nouveau and is totally lacking from the English scene. Flat frontals in a Pre Raphaelite mode were as far as designers were prepared to go. An illustration of this may be seen in an advertisement for Secessionist Ware by Lèon Solon in the Minton archive and is included in the appendix.

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[25] *Pottery Gazette*, August 1902, p. 791.
[26] *Pottery Gazette*, May 1904, p. 539.
[27] *Pottery Gazette*, May 1902, p. 475.
[28] *Pottery Gazette*, May 1903, p. 484.

The *Gazette* included within its remit the glass trade and there appeared in 1903 a significant review of the work of Galle. The *Gazette* was very appreciative of his work but readily acknowledges that potential English consumers could find it too revolutionary for their taste:

> There is a delicacy of taste in the concentration of many of the subjects treated that will commend the scheme of ornamentation to those in search of artistic novelties. It is high class art ware. Its effects may not appeal for some time to the popular taste but those with artistic feelings will appreciate this daring attempt at originality.[29]

The article points out that examples of the work may be seen at the South Kensington Museum and suggests that its readers should go to see them. It states, "Some charming models are in the Museum at South Kensington". However, it concludes somewhat ambiguously, "Its very refinement limits the numbers of those who may wish to acquire specimens".[30]

In the opening chapter I pointed to the fact that Art Nouveau was not a single phenomenon but had stylistic variations. Within the Franco/Belgium curvilinear school there were further divisions, the work of Van de Velde, for example, being far removed from that of his compatriot Horta.[31]

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[29] *Pottery Gazette*, May 1903, p. 483.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Amaya, Mario, *Art Nouveau*, London: Studio Vista, 1966, pp. 82-88. Amaya describes van de Velde's work as having gently curved flat plane decoration translated into 3d objects from which there are strong linear tendencies. He maintains that van de Velde's greatest qualities as a designer are displayed in his smaller objects. He shows how van de Velde was influenced by the English Arts and Crafts Movement as does Madsen. Madsen, Stephan Tschudi, (1956), *The Art Nouveau Style*, New York: Dover, 2000, pp. 42-53. Madsen makes further sub divisions in the form/language of Belgium Art Nouveau between Serrurier Bovy , who he sees as being close to English Arts and Crafts, Horta and Vane de Velde, who he sees as being influenced by the other two.

Van de Velde had been most impressed by the work of the Arts and Crafts Movement in England and had visited William Morris. While he was acknowledged at the time as a master of Art Nouveau, especially its philosophical basis, we may see a restraint in his decorative motifs, if not in the sculptural forms. Van de Velde produced ceramic designs for Meissen and a pattern with close affinity to Art Nouveau which is illustrated in the *Gazette* as late as 1909[32]. Such a restrained design was typical of the 'New Art' influenced decoration on English functional ceramics which invariably received praise from the *Gazette.* Its enthusiasm for such work may be seen in a Royal Doulton review in 1903.

> So many variations of what is called the 'new art' are on the market that there appears to be no limit to the application of the term. The bold sweeping curves which were the first characteristics of it have given way to all sorts of free designs. Some of them are so free indeed they border on the ludicrous. The variations introduced by Doulton are always artistic so that it does not matter whether they leave the accepted 'New Art' behind or not.[33]

A similar stance had been made in the January edition in the same year. It talks of a tendency to allow Art Nouveau shapes and decorations to run wild into nothing more than mere eccentricity. Doulton is excused such promiscuity with their work showing no extravagance.[34]

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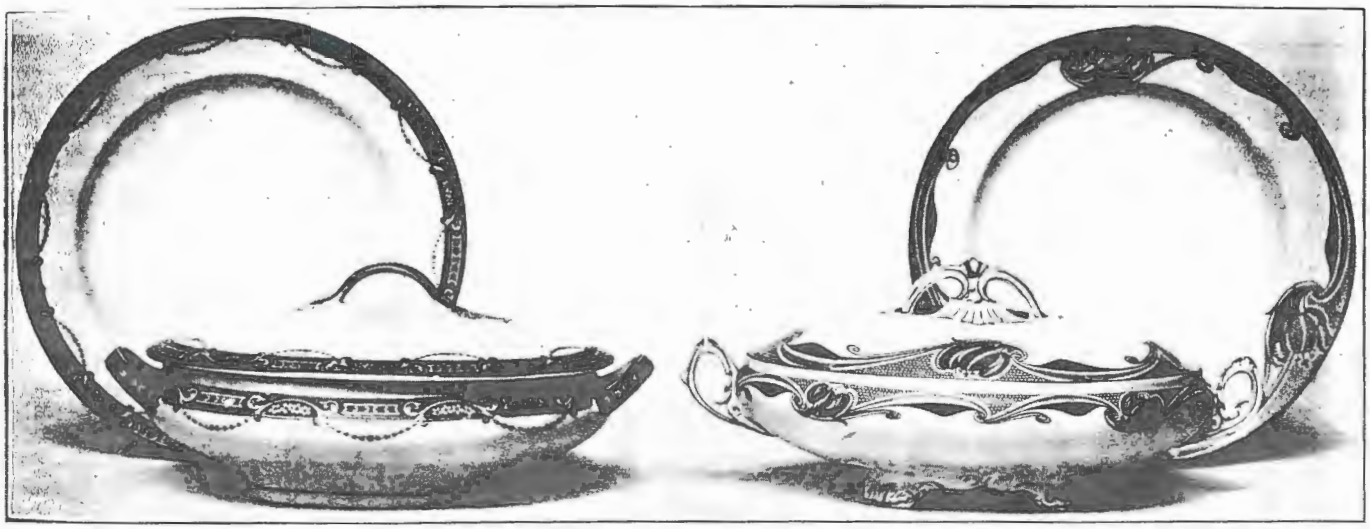
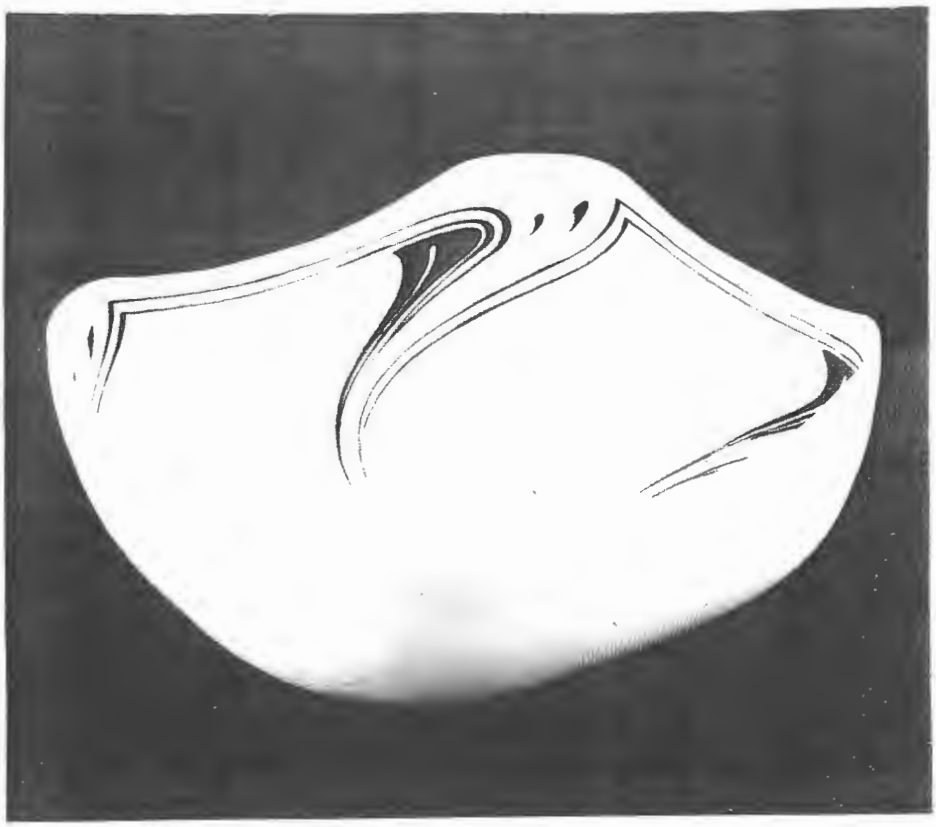
[32] *Pottery Gazette*, September 1909, p. 1023.
[33] *Pottery Gazette*, June 1903, p.583.
[34] *Pottery Gazette*, January 1903, p. 55.

Fig. 4.8 119a



BURGESS & LEIGH, BURSLEM. *Photo. by "The Pottery Gazette."*



HENRY VAN DE VELDE (1863-1957) Belgian

COMPARISON: DE VELDE DESIGN FOR MEISSEN AND A STAFFORDSHIRE POTTERY

The DE VELDE is illustrated in:
A.Duncan, *Modernist Design* 1880-1940 (Woodbridge: Antique Collectors Club 1998) p.62.
A Similar piece is exhibited at the Victoria & Albert Museum.
BURGESS & LEIGH, Pottery Gazette, October 1903 p. 1003

The *Gazette* was prepared to accept and sometimes even encourage the 'New Art' so long as it kept within certain limits of restraint. This restraint may be traced to the English traditions of reticence and understatement that Pevsner discusses in his *Englishness Of English Art*[35].

The most interesting advertisement that appeared in the *Gazette* was from one of the smaller manufacturers W.H. Williamson & Sons at Longton. Its headline reads: NOVEM ARTEM CHINA. The New Art as applied to Porcelain. It argues that the Arts and Crafts principles as espoused by Ruskin and Morris are the very same principles that lie behind their range of 'New Art' or 'Novem Artem' china. "True decoration should not conceal the beauty of the porcelain as a material"[36]

The china was, well received in the *Gazette,* which was normal practice. The illustrations would seem to belie the company's intentions. There is a hint of Art Nouveau but no more and compared to other contemporary designs it falls well short of forming an English Art Nouveau. It seems, that the company was no more than using the term as a marketing technique, with their advertisement appealing to the known disposition of the readers. Here is part of the *Gazette* review:

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[35] Pevsner, Nikolaus, *The Englishness of English Art,* London: The Architectural Press, 1956, p. 78. Pevsner states, "Restraint as shown by Reynolds or Gainsborough was recognised as an aspect of the English character at a much earlier date by Emerson. The English portrait conceals more than it reveals, and what it reveals is studied with understatement". My contention is that it is within such understatement the English contribution to Art Nouveau has to be assessed. This issue will be fully addressed in chapter seven, pp. 143-163.

[36] *Pottery Gazette,* August 1906, H. M. Williamson & Son advertisement.

Fig 4.9 120a

NOVEM ARTEM CHINA.

NOVEM-ARTEM-CHINA
H & M W
LONGTON SONS ENGLAND
COPYRIGHT

The New Art as applied to Porcelain.

THE practice of applying "Patterns" indiscriminately to Ceramic objects without consideration of—or reference to—their utility, or the material of which they are fashioned, has caused a revolt amongst people of taste, who are now rightly demanding that the decoration should be applied as a means to an end, and not the end itself.

True decoration should not conceal the beauty of the porcelain, as a material, but should accentuate and emphasise its whiteness and translucency. In addition to this, the general effect of a porcelain service, on a table, should be one of perfect harmony with the general surroundings of a room, and should form, as it were, a note in a complete chord of colour. To do this, simplicity is essential, and all obtrusive colours and complicated lines should be eschewed. In short, the whole effect should aim at repose and restfulness to the eye.

In "Our Novem Artem" decorations this result is achieved, and, on artistic grounds, as well as on the superior quality and finish of our goods, we believe we can confidently claim the patronage of all people of taste.

"Our Novem Artem" China is manufactured in Tea and Breakfast Ware, Morning Sets, Coffee, Cocoa, Milk Jugs, Dessert Ware, and every other article which is required for everyday use. This ware is most inexpensive, exceptionally artistic, and useful, and is the thing essential for up-to-date people and persons of taste.

NOTE.—We beg to call your attention to our LATEST

Specialities

OF

Golf and Old English Series

(REGISTERED).

Our Golf Ware cannot possibly fail to please the eye of all people who favour sport. It should be of especial interest to Golfers and Golf Clubs, illustrating as it does in most artistic colourings, every actual stroke given in the game. It should be seen at once.

ESTABLISHED 1858.

H. M. WILLIAMSON & SONS

BRIDGE POTTERY,

LONGTON, ENGLAND.

London Show Rooms: 25, THAVIES INN, HOLBORN, E.C.

Agent—Mr. JOHN BROCK.

Telephone: 51, LONGTON.

For full particulars, Samples, or any other information, apply to the Works or London Show Rooms.

REGISTERED.

Williamson and Sons in their advertisement went so far to use the 'New Art' positively as a marketing tool.

To keep in touch with the present demand for art in the home, the firm have just placed on the market an original application of 'new art' to porcelain, which they call their 'novem artem'. The principle which has guided them in this novelty is that decorative patterns should not be applied to articles of utility-particularly pottery-without a due regard to the form of the piece, the material of which it is made, and the purpose for which it is used. Messrs Williamson say that people of taste are now rightly demanding that decoration shall be applied as a means to an end and not an end in itself'. The term 'new art' is general ,and is applied to a great number of free and unconventional schemes of ornament. In most of them the idea is conveyed by graceful sweeps, curves and lines. No one of them can be described verbally. We therefore illustrate a group of Williamson's table china in their 'Novem Artem'.[37]

The fact that the firm was prepared to advertise its wares using 'New Art' as almost a brand indicates that the firm saw a market for ware labelled Art Nouveau. In an advertisement Sampson Bridgwood in 1903 used an Art Nouveau style ewer and basin; as did A.J. Wilkinson in March 1906 and Ault in 1906. In1906 Grimwade went so far as to advertise their new 'New Art' toilet set. As illustrated this was of classical shape and devoid of any decoration. Such firms therefore saw the words Art Nouveau as a good selling point.[38]

In 1903 and 1904 there were many and varied allusions to the 'New Art' in the *Pottery Gazette Buyer's Notes.* The *Gazette* showed some consistency in approach and while welcoming the new was not prepared to accept what it perceived as its extreme forms. "The Art Nouveau has produced many extravagancies and but little reformation in decorative art[39] A review of S.W. Dean's Newport China appeared in the following month. Here the reviewer was more specific but the sentiments were similar:

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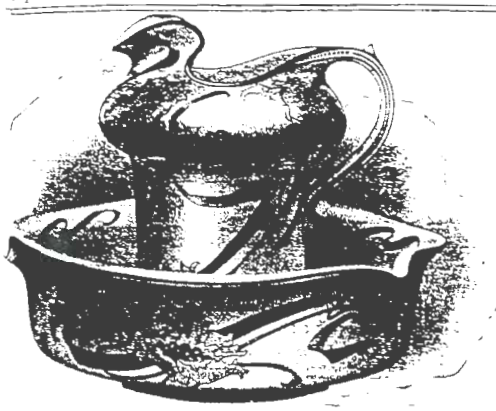
[37] *Pottery Gazette*, June 1906, p. 677.
[38] The illustrations mentioned are on the following page.
[39] This was in fact a review of the 1903 Arts and Crafts Exhibition and appeared in the *Gazette*, February 1903, p. 189.

Fig 4.10



SAMPSON BRIDGWOOD & SON,

Anchor Pottery, LONGTON,

MANUFACTURERS OF

CHINA & EARTHENWARE

For Home and Colonial Markets.

CONTRACTORS TO THE LEADING STEAMSHIP COMPANIES.

Badges of all kinds a Speciality.

LATEST STYLES IN . . .

TOILET, DINNER, and TEA SERVICES.

London Showrooms:

9, BARTLETT'S BUILDINGS, HOLBORN CIRCUS.

These and Hundreds more at the London Showrooms

If you want

Pottery that will please and immediately appeal to the taste of your Customers, pay a Special Visit to our London Showrooms. People like NEW things in Pottery, so it's decidedly to your advantage to add to your Stock from time to time some of our NEW Patterns.

GRIMWADES, Ltd.,

WINTON, STOKE, and ELGIN POTTERIES,

STOKE-ON-TRENT.

Given their size, and possibly the fact that they were used within the 'Woman's domain' the ewer and basin often featured 'New Art' motifs.

There are some excellent shapes in toilet services both on familiar lines and in the new art styles. There is ample scope in a pattern that is classed as 'New Art'; but Mr Dean's designers and decorators have not exceeded reasonable limits in the freedom of some of their productions.[40]

Reticence and reasonableness were seen as desirable traits to attain for manufacturers to satisfy demand from their customers. "Mr Fielding is fruitful in ideas, and there is always something new to be seen in his showroom-new in form and ornamentation.....highly ornamental without being extravagant."[41] Within the review there are three toilet sets illustrated. One in particular has ornamentation with twirling lines and whiplash force. Such decoration could not have been produced at any era other, than the period of Art Nouveau 1900-1910.

When prepared to define 'the new' the *Gazette* relates it to the curvilinear. The Royal Art Pottery was able to persuade the *Gazette* that it had produced ware incorporating both the traditionalism of Morris's inspired art pottery and the linear characteristics of the 'New Art'. It stated, "An up to date decoration quite in the style of the new art is called the 'Milk Maid'. That interesting person is depicted with true Arcadian surroundings, supplemented by those unconventional lines and curves which seem essential to L' Art Nouveau."[42]

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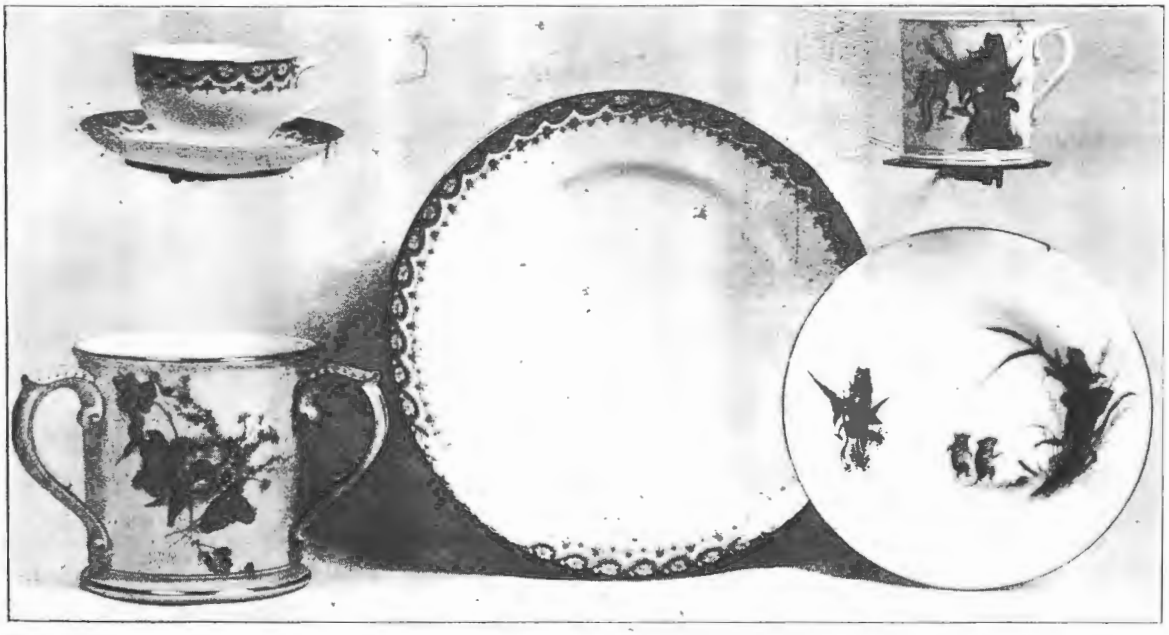
[40] *Pottery Gazette*, March 1903, p.270.
[41] *Pottery Gazette*, October 1903, p.1004.
[42] *Pottery Gazette*, November 1903, p. 1111.

Fig 4.11

122a

BUYERS' NOTES

The Worcester Royal Porcelain Company, Worcester, have sent up to their London showrooms, 8, St. Andrew-street, Holborn, E.C., a considerable portion of the fine collection of their new goods which was recently in show at the works. Their representative, Mr. John Porter, has, therefore, just now an exceptionally interesting display in his rooms. When I visit No. 8, St. Andrew-street, as a rule, Mr. Porter has one piece—sometimes more—of a particularly attractive character, which he is pleased to show me, so I am ushered amongst the highest-class pieces, and the artistic and richly ornamented section of the company's production receives my first attention. On my last visit, however, it happened that Mr. Porter himself was more than usually interested in the beautiful useful articles for domestic use recently produced, and so he showed them to me first. The useful side of good pottery is well to the front at present among the Worcester Porcelain Company's novelties. For instance, I saw an extensive variety of dinner patterns, with new features both in design and ornamentation. Their semi-porcelain and Royal Worcester vitreous ware lends itself nicely to the production of dinner services. I saw a number of patterns suited to every possible position in life, excepting perhaps the humblest. There may not be very much scope for the introduction of novelties in dinner ware shapes, but here are plenty of novelties shown by the Worcester Company in ornamentation. (These are known by numbers rather than distinctive names.) Border patterns are numerous, neat and effective in design, and in fine enamelled colours. A very pretty new shade is a rose-leaf green. It is simply what its name indicates, and has just the daintiness about it that is so pleasing to ladies. A new shape has a flat rim in place of the old concave shape. This lends itself to printed patterns, alone, or in combination with coloured bands and gold. There are dinner plates with ornamentation of a cameo character—a very neat border pattern in blue and gold. I was shown several useful breakfast patterns; these are either plain prints, or printed with other decorations. One of the best of many capital decorative schemes has acid gold border, or a deep blue border. The combination of acid work with blue and gold is a very radical change, and it is shown on many useful articles. The company are showing many new up-to-date ideas in decorated dinner ware at reasonable prices. The collection of dessert services includes an attractive acid border. This is not exactly a cheap decoration, but, on the other hand, it is not high-priced. A decided novelty is the new music pattern. The border consists of staves (the five lines on which music is written), with the various clefs in gold and blue. Novelties in crests and mottoes in colour and gold are shown. There are specimens of crests and monograms, in raised slip decoration, in white and gold. The Worcester Company's badges are full of detail. Fish and game sets are amongst the best classes of decorated ware. Some new shapes in trinket sets have effective colour combinations. Some new designs in table ornaments have centrepieces, troughs, with tall or short vases for cut flowers. Taking their productions all round, the company's present season's show is remarkable for colour, shape, style, and versatility. It will be remembered that some little time ago the Worcester Company acquired the whole of the business of Messrs. Grainger & Co. They are now producing all the specialities for which Messrs. Grainger & Co. were so celebrated. This is but a reunion after a long separation, for the firms were at one time united. All the best productions of Messrs. Grainger & Co. are now



THE WORCESTER ROYAL PORCELAIN COMPANY, LIMITED.

Royal Worcester, a traditional company serving the upper end of the market, maintained their well established lines

While mid-market manufacturers were prepared to move towards perceptions of the new, those in the more traditional market, for example Royal Worcester, stuck to traditional values. There is a total absence of even a hint of Art Nouveau in their tableware illustrated in the *Pottery Gazette*[43]. New lines were introduced but they conformed to established principles. The 1904 Royal Worcester Review states, "Border patterns are numerous, neat and effective in design, and in fine enamelled colours. A very pretty new shade is a rose leaf green. It is simply what its name indicates, and has just the daintiness about it that is so pleasing to ladies".[44] The Company knew its market and was obviously not prepared to deviate from well-established practice.

