Everywhere Mr. Champier has visited—New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, the industrial centers of Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, Baltimore, Providence, Paterson, Yonkers, and Grand Rapids—he was met with the most flattering and courteous response. “What we have become, we owe to France,” the artists said to him; “the least we can do is to open the doors of our workshops to you.”

Among the many samples of work produced by the arts industries in America on which Mr. Champier reported, we may mention some curious specimens of ceramics, fragments of kaolin from the state of Ohio as white and as pure as that of Limoges, and, finally, very beautiful vases of the manufactories of Rockrood [sic]. All these objects have been donated to the museum of our Sèvres manufactory.

The Decorative Arts of England,
Evaluated by a Frenchman

I

It is certainly a delicate task for a French writer to offer a categorical judgment on the decorative arts of England at the present time, just as it would seem difficult for an English critic, in a spirit of reciprocity, to formulate a similar appreciation of the decorative arts of France. Whatever talent one may presume on the part of these two judges, and taking into account the erudition or impartiality of which both may be capable, they will certainly encounter the same difficulties arising from the differences of race, the education of their taste, and the manner of their feeling.

Whether or not one likes it, despite their sincerest efforts, the critics will bring to their appreciations the distinctive qualities of their national temperament. If it were merely a question of pure reasoning about aesthetics or the philosophy of art, it would certainly be possible to agree, especially when approached with equal intellectual aptitude. But a work of art is the very opposite of an abstraction: there are many different elements in judgment that it provokes, and one’s impressions are modified according to individual temperament, to the more or less refined education of the senses, and even to the familiarity one has with certain external forms that are typical and symbolic for one country while they remain insignificant elsewhere.
The Orchard (or "The Seasons"), 1890, tapestry after a cartoon by William Morris (with John Henry Dearle), woven at Merton Abbey for Morris and Co., wool, silk, and mohair on cotton warp; 472 × 221 cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
All artistic peoples show in their works a very distinct originality that comes precisely from what they do not see—from the fact that they do not express nature and life as their neighbors do. The greater the intensity and personality in their works, the less they are able to understand or assimilate conceptions different from their own. The particular genius of a race asserts itself with so much more power in its art, as art involves more of its soul, more of its natural instincts, and more of its character. English art, in this case, is therefore defined more precisely in its relation to French art. The former has a very special flavor that creates no point of resemblance to the latter. There are general features that distinguish the two nations. To compare them would be a waste of time and a trouble. To trifle with the qualities of the other would be unjust and puerile. What is to be hoped for is that they might both develop in their normal sense, in accordance with their own traditions, their principles, and the genius of the two peoples.

These reflections are suggested by a close reading of Mr. Day’s very interesting study published in *The Magazine of Art* on the exhibition of French decorative arts which took place recently at the Grafton Gallery. The eminent critic judges my compatriots with an evident sympathy, but his appraisals, made naturally from an English point of view, will definitely not resonate with those at whom they are aimed and will likely pass over their heads without being understood.

In my turn, as a French writer, I will present in this collection the ideas I have drawn from examining the English exhibition of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society that opened last November in the galleries of Regent Street. I do not delude myself into thinking that my opinions will find any more credit with those that they concern. It is not without considerable reservations that I approach such a subject, for a man who lives by the banks of the Seine must have many uncertainties when talking about what goes on by the banks of the Thames! I shall, however, try to express my opinion clearly, and in order to understand how the English decorative arts are inclined to be appreciated in France, I shall begin with a brief historical summary of the two countries’ different destinies and evolutions.

II

In France, beginning in the Middle Ages, the arts were protected and directed by a remarkable ensemble of the clergy, the nobility, and the monarchy. Meanwhile in England, they developed by caprice, intermittently and without method,
torn in different directions according to the spirit that prevailed in the centers of wealth from which they were commissioned. Thus, the Gothic style in England slipped into decadence faster than anywhere else.

