

## Design Essay 1

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Due to the industrial revolution in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, materials such as furniture etc were increasingly being mass-produced in order to meet demand. This led to a decrease in the amount of hand made products, as they would tend to be more expensive than the mass-produced goods. Eventually this resulted in fewer people having the individual artistic skills needed to produce these objects. However, although manufactured goods were cheap they lacked individuality and artistic value; this led to many people rejecting these items.

The Arts and Crafts movement was a reaction to the industrial revolution. There were many types of people involved in this movement, such as designers, architects, poets, authors and musicians. They wanted to reach out from the manufactured market and to re-instate a society, which involved individuality and the need for original design. One method of enforcing this movement was to produce more objects by craftsmen and avoid the use of machinery.

People involved in this movement were influenced and inspired by medieval designs and natural things such as birds and flowers. Many techniques from the past were also used to produce pieces of art, for e.g., stained glass window making, tapestry and weaving.

William Morris was one of the key designers involved in the arts and crafts movement. He believed in designing things as a whole, for e.g. designing and decorating a house altogether as one co-ordinated piece of art.

William Morris re-created and encouraged hand-produced industry in this machine age. He hand crafted variety of products, such as woven goods, hand-dyed textiles, wallpaper and furniture. These were things, which at this period in history were commonly mass-produced in a factory. However, although this encourages much enthusiasm it was not incredibly successful due to the fact that his products were understandably expensive.

William Morris's designs were predominantly influenced by plant life and medieval history and legend. When Morris was young he lived in a mansion in Essex which was surrounded by 50 acres of land, exploring this vast garden allowed him to learn about plant life and become inspired.

Morris went to Oxford University and there he met a painter called Edward Burne-Jones. They became friends and together they took action against the social and artistic disadvantages of the time. After university Morris spent much time experimenting with different types of artistic expression. He tried architecture, painting and poetry.

Later on in his life, the artist set up Morris and co, which was founded in order to raise the standards of craftsmanship and design, as Morris was incredibly passionate about this. The company were renowned for their incredible stained glass projects for churches. They also created individual pieces of wallpaper, furniture and other such items. William Morris once famously said,

‘Have nothing in your house that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful’.

In 1859 William Morris commissioned Philip Webb (a close friend from university) to design the Red house. The Red house was the house William Morris and his wife Jane Burden moved to in 1859. Burne-Jones and Rosseti, also close friends from Oxford helped to make and decorate the furniture for the house. Philip Webb also worked with Morris in the production of stained glass. Morris was very passionate about stained glass and by 1862 he was already involved in this long lasting enthusiasm and was keen to revive this particular type of design. Morris re-interpreted the English greens of English 14<sup>th</sup> century and incorporated muted blues, rubies and yellows into these original and distinctive designs.

William Morris died in 1896 but his firm continued to prosper for a long time afterwards.

One example of a piece of stained glass work by William Morris is ‘minstrel (woman playing Lute

Art Nouveau takes its name from a gallery called 'L'Art Nouveau' which opened in Paris in 1895. The period of this movement lasted was short and lasted from 1890 to 1910. This style of design was influenced by Celtic, Gothic, Rocco and Japanese art. Roots of this style were in England. Designs from this movement often used subtle colours and a clever use of line and space.

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were many technological developments which allowed artists to experiment with new techniques and use materials they may have previously found difficult to use in art, such as iron, steel, concrete and glass. Using these types of materials encouraged artists to experiment with creative styles and experiment with structure. At this time technological developments in printing processes were also being developed and this was very advantageous for graphic designers because it allowed them to experiment with new styles.

Art Nouveau designers took their inspiration from nature. Plants and flowers were the main themes. In different countries the designs varied slightly but this was mainly due to the varied tastes in each place. Other elements which influenced the designers were the female form and insects such as dragonflies. These themes were often just used as a starting point for the designer who could later develop these ideas into imaginative designs.

Louis Comfort Tiffany was a designer who was also very interested in stained glass design and he also looked to nature for inspiration. Many believe that Tiffany was the most outstanding example of an artist of the Art Nouveau style. Like William Morris Tiffany believed that it was important to keep handicraft alive but he also felt that materials made by machinery could achieve beauty in homes for the masses. Tiffany designed a variety of objects in his time including lamps, windows, decorative glassware, ceramics, jewellery and textiles. He was also interested in painting, architecture, interior decoration and occasional photography.

In 1867 Tiffany travelled abroad to Paris, Spain, the Middle East and North Africa. He was inspired by stained glass works of art in medieval European cathedrals in these places and he also gained a wider view of art and a variety of styles of art. Tiffany was very interested in glass as a medium. At this time the Roman and Syrian glass of the 1<sup>st</sup> century had been discovered by archaeologists. He was very enthusiastic about these pieces and his interest in this medium was heightened. Tiffany began to experiment with glass himself in 1872. In 1879 he formed Louis C. Tiffany and associated artists.

Tiffany was fascinated with light and colour and using glass as a medium allowed him to express this passion. He had a very unique style when designing his glass masterpieces. He did not start the outline of his window designs in lead but instead cut pieces of glass to make the design and then threaded the lead patiently and skilfully around the glass. Because of his original style and beautiful creations Tiffany became famous very quickly. By 1882 he had been commissioned to do work in the white house when only three years before he had had no experience in interior design. In 1880 Tiffany applied for patents for three types of glass; glass suitable for tiles and mosaics, window glass and finally glass with a metallic lustre. I.e. the famous favrile art glass.

In the next few years' nature became a more predominant theme for the artist. He then began to explore a number of new techniques and new area of art. Some examples of the types of things he and the other members of his company experimented with were blown glass, metals, enamels, ceramics and jewellery. At this time Tiffany became more popular and gained international fame. His real fame didn't come from the stained glass windows alone but from the shimmering, iridescent qualities of the favrile glass which he began to produce in the 1890's. Using this technique molten glass of different colours was twisted together in an intricate and original manner creating pieces which resembles plants, flowers, lava and marble.

Tiffany tried to produce glass that would show the designs detail by using the colours and glass alone. He aimed to show the folds of fabrics, shadows and light using only the colour in the glass itself. Tiffany invented 'drapery glass'. This was when sheets of glass were styled to represent three-dimensional folds in textiles. Corrugated rollers were moved over the molten glass and tongs were used to try to achieve the desired shape. He also used a technique, which produced gem like lumps of glass by whirling the molten glass round on a rod. These gems would catch the light at different angles and create colourful effects.

Tiffany's work was an exciting breakthrough because his glass windows were created in an entirely original way and differed hugely from previous designers work. His glass windows had amazing use of light, colour and texture.

In 1912 Tiffany created the 'Peacock window' featured below.

William Morris was a prime example of an artist involved in the Arts and crafts movement and he helped to express the significance of the movement at the time. Louis Comfort Tiffany was linked to the Arts and Crafts movement to a certain extent and he also based his designs around plants and natural things and his new and inspired styles convey his involvement in art nouveau. I personally find both of the pieces of artwork I investigate to be particularly stunning. They are both very original and use different styles and a varied use of colour. The detail in each of the windows is spectacular and the flowing natural pattern draws your eye to the elaborate detail in the glass designs. Although each of the artists work is very different I enjoyed the windows they have designed equally.