It was not within the remit of the *Gazette* to detail the art pottery of the day. There is no account of the Martin Brothers' work. However, recognised art producers such as Bretby and Ault regularly advertised. A review of recent Ault's wares stated:

> It would not be 'art ware' if there was not perfect sympathy between the outline of the piece and the character of the applied ornament. The principal novelties this year are the decorations in accord with the taste of the day, which is for conventional designs (on what are commonly called 'new art' lines--English is good enough for me) in association with the combinations of colour-either in harmony or in contrast. [45]

Here there are suggestions that there was an acceptable English Art Nouveau provided it followed the precepts of the Arts and Crafts Movement, and was based on conventional designs. The illustration accompanying the article shows a sinuous

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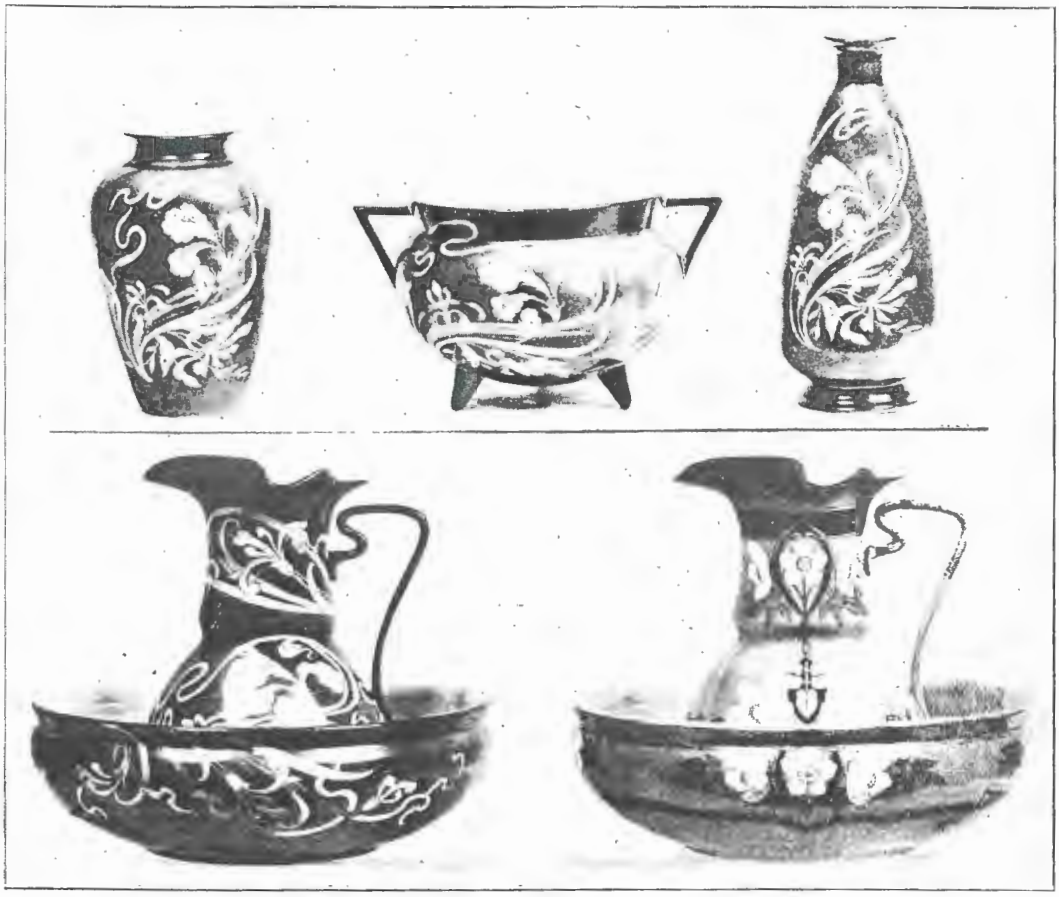
[43] *Pottery Gazette*, May 1904, p. 537.
[44] Ibid., p. 537.
[45] *Pottery Gazette*, March 1905, p. 317.

Fig. 4.12

Messrs. S. Fielding & Co., Railway Pottery, Stoke-on-Trent, are well known as manufacturers of useful and ornamental earthenware. They make general earthenware for home and foreign markets, but they also manufacture a number of specialities. Mr. C. Berry, their London agent, has a full line of samples at his rooms, 25, Ely-place, Holborn, E.C., and I had the opportunity of inspecting them a few days ago. The firm are always up to the times. Mr. Fielding is fruitful in ideas, and there is always something new to be seen at these rooms — new in form and in ornamentation. They are showing some pretty toilet sets—highly ornamental without being extravagant. The accompanying illustration of two of these gives a better idea of their principal features than could be conveyed by words only. The "Etna" shape has a new decoration, the "Assyrian." It has a large round bowl and tall graceful ewer. The "Antique" decoration is a fine specimen of embossed work. When decorated in colours and gold the effect is very pleasing. The selection of toilet ware is very varied and large. Indeed, excepting perhaps the most expensive se's, Messrs. Fielding make every kind of good toilet ware. I say *good*, because they do not manufacture the cheapest—and therefore the commonest grades. They are showing a large collec-



S. Fielding & Company, Stoke-on-Trent.

POTTERY GAZETTE OCTOBER 1903

Given their size toiled wares were ideally placed to incorporate Art Nouveau curvilinear patterns within the design.

Fig. 4.13 123 b

AYNSLEY CUP & SAUCER circa 1900
THE ALLEN GALLERY, ALTON

Aynsley were a traditional family based manufacturer serving the middle of the market. It shows the extent to which Art Nouveau motifs penetrated the ceramics industry at the time.

flowing movement that has the characteristics of a whiplash. This is not uncommon in pottery illustrations at the time and a similar pattern may be seen in an Aynsley plate in the appendix.[46]

A significant Art Pottery that did not make the pages of the *Gazette* was the Della Robbia Pottery 1893-1906 at Birkenhead. It took the name of the famous family of Florentine Renaissance potters and some of its work was in the Renaissance style. In line with the Arts and Crafts philosophy it was conceived to restore to the worker the individual interest and pleasure in the creative spirit of work. The intention was to use local clay, local labour and no machinery. However the local clay proved to be unsuitable and the local labour was unable to cope.

The Studio reviewed and illustrated its work in 1900 stating,

> Mr Harold Rathbone's experiments in the Della Robbia style are steadily gaining and increasingly meriting the recognition of connoisseurs. In the considerable mass of work exhibited this year there was a noticeable loosening of traditional bonds and an effort towards freer and more modern methods of design.[47]

Victoria Bergesen writing in 1991 has little doubt that the vases illustrated in the *Studio*, " were distinctly Art Nouveau in shape and decoration.[48]

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[46] This is on display at the Hampshire Ceramic Collection at the Allen Gallery Alton. It is a teacup and saucer with purple Art Nouveau buds.

[47] Anon., 'Home Arts and Industries', *Studio*, Volume 20, 1900, pp. 86-7.

[48] Bergesen, Op.Cit., p. 75, We have here further instance of the *Studio's* refusal to accept and identify the style of Art Nouveau. Bruce Tattersall, Bruce, *Apollo*, 1973 pp. 131-136, similarly maintains that Della Robbia had successfully absorbed Art Nouveau influences.

Fig 4.14

124a

BURMANTOFTS ART POTTERY.

ideas. Many designs are exhibited following the trend of what has come to be known as modern art decorations. This modern art, the English equivalent of the French L'Art Nouveau, is now pretty well known, but it is not easily described. The ornamentation on the three pedestals and pots shown in the illustration is exceedingly effective on the coloured originals. These effects are necessarily lost when the design is reproduced in black and white only.

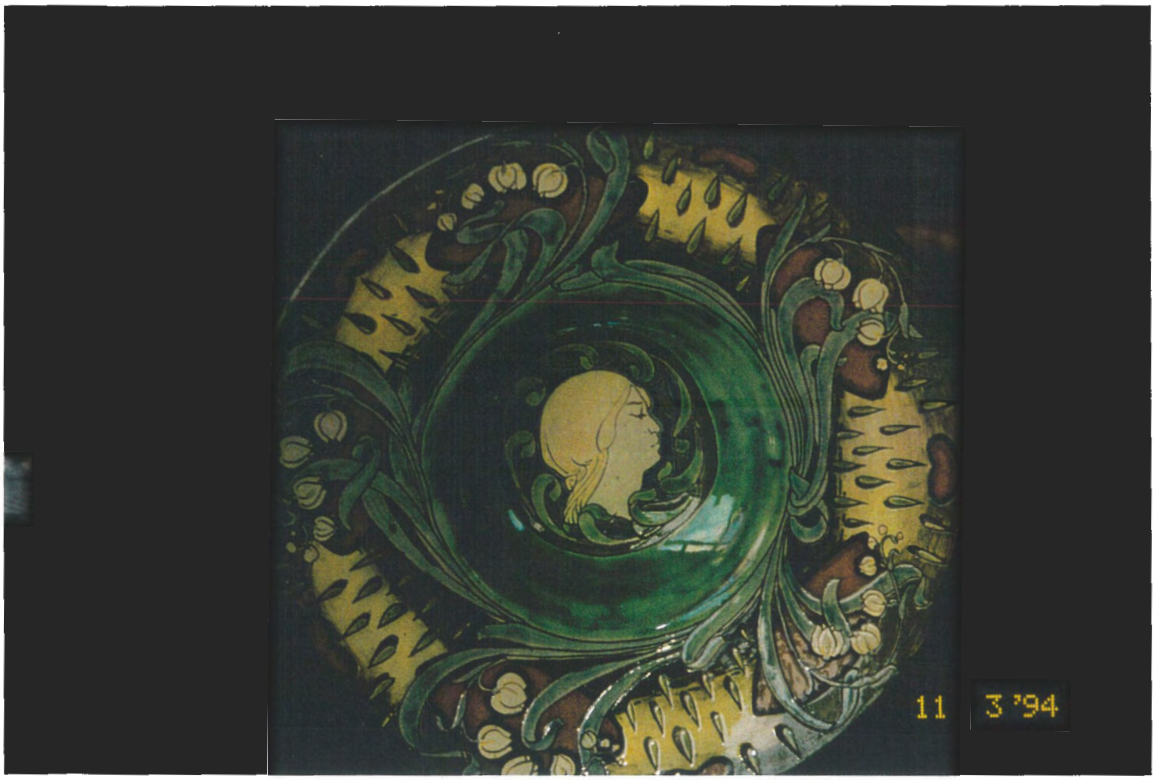
AULT FAIENCE.

The principal novelties this year are the decorations in accord with the taste of the day, which is for conventional designs (on what are commonly called "new art" lines—English is good enough for me—)

POTTERY GAZETTE BURMATOFFS MAY 1904 p. 540
POTTERY GAZETTE AULT APRIL 1911 p. 411

Art Nouveau motifs were also found on 'Art Pottery'.

Fig. 4.15 124b



DELLA ROBBIA CHARGER: PRIVATE COLLECTION
In 1906 the *Magazine of Art* stated, "A new industry has been established at Birkenhead of so distinctly artistic a nature that it is with pleasure we call attention to it". Anon., The 'Della Robbia Industry', *Magazine of Art'*, 1906, pp. 6-7.
The pottery, while adhering to the principles of the Italian Renaissance Florentine Pottery, was quite prepared to incorporate distinct Art Nouveau motifs.

The classic toilet ware of ewer and basin, given their size, gave more possibilities than other shapes, for linear decoration. It is unsurprising therefore that the majority of advertisements in the *Gazette* were for toilet ware. A typical example of such wares by John Maddock and Company is illustrated in the *Gazette* in 1903. The text too is illuminating in pointing to the importance of commercial consumption patterns.

The English manufacturers, as seen earlier in the Minton Report, were increasingly living in a cosmopolitan world. Walter Crane wrote in 1902, "One cannot resist the conclusion that in the latter phases of decorative art we have the results of modern intercommunication of ideas, of the constant intermingling, through modern commerce, travel, scientific discovery."[49]

Manufacturers, as we have seen, could not afford to neglect their customers' taste. There was a market segment for 'the new' and commercial viability meant that this sector of the market required exploitation. As noted previously Continental Europe had embarked on what many in England considered too radical a departure. When the market was cosmopolitan it became imperative that to compete successfully with continental firms the range had to relate to their customers' desires. This was particularly so in the case of John Maddock and Sons:

> The Company are manufacturers of dinner, tea and toilet ware for hotels, restaurants and ships. Their stock of current shapes and patterns is a large one yet they are continually responding to demands for something new.....decoration on new art lines. Patterns and shapes are both nicely varied so that all tastes are met. There are many expressly prepared for restaurants and ships. [50]

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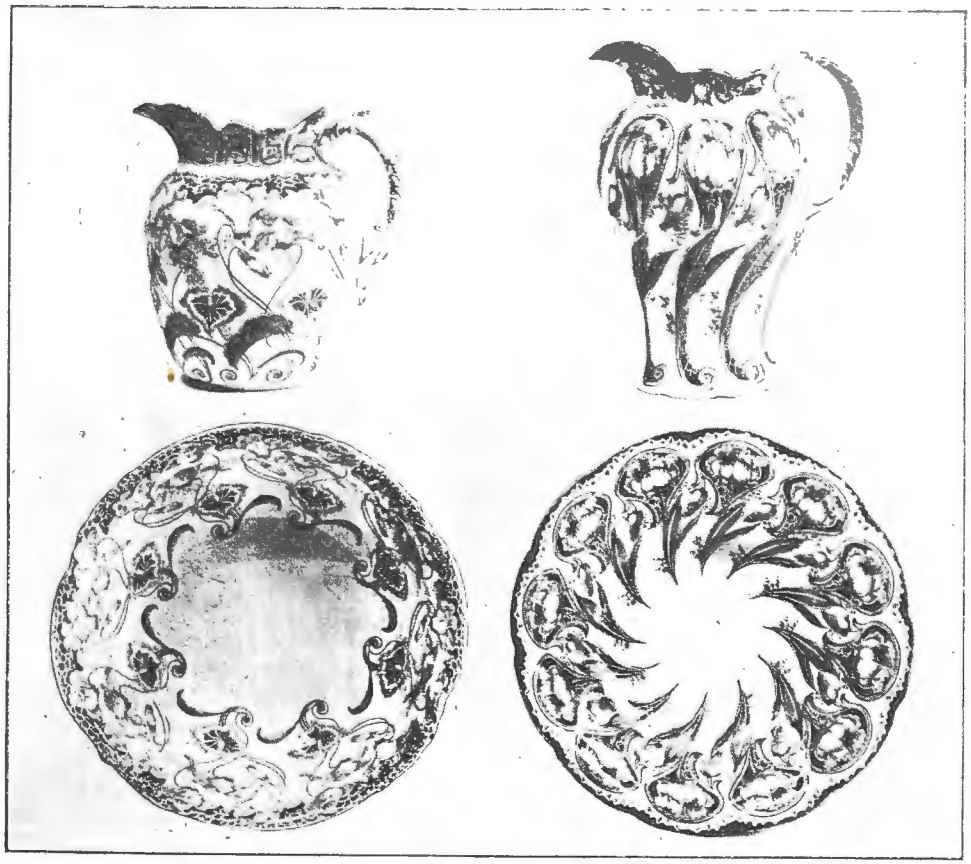
[49] Crane, Walter, 'Modern Decorative Art in Turin,' *Magazine of Art'*, 1902, p. 488.
[50] *Pottery Gazette*, July 1903, p. 692.

Meakin, Limited, in South Africa, where they have a special representative looking after their interests on the spot.

Messrs. John Maddock & Sons, Limited, Burslem, have a large collection of their samples at their London rooms, 7, Ely-place, Holborn-circus, E.C. Their representative, Mr. Tinsley, has the samples very well displayed. The rooms are all on one floor, and are well lighted. The company are manufacturers of Royal vitreous dinner, tea, and toilet ware and of vitrified semi-porcelain for hotel, restaurant, and ships' use. They claim that this semi porcelain is non-absorbent and that it will not craze. It is certainly a marvellously hard body, for we saw it subjected to treatment that would mean destruction to most pottery. Since they make ware expressly for restaurants, ships, clubs, and hotels, they also make a special feature of badged ware and monograms for the same purposes. Their stock of current shapes and patterns is a large one, yet they are continually responding to the demand



JOHN MADDOCK & SONS, LIMITED.

for something new. Some new samples have just been received from the works. Toilet ware is one of their chief departments. The newest shape is the "Ideal" toilet set. This is shown with the "Triumph" pattern—a decoration on new art lines. It is supplied ground laid, printed, and enamelled and gilt. It looks very well in light green and gold. It is a large useful ewer—tall and on foot. The annexed illustration will give a good idea of the points in which this new "Ideal" differs from other shapes. There is a large deep round basin. Another admirable shape toilet is the "Helene" shape, *La Gloria* pattern. There is a good collection of samples of dinner ware in the same non absorbing body. Patterns and shapes are both nicely varied so that all tastes are met. There are many expressly prepared for restaurants' and ships use. The patterns are neatly printed and in flow Canton and other colours. The company make a number of useful miscellaneous goods—cheese stands and covers, teapots and stands, triple trays, fruit dishes, &c., and the usual domestic requisites. We give illustrations of the

Maddock show their awareness of the modernity and cosmopolitan nature of the time.

Wedgwood, Doulton and other companies had to consider the impact of competition for their commercial viability. The introduction and at times positive marketing of the New Art has been seen in the *Pottery Gazette,* the mouthpiece of the industry. It was recognised as supplying a potential market segment and, in particular, tiles with distinct Art Nouveau characteristics were consumed in large quantities.

The majority of manufacturers did indeed produce lines that reflected strong associations with Continental Art Nouveau. They were seen as giving consumer choice from a wide range of options. No manufacturer at the time produced 'New Art' to the total exclusion of other lines. There is no evidence available to make a comparison of sales returns between those of 'New Art' designs and those with a more traditional approach. All that can be said is that the *Gazette's* articles and advertisements, relating to the 'New Art, reached a peak in 1903-4 and in subsequent years fell off markedly. Minton's eclectic Secessionist range did survive until 1914, but the later designs by Wadsworth had become increasingly traditional.

It was economic competition and even survival that was the major factor that determined many manufacturers' response to the 'New Art'. What emerged in England was an English version of the 'New'. It was essentially decorative with curvilinear movement, distinct in form from the rigid formality of the Victorian age.

The concluding section of this chapter will consider the *Pottery Gazette's* use of the concept of decadence- a concept which was freely used at the time. We tend to associate decadence with suggestions of debasement, dissipation, perversion and retrogression. However, the concept has other meanings related to decay, decline and fall. It was the latter side that the *Pottery Gazette* used to emphasise its concern at the conservative nature of some of the ceramics manufacturers during the period 1900-1910. Competition and economic problems were seen to require more vigorous movements in the direction of change. *The Gazette* sensed that the English ceramics industry was being held back by a concentration on traditional shapes and patterns. As we have seen[51] it was highly critical of the English contribution to the 1900 Paris Exposition and related the poor quality of her exhibits to a perceived decadence of spirit by equating 'decadence' to a failure to move forward or to be modern.

In the 1908 *Gazette* the ceramics industry was unfavourably compared to others and again was judged to be decadent in that it refused to move away from its traditional ways. Following an initial analysis of Art Nouveau styles the author proceeds to state:

> Such then, briefly is the new art which we potters are charged with neglecting. The manufacturer in nine cases out of ten has no glimmering of what is artistic. That it is not the public who are at fault may be easily be seen, by comparing the designs of dress stuffs, curtains and textile materials generally, of wall papers, book covers and even Christmas cards with most pottery designs. It is a *decadent* period we are passing through.[52]

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[51] See p.116.

[52] From An Occasional Correspondent, 'New Art in the Potteries', *Pottery Gazette*, December 1908, p.1423.

The article further suggests that the pottery industry was ten years behind the times in the matter of modern decoration and that other industries such as textiles, lace and jewellery had developed along the lines of the modern movement. What is understood by the modern movement is made clear when the writer states, "What then, we may ask, is this development of artistic decoration referred to as having been adopted by other allied manufacturers? This modern style or "new art" as it is often called."[53] This is clear evidence that some industries acknowledged the commercial significance of the modern or new. Further at the time the three industries mentioned were the ones that particularly appealed to the female consumer.

It may seen ironic that while some commentators at the time saw Art Nouveau as degenerate and decadent, the *Gazette's* correspondent viewed the failure of Pottery industry to wholeheartedly endorse it, in a similar way. For him, as for Frederick Rhead, such a lack of acceptance was one of the major reasons for the industry's economic difficulties. Rhead was scathing in his condemnation of traditionalism. He attacks the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society for its refusal to accept machinery in the production of goods. He makes the telling point that the Arts and Crafts were themselves not averse to use machinery in the manufacture of wallpapers. As we have seen Walter Crane, co-founder of the Exhibition Society was well aware of the social changes which were modernising his world.

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[53] Ibid.

There were therefore different meanings given to the idea of modern at the time. For Rhead it meant a whole hearted approach to machinery; for the *Gazette* correspondent it related to the 'New Art' and for Walter Crane it was the technological developments leading to a more cosmopolitan world. As far as decadence was concerned it did not mean a failure to adopt the new but the fact of its acceptance. In the next chapter I will explore the concepts of decadence and modernity in some depth to see how they determined the consciousness of the time.

CHAPTER 5

QUESTIONS OF DECADENCE AND MODERNITY

The contradiction between technological advance on the one hand and economic decline on the other was expressed by Sally Ledger and Roger Luckhurst who see the Victorian fin de siècle as an epoch of endings and beginnings. They see Britain's primacy as a global economic power being rivalled by Germany and America. They argue that the contradiction of a new century was expressed by haunting fantasies of decay and degeneration which showed the ambivalence of modernity.[1] Such decay may be expressed as decadence- a falling away, decline, deterioration, and self-indulgence. Closely allied to this is degeneration, a loss of the qualities that are regarded as normal and desirable. This was usually applied in biological terms to indicate reversion to a lower type of being.[2]

The word most often used in the aesthetic press to indicate a sense of revulsion was 'disease'. Lewis Day stated, "When we speak in this country of the 'New Art' it is

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[1] Ledger Sally & Roger Luckhurst (Eds), *The Fin de Siécle: A Reader in Cultural History1880-1900,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 1-3.

[2] Charles Darwin's cousin, Francis Galton, had laid the foundations of the eugenics movement during the mid 1860s and by the turn of the century it was at the crest of a wave. Galton had engaged on genealogical studies to prove the hereditability of talent and he came to the conclusion that the breeding habits of the lower social orders would lead to degeneration. Ultimately this would mean that the country's level of intelligence would be lowered. Such arguments also incorporated racial overtones. There was an influx of immigrants from Eastern Europe at the turn of the century and it was argued this it was would lead to a lowering of the national intelligence as they had come from inferior stock. The rapid urbanisation of the late Victorian period gave rise to the slums in which they and the very poor British were massed. This gave rise to highlighting the numbers of diseased, deficient and degenerate. However, it was easy to confuse the rising mass of known cases of diseased and defective families with a possible real increase. At the same time the movement also favoured the growing interest in philanthropy and increasing endowments for hospitals and charities and appropriations for public health. See Shannon, Richard, *The Crisis of Imperialism,* London: Paladin, 1976, p. 214.

with an inflection of irony in our voice. It shows symptoms not of too exuberant life, but of pronounced disease."[3]

Three years before, Day had used similar language in his *Art Journal* review of Art Nouveau. Here disease and decay is implied, "British art on the whole is much cleaner and wholesomer than that of the continental decadents."[4]

Lewis Day and Walter Crane were two of the most influential English artists of the late nineteenth century. Both were ardent followers of the Ruskin/Morris philosophy and may be seen as leaders of the second generation Arts and Crafts Movement. In 1888 they founded the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society. While wedded to the arts and crafts ideal, both worked for industry and designed for Pilkington under William Burton. Both were prepared, despite their background, to recognise and accept technological advance. In 1882 Day wrote, "Whether we like it or not, machinery and steam power and electricity for all we know, will have something to say concerning the ornament of the future".[5] As seen, in the previous chapter, Crane also refers to the idea of modernity at the time. Crane is struck by the recurrence of certain motifs and their use throughout the 1902 Turin Exhibition. This he concludes is, "Through the application of new materials, discoveries and inventions."[6] Indeed he begins his account by saying, "Art Nouveau, Art Moderne, or whatever you might like to call it."[7]

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[3] Day, Lewis, *Moot Points,* London, 1903, pp 82 sq. Quoted in. Madsen, *Art Nouveau,* 1967, p. 232.
[4] Day, Lewis, 'L' Art Nouveau', *Magazine of Art,* 1900, p. 296.
[5] Quoted in Pevsner, Nikolaus, *Pioneers of Modern Design,* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974, p. 26.
[6] Crane, Walter, 'Modern Decorative Art in Turin', *Magazine of Art,* 1902, pp. 479-493.
[7] Ibid.

Gabriel Mourey writing in the *Studio* in 1900 is also conscious of modernity. [8] He states, "It is wonderful to see how completely these Austrian artists and decorators have forgotten the past...their ardour for novelty...so keen for freshness and modernity."[9] Mourey continues by talking of a décor appropriate to the age. Such an idea is also seen in Hamo Thorneycroft's contribution to the *Magazine Of Arts'* 1904 Art Nouveau Symposium. He states, "This Art Nouveau appeared concurrently with that of freedom from tradition. It may be considered an honest expression of the age."

Margaret Armour in a *Magazine of Art* article titled Aubrey Beardsley and the Decadents, makes the case for the excellence of Beardsley's artistic flair, which for her outweighs any consideration of vulgarity. She says:

> Art for art's sake is sound doctrine. The first concern of pictorial art is with line and colour. It has no more to do with preaching than a sunset. That art like Beardsley's, so excellent in technique and so detestable in spirit, wakes more repugnance than praise and proves us a nation stronger in ethics than in art.[10]

In a series of *Studio* articles, the magazine's editor, Gleeson White defends the work of the Glasgow School. He refers to the sweeping sinuous line, which has monopolised so many designs lately. However, as so often in the *Studio*, there is no reference to the words 'New Art' or Art Nouveau.[11]

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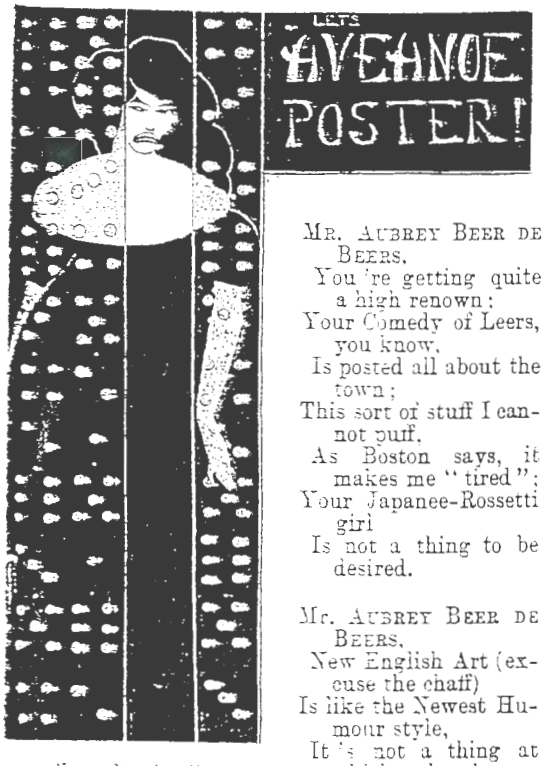
[8] As he is discussing modern Austrian work, I think it can be safely said that he is referring to Art Nouveau. We have yet another instance of the *Studio's* failure or just unwillingness to acknowledge the existence of the style, and most certainly a refusal to use the words Art Nouveau.
[9] Mouray, Gabriel, 'Round the Exhibition: Austrian Decorative Art', *Studio*, 1900, p. 114.
[10] Armour, Margaret, 'Aubrey Beardsley and the Decadents', *Magazine of Art*, 1897, pp. 9-12.
[11] White, Gleeson, 'Some Glasgow Designers' *Studio*, Volume 11, 1898, pp. 87-99 and 227-237.