It was much worse following Luther’s Reformation. Then art ceased altogether to be part of education and public life in Great Britain. The arts became suspect to the faithful of the new cult, were banned from the temple, and were considered as elements of moral corruption. They were no longer nourished by the deep roots of national life. Neither religious belief, which in all countries and at all times has been the fruitful inspiration of art, nor political passions, which agitate the crowd, could draw art from its torpor. If some lords and even certain kings, like Charles I, had the exceptional grace to admit art into their residences, it was only by considering it an amiable trifle, a futile entertainment. Art’s influence counted for nothing to the masses. The arts were not the common language that everybody understood from the Middle Ages onward, as in France, where painters and “imagiers” freely translated the vices and virtues of human comedy, the pains and joys of the humble or the rich. Little by little, the English public lost the use of art and forgot its meaning. The Puritan spirit and political scruples completed the disaffection of the people from all forms of art by rigorously applying the requirement that art be self-supporting. Since the statesmen of England regarded art as a mere indulgence of luxury rather than an element of general education, they freely encouraged anyone to take pleasure in it, but they would not impose the smallest burden on the majority of the nation in this respect. Such was, if I am not mistaken, the attitude of the English government toward the arts until the middle of this century. What has been the result of all this? Abandoned to themselves, without direction, without support, without roots in the imagination and in the hearts of the masses, the arts were left to the hazards of circumstance. They alternately followed the banal routes of foreign imitation, sometimes under the influence of an aristocratic society that pushed them to archaeological reenactments and sometimes influenced by the pernicious prestige of fashion or of fleeting little seductions. Thus, from the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Society of Dilettanti gave impetus to this movement in favor of studying ancient monuments, from which emerged William Chambers, the author of Somerset House; Flaxman in sculpture; and Josiah Wedgwood in industry. But art cannot be transported like a parcel from one country to another. It was, therefore, a vain and unsuccessful attempt to reproduce the marvelous Greek models and to awaken in a chosen environment a feeling for the Beautiful, which did not spring from the imagination. English art began to turn, like a hamster in the
archaeological wheel, producing pastiches in the styles of Louis XIV, Louis XV, and Louis XVI, burlesque imitations of the Renaissance and the Gothic. Even today, English art is still at this point. It has not found its way. But, at least, now that the symptoms are apparent, one recognizes that it is finding its way. It needs to pull itself together.

Already, during the past two centuries, amidst all the imitative stylistic aberrations, English art has sometimes shown a remarkable tendency to assume a utilitarian character, responding to a secret instinct within the national temperament. Painters and sculptors were long reduced to cultivating only one genre: the portrait. That was all that was necessary to satisfy aristocratic vanities. In the decorative industries at the beginning of the eighteenth century, some pieces of furniture and some goldsmiths’ work had an aspect of solidity, a massive, powerful, and sober ornamentation, which took on the appearance of style and was not devoid of virile originality. But it was only by chance. English taste is made of indecision and contrasts. Whether it has been distorted overlong by the spectacle of models both good and bad, borrowed from almost everywhere, or whether it is only slowly disengaging, relying more on reasoning than on spontaneous feeling, it is certain that English art offers an incredible mixture of happy qualities and sharp defects. In France, when it is said of an object, “It is in the English taste,” then it has a simple, well-proportioned form, a careful execution, and a sober design in exact relation to its purpose. Or it is absolutely horrible, without the slightest feeling of art, consisting of sharp and shrill tones and of contradictory ornamentation. And, indeed, in the streets of London, in sumptuous dwellings, and in clubs, one is struck by this perpetual contradiction. Alongside imposing, plush luxury that is of good quality and of an agreeable harmony, the English tolerate accessories that are so ugly a Parisian would have a nervous breakdown. How can one be found beside the other without English eyes being offended, without a cry of indignation and the rising of disapproval? That is what we cannot explain.

In the absence of spontaneity and of that sensitivity in taste that makes us reject all that is inelegant and inharmonious, England, on the other hand, possesses an admirable good sense when it cares to apply it. For fifty or sixty years, she has shown what reasoning can produce in the applications of art to industry. She has studied a certain number of functional objects and familiar utensils, and subjected them to the simple rules of common sense. She has examined the decoration best suited to the purpose of certain objects and the most appropriate form, and she has discovered a certain number of ideal types. For example,
the English have long sought a handheld water jug that can hold as much water as possible without being vulnerable to tipping over or having a too fragile base, and they devised a stocky, swollen form with an opening proportioned for fast, abundant pouring. England also sought and discovered the best form of teapot that suits her needs. Additionally, jugs, large bowls, bell jars, and also some furniture have been developed, which, if not elegant, at least have an essentially practical character.