Fig. 5.1

ARS POSTERA.



"Venus Domina."

MR. AUBREY BEER DE BEERS,
You 're getting quite a high renown:
Your Comedy of Leers, you know,
Is posted all about the town;
This sort of stuff I cannot puff.
As Boston says, it makes me "tired";
Your Japanee-Rossetti girl
Is not a thing to be desired.

MR. AUBREY BEER DE BEERS,
New English Art (excuse the chaff)
Is like the Newest Humour style,
It 's not a thing at which to laugh;
But all the same, you need not maim
A beauty reared on Nature's rules;
A simple maid *au naturel*
Is worth a dozen spotted ghouls.

MR. AUBREY BEER DE BEERS,
You put strange phantoms on our walls
If not so daring as *To-day's*,
Nor quite so Hardy as *St. Paul's*:
Her sidelong eyes, her giddy guise,—
Grande Dame Sans Merci she may be;
But there is that about her throat
Which I myself don't care to see.

MR. AUBREY BEER DE BEERS,
The Philistines across the way,
They say her lips—well, never mind
Precisely what it is they say;
But I have heard a drastic word
That scarce is fit for dainty ears;
But then their taste is not the kind
Of taste to flatter BEER DE BEERS.

Bless me, AUBREY BEER DE BEERS,
On fair Elysian lawns apart
Burd HELEN of the Trojan time
Smiles at the latest mode of Art;
Howe'er it be, it seems to me,
It 's not important to be New;
New Art would better Nature's best,
But Nature knows a thing or two.

AUBREY, AUBREY BEER DE BEERS,
Are there no models at your gate,
Live, shapely, possible and clean?
Or won't they do to "decorate"?
Then by all means bestrew your scenes
With half the lotuses that blow,
Pothooks and fishing-lines and things,
But let the human woman go!

Oscar Wilde in the 1890s had been subject to a rigorous attack from *Punch*. Beardsley fared no better as may be seen in this typical lampoon.

His language betrays an acknowledgement that the work of the Glasgow School of the time was being subjected to considerable criticism. He states:

> Its very audacity and novelty deserve to be encouraged. To say that they break with tradition and are eccentric....is but to take refuge in the old protest against any infraction of established custom.....It is but decent civility to treat any serious experiment with some of tolerance.[12]

Gleeson White does show some reluctance to accept the more symbolist aspects of the work pointing to the contradictions of modernity saying, "The fact remains in Scotland and in many other places there is a return to mysticism which at first sight seems out of touch with the 'actuality of modernity' as modern journalese phrases it."[13]

In 1904, following the *Magazine Of Art* symposium on Art Nouveau, the *Studio* outlined the arguments for and against 'The New Art' in an editorial that followed its usual format as a *Lay Figure* article. Here there is a recurrence of Gleeson White's earlier argument relating to the acceptance of change and originality. Modernity and Decadence were at the forefront of the discussion and at the outset the case against was starkly put, "This New Art was a result of the modern decadence of taste."[14]

The article concluded by stating, "The new art, as I understand it, is only the old art properly brought up to date. It is neither decadent nor revolutionary; it is simply modern."[15]

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[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Anon., 'Lay Figure', *Studio*, Volume 31, 1904, p.278.
[15] Ibid. p. 278.

Here we see the basis of much contemporary English criticism of Art Nouveau as seen in the 1904 *Magazine of Art* Symposium. Anything that seemed to be decadent or modern was anathema to many members of the English establishment, artistic and others[16] and this was particularly so in regard to masculine standards of taste. Why this should be so, and its impact upon the acceptance of Art Nouveau at the time, will form a major part of the remainder of this study.

There were further criticisms of work that seemed decadent or degenerate in the arts periodicals of the time. Aymer Vallance, the noted Arts and Crafts protagonist, applies the epithet disease, "Hitherto our British solidity and self sufficiency have saved us as a nation from this foreign contagion; notwithstanding certain signs of its presence indicate that, here and there, some unfortunate has been infected with this insidious disease".[17] Presumably this refers to Art Nouveau.

Walter Crane, in the Pugin manner of *Contrasts* considers the new and old. He states that there are two principles at work. "Of health and life and hope. On the other side-decomposition and decay". [18] He proceeds to develop the argument in terms of the arts and crafts principle of 'truth to material.'

There are a number of references relating to decadence in the *Magazine of Art* 1904 Symposium particularly from members of the Arts and Crafts and architectural

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[16] This was particularly so in the Architectural profession and the Arts and Crafts Movement and may be seen in the *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects*. John Belcher in his 1904 presidential address said of Art Nouveau, "...twisted to curves representing the final stages of vegetable decay and animal decrepitude, in defiance of all true principles of construction and beauty" Belcher, John, *R.I.B.A. Journal*, November 1904, p.4.

[17] Vallance, Aymer, 'British Arts and Crafts', *Magazine of Art*, 1903, p.169.

[18] Crane, Walter, Op. Cit., p.480.

professions. Walter Crane talks of "traces of decadence, primitive motives..."[19] and Gerald Moira, "the outcome of diseased minds."[20] Reginald Blomfield makes an allusion to disease in stating that the 'New Art' relates to influenza and other unpleasant things. Beresford Pite likewise refers to it displaying symptoms of mental disease[21] and C. Voysey "The manifestation of it is distinctly unhealthy and revolting."[22]

In the Symposium, Heathcote Statham maintains that the 'New Art' deliberately throws aside all traditions.[23] A suggestion that the period 1895-1905 was one of extraordinary change was explored by Stuart Hall in *Formations of Modernity.* Hall argues that the concept of modernity has been applied to many periods but it applies more specifically to a time of rapid change. He maintains that, "each succeeding age has a sense of itself as representing the culminating point of history by claiming the epithet 'modern' for itself."[24] His justification for seeing the period 1895-1910 as being one of modernity is:

> The whole idea of modernity received an enormous impetus towards the end of the nineteenth century when industrialisation was rapidly transforming economic and social life, not only in Western Europe but elsewhere, and the globalisation of the world economy and of the western way of life rapidly reshaped world history. This is the period of the avant garde intellectual and artistic movements in the arts, literature, science and philosophy sometimes called Modernism which aggressively embraced the new novelty for its own sake-and revelled in challenging and overthrowing the old forms, traditions, theories, institutions and authorities.[25]

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[19] 'Symposium on Art Nouveau', *Magazine of Art,* 1904, p. 211.
[20] Ibid., p. 380.
[21] Ibid., p. 327.
[22] Ibid., p.211.
[23] Ibid., p.378.
[24] Hall, Stuart, 'Introduction' (Eds.), Hall, Stuart and Bram Gieben, *Formations of Modernity*, London: Polity Press, 1992, p. 15.
[25] Ibid., p. 15.

For men such as Walter Crane, Lewis Day and Charles Ashbee, who were at the height of their prowess and had adapted the Morris/Macmurdo led Arts and Crafts movement to new forms of sophistication, the modernity and perceived decadence of the 'New Art' was difficult to bear. They had taken the decorative arts in England to a new and higher level at the time when more revolutionary change was blowing ill winds from the continent of Europe.

They undoubtedly struck a chord with many in the country. It may have been a defensive reaction, but none the less, it was significant in determining the English acceptance of Art Nouveau. For some manufacturers it was a different story. Economic survival was paramount and they were more conscious of the need to accept the 'moderne' so long as it related to what was seen as English tradition, especially when it related to a question of taste. As will be seen this was particularly so in the thoughts of Arthur Lazenby Liberty. His shop was to embrace the new but there was to be no suggestion of degeneracy or decadence.

An example of what might at first give an impression of degeneration is to be found in the *Magazine of Art*. This is a review by Octave Maus of Belgian Decorative Art. He opens by giving a detailed account of the origins of Art Nouveau and the nature of the style, in which he states, "It is developed from nature with some primordial principle of ornament." His positive approach however, is all too apparent in his comment

relating to Horta's *People's Palace.* "The building rises from its foundations like healthy growth."[26]

Holbrook Jackson gives further insight to the feelings at the time. For him the Trials of Oscar Wilde were a watershed and they made certain that the decadent movement was stopped firmly in its tracks. He stated:

> The general public first realised the existence of the decadence with the arrest and trial of Oscar Wilde. The suddenness, with which the decadent movement in English literature and art ceased, from that time, proves if nothing else, the tremendous power of outraged public opinion in this country. It also proves that English thought and English morality, however superficial on the one hand, and however hypocritical on the other, would neither understand nor tolerate the curious exotic growth which had flowered in its midst.[27]

Jackson proceeds to emphasise that the decadent movement was the expression of a minority and that a number of the establishment, fearful of the possible consequences, swiftly departed to the safe shores of France resulting in the total suppression of Wilde's name. More recently Peter Fuller concurs with this assessment He states that, while many of Beardsley's drawings were like icons of fin de siécle decadence, his popularity dived in 1895, after the disgrace of Oscar Wilde, whose play *Salome* was illustrated by Beardsley.[28]

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[26] Maus, Octave, 'Decorative Arts in Belgium', *Magazine of Art,* 1901, pp. 271-4.
[27] Jackson, Holbrook, (1913) *The Eighteen Nineties,* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1939, p.60.
[28] Peter Fuller, 'Fine Arts', (Ed.) Ford, Boris, *Cambridge Cultural History: Victorian England,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 178.

There has been considerable argument about Beardsley's credentials as an Art Nouveau artist. In some respects he was nearer to the Pre Raphaelites than Continental Art Nouveau, but such narrow distinctions would have been irrelevant at a time of ferment. That this was so can be seen in the detailed account by Michael Foldy of Wilde's trials and questions related to decadence.

Foldy's research highlights the decline of tolerance in the wake of the Wilde trials. He shows that the epithet 'Art for Art's Sake' could no longer hide what might be perceived as a degenerative tendency. He says, "The Wilde trials can be seen as representing a host of fears...to a social body that saw itself as struggling for survival in an increasingly hostile and unpredictable world."[29]

Foldy proceeds to suggest that the impact became a moral panic. Such a panic would include any person seen to be identified with the label. The decadents were well known to have their parentage in France. Holbrook Jackson stated, "The chief influences came from France and partially for that reason the English decadents always remained spiritual foreigners in our midst". [30] French literary decadence and French inspired Art Nouveau were easy to associate as one.

Foldy goes beyond the purely sexual implications of the trials. He sees them as sparking a revolution in consciousness related to general anxieties about life and change. He explores the evolving modernity of the time and its impact on the evolving process of secularisation. His analysis of contemporary reports leads him to

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[29] Foldy, Michael, *The Trials of Oscar Wilde*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997, pp. 142-3. Foldy quotes from the *Star*, April 6th 1895, which referred to the aesthetes as parasitic, an excrescence and an abomination.

[30] Jackson, Holbrook, Op. Cit., p.64.

state, "He [Wilde] was [seen] as ambassador of an insidiously subversive French School of Art. Paris especially was seen as the centre of artistic and moral corruption and Wilde was portrayed as its representative.[31] He quotes the *Daily Telegraph* in its attack on "the salacious impulses of Wilde's Francophile dandyism."[32]

Foldy is addressing the impact of the trials on the bourgeois English male and he concludes by stating:

> When the newspapers attacked Wilde they were also expressing their xenophobic fear of foreigners and foreign influences; their hatred of a useless and parasitic aristocracy and their intolerance for useless artists and for anyone else that would actively try to subvert the status quo. In sum they were expressing fear, hatred and intolerance for everything that was not bourgeois, useful, rational, right thinking and patriotic.[33]

Another important event occurred in 1895. This was the publication of *Degeneration* by Max Nordau. For Nordau the decadents, (he included Burne Jones in their number), threatened the end of the established order given their contempt for traditional values and customs. Nordau was particularly scathing in his review of Wilde who he sees as having a hysterical longing to sensationalise. He was sceptical of the artist and suggested that society had much to fear from the 'so called' genius and in general terms the aesthete was associated with sexual depravity.[34]

The significance of the book at the time is questionable. Few are likely to have read it[35] and given its wide range of attack and racial overtones it was itself attacked and

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[31] Foldy, Op. Cit., p. 148.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid., p.149. This raises the question of emulation which will be considered in the following chapter.
[34] Nordau, Max, (1895) *Degeneration*, New York: Bison Books, 1993, p. 71 and p.457.
[35] See, Bennett, Alan, (1909) 'The Middle Class', (Ed.) Read, Donald, '*Documents from Edwardian England*', London: Harrap, 1973.

by no means accepted. William James[36] saw Nordau as being haunted by his own fears of sexuality, and with a complete inability to see a joke. It is suggested that Nordau himself is a degenerate of the worst sort.[37] Anna Davin argues that there were fears that the race itself would degenerate if child rearing was inadequate. Suggestions of physical degeneration became significant at the time and that the Eugenics Movement that evolved was close to Nordau's position. [38]

In the 1880s the economic downturn had given a blow to the Victorian concept of unlimited progress. Holbrook Jackson sees a link of the anti decadent spirit to the growth of imperialism.

> It [decadence] is a form of imperialism of the spirit, ambitious, arrogant, aggressive, waving the flag of human power over an ever wider and wider territory. And it is interesting to recollect that decadent art periods have often coincided with such waves of imperial patriotism as passed over the British Empire and various European countries during the Eighteen Nineties.[39]

Thus there was a demand for new spiritual territory and artistic expression. It may be argued than one offspring was the emergence of Art Nouveau. Decadence for Jackson may be seen as creativity but for the English in the mid 1890s it was too much associated with the sexuality which came to the surface in the Wilde Trials. As we

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[36] He was the brother of Henry James and Professor of Philosophy at Harvard from 1885.
[37] James, William, 'Review of Degeneration', in (Eds.) Ledger and Luckhurst, Op. Cit.
[38] The basis and history of the Eugenics Movement is outlined p.130 note 2. Davin, Anna, 'Imperialism and Motherhood', (Ed.) Samuel, R., *The Making and Unmasking of British Identity*, Volume 1, London: Routledge, 1989, p. 210. Davin states, "The answer to perceived deterioration and degeneration was to be found in a stronger basis for marriage and the importance of the family and especially because of the importance of the racial stock was partly a question of breeding and partly of child rearing which both for her health and her role were essential."
[39] Jackson, Holbrook, Op. Cit., p.58.

have seen, for some, decadence was seen as symptomatic of cultural disease with racial overtones.

When I explored the historiography of Art Nouveau I identified how the national vernacular, in its relation to Art Nouveau, has become increasingly significant. In England there were forces at work, which for some at the time, related to their perception of English traditions. Such forces will now be examined. Edward Carpenter was a prominent writer at the time and both Asa Briggs and Richard Shannon recognise Edward Carpenter as a significant influence during the period.[40] Shannon emphasises the modernity of the time but sees Carpenter's influence in an urge for the discovery of nature. Carpenter expressed a fear that what was cherished in the past might be lost for ever, particularly those values which had endured for centuries. This argument has significance for the acceptance of Art Nouveau, particularly in its architectural forms.[41] R.G. Hatton in the *R.I.B.A. Journal* forcefully expresses ideas that relate to England's architectural traditions.[42] Indeed, the early years of the Twentieth Century may be seen as a time when English music, language, crafts, were seen as significant and ideas of Englishness were increasingly important.[43]

G.M. Young, the historian, who lived through the period, maintains that notwithstanding technological advances, socialist and feminist agitation, labour unrest and recurring Irish agitation, the hard-core establishment was little moved. He states:

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[40] Briggs,Asa, 'The Later Victorian Years', Ford (Ed.) Op. Cit., p. 10. Shannon, Richard, *The Crisis of Imperialism.1865-1915,* London: Paladin, 1976, p. 284.
[41] It relates to the question as to why there are Art Nouveau buildings in the public domain.
[42] Hatton, R.G., Op. Cit., pp. 145-149.
[43] See Colls, R., & P., Dodd (Eds.) ' *Englishness, Politics and Culture* 1880-1920,' London: Croom Helm, 1986.

The political changes, the social changes, yes, even the scientific achievements of the Victorian age had left the outer fabric of life very much as it had always been. We looked forward to leading, with some improvements, the sort of lives our fathers had led. England was a very good country for gentlemen.[44]

This assertion of Young's seems to have validity. If anything there seems to have been a conscious attempt to recapture the essence of a disappearing world in which the arts and crafts attempted to play a prominent role. For some the concept of modernity was far removed from a world that relied on perceived tradition. Nikolaus Pevsner sees the English as having enduring values of restraint, reticence, compromise and moderation with an underlying continuity of tradition. The latter included reverence for nature and enduring links to the Celtic past.[45]

Such values became crucial in determining *Liberty Style.* Liberty was able to fuse a variety of traditional elements into an identifiable style. It was far removed from continental Art Nouveau, but did show a conscious break from the past. It may be described as updated or modern traditionalism. In doing so Liberty was able to perfect a style that resonated with both the age and English sensibilities. Liberty developed a style that incorporated varied influences including elements of Art Nouveau. Reticence and restraint meant it escaped from any accusations of descending into decadence and consequently it was acceptable to the public.

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[44] Briggs, Asa, Op. Cit., p.38. Briggs is quoting from a broadcast given by G.M.Young, 'Coronation Year 1902' in which he described how he felt as a young man of nineteen when Queen Victoria died.

[45] Pevsner, Nikolaus, *The Englihsness of English Art,* London: Architectural Press, 1956, pp 163-184. Strong, Roy, *Country Life*: *The English Arcadia,* London: Country Life Books, 1997, p. 32. Strong points to the vision of the rural at the time as a re-invented tradition. In similar vein Alun Hawkins argues that it was essentially an image such as thatched cottages that came to dominate English feelings at the time Hawkins, Alun, 'The Discovery of Rural England', Colls and Dodd (Eds.) Op.Cit.,p. 62.

Fig. 5.2

PUNCH, OR THE LONDON CHARIVARI.—JULY 1, 1908.

LIVING ON REPUTATION.

BRITANNIA (*among the Pageants*). "QUITE RIGHT OF THEM TO SHOW PRIDE IN MY PAST; BUT WHAT WORRIES ME IS THAT NOBODY SEEMS TO TAKE ANY INTEREST IN MY FUTURE!"

1908 was quite late for the period under review. We can see here the concern that the revivalist tendencies of the time gave for the future growth and well being of the nation when rivals such as Germany were expanding both economically and militarily at what was seen to be an alarming rate.

CHAPTER 6

A QUESTION OF TASTE

In the previous chapter we have seen how ideas of taste related to English consciousness in the period 1895-1910. This will now be developed and it will be seen that social class divisions and taste preferences are also important in determining the acceptance of Art Nouveau.

At the outset, in order to map class patterns of taste, I will consider the meaning given to the concept of social class. Secondly I will consider how historians and sociologists have seen class fractions in the late Victorian period. Following on from this I will examine in some depth upper bourgeoisie patterns of taste and the question of emulation. Consideration will be briefly given to those at the time who may be seen as 'gatekeepers' of taste and to what extent they were seen to be official 'models' of what was seen to be 'good' taste. I will then examine the relevance of taste within the contemporary decorative arts press along with other contemporary accounts.

CLASS FRACTIONS AND ART NOUVEAU 1895-1910

In the period 1895-1910 there was low social mobility and the majority lived their lives within their class of origin.[1] Analysts invariably see the interconnection of wealth, income, occupation and education as major class determinants. For the vast majority wealth and income derived from their occupation.

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[1] Halsey, A.H., *Change in British Society*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986, p.52; Ryder, Judith and Harold Silver, *Modern English Society, London*; Methuen, 1970, p. 64.

This fact relates directly to consideration of Art Nouveau. As we have seen Art Nouveau was in essence a decorative style. Retrospectively today we may see artefacts with hints or elements of stylistic derivation from the 'New Art' that were produced at the turn of the century for which there must have been a market at the time.[2]

It is a major aim of this chapter to tentatively explore the basis of this consumption. There is the basic fact that, without income, there can be no choice and as income rises beyond the basic necessities, so too does the prospect of choice becomes significant. In numerical terms the majority of people were in the working class and the class system expressed this fact in the form of a pyramid. Three quarters of the employed and self-employed were in manual work.[3]

The rise in real income during the last quarter of the nineteenth century led to the growth of mass markets for a wider range of consumers.[4] There was therefore a much

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[2] That such consumption took place may be seen today in the quantity of articles with distinct Art Nouveau motifs at auction houses, antique fairs and shops. Besides those of English origin there are those which came from the continent of Europe. Particularly popular then and now is the metalwork produced by Wurttembergische Metallwaren Fabrik. My contention is that the firm must have had reasonable, if not good sales, for its Art Nouveau inspired products given the fact that as late as 1906 it produced a four hundred page English catalogue. The Antique Collectors Club produced a facsimile edition of this in 1990. The catalogue would suggest that the majority of the artefacts were for a predominantly middle class market given their price. As we shall see this goes against Halsey's contention that, "Edwardian Britain had a secure alliance of class and status. The bourgeoisie had adopted modified versions of the tastes and style of life of the aristocracy and the gentry." Op. Cit., p. 52. English Catalogue, *Art Nouveau Domestic Metalwork: From Württembergische Metalwarren Fabrik, 1906*, Woodbridge: Antiques Collectors Club, 1988. See p.52 for representative pieces. We may still see front porches with distinct Art Nouveau patterns in Edwardian middle class houses. An example is illustrated on the following page. As will be seen the upper class was unprepared to accept Art Nouveau in the public sphere and such porches, as they face on to the road, are most certainly within the public sphere. This raises the question of emulation. This will be addressed during the course of this chapter.

[3] Halsey, Op. Cit., p. 32.

[4] Read, Donald, *England 1868-1914*, London: Longman, 1977, p. 248 Hobsbawm, E.J., *Industry and Empire*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977, p.164, states that there was an eighty-four percentage rise in real income at the time.

Fig. 6.1

144a

820
A Kayserzinn vase, *designed by Hugo Leven*, of goblet shape, embellished with florets and having three loop handles, 12cm. high, **a pewter knife-rest**, in the form of a Dachshund, 9cm., possibly W.M.F., and **a Hagenauer-style brass ashtray**, centred with a dancing cat, 9cm. diam. (3)

£60-80

821
An unusual Kayserzinn 'Jugendstil' vase, *designed by Hugo Leven*, of square section embellished with organically-inspired dimples, supported on four short feet, the tapering shoulders pierced and surmounted by a shaped circular disc pierced with ovals and having a central square aperture, 18.5cm. high, raised mark 'Kayserzinn 4541' in circle. *(see illustration)*

£600-800

822
A W.M.F. pewter soda-syphon coaster, of openwork cylindrical shape embellished with geometric plant form motifs, and having sinuous twin handles, 20cm. high, makers marks on base. *(see illustration)*

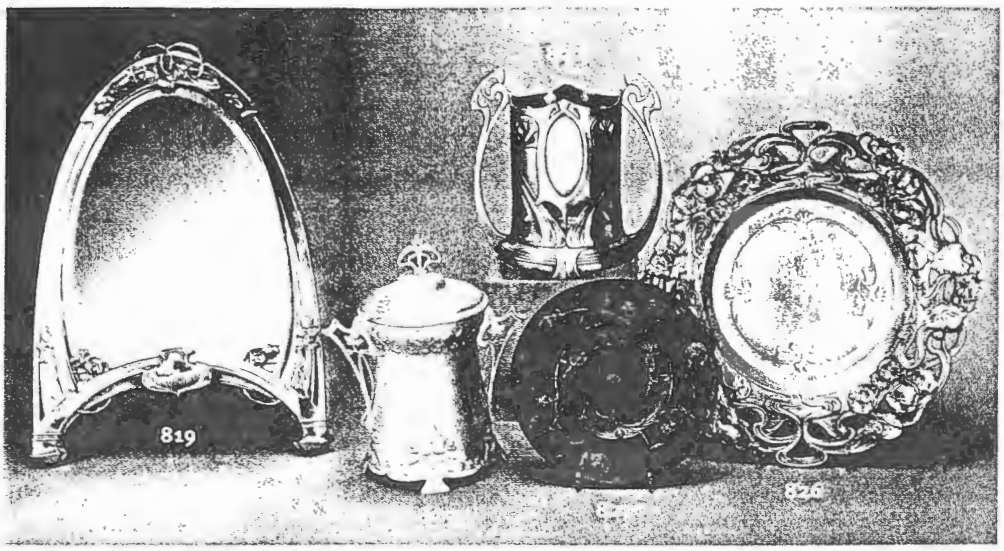
£200-250

823
A pair of W.M.F. pewter candlesticks, each with an elliptical base embellished with lobes and panels of fruit, tapering to support a simple sconce and twin loop handles, 15.5cm. high, makers marks on edges. (2) *(see illustration)*

£250-350

824
A W.M.F. plated claret jug, the tapering clear glass vessel carved with spiralling banding, having a sinuous metal collar and hinged domed cover linked by flowing organically inspired handle, 34.5cm. high, makers marks on the handle. *(see illustration)*

£250-300



825
A W.M.F. plated metal biscuit barrel, of waisted cylindrical shape embellished with ivy leaves and other sinuous stems and berries, having twin sinuous handles with further ivy leaves, and a similarly decorated domed cover, clear glass liner, 23cm. high, makers marks on foot. *(see illustration)*

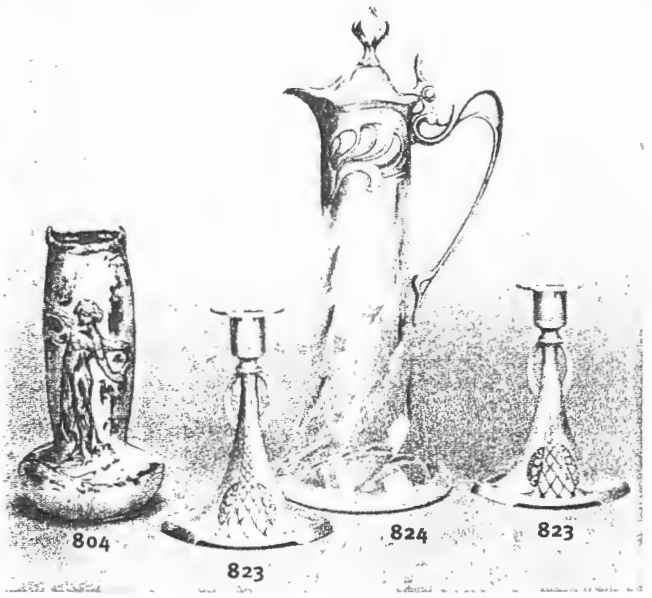
£400-500

826
A W.M.F. circular tray, with a broad rim embellished with an openwork design of the profile head and shoulders of Art Nouveau maidens amid water lily pads and tendrils, 33cm. diam., marked on underside of rim. *(see illustration)*

£250-300

827
An unusual French Art Nouveau pewter circular plate, *designed by Jules Brateau*, embellished in relief with clover and foliage, 19cm. diam., maker's touch mark in shaped panel 'Jules Brateau' in centre of plate. *(see illustration)*

£150-200



The popularity at the time for WMF metalwork may be seen today at auction houses.

Fig. 6.2 144b

ANNONYMOUS FRONT DOOR GUILDFORD C. 1900
THE AUTHOR

This porch is one of a number in a street of speculation built houses. Doorways such as this with Art Nouveau derived motifs may be seen in a number of towns throughout the country.

greater possibility of consumption beyond bare necessities for a number of working class families at the turn of the century.

The fact that such consumption *may* have included objects of Art Nouveau derivation can be seen, in the *Classic Slum* by Robert Roberts (1971). Roberts presents an account, which is drawn from personal experience in Salford, in the early years of the new century. Roberts takes the title from Engels account of Salford written in 1884.[5] Roberts states that within the working class itself there was a wide divide. He says, "The division ranged from an elite at the peak through recognised strata to a social base to those [seen as] no class."[6] He maintains that shopkeepers, publicans and skilled tradesmen occupied the higher positions. What is particularly revealing for this study is Roberts's chapter on possessions. He opens by stating, "The social standing of every person within the community was constantly affected by material pressures. The struggle for the acquisition and display of objects...was fierce." [7] He adds, "For many in the lowest group, the spectrum of destitution stood close; any new possession helped to stifle fear."[8] Roberts proceeds to describe some of the possessions and maintains that pictures, in a society not wholly literate, were especially esteemed. He states, "Fireside objects in brass and copper instead of plain steel gave a kitchen a special tone."[9] He sees the possession or non-possession of the overmantel as providing a marked status division. Roberts states, "The overmantel mirrored and

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[5] However, Halsey warns that it is misleading to suggest that there was a identification between working class communities and slums at the turn of the century, especially as Roberts shows the Salford proletariat arranged in an elaborate status hierarchy. He further maintains that this status hierarchy lent legitimacy to the class inequality. See Halsey, Op. Cit., p. 56.
[6] Roberts, Roberts, (1971) *The Classic Slum*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977, p. 17.
[7] Ibid., p. 32.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.

laddered with brackets, displayed a mass of tawdry ornaments, the more the better."[10] The Bric a Brac on the overmantel was there as a showcase for the admiration of visitors.

It would seem that there is no sense of 'taste' involved here but affordability. I would surmise that people within working class communities owned mass-produced objects from Birmingham, Sheffield and the Potteries with 'New Art' motifs. Roberts describes the brass chandelier as a mass of twisted metal and variegated knobs.[11] A hint perhaps of Art Nouveau! Even among the quite poor it would seem that there were real possibilities for the consumption of Art Nouveau, despite the limitations of income.

Such consumption from the mid nineteenth century onwards related to working class needs and desires. Many earthenware figures, spill vases, flat back mantle groups were produced. Pat Halfpenny's research indicates that there were dozens of figure manufacturers but we know little about their products.[12] Moira Vincentelli states, "By the nineteenth century the mass production of ceramics, both functional and ornamental, offered even the lower classes the possibility of using ceramics as house decoration and brought them into a price bracket that could be afforded, even by women, who have rarely held equivalent resources to their male counterparts."[13]

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[10] Ibid., p. 34.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Halfpenny, Pat, *'English Earthenware Figures 1740-1840'*, Woodbridge: Antique Collectors Club, 1991.
[13] Vincentelli, Moira, *Women and Ceramics*, Manchester University Press, 2000, p. 124.

I will consider questions related to gender and consumption in the following chapter. What may be said, at this stage, is that it is more than likely that the working class and segments of the middle class were prepared to consume Art Nouveau products at the time and such consumption was, more likely than not, to be within the woman's domestic realm. It is acknowledged that there is only circumstantial evidence for this view but there is a plethora of Art Nouveau objects found today and the *Pottery Gazette* does indicate a demand. Daniel Miller asserts, "In so far as differences in social position such as class and gender lead to different perspectives, that which is evoked by the objects in society will be different".[14]

De Grazia sees the working class consumer as being limited not only because of low income but also as a result of class rooted social routines. [15] She maintains that within the literature there is often an aesthetic bias towards the object, and that this is directed towards those with the most attractive and abundant symbolic capital, who are the rich and the powerful as against the dreary and 'tasteless', who are usually the poor and the powerless.[16]

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[14] Miller, Daniel, *Material Culture and Mass Consumption, Oxford*: Blackwell, 1987, p. 107. Miller proceeds to suggest that the for the man the object may have little importance but for the woman it may symbolise something related to her gender which he is unable to comprehend. Juliet Kinchin quotes an example of this. It relates to a Glasgow clerk discussing art in 1901. He states: "I can easily tell ye whit Art is. Says I for it cost me mony a penny. When Art broke ott, Jinnet took it bad, though she didna ken the name o' the trouble the wally dugs, and the worsted thing, and the picture o'John Knox, were nae langer whit Jinnet ca'd the fashion, and something else had to tak' their place. That was Art; it's lingerin' disease; she has the dregs o'yeyt. And while she buys shillin' things that's no use for onything except dustbin." Quoted by Kinchin, Juliet, 'Interiors: Nineteenth Century Essays on the "Masculine and the Feminine Room", (Ed.) Kirkham, Pat, The *Gendered Object*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996, p. 20. Taken from Munro, N., '*Keir Hardy and Other Tales*,' Edinburgh and London, 1931, p.653. Originally published in the columns of the *Glasgow Evening News* circa 1901.

[15] de Gracia, Victoria, *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption*, London: University of California Press, 1996, p.154.

[16] Ibid., p. 8.

Any suggestion of tastelessness is questionable and raises issues relating to emulation, hegemony and cultural capital. For Pierre Bourdieu taste is not a matter of individual whim. He contends that it is socially structured and stratified and that in expressing or displaying taste we indicate to others much about our class[17].

The class pyramid, which I have referred to, had at its apex the landed aristocracy, together with a new elite that had grown during the nineteenth century, with its wealth, power and status derived not from land, but from industry, and increasingly, as the century progressed, from commerce. For David Cannadine, it was a new plutocracy of super rich bankers, financiers and businessmen, which merged with or bought its ways into the traditional aristocracy.[18] Earlier Cannadine had traced how the landed aristocrat's position was eroded during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.[19]

The Nouveau Riche was now seen to have the wealth that Trollope illustrates in *The Way We Live Now* (1891), thus opening the door to possibilities of conspicuous consumption. Eric Hobsbawn had little doubt that where possible the aim of this group was to crown business success by joining the class of the nobility either through the education of their sons or through the adoption of aristocratic life styles. [20]

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[17] Bourdieu, Pierre, *Distinction,* London: Routledge, 1984, p.1.
[18] Cannadine, David, *Class in Britain,* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2000, p 91.
[19] Cannadine, David, (1990) *The Decline and fall of the British Aristocracy,* London: Macmillan. 1992.
[20] Hobsbawm, Eric, (1987) *The Age of Empire,* London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1995, p. 176.

Those with wealth and influence were more likely to be in a position to afford what were seen to be the most desirable objects: the objects that displayed their taste. For Bourdieu the arts have direct significance in determining class relations and concepts of taste. He points to the importance of material or symbolic consumption of works of art as constituting one of the supreme manifestations of ease and feelings of confidence. The use of symbolic goods, especially those regarded as having attributes of excellence, is seen to constitute one of the key markers of class. He quotes from Proust, " [It is] the infinitely varied art of marking distances."[21] Early Art Nouveau was generally hand made and necessarily expensive and therefore an appropriate representation of status.[22] The question arises as to why the English upper bourgeoisie failed to accept the style. We shall see that there were other concerns at the time and that aesthetic choice was low in their list of priorities.

David Cannadine maintains that the middle of the pyramid was the most difficult to define, with the middle class merging into the working class beneath and with the more prosperous above.[23] He illustrates the growth of traditional middle class occupations associated with business management and a pronounced growth of professions, such as accountants, together with a proliferation of lower order clerks and office workers.[24]

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[21] Bourdieu, Op.Cit., pp.55-56.
[22] Schmutzler, Robert, *Art Nouveau and Jugenstil,* London: Thames and Hudson, 1962, p. 212. Schmutzler maintains that it was a style of the upper bourgeoisie being the ideal world of a select group.
[23] Cannadine, David, Op. Cit., p. 45.
[24] Ibid., pp. 46-48. Ryder and Silver Op. Cit., state that the expansion of the world of commerce and trade was a central fact of middle class expansion. That it meant a widening catchment area of population involved in middle class economic activities. p. 66.

The position of the clerk was particularly complex. For many clerks their income was little more, or even less, than their working class counterpart but status considerations (this for Hobsbawm involved the employment of a servant)[25] led to a life of deprivation. The clerk's relative poverty may be seen in a contemporary source: S.F. Bullock's *Robert Thorne.* (1907) The book illustrates well the consumption of such a person. The main character says, "We only wanted enough food to maintain life decently. During the first ten years of our married life we were always in debt. It was so hard."[26]

Summarising class fractions at the time, David Cannadine says, "In terms of skills, status and income, there were still complex gradations, hierarchies and divisions which carried over from the mid Victorian era".[27] There was an undoubted plurality at the time. However, patterns of behaviour may be seen. Significant variables may and do affect individuals preference and choice. Such a variable is the influence of religion on the consciousness of the time. Within segments of all classes the puritan ethic remained strong.[28]

Above all it was a time when religion mattered for the majority of the population.[29] It was time when an establishment valued tradition whether from an arts and crafts

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[25]Hobsbawm, E.J., Op. Cit., 19878, p.181.
[26] Bullock, S.F., (1907) 'Robert Thorne: The Story of a London Clerk', reproduced in Read, Donald, '*Documents from Edwardian England'*, London: Harrap, 1974, pp. 47-8. Read states that the further a family income fell below an annual £700, the more it depended on aspiration, to support the middle class state. See p. 43.
[27] Ibid., pp. 114-115.
[28] Other significant variables include the impact of compulsory schooling and the fact there had been a long tradition in England of political non-conformity.
[29] The Reformation had reduced the mystical elements in religion and Calvinism took the process further. Varied Anti establishment chapels arose in the post Charles Wesley period See Halsey, Op. Cit., p. 81. Halsey emphasis the significance of religion in the late Nineteenth Century and he wrote, "Political conflict divided contestants by religion more than by class". The working class male in

perspective or from developed classicism. It was a time too when the overt display of wealth was at a premium for some of the newly enfranchised members of the establishment.

A direct link may be seen to the acceptance of Art Nouveau within the concept of class fragmentation. Non-conformity emphasises non-idolatrous forms of behaviour. The church with its stained glass, monuments and paintings is seen to represent idolatry. The chapel represented purity of spirit and the decadent side of Art Nouveau would have been abhorrent to those with puritan values. Bryan Wilson maintains that there was a revival of such values in the late Nineteenth Century in a demand to return to stronger and more emotional religious attitudes.[30]

THE BOURGEOISIE AND TASTE

Among the bourgeoisie there is evidence for the continuing preference for classic French and English styles. An article in the *Lady's Realm* 1899 states; "Just now old French furniture is all the rage."[31] *The Pottery Gazette* shows that the majority of the accepted premier manufacturers continued to market their traditional classical lines.

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particular was often suspicious of any art form. D.H.Lawrence tellingly makes the point in his semi autobiographical *Sons and Lovers* (1913). He was 28 years old at the time and had lived through the period being considered. The puritan ethic emphasis the importance of saving and to purchase a work of art would be seen as throwing money away. We have seen an example of this in the Glasgow case, see footnote 15 p.147. Hobsbawm argues that developments in education post 1870 led to less superstition and greater rationality. He states, "It meant the ideology of modernisation", p. 264. It may be argued that this 'opening of the mind' led to a greater possibility of accepting new movements in science and art which the influence of Puritanism would have been against. Political dissent has a long history. Thompson, E.P., *The Making of the Working Class*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980, shows the influence and importance of dissenters like Thomas Paine and William Cobbett. The working class was quite prepared at times to challenge current orthodoxy and this meant buying works of art not recognised as such by the establishment so much the better!

[30] Wilson, Bryan, *Religion In Secular Society*, London: Watts, 1966, pp. 26-7.

[31] Clark, Eliza,' The Home Beautiful', *Lady's Realm*, October 1899, pp. 354-5. I shall develop this further in the conclusion.

However, as we have seen from the mid nineteenth century onwards, there was working class consumption of pottery related to their needs and desires.

'Restraint' is a word that does not readily come to mind when one describes Art Nouveau. Conspicuous (striking to the eye) would seem more appropriate. However, we shall see that here is a paradox. Art Nouveau appeared at the very time when Veblen identified, from his observations of late nineteenth century American society, processes of conspicuous leisure, conspicuous consumption and emulation. He wrote about the North American rich at the peak of their power. Conspicuous consumption was consumption exclusively designed to impress and demonstrate the power of wealth.[32] Similar observations were made about the English wealthy elites. Margot Asquith in her diary published in 1922 comments; "Rich men's houses are seldom beautiful, rarely comfortable, and never original. It is a constant cause of surprise to people of moderate means how little a big fortune contributes to beauty. Money has never bought imagination.[33]

The Artist (1900) in its review of the French Section within the 1900 Exposition gives a clue for the continuing bourgeois desire for the classical. It states that the styles of

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[32] Galbraith, Kenneth, *The Age of Uncertainty,* London: Andre Deutsch, 1977, p. 61. Galbraith puts the question. "How real was the culture of conspicuous wealth that Veblen described? Anyone who has doubts can go and see for himself. The place is Newport, Rhode Island. Most Americans have never seen these vast houses; do not know what they are missing. The Newport houses were not places of habitation, recreation, procreation. Their purpose was to proclaim the worth of the inmates". Galbraith points to the absurdity reached by an American society woman at the time. "She staged a major party not ostensibly for her neighbours but for their dogs", p. 65. He observes that, for the American rich at the time, "Wealth was greatly improved by being old." He contends that the French Riviera gave the rich American millionaires the opportunities for associating with the European aristocracy.

[33] Asquith, M., *Autobiography,* 1922, pp. 103-4. In Crook, Morduant, *The Rise of the Nouveau Riches,* London: John Murray, 1999, p. 78.

the last Louis signifies for the French the essence of distinction and wealth. It adds, "It is a luxury for the very wealthiest of the nation," and pleads for citizens to desist from living their bourgeois life in surroundings that suggest kings and courtiers.[34] While the *Artist* was considering French bourgeoisie values in 1900, Morduant Crook, an architectural historian, points to similar values regarding building exteriors by the contemporary English Nouveau Riche. We do need to explain the basic fact there was no large scale English, public or private, exterior within the Art Nouveau style.

Morduant Crook makes the point that much of the architectural history of the later nineteenth century concentrates on the stylistic progression from Pugin and Morris; however, the Nouveau Riches invariably built in Neo Classical, Italianate or Beaux Arts styles. Morduant Crook maintains that the Arts and Crafts made little penetration into the architectural styles adopted by the rich. [35] He shows that there was increasing integration of the old and new elites which he called a homogenising process. His in-depth analysis of their buildings shows a bias towards the classical.[36] Indeed, French Classicism was embellished to levels of ostentation which led to Beatrice Webb saying of Joseph Chamberlain's new house, "There was a good deal of taste. All of it bad."[37]

Margot Asquith (nee Tennant) was the daughter of a multi millionaire chemical manufacturer whose chimneys dominated the city of Glasgow. She was a leading

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[34] Anon., 'Paris Exposition', *Artist*, 1900, p. 6.
[35] Crook, Morduant, *The Rise of The Nouveau Riches*, London: John Murray, 1999, pp 4-5 & 71.
[36] Ibid., p. 9.
[37] Ibid., p. 30.

member of a group who called themselves 'The Souls'. They were aesthetic, intellectual and in Angela Lambert's words, "They had a disdain for vulgar displays of gross self indulgence which reflected the taste of their accepted leader Arthur Balfour."[38] An example of his taste was *The Hesperides* an over-mantel by Alexander Fisher that cost £1000.[39] It is likely that the preference for 'The Souls' was for the Arts and Crafts. Lambert identifies an alternative group called the Marlborough set. They were not in competition, but represented very different aspirations and interests and were in large part drawn from the Nouveau Riches. They were predominantly bankers and financiers, often with foreign antecedents. They had a passion for shooting and racing and evenings devoted to gargantuan meals. These were the preferences of their most noted member the Prince of Wales. Lambert states, "The sole criterion of membership of the set was the ability to entertain the Prince of Wales and the money to afford it."[40] Edward was certainly no model to emulate in matters relating to educated taste.[41] The cost of such entertaining was high. Morduant Crook illustrates this from Dorothy Nevill's Diary.[42]

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[38] Lambert, Angela, *Unquiet Souls,* London: Macmillan, 1984, p. 49. Balfour was the nephew of the Prime Minister Lord Salisbury and Lambert maintains that much of the *Souls* membership derived from a harder aristocratic core than the contemporary Marlborough set. Morduant Crook also points to their traditional backgrounds-mostly old money. He comments on their tendency to understate things with a preference for pure classicism or rustic vernacular. See p. 241. Lambert maintains that, "The *Souls* of both sexes were unusually well read" p. 133. Holbrook Jackson maintains that aesthetic taste at the time was essentially literary being poetry, drama and fiction with an ever increasing popularity of reprints of the classics.

[39] Smith, Nowell, (Ed.) '*Edwardian Society*', London: Oxford University Press, 1964, p. 330. A further clue to his taste may be seen in the commission for *Perseus Series* in 1875. Exhibition Catalogue, *Albert Gilbert,* London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1986, p. 213.

[40] Lambert, Op. Cit., p. 34

[41] Edward's taste, or lack of it, is summarised in his biography. "As Bertie had shown no interest in reading as a child his antipathy towards books lasted all his life." Hough, Richard, *Edward and Alexandra,* London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1992, p. 199.

[42] Crook, Op. Cit., p. 19. In today's terms he calculates that cost would be upward of half a million pounds a year. Lambert points to the bankruptcies that ensued as a result of entertaining the Prince of Wales.

This lack of taste was also recognised by Arnold Bennett says of his predominantly middle class readers, "They spend their lives in spending. They deliberately gaze into shop windows in order to discover an outlet for their money. (Their) passion for the status quo shows itself in a general defensive sullen hatred, of all ideas whatever".[43] H.J. Jennings reinforces such sentiments. He says, "Every movement has its uninformed camp followers who pick up a smattering of its jargon, and repeat it like parrots, without knowing in the least what it means". [44] He proceeds to illustrate the point from an observed conversation.[45]

A case may be made for some element of conspicuous consumption. Veblen contends that, "infirmities induced by over indulgence are among some peoples freely recognised as manly attributes."[46] The Marlborough Set, in particular, was indulgent in their leisure and eating habits. Their dwellings too were seen as wasteful and pretentious. [47]

H.G. Wells referred to their acquisitions and wasteful symbolisms in his novels. Sidney and Beatrice Webb were appalled at the contrast between the mean streets of Luton and the 'great house' Luton Hoo where they stayed for a brief period. In *Our*

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[43] Arnold Bennett, Arnold, (1909) 'Middle Classes' in Books and Persons, London: Chatto and Windus, 1920, pp. 67-70. Reprinted in Read, *Documents From Edwardian England,* London: Harrap, 1973 p. 33.
[44] Jennings, H.J., *Our Homes and how to Beautify Them,* London: Waring & Gillow, 1902, p. 20.
[45] Ibid., p. 20. "Oh, what a sweet table", said Lady Croesus, "where did you get it my dear? Oh, I see, here's the man's card. 'A table, Louis Quinze!' Louis Quinzey! What a horrid name and no address!"
[46] Veblen, Thorstien, (1899) *The Theory of The Leisure Class,* New York: Mentor, 1953, p. 62.
[47] The fact is that in architecture and furniture the advertisements in the magazines for bourgeoisie readership were predominantly in the classical style, either French or English with occasional reference to the Arts and Crafts. What may be said is that Art Nouveau did not feature in their terms of reference. In some ways it is more difficult to explain why something did not occur rather than why it did. The Marlborough set in particular had high expenditure necessitated by entertaining and their interests and life style were far from exploring new aesthetic fashion.

Partnership Beatrice Webb wrote, "The contrast was oppressively unpleasant and haunted our thoughts. We lived for a brief interval in close contact with an expenditure of £30,000 a year on a country house alone.[48] For the Edwardians tradition meant a continuance of the pattern established within the Victorian era. Morduant Crooks puts the question. "Did most of those Nouveau Riches just prefer to play safe, buying up Georgian mansions, or replicating French chateaux as symbols of social success? On the whole that seems the likeliest explanation, a familiar style, an acceptable image."[49]

The acceptable image for a member of the nouveau riche would be within the prevailing canons of taste, which was essentially conservative. Nonetheless there was self-confidence and ease in relationships that had been acquired through socialisation. As Bourdieu maintains capital goes beyond the economic. As seen in their predilections for large scale entertaining the Marlborough set priority was to keep up with the high expenditure set by Edward. Aesthetic adventures, such as explorations of 'New Art' were not on their agenda.

The concept of emulation is a key element within Veblen's analysis. He argued that people imitated those who were higher up in the system in order to gain status. He states, "The root of ownership is emulation".[50] He further maintained that such emulation determined high cost consumption saying, "It [emulation] has invested

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[48] Webb, Beatrice, *Our Partnership*, (Eds.) Drake, Barbara and Margaret Cole, London; Longman, 1948, p. 413.
[49] Crook, Op. Cit., p. 77.
[50] Veblen, Op. Cit., p. 35.

consumable goods with a secondary utility as evidence of relative ability to pay."[51] This leads Veblen to a disapproval of cheap articles as being unworthy because they are cheap. What is expensive is seen as beautiful. This he calls 'pecuniary beauty'. *The Pall Mall Gazette* had little doubt the viability of the concept at the time. It stated, "The whole community follows the example set by the coterie because it is the highest in the land".[52] The paradox of Art Nouveau, a style of ostentation, is that those most prepared to conspicuously display their wealth, were unprepared accept it, indeed they were the most conservative in their expression of taste.

Veblen maintains that vulgar taste is born when consumer goods become more and more important status symbols. However, anyone can buy them as long as they have enough money. Such goods have been labelled kitsch.[53] They are small manufactured articles, often mass-produced and they were the mainstay of Art Nouveau consumption in England. It is such articles, which gave the popularity to the style and led paradoxically to its decline. The more popular it became the less likely was it that those with the potential to consume the expensive and hand made were prepared to do so.[54]

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[51] Ibid., p. 111.
[52] Cooper, N., *The Opulent Eye*, London: The Architectural Press, 1976, p. 6, quoting from *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 1893.
[53] Gronow, Jukka, *The Sociology of Taste*, *London*: Routledge, 1997, p. 42.
[54] Becker, Vivienne, *Art Nouveau Jewellery*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1998, concludes by saying, "After 1900 the Art Nouveau jewel became high fashion and as the motifs and themes were copied, often indiscriminately, the style became diluted, its initial force undermined. This popularisation finally led to the eclipse of the Art Nouveau jewel. Gronow, Op. Cit., quotes from Goffman, *Symbols of Social Class*, 1951, which bears directly on Becker's argument. Goffman states that goods may be said to take the properties of status symbols if the purchase of them is indicative of membership in a particular social group. Crucially Goffman continues. "They are effective only as far as their use is limited". Robert Schmutzler maintained in the closing paragraph of *Art Nouveau and Jugenstil*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1978, p. 212, that the Art Nouveau style was essentially that of the upper bourgeoisie 'the ideal world of a select group'. However, as we have seen, Schmutzler's contention does not relate to the English experience. Stefan Madsen in his 1967 *Art Nouveau* states, " Art Nouveau offered no solution to the problem of how to relate the machine to aesthetic norms." He

'GATEKEEPERS OF TASTE'

In the opening chapter the taste of the R.I.B.A. was shown in the address of its President John Belcher. He ridiculed Art Nouveau at a time when the indigenous Arts and Crafts Movement was struggling for recognition. Those who Bourdieu perceived as 'the gatekeepers' of taste were equally conservative in their approach. A possible explanation for this is that one of the principles underlying Art Nouveau style was the establishment of democratic principles relative to all the arts.[55] Such ideas were ideological and repellent to those in prominent positions in the fine arts and architecture. Gordon Fyfe maintains that within the Royal Academy itself there was a struggle for the prize of the monopoly to define the categories of art and artist. He says, "The Royal Academy, whose members were primarily oil painters, were increasingly seen as the legitimate definers of taste."[56]

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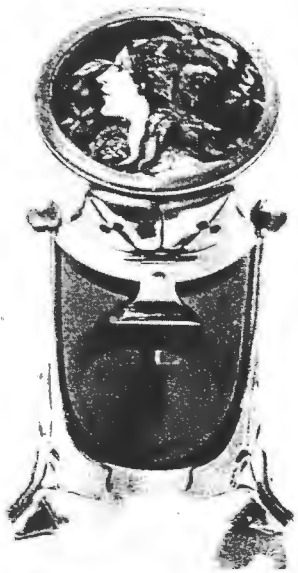
maintains that it was based on a purely individual artistic approach to the artefact. Madsen, Stefan Tschudi, *Art Nouveau*, London: World University Library p. 234. See too Bourdieu, Op. Cit., 'Distinction', p. 232, where he states that choosing according to one's taste is a matter of identifying goods that are objectively attuned to one's position.

[55] Such ideas had developed from principles put forward by William Morris. They put into practice in the building of his Red House in Bexley Heath. De Velde, a former painter, was a strong advocate for the elimination of the division of painter and decorator of artist and craftsman. See De La Sixeranne, Robert, 'Is Ruskin Out of Date?' *Magazine of Art* 1900, p. 260. He notes, "Artists of high merit, who a few years since, would have regarded a commission to paint a teapot or a screen as an insult, accept the humblest decorative work. They are not ashamed to take up the arts of their predecessors". Mourey, Gabriel, *Studio*, Volume 12, 1897, p. 122, extolled the virtues of the French Art Nouveau potter Auguste Delararche for his democratic vision. Mouray states, "He rightly holds [the view] that there is no such thing as inferiority in art". Aymer Vallance, a friend of William Morris, and frequent contributor to the *Studio* is totally dismissive of the attitude prevailing in England at the time. See Vallance, Aymer, 'British Decorative Arts and the Arts and Crafts Exhibition,' *Studio*, Volume 18, p. 38.He wrote, "The arrogant assumptions of single art have been such that the rest have long lain under a sort of stigma, as though the pursuit of them, was something less honourable than that of picture making. And yet the man who paints the average academy canvas year by year, is just as much a tradesman." He continues by suggesting that it was essentially a matter of class and concludes, "He may obtain more money for his efforts but it does not necessarily result from any more artistic imagination."

[56] Fyfe, Gordon,' Auditing the RA: Official Discourse and the Royal Academy', (Eds.) Cardoso Denis and Colin Trodd, *Art and the Academy in the Nineteenth Century*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000, p.120.

Fig. 6.3



English **Kate Harris** (designer for Wm. Hutton & Son, suppliers to Liberty & Co) 1901
Scent bottle of green glass, silver with enamel plaque inset. Collection Martin Battersby

English **David Veazey** 1901–2
Comb in beaten silver with ivory prongs

MARIO AMAYA, *ART NOUVEAU,* LONDON: STUDIO VISTA, 1966.
KATE HARRIS SCENT BOTTLE & DAVID VEAZEY COMB.

Examples like these are core to my assertion that small mass-produced articles were produced and consumed in England in the period 1900-1910. Amaya, however, fails to discuss such illustrations in his text.

There were distinct hierarchies at the time and Holbrook Jackson gives further clues to the masculine art establishment's failure to accept Art Nouveau. He states, "In terms of the Arts and Crafts Movement the average man was still unmoved from his conviction that art was an affair of pictures."[57] Jackson too saw the art of the time as being class driven, " [It was] an art based on luxury, optimism and aristocracy, which was exclusively designed to ingratiate itself with English ideas of comfort."[58]

The conservative attitude at the time is borne out in Richard Cork's analysis of the Visual Arts.[59] The Royal Academy was seen to continue to behave as if the impressionist revolution had never existed. Alma Tadema, President of the Royal Academy, commanded vast prices for works that avoided any direct contact with modern life, preferring instead to provide skilful evocations of classical civilisations. In 1907 the National Gallery refused a Degas[60] and Brandon Taylor shows that by 1905 none of the London Art Museums, with the exception of a Degas at South Kensington, possessed a single work of French Impressionism.[61]

Given the primacy of the fine arts at the time, and the prevailing conservative taste, a 'New Art' that essentially related to the decorative arts would have had little hope of gaining a foothold within the English male dominated art establishment. However, Bourdieu dissents from the view that dominant cultural categories are imposed on subordinate classes by the economically powerful. He maintains that modern societies

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[57] Jackson, Holbrook, (1913) *The Eighteen Nineties,* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1939, p.240.
[58] Ibid p., 242.
[59] Cork, Richard, 'The Visual Arts' in Ford, Op. Cit., p. 157.
[60] Cork, Richard, Ibid., 157. Cork states, ' National Gallery scornfully rejected a fine Degas painting".
[61] Taylor, Brandon, *Art For The Nation,* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999, p. 134. Taylor acknowledges Rutter for this information.

exhibit, "a division of labour of domination. Artists, critics and other cultural agents increasingly determine legitimate art".[62]

Bourdieu is not prepared to accept the trickle down theory of hegemonic taste. He sees a gradual shift towards the professional arbiter of taste. Bourdieu states, "A cultural product is a constituted taste [brought] by a process of objectification [which] is almost always the work of professionals."[63] Following Bourdieu we need to establish who were these taste professionals; who were the 'gatekeepers' of taste. If we accept Fuller's argument they are to be found among the newly educated middle class, and if we take the young Roger Fry as representative, they are likely to have received a traditional classical education, at a public school, as he did at Clifton.

Veblen, especially in the concept of emulation, assists in the understanding of the time. However, it implied a questionable homogeneity of taste and ignored the influence of the growing middle class. As we have seen there was a rise of taste professionals. In fact this was not an entirely new phenomenon as Ruskin illustrates. Howard Becker further develops this question of the legitimacy of art. Becker's particular concern is the way in which objects come to be labelled as art, or why they

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[62] Bourdieu, P., *Sociology in Question, London*: Sage, 1993, p. 73. Fyfe, Op. Cit., p. 117, footnote 17, says that the evidence for a hegemonic culture of traditionalism, most systematically stated by Martin Weiner, 1981, has long seemed fragile. Fyfe draws attention to the work of Savage and others (see p. 128, footnote 1) who argue that the terms of the debate have been drawn too narrowly. Inspired by Bourdieu, they emphasise the role of cultural assets in the struggle for power and privilege and how the professional class had a long association with the British state.

[63] Bourdieu, Op. Cit., 1979, p. 235. Fuller considered the significance of 'taste professionals' of the late nineteenth century. He says "Painting in the later nineteenth century had to cater for a much larger audience, with much more diverse tastes than ever before. If, once, these arts had been the province of a relatively tight circle of refined, aristocratic connoisseurs, they were now thrown open to the spectrum of the middle classes. Inevitably dealers emerged to meet the need of the changing market and an army of critics mediated between the pictures and the public". Fuller, P, 'Fine Arts', in '*Victorian Britain,*' (Ed.) Ford, Boris, The Cambridge Cultural History, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 180.

are exhibited in the 'sacred' space of the gallery. For Becker, this is a process predicated on conflict. He states, "Even within the field of 'integrated' professionals, specific art works require a rationale from reviewers and critics".[64]

CONTEMPORANEOUS REACTIONS TO IDEAS OF TASTE

The key questions for Becker concerns how people perceive their worlds. For the late Victorians their world was one of uncertainty and introspection. It was a world, which preferred tradition to modernity, but a tradition formed from the immediate past. A world that felt uncomfortable with the idea of originality. It was a world in which the Arts and Crafts movement was struggling.[65] In 1896 *The Studio* gives expression to the perceived lack of taste at the time and its preference for the Arts and Crafts Movement:

> entrenched behind precedent and fashion and guarded by the follies and caprices of that most vulgar people, the art less rich, Mr. Ashbee started a forlorn hope which will arouse the sympathy of every reader of the Studio. It is a reproach to our wealthy country that its most costly products are beyond question the most hideous.[66]

Aymer Vallance, from a similar Arts and Crafts perspective sees such work as Ashbee's as within the continuity of English cultural traditions. He eulogises the simplicity, honesty to material, appropriateness of ornament and modesty which he sees as characteristic English work by artists such as Ashbee, Voysey, Crane and Fisher. He suggests that such traits derive from English tradition and taste.[67]

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[64]Bridget Fowler, *Pierre Bourdieu and Cultural Theory*, London: Sage, p 100. Fowler is making points from Becker's book Art-Worlds (1982).

[65] See Burton's view in chapter 3, p. 101 and the fact that Charles Ashbee was economically unsuccessful at Chipping Camden. Burton, Anthony, *Vision and Accident: The Story of the Victoria and Albert Museum,* London: Victoria & Albert Museum Publications, 1999, p. 43.

[66] Anon., Arts and Crafts, *Studio,* Volume 9, 1896, p. 129.

[67]Vallance, Aymer, 'The Arts and Crafts', *Studio,* Volume 18, pp. 37-46.

R. Hatton expresses comparable thoughts. He is forthright in expressing the Arts and Crafts detestation of the 'New Art' and says, " [It has] a lack of weight, contempt for material and construction and neglect of detail."[68] *The Studio* 1896 expresses the view that English work was far preferable to that being produced in France at the time:

> The latter (English) shows evidence of deliberate and careful work deeply beautiful and restrained. The Frenchman's productions were evidently the outcome of a sudden caprice, a mere fashion. It is really painful to see so much knowledge and talent sacrificed to the ridiculous whims of the most deplorably bad taste.[69]

The attitude of the Arts and Crafts establishment towards continental Art Nouveau is well expressed by Ashbee in his lampoon:

A spice of the latest French erotic
Anything new and stylistic
As long as it ells in black and white,
And however wrong comes out alright
"Id est" as long as it pays, you know
That's what's meant by L'Art Nouveau.[70]

Longstanding antipathy towards anything French, notwithstanding the popularity of French fashion, cuisine, and eighteenth century furniture, resurfaced as the English attempted to find a national identity. Lady Dorothy Nevill in her memoirs writes of the "atrocious Art Nouveau", and laments the fact that the Victoria and Albert Museum was filled with some of the finest specimens of French furniture adding, "but we cannot see the finest English work of the period."[71]

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[68] Hatton, R., 'The Principles Underlying the Handicraft Movement and their Influence on Architecture and Decoration', *R.I.B.A. Journal,* 1903, pp. 145-9.
[69] Anon., Studio Talk, *Studio,* Volume 7, 1896, p. 182.
[70] C. Ashbee, The Masque of Edwardian England, quoted in Naylor, G., *The Arts and Crafts Movement,* London: Studio Vista, 1971, pp. 168-9.
[71] Nevill, Lady Dorothy, *Reminiscences,* Edward Arnold: London, 1906, p. 220.

The Studio at times was contemptuous in its dismissal of French work, no more so than in its review of Gaughin. "It is all inconceivably atrocious. A strange sin, all of this, of the taste of a certain 'enlightened' class in France at the present time. A strange disease which happily has left most minds untouched". [72] Further examples may be given. Guimard's work is seen as being laboured, overdone, and full of violent contrasts, with the prospect of it being imitated seen as a nightmare.[73] Galle's furniture is described as thoroughly characteristic of bad taste.[74]

The magazines, such as *The Studio*, often employed artists or their peers. At times there is bias especially towards the Arts and Crafts Movement. Nonetheless, certain patterns may be discerned. There was some latent prejudice towards the French, partcularly the Louis Quinze style. English artists and craftsmen, schooled within the Arts and Crafts Movement, were generally the most critical of the 'New Art'. This was the time when the movement was reaching its maturity and competition from any source was anathema.

However for some women it was a different story. Words such as modern, freedom, liberation, emancipation were now being used freely. While their husbands or fathers showed a disinclination to explore the world of the new the social forces at work, during the period 1890-1910, led her in another direction. We shall see how this occurred in the following chapter.

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[72] Anon., 'Studio Talk', *Studio,* Volume 7, 1896, pp. 145-6.
[73] Anon., 'American and French Applied Art', *Studio,* Volume 17, 1899, p. 49.
[74] Mouray, Gabriel, 'The Decorative Art Movement in France', *Studio,* Volume 10, 1897, p. 122.

CHAPTER 7

A QUESTION OF GENDER

In this chapter my aim is to examine questions related to different preferences on the part of men and women in relation to Art Nouveau in England. Three basic variables will be considered; the personal; the home and the public domain. As Art Nouveau never became an established public art form there is virtually nothing of Art Nouveau extant today in the public domain. As we have seen there is still controversy regarding the three buildings that feature in the second chapter.

The period 1890-1914 was one of complexity and change. It was a time of increasing introspection for some men, while for some women it was a time of increasing self-awareness and confidence.[1] There were suggestions in literary and journalistic fields of the concept of 'The New Woman', with *Punch* in particular, producing numerous articles and cartoons to illustrate the point. There were also magazines and periodicals aimed specifically at the 'New Woman' such as *Women's World.*[2]

Juliet Gardiner suggests that there were general demands for greater equality that offered a challenge to the established order. She states, "The New Woman threw certainties into dispute and threatened to disrupt family life as the Victorians liked to believe they had known it."[3]

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[1] 'This consciousness of self is of recent growth unknown to our fathers and grandfathers' wrote a critic in 1897. Quoted in *Women's Voices 1880-1918: The New Woman,* Gardiner, Juliet, (Ed.) London: Collins & Brown, 1993, p.2.
[2] Ibid., p. 2.
[3] Ibid., p. 6.

However, she adds that this woman was in the vanguard of an unsettled and unsettling middle class minority. While few women were actively involved, there was, though, a general rise in awareness.[4] While for most it remained, in most essentials, a world of male expression, the behaviour and attire of such role models as Sarah Bernhardt, and the conspicuous consumption associated with King Edward's social set, led to some accepting the most exquisite and expensive forms of Art Nouveau jewellery.[5]

Jane Lewis in an in-depth analysis of five prominent feminists at the time points to their varied range of expression,[6] with the major link between them a sense of family obligation.[7] She states, "For women like these the desire to bolster proper family relationships was larger than the urge to do something useful with their spare time."[8] Olive Banks also maintains that there was not a total rejection of separate spheres.[9] The available forms of self-expression during the Victorian age for the woman were essentially domestic. It was within this sphere that she acquired cultural identity. Olive Banks states, "The home and the world were quite different spheres. One was woman's special realm; the other to a large extent was forbidden to her.[10]

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[4] Lorimer, Norma, 'The Strides of Women', *Girls Own Paper,* 1897-8 pp. 570-71 Lorimer, while emphasising the importance of philanthropic women highlights the achievement of novelists such as Miss Brandon and Sarah Grand. She favourably compares Miss Fawcett, the first notable female surgeon, with the philanthropist Octavia Hill.

[5] Lees, Frederick, 'Sarah Bernhardt Chez Ell', *Lady's Realm*, 1897, Volume 2, pp. 4-9. On p. 8, Lees states, "The intense sympathy, which during the whole of her life Madam Bernhard has had for every art form."

[6] Lewis, Jane, *Women and Social Action in Victorian and Edwardian England,* Aldershot: Gower, 1991. Lewis states, "The passion for social action was inspired by varying degrees of self interest and duty." p. 307.

[7] Ibid., p.1

[8] Ibid., p. 308. For Lewis the only major unifying force of the Feminist movement was the powerful commitment to social action which each woman had to reconcile with an equally strong commitment to domestic duties and to late Victorian ideals about female propriety. See too p. 2.

[9] Banks, Olive, *Faces of Feminism,* Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1981, p.86.

[10] Ibid., p. 86.

Fig. 7.1 165a

WHAT THE NEW WOMAN WILL MAKE OF THE NEW MAN!

"IF YOU WANT ME TO KEEP THE NEXT DANCE FOR YOU, YOU MUST WAIT UNDER THIS DOOR. I CAN'T GO RUSHING ALL OVER THE ROOM TO *LOOK* FOR YOU, YOU KNOW!"

Punch displayed a distinct dislike for the social changes that it perceived were leading to the idea of 'The New Woman'. Its displeasure may be seen in a series of cartoons at the time.

It was within the public sphere that notable advances were made in the period 1890-1905. Sally Ledger argues that besides the campaign for a broader education for women there was also a demand, "for access to a wider cultural world than that deemed suitable for the bulk of middle class Victorian women."[11] Various technological advances, particularly in transport at the time, did indeed make this possible; and this was especially so for the upper middle class woman as the maternal role had become less severe. There was a noticeable decline in the birth rate among middle class women. J.A. Banks examined the complex causes of this.[12] The decline in the number of children gave the opportunity to develop interests beyond the expectations of their traditional role. However, women had a long history of buying for the home. [13]

My contention is that the 'New Art' fitted in to the bourgeois woman's, expanding social world.[14] This was especially true of those areas traditionally seen as being the female province, notably in fashion, textiles, jewellery, glass and ceramics. Such objects, with Art Nouveau stylistic characteristics, circulated widely at the time. They are found today in English antique shops and auction houses.

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[11] Ledger, Sally, *Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1977, p.76.

[12] Banks, J.A., *Prosperity and Parenthood: A Study of Family Planning Among the Victorian Middle Classes*, London: Routledge, 1954, Ch. 12. Banks shows that the restriction was led by the professional class and did not reach the working class until well into the twentieth century. Reasons given include the increasing cost and shortage of servants, educational expense and desire for status emulation. See too Hobsbawm, Eric, (1987) *The Age of Empire 1875-1914*, London: Weidenfelt & Nicolson, 1995, p. 195. He states, "Birth control indicated significant cultural changes, both towards children and in respect of what men and women expected from life.....their own lives did not have to replicate their parents." However he adds the caveat for women, "Nevertheless most of them were only marginally affected".

[13] Banks, J.A., Op. Cit., pp. 197-207, also shows that it was the expectation to keep abreast with the increasing standard of living that was a prime cause in restricting the number of children. It was the relative wealth and not poverty that was the major driving force.

[14] Leslie, Marion, 'Women's Work at the Victorian Era Exhibition', *Lady's Realm*, Volume 2, 1897, p. 59. She writes of the rapid progress women had been making in all directions.

The private room of the 'inner home' was traditionally seen as the woman's sphere. Her clothing and adornment were in this world giving expression to her sense of femininity and identity. On the other hand in the more 'public' rooms of the home the male had hegemony and typically here we find an absence of anything that might be construed as Art Nouveau.

Juliet Kinchin maintains that the nineteenth century interior space was increasingly defined as female territory. At the same time the male continued to dominate the public arena of the home. There was a strict colour codification with light colours for the female oriented rooms and darker colours for the males. She says that innocent trifles were relegated to the female areas for instance the tea and dressing rooms. Further there was pressure for the female to assert her identity but not through mere whims of fashion.[15] Miller's contention that objects may have different gender meaning[16] is well illustrated in the woman's public display of 'New Art' jewellery.

Davidoff and Hall maintain that there were major differences in gender purchasing patterns. Men are seen as responsible for buying such items as wine, pictures and musical instruments. They accompanied their wives in the purchase of furniture and carpets.[17] Juliet Kinchin has little doubt that there was a continuation of the historical desire for French furniture she comments, "In relation to themes of richness,

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[15] Kinchin, Juliet, 'Interiors: Nineteenth Century Essays on the 'Masculine' and 'Feminine' Room', (Eds.) Attfield, Judy & Pat Kirkham, *'View From The Interior'*, London; Women's Press, 1989, pp. 12-20.

[16] Miller, Daniel, *Material Culture and Mass Consumption,* Oxford, Blackwell, 1987, p. 107. Miller says, "A male may not be aware of the possibility of a female's alternative reading of what an object constitutes or signifies".

[17] Davidoff, Leonore and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850,* London: Hutchinson, 1987, p. 359.

refinement and evocation of nature eighteenth century French styles had everything going for them."[18]

It is easy to demonstrate a gender differentiation based on values and economics. While male perceptions were set within family history and tradition the female was more prepared to embrace the latest fashion. The higher the cost the greater was the probability of the decision being made by the male. Davidoff and Hall make explicit such gender differentiation. They state, "The contrast between the straight lines, practical materials and business like images of men's clothes and the soft flowing curved lines, the rich colours and textures, elaborate detail and constricting shape of women's clothes, was becoming a powerful part of gender segregation."[19]

THE RECEPTION OF ART NOUVEAU JEWELLRY

While Davidoff and Hall were writing of a generation earlier, it is easy nevertheless to see a relationship of female dress to the curves of Art Nouveau. In the wake of the Wilde trials middle class men felt constrained to choose styles that reflected gender expectations. This included conservative attire and formality in dress. On the other hand 'The New Woman' was increasingly prepared to behave openly in ways that would have been alien to her grandmother or even mother. She was educated, more confident, physically active and freer in law and domestically. For such women

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[18] Kinchin, Juliet, Op. Cit., p. 23. There are numerous examples to reinforce this. The *Lady's Realm* had frequent examples of classic French furniture such as the Louis XV1 china cabinet illustrated in (Volume 2 1897 p. 107). In the same issue Waring's had an advertisement for their large collection of French furniture of the periods Louis X1V, Louis XV, Louis XV1 and French Empire.
See too Lora Auslander in De Grazia, p. 82 who makes the point that furniture was a major purchase and was intended as an investment to be used in the future as well as the present and family history was inscribed within it p.82. Aslander, Lorna, 'The Gendering of Consumer Practices in Nineteenth Century France', (Ed.) Victoria de Gracia, Victoria, *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective*, London: University of California Press, 1996, pp. 81-83.

[19] Davidoff and Hall, Op. Cit., p. 414.

personal adornment became a symbol and a movement towards freedom, if not liberation.

Leonore Davidoff in her analysis of upper class society relates the impact of such change. She states, "A footman with long experience in upper class households said, 'Jewellery was a badge that women wore like a sergeant major's stripes or field marshal's baton. It showed achievement, rank, position."[20] Jewellery was not on the agenda as far as the man was concerned and most certainly not the perceived effeminacy of the 'New Art'.

At the time, Davidoff argues, the nouveau riche and aristocracy were merging socially with the amount of wealth possessed increasingly seen as the criterion for acceptability. The wife became the overt symbol of the man's purchasing power. He was able to display openly his understanding of both feminine desire and his awareness of the latest fashion and above all to show that he could afford to do so.

The 'New Art' especially in an area such as jewellery, found acceptance both for wives and husbands. The husband saw it as a legitimate expression of his wife's femininity.[21] Writing at the time in America, Thorstien Veblen pointed to the need of the nouveau riche wife to consume conspicuously in order to demonstrate her husband's position.[22] Veblen maintains it is within the household that she should be

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[20] Davidoff, Leonore, *Best of Circles*, London: Croom Helm, 1973, p. 93.
[21] Davidoff and Hall, Op. Cit., in their Max Weber inspired analysis state, "Consumption is instrumental in forming and maintaining status, the 'relational' element of class, the continual claim and counter claim to recognition and legitimation. Women, in their association with consumption, are often seen as creators, as well as bearers of status". p. 30.
[22] Veblen, Thorstien., (1899) '*Theory of The Leisure Class*', New York: New American Library, 1953, p. 232.

the chief ornament.[23] He argues that propriety necessitated expensive display in the dress and other paraphernalia of women.[24] My contention is that this necessarily meant the wearing of the most expensive jewellery and relates to Veblen's further statement that it must at the same time be up date."[25] Consequently in the early years of the twentieth century many wives would be adorned with Art Nouveau jewellery.

Within the three variables considered in the chapter; the public, the home and the personal, it would seem that the decision making male was the one least prepared to accept the 'New Art'. The bourgeois female was more prepared to accept the 'New Art' in certain areas, within the home. This had become acceptable as legitimate for her to use as she wished. Today we find hand mirrors with Art Nouveau embellishment, photograph frames with Art Nouveau decorative motifs and Art Nouveau inspired vases. The list essentially relates to small articles that may be conveniently labelled bric a brac. It includes those articles found in the lady's dressing room- varied dressing table pieces, lace, hand mirrors, toilet sets, perfume bottles, photograph frames, scissors, pendants and above all jewellery.

Lawrence Stephens, in a detailed article on jewellery in the 1901 *Lady's Realm*, a newly established magazine for the upper middle class woman, attacked the nineteenth century addiction to weak settings, with its emphasis on the cost of the inset stone. He states that the earlier emphasis was on intrinsic worth rather than

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[23] Ibid., p. 126.
[24] Ibid., p. 126.
[25] Ibid., p. 122. Veblen pointed to the importance of fashion stating that so long as a style is a novelty people generally find the new style attractive.

artistic value. Lalique is seen as leader of the revolt against copying in giving a new artistic rendering that related to the needs of the time.[26]

The tone throughout the article is that of a favourable response to the 'New Art'. In his conclusion Stephens addresses the possibilities of his readers purchasing the 'New Art'. He compares the high cost of Lalique's work with that of Vever and states: "While the materials may be less expensive the workmanship is good. Good artistic work is at last being brought into the means of those whose purses are slender."[27] In an early *Studio* article Gabriel Mouray reinforces the point that the 'New Art' jewellery was an advance in technique and taste upon its Victorian predecessor.[28]

Stephens emphasises the freer interpretation of the new in contrast to the servile copying of what went before. For him it was no more than good art brought up to date. He states, "They can give entirely new readings and can fit the traditions established by the masters of other times to the needs of the present day. The new art is the old art just brought up to date. It is just *modern.*"[29] However he acknowledges that some work is of an inferior standard and that there is eccentricity; but in the work of the masters of their art such as Lalique, there is no such suggestion.[30]

In 1902 *The Studio* produced a winter supplement on Jewellery and Fans. Aymer Vallance, biographer and friend of the late William Morris, provided the introduction

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[26] Stephens, L., 'Some Artist Jewellers of Paris', *Lady's Realm,* Volume 10, 1901, pp. 37-45.
[27] Ibid., p. 45.
[28] Mourey, Gabriel, 'Decorative Art Movement in Paris', *Studio,* Volume 10, 1897, p. 119.
[29] Stephens, Op. Cit.
[30] This is echoed in the *Studio* Lay Figure article of 1904. "The problem is not the masters of their craft but their imitators, with no taste in their design. Nothing is new in their art. It is simply bad". Anon., 'Lay Figure', 'L'Art Nouveau', *Studio,* Volume 31,1904, p.278.

to the English section. In this he listed the advances made in design and taste during the preceding years.[31]

Vallance makes an interesting comment relating to the position of Art Nouveau at the time. He states, "The artistic jewellery produced in this country has not from its very nature appealed chiefly to the richest classes of the community but rather those of quite moderate means."[32] It would seem that he, like Stephens, is suggesting that it is from the middle ranks of the emerging middle class that the 'modern' had most appeal and the old established order were less willing to accept it. The aristocratic core of the English establishment would seem to have had severe reservations regarding Lalique's work.[33]

The 1901 *Journal Of Decorative Arts* displayed further reservation regarding 'New Art ' jewellery. It maintained that, "It was devoid of art with the mere transcribing of natural forms and twisting it into some use." This it sensed was particularly conspicuous in French jewellery, "where the motif may be a moth or a fly or some other insect ...as part of the new revelation to startle the world and to inaugurate a new beginning." Lewis Day, however, a leading member of the Arts and Crafts establishment, while showing antipathy to Art Nouveau in his *Art Journal* article in

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[31] Schopfer, Jean, addressing an American readership in the *Architectural Record,* also senses the historic transformation of jewellery and Lalique's contribution to this. She says, "Who would have believed that jewellery would be received in the salons and would be ranked among pictures and statues. Modern jewellery has been born. Schopfer, Jean, 'Modern Art (L'Art Nouveau) in Jewellery', *Architectural Record,* Volume 20, 1902, pp. 67-70. urther American praise for 'New Art' jewellery appears in the 1902 *Craftsman* in which Irene Sargent states that society women have welcomed the 'New Art' into their personal adornments. Irene Sargent, 'The Wavy Line' *Craftsman,* 1902, p. 140.

[32] Special Edition, 'Jewellery and Fans', *Studio,* 1902.

[33] It might be suggested that the overt sexuality of some of his patterns went beyond acceptability for those who shared their husband's traditional dispositions. urther reservations are found in René Lalique and his Work, *Magazine of Art,* 1903, pp. 25-6.

1901 had been prepared to say in 1898, "The notable thing about this French work [modern jewellery] is its superiority in technique to much that Englishmen think worth exhibiting. The taste in it is of a kind which has gained for the French the reputation they deserve."[34]

Another leading member of the Arts and Crafts Movement, Hamilton Jackson, was equally positive. In two contributions to the *Magazine Of Art* 1901 and 1904 he showed considerable hostility to the 'New Art' but readily admitted that, "The greatest successes of L' Art Nouveau have been obtained in jewellery, much of which is very beautiful."[35]

Such excerpts from contemporary sources do indicate that Art Nouveau jewellery, probably more than any other form of the decorative arts, was quite well received. Although we should note that there were reservations and it is not hard to see how the aristocratic lady, who shared the traditional values of her husband, was not prepared to accept the stylistic characteristics of the 'New Art'.

Another example of a female preference for Art Nouveau may be seen in a *Studio* article of 1897. Unusually for *The Studio* this article was written by a woman, Mary Logan, who discusses Hermann Obrist's embroidered decorations. She begins by

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[34] Day, Lewis, 'Bric a Brac at the New Gallery', *Art Journal*, 1898, p. 380.
[35] Jackson, F., Hamilton, 'New Art as seen at the Paris Exhibition,' *Magazine of Art*, 1901, p. 129. Similar words are used by him in the *Magazine of Art,* Art Nouveau Symposium, 1904 p. 380.

saying, "Here are great embroideries, greater perhaps than that have ever been made in Europe."[36] The illustrations she gives are in the Art Nouveau of the time, as may be seen on the following page.[37] Her message at times is ecstatic and she concludes, "Instead of seeing in our furnishings nothing but unsympathetic shapes and dispiriting lines, the things that our eyes fell upon would soothe, caress, stimulate and fortify our nerves."[38]

The fact is that jewellery was well explored in the contemporary press. Subsequent writers too have explored its significance. David Lancaster sees greater naturalism and whiplash curves in English work, but maintains that a certain restraint was retained, and suggests that some of Gaskin's jewellery would not be out of place in any collection of Art Nouveau items.[39] He comments that as the popularity of the Art Nouveau style spread the need arose to cater for all levels of the market, and that with changes in fashion, small mass produced items such as hatpins and buckles became readily available. He sees Liberty jewellery design as a conscious and significant break with the past.[40] Kate Harris, the designer for William Hutton and Sons, Sheffield, is described by Victor Arwas as producing buckles, toiletry sets and other small silver items in an Art Nouveau style.[41] The most detailed and comprehensive study of Art Nouveau jewellery is by Vivienne Becker who points to the diversity of

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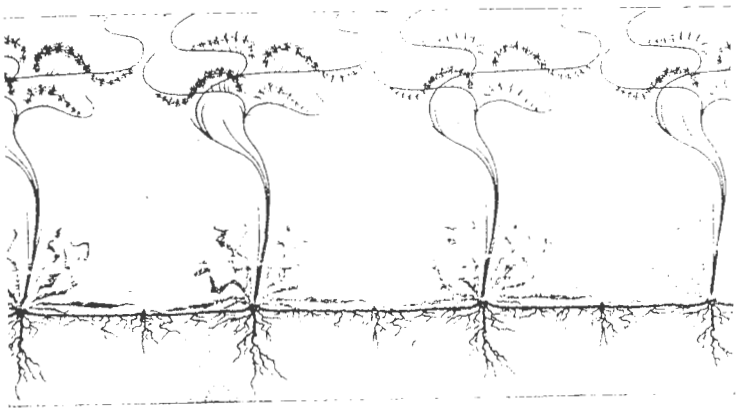
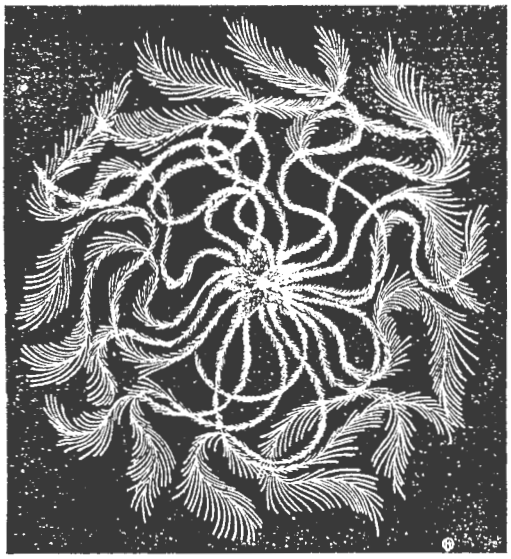
[36] Logan, Mary, 'Hermann Obrist's Embroidered Decorations', *Studio*, Volume 9,1897, pp. 98-105.
[37] Ibid., p. 102. Logan's description also relates to what is now accepted as Art Nouveau characteristics. She states, "The lines which stray in twisted roots at one end and fantastic tendrils at the other, the piercing shafts that drive through the springing curves, do not draw away the attention, for they are contained within the ideal space."
[38] Ibid., p. 102.
[39] Lancaster, David, *Art Nouveau Jewellery*, London: Little Brown, 1996, p.22 & 29.
[40] Ibid p.55 and p. 154.
[41] Arwas, Victor, *Art Nouveau in Britain from Mackintosh to Liberty*, London: Papadakis, 2000, p. 191.

Fig. 7.2

Hermann Obrist's Embroidered Decorations



EMBROIDERY, DESIGNED BY HERMANN OBRIST



EMBROIDERED TABLE CLOTH, DESIGNED BY HERMANN OBRIST
EXECUTED BY LERTHA SECHEL

MARY LOGAN, *HERMANN OBRIST'S EMBROIDERED DECORATIONS,* STUDIO, VOLUME 9, 1897, PAGES 98-99.

The *Studio,* as ever, was quite prepared to illustrate Art Nouveau. Its wide readership no doubt drew its own conclusions.

Fig. 7.3

KATE ALLEN, TEA KETTLE: A DUNCAN, 'MODERNISM', WOODBRIDGE: ANTIQUE COLLECTORS CLUB, 1998, p.13.

Here we see a strong affinity to Continental Art Nouveau. Allen's work, like some of her contemporaries, is only now receiving its just recognition.

jewellery manufactured in England at the time. She maintains that previously unknown makers such as Frederick Partridge designed in French Art Nouveau style.[42]

The Halifax firm of Charles Horner, with its total commitment to mass production, is seen by Becker as producing jewellery representative of the era. She states that the firm was well known for their Art Nouveau style hair pins, also their pendants and broaches. She states, "The quality of other English Art Nouveau jewels varies enormously and there must have been unknown jewellers working in a similar way to account for a large number of indifferent jewels."[43] Such a statement goes a long way to indicate that there was a market for Art Nouveau in England at the time.

We therefore have jewellery throughout the social spectrum from the expensive individual creations of Lalique to the mass produced hairpin with its hint of Art Nouveau decoration. Such acceptance was gender based and related to the growing awareness and expression of overt femininity at the time. Becker states, "There was a gradual acceptability with an image of passionate sensuality evolving which made a sharp contrast with the prim corseted and sheltered image of the lady of fashion."[44] Becker concludes, "After 1900 the Art Nouveau jewel became high fashion and as the motifs and themes were copied the style became diluted, its force undermined."[45]

My contention is that 'The New Art' found expression here[46] and that it was above all in personal adornment that a woman, whether unmarried or married, wished to

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[42] Becker, Vivienne, (1895) *Art Nouveau Jewellery,* London: Thames & Hudson, 1998, p.21.
[43] Ibid., p. 179.
[44] Ibid., p.20.
[45] Ibid., 212.
[46] However, as seen in the text, upper class bourgeois women were by no means a homogeneous entity.

express her individuality and sexuality and this was accepted as legitimate expression of her femininity by her husband and others that made up her social world.

AND THE MAN

For men at the time there were different concerns, possibilities and preferences. While the image of 'The New Woman' was positive for the female, for some males it had the opposite effect.[47] The potential threat to the man's position is well expressed in Teresa Billington's *Woman's Liberty and Man's Fear*: "Man is afraid of Woman. He proves it every day. History proves it for him".[48] Such an impact on male consciousness may be seen in Gardiner's extract from H.G.Wells *Ann Veronica.* Ann Veronica's father said of the New Woman. "It's these damned novels. Those sham ideals and advanced notions. Women who dids, and all that kind of thing....".[49]

In the previous chapter we have seen the impact of the Wilde Trials on taste at the time. Foldy sees the trials as also exposing latent sexual tensions.[50] The Trials led to a reaffirmation of conventional masculinity. Any sign of sexual depravity, eroticism and decadence was castigated publicly. The impact on Art Nouveau is easy to see.

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[47] See Miller, Daniel, Op. Cit. p. 107.
[48] Billington, Teresa, 'Woman's Liberty and Man's Fear, ' London: TBC Collection, Fawcett Library, quoted in Gardiner, Op. Cit., p. 47.
[49] See too Ledger, Sally, and Roger Luckhurst, (Eds.) *Fin de Siècle Readings*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2002.
[50] Foldy argues that Wilde's behaviour in the witness box, his written work and sexual behaviour, as related by witnesses, was interpreted in the courtroom within culturally available labels. These, Foldy states, were themselves influenced by the prevailing heterosexist values, the result being to emphasise Wilde's transgression of culturally mandated gender roles." Foldy, Michael, *The Trials of Oscar Wilde: Deviance, Morality and Late Victorian Society*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997, pp 93-5.

The trials were in 1896; the Paris Exposition was but four years away in 1900. The sinuous and sensuous curves of the *femme fatale* could not have occurred at a worse time for the emerging style's acceptance in England.

Men at the time had virtual total hegemony in the public sphere. There were no females allowed in either House of Parliament and women were only beginning to enter local government. The lack of public buildings with any association with Art Nouveau may be understood in the light of Miller's argument that:

> Buildings are enormous artefacts, immovable, extremely expensive, highly visible and highly durable. Their material importance has led to extensive involvement by the state in their production and allocation. Such artefacts may tend towards the representation of dominant perspectives.[51]

Such dominant perspectives were in the hands of the male establishment who were drawn from the upper bourgeoisie. Nikolaus Pevsner is in no doubt that the failure of Art Nouveau to penetrate the public arena was determined by the English class system.[52] The social contrasts were highlighted at the time by the first generation of the fee paying boarding school educated elite. The values inculcated at the schools were at total variance to those that underpinned Art Nouveau. At the time there were other preferences that went beyond the aesthetic. G.M Young writing about the impact of the public schools at the time said:

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[51] Miller, Daniel, Op. Cit., pp. 158-177.

[52] Pevsner, Nikolaus, *Pioneers of Modern Design,* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974, p.27. Pevsner wrote, "Other nations took the lead, nations that lived no longer, or who had never lived in the atmosphere of the *ancien regime,* nations that did not accept or did not know England's educational and social contrasts between the privileged classes and those in the suburbs and the slums".

The charge against the higher education of the late Victorian age is that it surrendered the freedom that it was meant to guard. They preserved some of the most precious things of the past but the larger and freer upbringing of the earlier Victorians made them a more receptive and independent audience for literature and science, for controversy, and for the closing of the general intelligence...the public schools must take some of the blame.[53]

He could have added to this 'Art Nouveau'! At the time the classics were the core of the curriculum and a style, which denigrated tradition, would have been anathema to those who had been socialised into traditionalist values. Acceptance of such an art form required open and receptive minds, which Young maintains was no longer possible. Public schools grew at a considerable rate in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The period of Art Nouveau 1895-1910 was therefore the time when their first major intake had reached an age that led to positions of influence and authority. The values inculcated may be seen to have direct relevance to their students' acceptance of Art Nouveau. Martin Wiener argues that by the turn of the century there was a homogeneous and cohesive elite, made of the old landed aristocracy and the rich who had acquired their wealth from industrial growth. He maintains that they had a common outlook and set of values and argues that this was cemented by a common education at a public school, or one based on its ethics.[54] Other writers have seen the

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[53]Young, G.M. (1936) *Portrait of an Age,* London: Oxford University Press, 1960, p. 158.

[54] Wiener, Martin, (1981) *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit,* Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1985, pp. 8-10. However, Bernard Porter, *Britannia's Burden* 1851-1891, London: Edward Arnold, pp. 70-71, maintains that such an argument is too simplistic and the schools were simply reflecting changes in society. Cain, P.J and A.G.Hopkins, *British Imperialism Innovation and Expansion 1688-1914,* New York: Longman 1993, p. 127, dismiss Weiner's claim for the continuance of aristocratic hegemony but do see within London bankers and their close associates a close knit group with a similar public school education and life which gave expression to 'a gentlemanly code of conduct'. See too Urry and Wakeford (Eds.) *Power In Britain,* London: Heinemann, 1973, p. 183.

curriculum of the schools as inhibiting creativity.[55] What this meant for the individual scholar may be seen in Harold Nicholson's biography of his uncle Sir Arthur Nicholson. He says, "It was taught on all sides that manliness and self control were the highest aims of English boyhood. He was taught that all but the most material forms of intelligence were slightly effeminate.[56] Harold Nicholson concludes by saying that his uncle learned to rely on action rather than ideas. Such an emphasis on action and the physical fitted the mid Victorian concept of Muscular Christianity. The arts had a low priority while the imperialism of the period gave men the possibility of expressing adventure and courage. C. Wee links this image of masculinity to the imperialist concern with formal territorial expansion.[57] Hobsbawm, however, points to the general pessimism in the literature and philosophy of the 1880s. He maintains the late nineteenth century did not exclude triumphalism and cultural self-confidence and states, "The crux of the crisis in the arts lay in the growing divergence between what was contemporary and what was modern."[58]

For men there were seen to be threats from both external and internal forces. The concept of the 'New Woman' was providing a major concern. There too was growing competitiveness with its impact on the economy, colonial rivalries, German re-

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[55] Lambert, Angela, *Unquiet Souls,* London: Macmillan, 1984, p. 88 states, "In the last decades of Queen Victoria's reign the public schools built up a games machine that far outweighed in its status and prestige anything on the academic side" Halevy also perceived the importance of the games field with the emphasis on physical courage and the study of the classics. Halevy, Elie, (1926) *Imperialism and the Rise of Labour,* London: Benn, 1952, Volume V, p. 159. See too Hobsbawm, Eric, (1987) *The Age of Empire,* London: Weidenfelt & Nicolson, 1995, p.176.

[56] Lambert, Op. Cit., quoting from Harold Nicholson 's biography, *Sir Arthur Nicholson,* p. 7

[57] Wee, C., Christian Manliness and National Identity: The problematic construction of a racially pure nation, (Ed.) Donald Hall, *Muscular Christianity,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 66. The popularity enjoyed by Hughes and Kingsley is seen to testify to a felt need. England's glory was now seen to lie in her ability to develop primitive lands and also to bring to their people the true faith. The latter became well established as the 'civilising mission'. Hobsbawm, Eric, Op. Cit., pp. 142-3 considers the background to this feeling for the renewal of the English.

[58] Hobsbawm, Op. Cit., pp. 119-243. Here he addresses the question of crisis in the arts.

armament, the Irish question, militant socialism and other threats to their security and identity. It is therefore not surprising that they increasingly looked backwards to former expressions of English male dominated traditions and forwards in exploring and manning the growing empire.

The fact that bourgeois men were unprepared to accept the 'New Art' either home grown or from abroad does not mean that this was so for the country as a whole. We have seen that his wife/mother/daughter may have been quite prepared to do so. Indeed in her consumption of the latest fashion, especially in jewellery, he may have given her active encouragement to do so.

CONCLUSION

I have attempted to address two major areas that have been neglected in the scholarly literature on Art Nouveau. There is first the existence of an indigenous English Art Nouveau and some, if limited, acceptance of foreign work. Second the underlying economic and cultural background in the period 1895-1910, and its impact on taste has received little recognition.

Throughout the literature there is an emphasis on the large scale and expensive. Little consideration has been given to small-scale everyday objects, which I have to shown to be the core of English Art Nouveau. The context of the time is ignored in much of the literature despite the fact that in 1986 Adrian Forty in his *Objects of Desire* argues that societies use design to express their values and that design is shaped by economic and social conditions.[1]

My reading of contemporary accounts between 1895 and 1910 led me to reflect on the issues that arose and were significant for the people at the time with modernity, tradition, decadence and degeneration being the most prominent issues. Concepts of emulation and conspicuous consumption were also important and may be seen in Veblen's *Theory of the Leisure Class*, which was originally published in 1899.

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[1] Forty, Adrian, *Objects of Desire*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1986, p.8. He states, "Most histories of design and art and architecture have treated their subjects as largely independent of the social circumstances in which they were produced".

Another major concern at the time related to questions of taste and feelings of Englishness. Much of the contemporary criticism related to what was perceived to be Art Nouveau's lack of taste, indeed the words vulgar and disease ridden were often used to distinguish it from what was seen as being proper English design. In some respects it is more difficult to understand and explain retrospectively why something did not happen rather than why it did. It does stand out that there is no Art Nouveau building exterior that has mainstream Art Nouveau characteristics. In fact, there is little Art Nouveau in England to be found in the public sphere. Major decisions, especially those related to the public sphere, were made by the bourgeois male establishment. Consequently I felt that there was a need to explore male consciousness at the time. Bourdieu provided theoretical insights that were timeless in their application and his statement that "the manner in which culture has been acquired lives in the manner of using it"[2] was particularly appropriate to Art Nouveau and Englishness in 1895-1910 and goes some way in giving an understanding of bourgeois male perceptions at the time.

Art Nouveau itself was full of contradictions. An inconsistency may be seen in the fact that Louis Bonnier, a French Art Nouveau architect, who built Bing's salon in Paris, built a country villa in the vernacular style of Voysey. Greenhalgh considers the problem and says, "This [Art Nouveau] was a multi-faceted, complex phenomenon that defied – then and now – any attempt to reduce it to singular meanings and moments.[3]

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[2] Bourdieu, Pierre, *Distinction*, London: Routledge, 1986, p.2.
[3] Greenhalgh, Paul, *Art Nouveau*, London: Victoria & Albert Museum Publications, 2000, p. 17.

The 1936 edition of Pevsner's *Pioneers of Modern Design* (republished in 1974) was one of the first attempts to make sense of Art Nouveau. However, the book was a general survey of the field of design in the last decade of the Nineteenth Century and the first of the Twentieth. Pevsner maintained that England, through the impetus of the Arts and Crafts movement, set the wheels in motion towards modernism but then let it falter. The reason for this, he argued, was a direct result of England's class system that inhibited innovation.[4] There was a tendency for subsequent authors not to consider the context of class and culture of the time in which Art Nouveau appeared.

Post war academic texts by Stefan Madsen and Robert Schmutzler acknowledged Art Nouveau's debt to English decorative art and in their different ways saw some English work as having Art Nouveau stylistic characteristics. Madsen argues that it was in metalwork that England more closely approached Continental Art Nouveau as far as its tradition and independence allowed.[5] Schmutzler perceived that the essence of English Art Nouveau was that of understatement and detected English Art Nouveau within a definition that emphasised the importance of the line.[6]

Both Madsen and Schmutzler saw Great Warley church as exemplifying the values that underpinned English acceptance of Art Nouveau. Indeed Schmutzler gives the church a whole page within his text. My three case studies in the second chapter were consecutive chapters in Richards' and Pevsner's *Anti Rationalists* (1976)[7] and the interior decorations made it possible to analyse the distinction between English Arts

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[4] Pevsner, Nikolaus, *Pioneers of Modern Design*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974, p. 27.
[5] Madsen, Stefan, Tschudi, (1952) *The Art Nouveau Style*, New York: Dover, 2003 p. 282.
[6] Schmutzler, Robert, (1962) *Art Nouveau and Jugenstil*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1967, p. 212.
[7] Richards, J.M., and Nikolous Pevsner, *Anti Rationalists* , London, Architectural Press, 1976.

and Crafts and Art Nouveau by utilising Benton and Millikin's concept of a continuum. In considering Liberty's jewellery they discerned a continuum from unquestioned Arts and Crafts at one end to Art Nouveau at the other.[8]

English attitudes towards foreign competition and new and original design was a major concern in the first quarter of the Nineteenth Century when the seeds of the fate of the Donaldson Bequest maybe seen to have been sown. In 1835 there was an inquiry into what many in Parliament perceived to be the unsatisfactory nature of industrial design in the United Kingdom. This resulted in a dual system of training school and museum of exhibits intended to educate a manufacturing population.[9]

Subsequently, Parliament voted funds for a committee to purchase artefacts from the 1851 Exhibition. Whether through a lack of self-confidence or lack of quality the exhibits purchased were mainly of foreign manufacture. Early purchases by the Museum of Manufacturers, which eventually became the Victoria and Albert Museum, displayed its own inclination towards the 'old' and the aesthetic rather than the new and the manufactured. The 1835 mission of raising the standard of British manufacture by training good designers was at the heart of the revolt by some of the artistic establishment, against the 'New Art' Furniture Bequest by Donaldson in 1901. In succeeding years, following the move to South Kensington, the role of the training function was to feature less prominently than the purchase of what were considered

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[8] Benton, Tim and Sandra Millikin, *Art Nouveau*, Milton Keynes, Open University Press, 1974, p. 18. This is discussed on p. 43 and illustrated on p. 43a.

[9] Carduso Dennis Rafael, 'Teaching by Example: Education and the Formation of South Kensington's Museums', (Eds.) Baker and Richardson, *A Grand Design*, London: Victoria and Albert Museum Publications, 1997, p. 107.

desirable objects for display at the Museum. Cardoso Denis states that the, "Museum of Manufacturers introduced a public display role which was to endure far longer than the rather sporadic attempts at education in design".[10]

The raising of public awareness, particularly its taste, became a major preoccupation as the Nineteenth Century progressed. The Museum increasingly became divorced from its original mission and this was made clear by the decision in 1881 to send newly manufactured articles to its branch museum at Bethnal Green.

I have detailed the varied problems that the Museum faced in the 1890s and three major issues stand out in bold relief. These are, first, the relationship of the Museum to a training function and the Museum's attitude towards the 'new'. Second the setting up of a Royal College of Art in the year before the Bequest was an acknowledgement that the training function had at last received its due recognition. Finally the fact that the training function had been ignored, in the decision making process, was the spark that ignited the Royal College letter that did the initial damage to the credibility of the Donaldson Bequest of 'New Art' furniture notwithstanding the fact that the signatories had antipathy towards Art Nouveau.

Donaldson, in the *Magazine of Art,* defended his action in words similar to those he used in his original offer to the Board of Education. He stated, "I saw a very active artistic evolution which gave unmistakeable evidence of enormous mercantile

[10] Ibid., p. 107.

Fig. 8.1

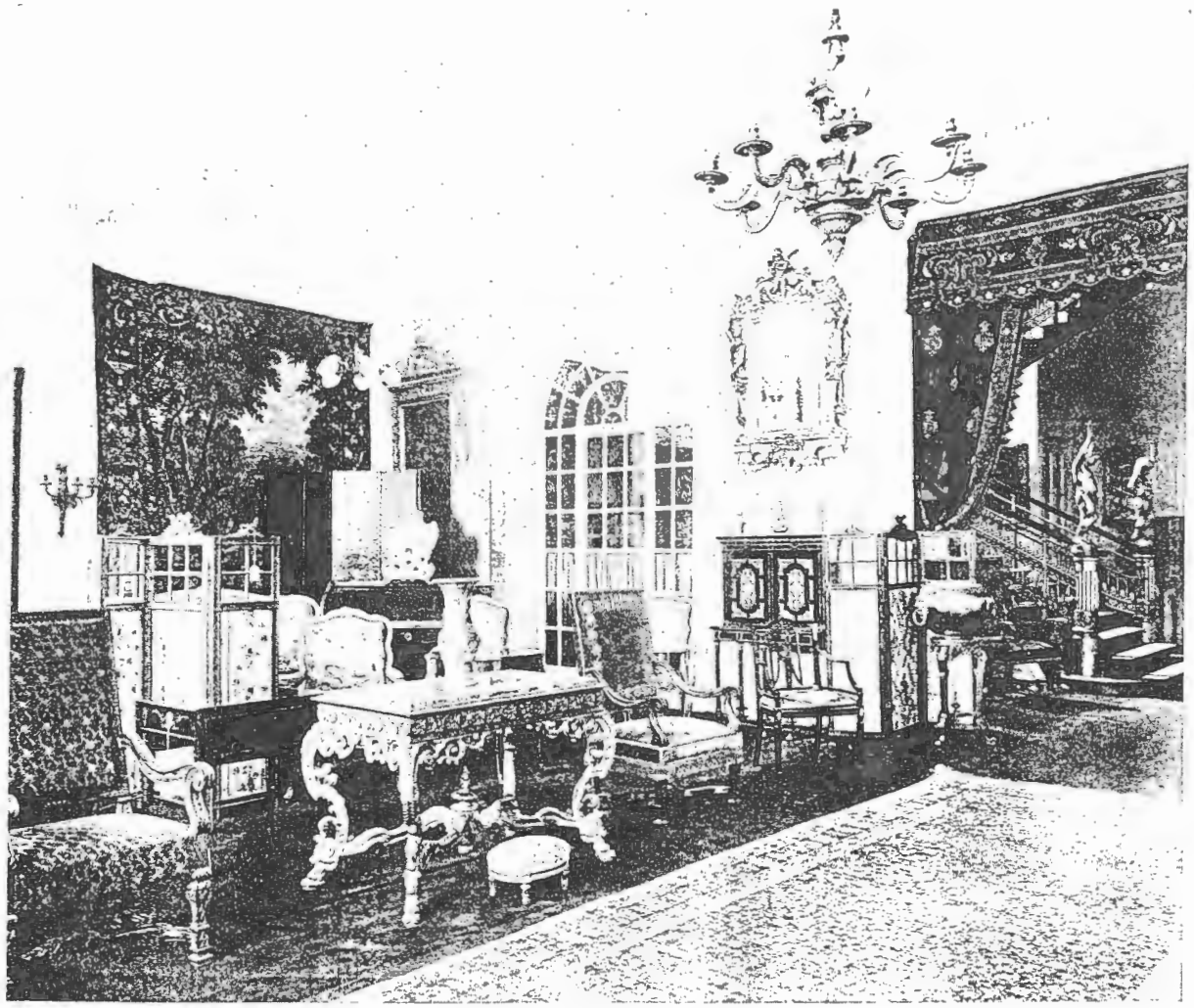
GILLOW & Co

Founded 1695.

Double Grand Prix, Paris, 1900.

CABINET MAKERS. UPHOLSTERERS.

BUILDERS & DECORATIVE ARTISTS.



ENTRANCE TO SHOWROOMS, MESSRS. GILLOW, 406, OXFORD STREET. W.

THE Magnificent Galleries, which have been recently extended, and now include the Rooms that obtained a DOUBLE GRAND PRIX at the PARIS EXHIBITION, 1900, are open for the inspection of Furniture of the highest quality, together with specimens of the best periods of ENGLISH, FRENCH, and ITALIAN DECORATION.

MESSRS. GILLOW possess an interesting collection of Drawings of Furniture made at the time of their late contemporaries the BROTHERS ADAMS, CHIPPENDALE and SHERATON, and are constantly reproducing these old pieces.

DESIGNS AND ESTIMATES FREE OF COST.

406, OXFORD STREET, LONDON, W.

AD. XV

THE CONNOISSEUR, VOLUME 1, NUMBER 4, DECEMBER, 1901

A typical advertisement for furniture at the time

advantage to the producers".[11] The spirit of his letter was similar to that of the 1835 Select Committee. Donaldson, in another link to the past, added that he wished students, in London and the provinces, to see 'the new' at first hand, and therefore understand what was being achieved in design.[12]

I have maintained that a major problem regarding the Bequest was the decision to exhibit the furniture within the Tapestry Court at South Kensington rather than at Bethnal Green. In fact this key decision was made without the approval of Gorst, the Vice President of the Board of Education, the minister responsible to Parliament. Gorst said, "I should have objected to the Tapestry Court myself if I had been in England. I think it should have been in a place by itself. At any rate it should not have been where it is".[13] Sir William Albury mentions the ill feeling that the decision engendered. It is noteworthy that neither made any suggestion that the furniture should not be exhibited and initially both Gorst and Albury welcomed the Bequest. It is unfortunate that there is nothing in the archives that relates to this crucial decision as to how and why it was made. Here we see an institutional acceptance of Art Nouveau, although it may be no more than on economic expediency by Government ministers.

The *Pottery Gazette* was also concerned that ceramic manufacturers should be up to date with the latest continental fashions. Economic survival was a by-word at the time with economic competition particularly fierce. Quality firms such as Minton, Moorcroft and Wedgwood were prepared to bring in lines that incorporated elements

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[11] Donaldson, George, 'Victoria and Albert Museum', *Magazine of Art*, Volume 25, 1901, pp. 465-70.
[12] See Appendix New Art Furniture File, p. 11,where there is a full transcript of the 'New Art Furniture' archive file.
[13] Ibid., p. V11.

of the 'New Art'. Kennard Wedgwood sensing the economic climate[14] made a request for designs on 'New Art' lines. That this was a commercial decision may be seen in the attitude of Cecil Wedgwood his co-director who, while expressing reservations on grounds of taste, was willing to proceed with the commission when Kennard Wedgwood was on a business visit to South Africa. There were similar sentiments regarding the 'New Art' expressed by the managing director at Macintyre's another major ceramic manufacturer.[15] There was a realisation that the market was far from homogeneous and that distinct market segments meant some incorporation of 'the new' was an economic necessity, in order to maintain, or possibly increase their share of the market. The strong feelings provoked at the time were not unique to England. This may be seen in the Consultants' Report commissioned by Minton to assess their Continental outlets. Some retailers were happy to have 'the new' which was associated with the latest fashion while for others it was anathema. The *Pottery Gazette* clearly suggests an acceptance of Art Nouveau derived patterns so long as there was no extravagance and it was tempered by what it perceived to be acceptable taste. At the same time the *Gazette* was concerned that if English manufacturers failed to accept the new stylistic ranges they would lose out to their rivals on the continent. Its position may be seen in an article, 'New Art in the Potteries'.[16]

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[14] Wedgwood had to close its tile making production line in the early 1900s due to substantial losses.
[15] Swindells, Neil, 'William Moorcroft Story', *Moorcroft Collectors Club Newsletter,* No. 21, 1999, p. 13.
[16] Anon., 'New Art in the Potteries', *Pottery Gazette,* December 1904, p. 1423.
There are a number of Buyers' Notes that reinforce this. A few examples are given below. Anon., 'Buyers' Notes', S.W. Dean & Co., *Pottery Gazette,* March 1903 p. 270. The review stated, "Dean's designers and decorators have not exceeded reasonable limits in the freedom of some their productions". Anon., 'Buyers' Notes', *Pottery Gazette,* January 1903, p. 55. The Doulton review stated, "There has been a tendency to let these Art Nouveau shapes and decorations to run wild, what began on original art lines have degenerated into eccentricities which in no sense are artistic". Anon., 'Buyers' Notes', *Pottery Gazette,* May 6 1903, p.583. A Doulton review stated, "Some of the bold sweeping curves which were the first characteristics [of the New Art] have given way to all sorts of free designs, and some are so free they border on the ludicrous".

The *Pottery Gazette* went so far as to describe the industry as decadent in its failure to adopt more fully stylistic ranges from the 'New Art'.[17] It was particularly concerned at the industry's contribution to the Paris Exposition in 1900. The use of the word in this context was unusual in the literature of the time. The idea of decadence was used fairly frequently[18] to illustrate contempt and dislike for the 'New Art' especially given its association with the decadent literary and art movement in Paris that had influenced artists like Oscar Wilde and Aubrey Beardsley. Holbrook Jackson shows that English consciousness of the time was severely affected by the social consequences of the Wilde Trials. The whole question of manliness became a major issue with the French decadent movement being roundly condemned. [19] Andrew Foldy sees the anti-decadent movement linked to the growth of imperialism. [20] In such a climate the sinuous, sensual and decadent side of Art Nouveau was unacceptable, especially for the men.

A major issue of the time that had an adverse resonance for Art Nouveau was that of modernity. Stuart Hall defines it as a time of rapid change and singles out the Fin de Siécle as a particular example.[21] Technological change was moving at an increasing rate and the idea of a new, modern, cosmopolitan world was well expressed by Walter Crane.[22]

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[17] From an Occasional Correspondent, 'New Art in the Potteries', *Pottery Gazette,* December 1908, p. 1423.
[18] The frequency in which the word decadence appeared in the literature at the time led me to explore how far the feelings of the time particularly those relating to decadence and modernity had an impact on the development and acceptance of Art Nouveau in England.
[19] Jackson, Holbrook, (1913) *The Eighteen Nineties,* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1939 p. 60.
[20] Foldy, Michael, *The Trials of Oscar Wilde,* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997, pp. 142-3.
[21] Hall, Stuart, 'Introduction', (Eds.) Hall, Stuart & Gram Gieben, *Formations of Modernity,* London: Polity Press, 1992, p. 15.
[22] Crane, Walter, 'Modern Decorative Art in Turin', *The Magazine of Art,* 1902, pp. 479-493.

Both decadence and modernity were anathema to many members of the English male artistic establishment and others. Art Nouveau was often seen as being 'free from tradition'. Many in the establishment had achieved their position through tradition, or hoped to achieve it through their acceptance of traditional values. For their wives, things were not so black and white with some seeing Art Nouveau as a badge of liberation.

A further issue that often arose in the arts periodicals at the time related to taste. A number of commentators expressed a belief that Art Nouveau was not only degenerate but in bad taste. Such arguments may be seen in the *Magazine of Art* 1904 Symposium on Art Nouveau. This led me to explore the relationship of class, taste and the English acceptance, or more particularly the non-acceptance, of Art Nouveau.

Pierre Bourdieu maintains that choosing according to one's taste is a matter of identifying goods that are objectively attuned to one's position. Indeed taste for Bourdieu is major marker of social class with some having cultural assets in the struggle for power.[23] Those at the time who had the power to enforce their will did so in their total rejection of Art Nouveau in the public sphere. However, this did not mean that all rejected Art Nouveau and dominant ideas of taste are not always followed. Robert Roberts illustrates the pitfalls of making hard and rigid distinctions regarding taste. While those at the apex of the class pyramid had values that precluded an acceptance of Art Nouveau, which was often articulated in conceptions of taste, the working class were seen to continue their traditional consumption.

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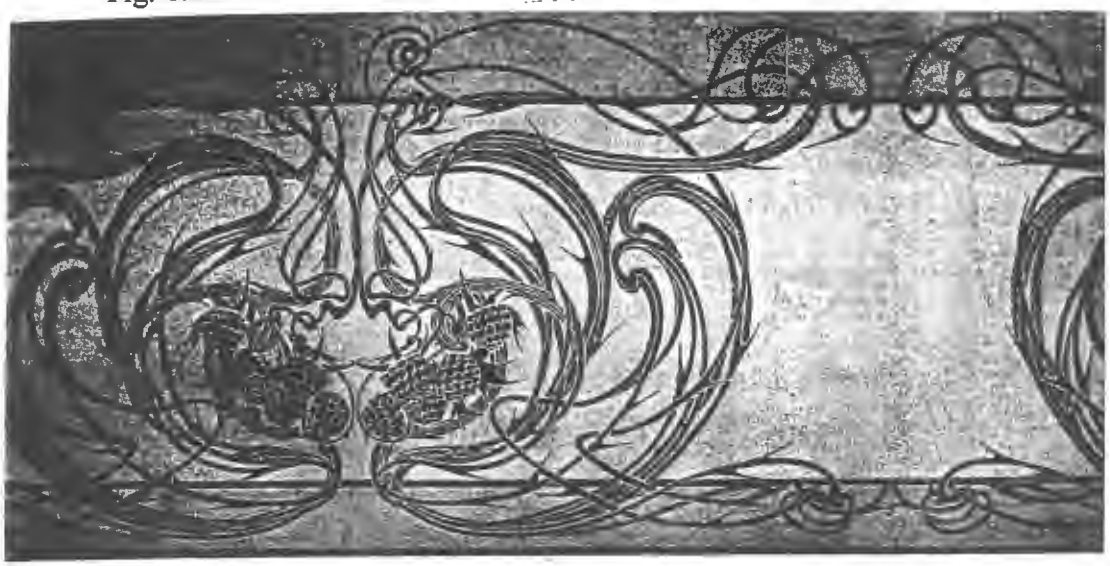
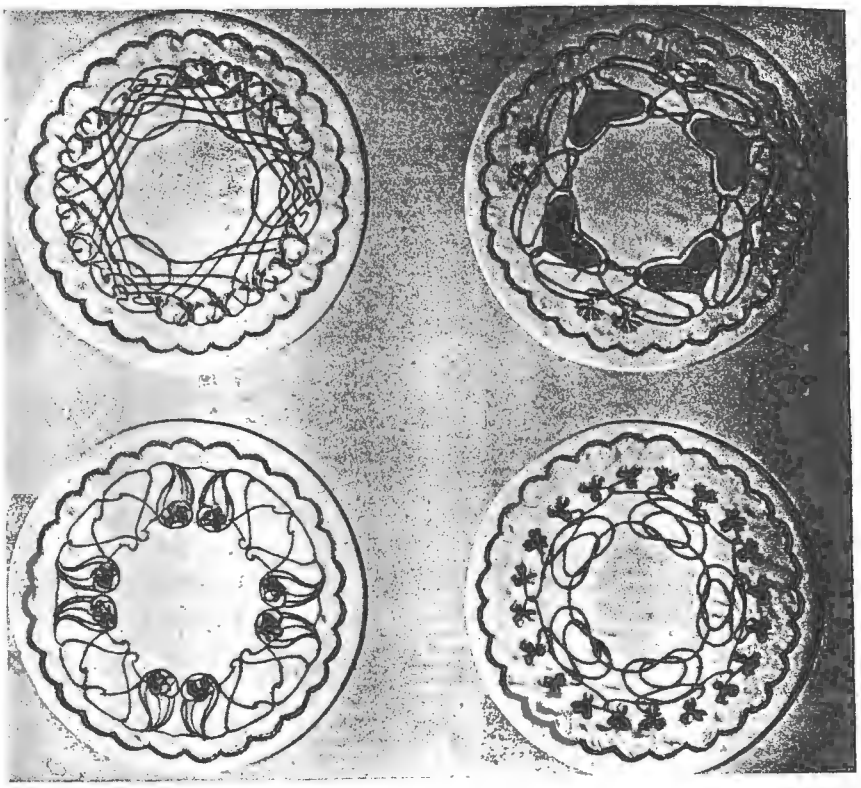
[23] Bourdieu, Op. Cit., pp. 257-315.

Fig. 8.2 190a



WALL-PAPER FRIEZE DESIGNED BY THOMAS CHISHOLM



EMBROIDERED D'OYLEYS BY HELENA SHAW

THE TEXT READS:

Much ingenuity is devoted by Thomas Chisholm to the intricate twinning of his bramble pattern for all paper frieze but one feels that the design is too dependent on line and lacks the desirable breadth of treatment which the introduction of leafage would tend to improve

Helena Shaw's d'oýleys are worked in silk upon silk and display delicate taste in their variations upon each separate design.

There is no suggestion in the text of any pattern having an affinity with art Nouveau

SOME WORK BY THE STUDENTS OF THE LIVERPOOL SCHOOL OF ART, *STUDIO,* VOLUME 25, 1902, pp. 170-180

described by Roberts as Bric a Brac.[24] Acceptance went beyond affordability with Roberts maintaining that it was a fear of destitution which led to the possession of small objects, while Moira Vincentelli contends that the ceramics that filled the Welsh dresser had meaning for the woman in the form of house decoration.[25]

Within my text I have emphasised we can no more than surmise that such artefacts as described by Roberts and Vincentelli are Art Nouveau[26]. Nevertheless the extensive advertising in the *Pottery Gazette* for 'New Art' products and the number of lines brought out by firms for the earthenware market (this was far cheaper than bone china) do point to my hypothesis having some validity. Indeed, it may be argued that the consumption of Art Nouveau products by those seen as 'uneducated' led to a reinforcement of those with capital in their disdain for Art Nouveau.

Within the *Pottery and Glass Trades Gazette* it was the smaller manufacturers, who produced cheap earthenware who used 'New Art' stylised designs in their marketing with Williamson & Sons going as far as to draw attention to their 'Novem Artem' ware. Such facts give credibility to Daniel Miller's assertion that class and gender give different perspectives with the object (the product) being seen in different ways.[27] It is the meaning of the object for the social actor that is all-important and this makes Veblen's concept of emulation problematic. Significant numbers of those with low income were prepared to accept the 'new' regardless of what the establishment deemed acceptable.

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[24] Roberts, Robert, (1971) *The Classic Slum*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977, p. 17.
[25] Vincentelli, Moira, *Women and Ceramics*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000, p. 124.
[26] See p. 147 of this thesis.
[27] Miller, Daniel, *Material Culture and Mass Consumption*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1987, p. 107.

De Grazia maintains that the literature has a bias towards the object and that those who have symbolic capital (they invariably have the economic capital as well) are seen to have taste whereas the dreary and tasteless are seen as the poor and powerless.[28] This is close to Bourdieu's position which states that symbolic goods are those regarded as having attributes of excellence. De Grazia's argument goes some way in explaining why the historiography generally ignores the small-scale objects that I consider to be the core of English consumption. These objects were often mass-produced and were functional rather than ornamental.

Those at the leading edge as the discriminators of taste - the gatekeepers - were conservative in outlook as were those in the architectural profession, and in the field of 'Fine Arts'. Given their position as arbiters of taste they are relevant to the question of English acceptance of Art Nouveau. They illustrate the suspicion of change that underpinned the English aesthetic establishment. The taste of those with potential power to influence lay in other directions than Art Nouveau. Expensive functional dinnerware produced by the major porcelain manufacturers was as traditional in spirit as was the home of their customers.

Within the appendix of *Pioneers of Modern Design* Pevsner addresses Herwin Schaefer's *Roots of Modern Design* published in 1970[29] Pevsner states that Schaefer sees his work as being determined by individual innovators. He then points to Shaefer's

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[28] De Gracia, Victoria, *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption,* London: University of California Press, 1996, p. 154.
[29] Pevsner, Nikolaus, Op. Cit., p. 245. He discusses Schaefer, Herwin, *The Roots of Modern Design,* (London, 1970).

emphasis on functional products such as lathes, adding machines, scissors etc., which are invariably mass-produced. Pevsner comments, "His examples are indubitably functional, but are innocent of aesthetic efforts".[30] Another functional product of the late nineteenth century was the sewing machine, which like scissors sometimes displayed extensive Art Nouveau motifs. My contention is that it is in both functional and non functional objects that English Art Nouveau may be found and they are not necessarily in Pevsner's words, "Innocent of aesthetic effects".[31]

A possible reason or the rejection of Art Nouveau furniture may be seen in the fact that in England hand made furniture had a long tradition both of excellence and expense with classic French styles and English Georgian vying for prominence. Today it is very difficult to find examples of English Art Nouveau furniture. Furniture advertisements during the period 1900-1910 are invariably for classic styles and those in the early editions of the *Connoisseur* may be said to anticipate the taste of potential customers[32] However, this is not so in the case of jewellery. Within the arts press of the time jewellery figures prominently - not just jewellery - but Art Nouveau jewellery. Advocates of the Arts and Crafts Movement such as Lewis Day and

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[30] Ibid., p. 245

[31] Ibid., p. 245. Adding Machines used in shops sometimes displayed Art Nouveau decorative motifs.

[32] The *Connoisseur* was a magazine for collectors that began in 1901. There were a number of prominent London retailers, who advertised to a readership that was upper and upper middle class. A sample, of typical advertisements, shows a continuing taste for classic styles: Advertisements, *Connoisseur,* Volume 1 No2, October 1902.Hewetsons, 'Original and reproductions of the work of bygone days', Ad. V. Warings, 'Old English Furniture', Ad. X. Gillow & Co., 'Specimens of the best periods of English, French and Italian decoration, Ad. X11. Graham & Banks, 'Old Furniture and Woodwork', Ad. XV. Maple & Co., 'Unique Art Treasures' , Ad. X1X. W. Hodges & Co., 'A collection of quaint furniture in Sheraton, Chippendale, Hepplewhite and the French styles', Ad. XXV. Within the advertisement for Gillow & Co, *Connoisseur,* April 1902, there is an illustration captioned, 'Art Nouveau Children's Bedroom', Ad. XLV. The fact that the illustrated pieces of furniture do not fit any acceptable definition of Art Nouveau does not matter. The fact is a traditional firm was prepared to use the term in their advertisement. It indicates an acknowledgement that Art Nouveau was significant and acceptable for use by some at the time.

Hamilton Jackson are quite prepared to sing its praises.[33] This seeming contradiction requires explanation.

There was continuity of tradition in patterns of furniture consumption while Art Nouveau jewellery was accepted and consumed. An explanation may be found in changing gender patterns at the time. Some of the Continental practitioners of Art Nouveau set out to shock - to explore all aspects of nature in a democratic way and to question the hierarchy of the arts. The freedom from past restraints was a major motivating force. This was true too for some women who were influenced by the emancipation movement and were sometimes seen as 'The New Woman'. This was reinforced by her time-honoured role of being at the vanguard of the latest fashion, whereas fashion for men, in the wake of the Wilde trials, meant a retreat to conservative attire and a more circumspect outlook to life

Veblen said of the woman of the leisured class of his time, "She is petted and is permitted or even required to consume largely and conspicuously - vicariously for her husband".[34] My argument is that conspicuous consumption related to the burgeoning question of femininity in England at the time. Society women, especially those who formed part of the *Nouveau Riches,* whose husbands' wealth derived from industry and latterly commerce, became publicly associated with the advance of their husband's social mobility and status. Feminine adornment was particularly conspicuous in the wearing of the latest fashions in jewellery. This was not unnoticed

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[33] See Day, Lewis, 'Bric a Brac at the New Gallery', *Art Journal,* 1898, p. 380. Jackson, F. Hamilton, 'New Art as seen at the Paris Exhibition', *Magazine of Art,* 1901, p. 129.
[34] Veblen, Thorstein, *The Theory of the Leisure Class,* (1899) New York: New American Library, 1953, p. 232.

by the contemporary decorative arts press. Indeed Lawrence Stephens indicates that such consumption of Art Nouveau jewellery went beyond the bounds of the bourgeoisie. He states, "Good artistic work (he had been discussing jewellery) is at last being brought within the means of those whose purses are slender.[35]

While women were moving slowly into the public sphere it was still very much a male dominated world. For men the world was becoming more homogeneous in values and expression as a consequence of changes within the educational system. G.M. Young writing in 1936, looking back to his youth, contrasted the largely free upbringing of the Victorian period that facilitated a receptive mind for ideas and intellectual curiosity with one that overstressed standardised ideals.[36] In the later Victorian period the emphasis changed to tradition, preservation and consolidation. Eric Hobsbawm maintains that this led to disdain for matters relating to the intellect and a narrowness of vision.[37] Accepted taste was for the familiar and there were strong forces at work, which made it difficult for the elite to take on board an art form that was revolutionary in spirit. Priorities had changed. Team games, the outdoor and the physical dominated the ethos of the emerging public schools and the concept of Christian Muscularity aided the process, with the empire giving the opportunity for its formal expression. Art Nouveau with its sensuous line and sexual connotations was a different world from that experienced by the public school boy.

I have shown that both gender and class fractions were far from rigid at the time and evidence of forms of Art Nouveau stylistic derivation, within these class fractions

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[35] Stephens, Laurence, 'Some Artist Jewellers of Paris', *Lady's Realm,* Volume 10, 1901, pp. 37-45.
[36] Young, G.M., (1936) *Portrait of an Age,* London: Oxford University Press, 1960, p. 158.
[37] Hobsbawm, Eric, *Industry and Empire,* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969, p. 168.

may be seen today, in prosperous Edwardian house porches, in ceramics, jewellery and metalwork.

A modified form of Art Nouveau was without doubt popular among a number of the population. Liberty and Co., who marketed products from mass production manufacturers, more than any other retailer, were able to exploit English taste for the reworking of traditional values in Art Nouveau forms which encompassed the traditional, the oriental and the new. This was also so for the ceramic industry at the time. A number of ceramic manufacturers took strands of the new continental designs and modified them for their mass markets. In doing so they explored areas beyond the designs associated with traditional ceramic manufacturers and did show that if acceptance of Art Nouveau was tinged with reservation it was nevertheless a significant force at the time.

I have shown, particularly in the case study of the English ceramics industry, that there were some Art Nouveau derived designs produced in England. The illustrations in Mario Amaya's *Art Nouveau* (1966) further suggest that the ceramics industry was not alone in producing work with Art Nouveau stylistic ornamentation and this was particularly so in regard to jewellery. Here we find acceptance of Art Nouveau going beyond English production to include some of the major European designers. I have also attempted to show why the acceptance was by no means general and that the underlying economic and cultural background in the period 1895-1910 gave rise to some sections of the population being more willing to accept the 'New Art' than others. This may be seen today in the lack of any fully-fledged Art Nouveau building

exterior. I am conscious that my research is but a beginning, that I have opened a door, that others may fruitfully follow. Other industries involved in the production of small-scale domestic objects require in depth investigation for their use of Art Nouveau motifs and then we might have a fuller picture of English taste and consumption patterns between 1895 and 1910.

DONALDSON CHAPTER APPENDIX

VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM ARCHIVES: 'NEW ART' FURNITURE COLLECTION

THE *TIMES* LETTERS

DONALDSON'S JUSTIFICATION IN THE *MAGAZINE OF ART.*

DONALDSON'S JUSTIFICATION IN THE MAGAZINE OF ART

In 1909 he requested that the article be kept in his archive at the Victoria and Albert Museum. It is now at Blythe House.

To the Museum has recently been presented by Mr. George Donaldson a collection of modern and other furniture representing the style of the 'so called' 'New Art'. Representative examples of work have been obtained from several of the countries affected by this movement in art.

Mr George Donaldson in response to our request has sent us the following statement of his intentions in making the gift.

"I am simply a student of some branches of art with a sincere desire to see my countrymen to the front in the artistic and mercantile race which my special opportunities have shown me to exist, and which observations leads me to feel that Englishmen have either been apathetic or to be largely unconscious of. Those impressions are the raison'etre of the gift of 'New Art' furniture.

At the Paris Exhibition of 1887, when my first official connection with furniture began, the struggle for supremacy amongst the nations in the production of beautiful furniture was tremendous and a very high standard of excellence was reached but the struggle was restricted to more or less traditional lines, or found inspiration in what had been done before in Gothic, Renaissance, the styles of the French Louis, and the English expression, if not interpretation of them, in Chippendale, Sheraton, Adams and others. At that time the historic houses of Gillow, Jackson and Graham, Crace and Wright and Mansfield, 'spared neither land nor gold' to attain a high order of merit and with success. But there was still a large unsatisfied public crying out for something new, a distinctive style which should mark our epoch and refresh the jaded appetites of art furniture lovers. At this time there was great activity in the studio and workshops, and the decorative mountain brought forth the mice of Neo-Greek, a so called Jacobean and a nondescript medieval style. These efforts were lacking in spirit, originality and distinction and had a short life and inglorious death.

At the Paris Exhibition of 1889 I was called to the jury of awards and I was assisted in giving those awards and for much that was excellent but little that was new or original. But one note was struck by a Frenchman of Nancy, Emile Gallé, a many sided genius, who has since received highest recognition in France. This note, in furniture at least, found no very sympathetic vibration in the eighteen wise men comprising that jury.

Eleven years past and again I found myself elected to the position of Vice President of the jury of awards for Furniture at the Universal Exhibition of 1900 in Paris and in the process of judging I became conscious of a phenomenon. In those eleven years there had sprung up a quite astounding expansion and development in the production of artistic furniture on fresh lines and denominated 'New Art'. I saw that this was far from being the accidental, isolated or local efforts, was a very active artistic evolution which had spread over the countries of the Continent and which gave unmistakeable evidence of enormous mercantile advantage to the producers. That fact, Sir, is what actuated me securing what I felt were the best examples of this 'New Art' and to offer them to the President of the Board of Education for the use of students and the hundreds of designers who were prevented, by want of means or other reasons from going to Paris to see them.

It is the intention of the authorities to send this furniture for exhibition in the chief cities of Great Britain, so that English producers may see what is being done by foreign competitors in the same direction.

In seeking this 'New Art' this ideal of the designer, many things were produced which I felt to be indefensible and not to be encourages, these I left alone, and I do not suggest, indeed I deprecate, servile copying of the examples before us; it is not fair to the creators of them, and no real help to progress. Let the critics criticise, let him seek the merits of the style and reject what he condemns and let him produce something better.

Where the 'New Art' Movement will lead I cannot attempt to predict. Franklin asked, "What was the use of the baby?" I will leave the answer to others. But I venture to

think that this selection of 'New Art' furniture demonstrates at least there are forms and combinations of line, colour and materials not hitherto dreamt of in the philosophy of English designers and producers of furniture and I have performed what I have felt to be a duty in placing these before them".

MAGAZINE OF ART VOLUME XXV 1901.

THE TIMES LETTERS

LETTER 1

SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM
To the Editor of the Times

Sir,

I t is much to be regretted that the authorities of South Kensington have introduced into the Museum specimens of the work styled "L' Art Nouveau". This work is neither right in principle nor does it evince a proper regard for the material employed. As cabinet maker's work it is badly executed. It represents only a trick of design which, developed from base forms, has prejudicially affected the designers of furniture and buildings in neighbouring countries. In its present position it is in danger of being looked upon as a recognised model which has received the approval of the authorities for study by students, and the harm it may thus produce on our national art cannot easily be gauged.

We, the undersigned, desire publicly to protest against its importance at South Kensington, and most strongly against its recommendation by the authorities to the notice of furniture makers and others.

We are, Sir
Yours faithfully,

John Belcher A.R.A.
Reginald Blomfield
Mervyn Macartney
Edward S. Prior
20, Hanover Square W.
July 15th 1901

LETTER 2

TIMES 10th August 1908 p. 8. from Vernon Watley.

Not very long ago you published in your columns a letter protesting against the fact that the authorities at the Victoria and Albert Museum at South Kensington were exhibiting examples of things which are known in France under the term Art Nouveau, and, as one remembered the old advise that differences of taste should not be discussed, and felt tempted to take an early opportunity of seeing the things which that letter referred.

Will you allow one who spent part of yesterday afternoon at South Kensington and saw these latest additions to our national collection to record his impressions. Apart From the feeling that a great national collection had been degraded, one's impression was patriotic, in the sense that it seems hardly fair to our British makers of modern furniture that they should not be equally allowed good opportunities of displaying their wares at South Kensington.

One also wonders why the authorities at South Kensington should have huddled together, as if in a limber room, our examples of old tapestries, embroideries, and furnished things which have given pleasure to successive generations during the past two or three centuries, while they display, as if in a shop window, those articles, which we are accustomed to look in our more ephemeral exhibitions.

It may be, or it may not, be a good thing that there should be in this country an exhibition (permanently or otherwise) of modern furniture; but the artistic side of the Victoria and Museum is full of, and dedicated to, things that have stood the test of time, and I venture to join in the ap[peal to you to let the strength of your columb guard it even from the appearance of being a medium for the advertisements of modern furniture makers.

LETTER 3 From THE EDITOR: THE MAGAZINE OF ART
Sent 15th August 1901. Printed 17th August 1901 p.3.

L'ART NOUVEAU AT SOUTH KENSINGTON

The criticism which have been passed upon the authorities of 'New Art' furniture have not taken sufficient account the intention of the donor and the motive of the Board of Education. It should be first observed that it is wrong to speak of the collection as exclusively as exclusively 'French', but German, Hungarian, Scandinavian-indeed it represents fairly well the wave of art-taste which has submerged the whole of Europe. That this wave received its first impulse from the efforts of Mr. William Morris and Mr. Walter Crane and their associates of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, cannot be denied. To regard this 'New Art' as foreign and the introduction of it into England as 'unpatriotic', is therefore incorrect.

The enormous demand abroad for furniture, etc. in this 'new style' suggested to the Board of Education the propriety of showing the art manufacturers of this country of what is being done; this was the more advisable as illustrations of the worst of it have been widely circulated here and has resulted in the production by some British firms of furniture and other objects in which 'quaintness' is more obvious than artistic design. In deciding, therefore, to display some examples of the best foreign manufacture, and so moderating the extravagances which have taken so alarming a hold on the public mind, the Board was surely well inspired, and its reactions the reverse of the unpatriotic.

The sum voted, however, was insufficient to purchase a representative collection, so that Mr. George Donaldson, the Vice-President of the Art Furniture Jury at the Paris Exhibition, largely supplemented the grant under circumstances related by him in the current number of *The Magazine of Art*, in which illustrations of the main pieces are reproduced. He admits the extravagance of much that has been produced, as he must admit the false principles of more of it, and the neglect of logical structure where novel surface decoration is the main aim; and he could not deny the imperfection of workmanship through which some of the pieces have cracked and split-and that not always at the joints. "But I venture to think", he writes, "that this selection of 'new art' furniture demonstrates at least that there are forms and combinations of line, and

colour and materials not hitherto dreamt of in the philosophy of English designers and producers of furniture, and I have performed what I felt to be a duty in placing these things before them."

Imperfect design and illogical construction are, of course inadmissible; but neglect of tradition in search of something afresh and fine is not in itself indefensible. It is the old struggle between purism and revolution, and it is the clash of collision that compels advance.

LETTER 4 FROM VINCENT J. ROBINSON.
SENT 11th August 1901. PRINTED 17th August 1901 p. 3

May I be allowed the smallest possible space in your valuable columns to support all that has been said, and especially by Mr. Vernon Watney, in condemnation of the exceedingly vulgar show now made at South Kensington Museum of what is called "L'Art Nouveau?"

I have myself for many years represented to the 'authorities' there that the Museum should be one whose endeavour should be to possess the best specimens of works that have stood the test of criticism and to reject the wild efforts of modern trade to crowd their limited space with novelties. Their space and their funds are limited; there are plenty of solid ways of expending both without wasting opportunities on obvious shams.

LETTER 5 FROM Z
August 22nd 1901 p. 5.

Your correspondent, the Editor of the *Magazine of Art*, defends the show of Art Nouveau at the Victoria and Albert museum and asserts that this so called 'art' received its first impulse from the efforts of Mr. William Morris and Mr. Walter Crane. We need not dim the reputation of these artists by ascribing the Art Nouveau to them even remotely. It is the result of the example of a very different kind of artist. Those who went to see the Japanese troupe lately performing in London will remember that fully half the popularity of the entertainment was due to thje dancing of Loie Fuller. This artist has for years been more widely known on the Continent than in this country. It is to the Continent undoubtedly that we owe the Art Nouveau and the ideas sprang from the gyrations, which Loie Fuller imparts to her garments, as she twirls them in the limelight. Any one can verify the connection between the Art nouveau of the Loie Fuller performance by going to see them. The Victoria Museum possesses ample specimens of the hitherto recognised styles of art. 'Jacobean' 'Louis X1V', 'Louis XV', 'Louis XV1' etc. and I think that those who have some taste in art will feel that it is quite unnecessary to add specimens of the Loie Fuller style.

THE DONALDSON FILE: NEW ART FURNITURE COLLECTION

1 AGREEMENT FOR DONALDSON TO PURCHASE AT THE 1901 PARIS EXHIBITION WITH SUBSEQUENT DISPLAY AT BETHNAL GREEN

The File Opens

Minute Paper: Board of Education
South Kensington
6th July 1900
To C.P. Clarke
Attached offer by Mr. G. Donaldson to supplement the grant of £500 for the purchase of objects. The letter follows the memo to Sir William Albury to which it was attached.

Memo: From Purdon Clarke to Sir William Albury.

Sir William Albury,
Mr. George Donaldson made a very important proposal which is attached. Mr Donaldson was elected Vice President of the furniture class (by the rules a Frenchman had to be President).

He informed me that after three weeks daily study of the furniture in the various sections he was strongly impressed with the idea that all our manufacturers, designers and artisans in the furniture trade should visit the exhibition and mark the progress made within the last few years, but as it was impossible to bring the people to see the work, he considered the next best thing would be to make a good selection which through our circulation department could be sent to the great centres of trade in England commencing with Bethnal Green.

As I had independently formed the same opinion when proposing the purchase of Foreign Art works I strongly recommend the acceptance of Mr. Donaldson's generous offer.

Having arranged with Mr. Donaldson for him to assist in selecting others (one to date) Within the sum for which sanction has been given I propose to return to Paris on Sunday and expect to complete the work in two or three days. An early decision is necessary as Mr. Donaldson after today will be remaining in Paris especially to assist the Museum.

Signed A.P.Clarke
29th June 1900

The attached letter from Donaldson

I feel that the Board's proposal to have a collection of Modern Art Objects selected in this great exhibition is an admirable one as it will be a permanent historical record of this period and the collection by circulation by collection to the great centres of the Art Industries may assist the manufacturers and designers to keep pace with their Continental competitors. I find, however, one weak point in the proposal and that is that the sum the disposal is too small.

I have pleasure not only in confirming my offer to devote any time necessary for the proper selection of the objects, but in addition I will supplement your grant by a donation of whatever money may be required to secure an adequate representation of objects illustrating the 'New Art' Movement to the extent of several thousands if necessary.

Vice President
I strongly recommend the acceptance of Mr. Donaldson's generous offer.
Mr. Clarke informed me that there are no conditions attached to the gift.
I think Mr. Donaldson's letter fully explains the desirability of accepting the offer.
Signed...almost unreadable but it looks like Albury.
Dated 30-6-00

I agree. I think he should be thanked officially for his very generous offer which the Board of Education officially accepts.
Initialled...J.E.G. (Sir John Gorst)
Dated 4-7-00

Further memo
I wired to Mr. Purdon Clarke on 4-7-00 who is in Paris after mentioning the matter and the Vice President that the Board accepted Mr. Donaldson's generous offer with thanks.
Write to Mr. Donaldson

Signed Cole
Dated 5-7-00

Unsigned memo
Dated 11th July.
I am directed by the President of the Board of Education to express to you his thanks for your very generous offer. He most gladly accepts it together with your valuable assistance in selecting such examples.

Letter from Donaldson

British Royal Pavilion
Quai d'Orsay
Paris.

MODERN ART OBJECTS

Dear Mr, Clarke,

Since hearing from you the Board of Education has sanctioned the expenditure of five hundred pounds and has accepted my offer of making a selection. I have taken every opportunity of examining during my daily round of jury work the modern art examples with a view of selecting the objects illustrating the advances made by foreign manufacturers in the New Art Movement which commenced in England.

I am therefore in a position to state that in my opinion the New Art Movement has taken a firm hold in Europe and that in most cases superior ingenuity and taste are displayed than in our own productions.

However much this New Art may conflict with our own classical standards or ideas of architectural basis I am forced to the conclusion we are in the process of a distinct development; where it will lead no one I think can foretell. It is of great importance to our people that the best models of the style called 'New Art' should be purchased and placed before them. It is an admirable idea to have a permanent record of the period. The sum of £500 is too small. I will supplement your grant by a donation of whatever money might be required to secure an adequate representation of objects illustrating the 'New Art' movement to the extent of several thousands of pounds if necessary

LOANS TO PROVINCIAL MUSEUMS

26th December 1900 request from
Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art

To the Secretary Board of Education

"I understand that the collection of New Art Furniture bought at the Paris Exhibition for the Victoria and Albert Museum will in the first instance be available for exhibition on loan. Cabinet making is at present of considerable importance in Edinburgh. I believe it would be of much public advantage to have the collection shown here for a short time and request a three-month loan.

F. Grant Ogilvie
Director

Please acknowledge and say that this application will be considered
Clarke 3-1-01

Memo
See previous memo 15719/01
Edinburgh must wait. In any case the loan cannot be promised until the V.P. has sanctioned it.
Initialled A.S.G.

5th January 01 letter signed A.S.Cole stating:
"Your application for the loan of the collection in question will be duly considered".

4th January 1901 request from:
DUBLIN MUSEUM
For 'styles of furniture now in vogue on the continent'

Mr Cole,
Colonel Plunkett (the Director of the Dublin Museum) came to London shortly after visiting and was told we would let him know when the furniture would come as soon as the date was fixed.
Unsigned. 6.7.01

Response to this.

Mr Clarke,
Please see previous memo 15719/01
Dublin must wait; in any the loan cannot be promised until the V.P. has sanctioned it.
Signed A.R.g

[During the early months of 1901 the major concern appeared to be an invoice for seventy five francs submitted for packing the artefacts. The archives suggest that this took up a considerable amount of time and energy when decisions regarding loans were to be made. Various memos on this eventually reached the Director for a decision. The final letter in the archive was sent by Alan Cole.]

20th June 1901 request from
BIRMINGHAM INDUSTRIAL POLYTECHNIC EXHIBITION
The request for the New Art Furniture to be placed within the Exhibition mentioned the support that the organisers had received from Mr. Joseph Chamberlain. (I enclose a Prospectus with copies of letters from Our Lord Mayor the Right Honourable J. Chamberlain M.P.) This relate to the Exhibition.

Director
What reply should be sent?
Signed either Mw or WW

Mr Watts
The Collection must remain her until September when it will be sent to Edinburgh and on to Dublin in January.
Appears to be Purdon Clarke's signature .....CH p....

2nd July
Letter
I am directed to express in consequence of other arrangements the Board are unable to comply with your request for a loan from the collection of furniture which you mention.
Signed A. Cole.

10-7-01
Memo-Modification to allow it to go to Birmingham on the way to Edinburgh

Memo to Purdon Clarke.
Re. LOAN TO BIRMINGHAM POLYTECHNIC EXHIBITION

Mr Morant has notified me that the Vice President has promised to arrange for the Donaldson New Furniture Collection to be loaned to the Birmingham exhibition at the time desired. It is necessary that we should send an official notification as soon as possible to them. It is understood that the collection can go to Birmingham on its way to Edinburgh and that there will be no clash of dates.

Purdon Clarke
Mr Watts please note.

2nd July 1901
LIVERPOOL REQUEST
[This was not proceeded with due to technical problems over insurance]

[Evidence to support the fact that the loans to the providences took place]

20th January 1902

With reference to your memorandum to Mr. Purdon Clarke of the 11th July last year I am directed to inform you the collection of 'New Art' furniture etc. now on loan at Edinburgh will be forwarded to Dublin in the first week in February.

Alan Cole.

[There is a draft notice for issue to managers of Exhibition Museums to which they may be sent on loan. A comment from Sir William Albury suggests that this should be shortened]

Dated 29-01
A further note from Albury states:

Mr. Graves I gather you are now taking the matter up. The collection is apparently now on exhibition in Birmingham and a circular should go too I suppose.

[From this it would seem that the provincial visits to Birmingham, Edinburgh and Dublin did take place]

3 DECISION TO EXHIBIT NEW ART FURNITURE IN THE TAPESTRY COURT

Board of Education
Secondary Branch
South Kensington
London S.W.

22nd June 1901.

The Council regret that the beautiful tapestries and furniture arranged, as they were in the Tapestry Court by the late Professor Middleton and the late Mr. William Morris has been concealed or removed to make space for a so called 'New Art Collection' under the title of the 'Donaldson Gift'.

The council can recommend hardly any of these exhibits as useful examples for students. For instance the pictorial treatment of intarsiatura, the concealment of the constructional form by the lines of the design and the character of the wood carving, are all of the kind against which the teaching of the schools is constantly directed and the Council considers that if these pieces of furniture, tapestries, posters etc. are offered to art students and furniture designers as patterns of work to be studied or imitated they will do nothing but harm.

Having regard to the instruction that they would have to consider, "questions relating to the acquisition of objects and the educational development of museums" the Council regret that they did not have an opportunity of expressing an opinion before the collection was accepted or exhibited.

Signed: T.G. Jackson
Sir William Richmond
Onslow Ford,
Walter Crane.

Purdon Clarke (it appeared to be his writing) requested comments on the Council's letter. He summarises it saying the it deprecates the removal of furniture and tapestries which were arranged in the Tapestry Court by the late William Morris and the late Professor Middleton to make space for the Donaldson gift and Gorst responded by stating that he would have objected to the Tapestry Court if he had been in England and that it should not have been where it was. Sir William Albury stated, "It appears from what I hear that there is a good deal of feeling on the point. Should it be possible to have the collection removed to say the space that was used for the Exhibition of Modern Illustration?"

(There is no previous suggestion in the archives relating to this decision. It is at odds with the previous agreement of Donaldson and Clarke that the Bequest should be exhibited at Bethnal Green before the provincial tour)

RAMIFICATIONS OF THE LETTER FROM THE COUNCIL OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF ART

1st July 1901
Memo to Mr. Purdon Clarke.

I see that you contemplate passing the collection of 'New Art' on loan to Edinburgh and Dublin but having regard to the strong views expressed by the Council of the Royal College of Art of the value of most things in it, wouldn't it be better to hold over the proposed loans or at any rate to put forward the proposal in specific terms for consideration by the Board in connection with the Council's views.?

Signed
A. Cole.

The Reply from Purdon Clarke.

I do not think we can prevent this as Dublin and Edinburgh have arranged to exhibit them. But as we are not pledged to any other Museums at present the Council will have an opportunity of considering any further circulation of the collection.

It will be well to take into consideration the fact that the selection was made chiefly from examples to which the international Jury of 1900 awarded the highest honours.

8th July 1901
Further Memo from Purdon Clarke,

There is nothing to prevent a manifesto from the Council from being printed in large type displayed with the collection directing attention to the errors in construction and design.

In the face of the heavy purchases of 'New Art' furniture made by the Continental Museums we cannot afford to ignore it and deny our citizens a chance of seeing it.

Memo Cole to Clarke,

The Vice President has decided that English manufacturing places are to have consideration before Edinburgh and Dublin but every application for the 'New Art' Collection must be brought before him for decision

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