In regard to the problem of identifying a definitive style that responds to the needs of modern society and to the needs of mechanization in order to fulfill the demand for cheap manufacturing, it is true that England is currently no better than France at finding a solution. After choosing the Gothic, which the painters of the Pre-Raphaelite school tried to revive, believing that they were being patriotic—just like the French enthusiasts of this style did around 1840—English taste transferred to eighteenth-century fashions and to forms of Chippendale furniture. Then, after the Paris Exposition of 1878, it yielded to the amiable influence of the Japanese and grew tired of being reconquered by Greek types and the Pompeian paintings that still decorate so many English
houses. English taste continues to oscillate between the caprice of amateurs and the impotent ignorance of manufacturers, without a determined direction, without purpose, and without bias.

It was under these conditions that the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society was founded and its fourth exhibition was held. But, before judging its principal works from our French point of view, let us recall who the distinguished founders of this society are, what principles of art they invoke, and by what theories they wish to triumph.

III

The seventy-two personalities who make up the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society and the twenty-one members of the Steering Committee who inspired the movement, including William Morris (the president), Burne-Jones, Walter Crane, Lewis F. Day, Reginald Blomfield, W. R. Lethaby, et al., are not only talented artists but also intellectuals of high culture, eminently educated, with distinguished minds. They know perfectly well what they want. They are not unaware of the difficulties that must be overcome and have the merit of circumscribing the task they have assumed with absolute clarity and frankness.

What I wanted from them (and I visited most of them in London) was to hear, in their own words, confirmation of what I understood of their theories from the books they had published.

They pretend to nothing less than to endow England with a homogeneous style of the decorative arts, established on rational principles and formed from scratch, in order to make a clean sweep of what was merely imitation of the past. Would this goal be achievable if the artist-members of the association followed their own personal fantasies in the midst of the general disorder of ideas that characterize taste for a populace spoiled by the spectacle of incessant pastiches of old works, mercantilism, and the ephemeral caprices of fashion? The Society does not think so. On the contrary, the members are convinced that it is necessary to adopt a common starting point to which all can rally in order to give their combined efforts cohesion and efficiency. And with this conviction, they feel they can redouble their strength by considering what is happening in France. “You see,” they say, “what unfortunate results have been reached in your country for want of attaching yourselves to a doctrine, a precise program that all are strictly obligated to follow. Certainly! It is not talent that is wanting. There
is an abundance of it: brilliant, graceful, and delicate. But these talents are applied, so to speak, to disorganization, lacking method, each one turned in on itself; they are isolated forces, having no link between them. The consequence is that interesting works of art are created here and there, but art receives no new impulse. It does not obey one of these irresistible currents, as it did in glorious epochs past, involving a whole generation of artists of one race; in a word, you have no style!"

And these theorists of aesthetics add:

Since it seemed to us indispensable to restore vigor to the decorative arts in England through discipline, without which we cannot hope for style, and to place ourselves under a flag, what period or type of art should we choose? Should it be antiquity? No, the archaeological attempts have given us sufficient measure of its influence. Should it be the Renaissance? We have tasted this fruit that leaves ashes in the mouth. Should it be the eighteenth century, when a kind of semi-original art flourished on our soil? No, the base was too fragile. We agreed that the art of the Middle Ages was best suited to serve as a starting point for our enterprise. Not that we all share an exclusive admiration for the Middle Ages in the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, nor that we limit our ambitions to a revival of the antiquated forms of that period. No, of course not! But we do believe that to go back to the art of this time is to resume our traditions at their purest source and to inspire us with logical principles of construction and techniques that were not yet distorted. That’s why almost all of our works at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition have an accentuated Gothic air.

Such are, as briefly summarized as possible, the theories of Mr. W. Morris, Mr. Walter Crane, Mr. Day, etc. Each of them defends their views with exemplary zeal and talent, in books, public lectures, or artworks of every kind. Mr. W. Morris, above all, is very active in this pursuit at all times. For more than thirty years he has been at the breach. He had scarcely finished his studies when he and his fellow student, Mr. Burne-Jones, gathered around them a few artists with similar aspirations. By confirming their commitment, they founded a sort of commercial enterprise, a tapestry factory and decoration workshop, where, as in the thirteenth century, the management was in the hands of a “master craftsman,” giving the works a happy unity of inspiration. Wallpaper, woodwork, and stained-glass windows were conceived with a uniformly archaic feeling and executed.
for an expanding clientele of amateurs. They testify to the obstinate will of this philosopher-decorator who emerged from the Pre-Raphaelite school. I saw William Morris in his little house in Hammersmith, surrounded by his books and directing his craftsmen-engravers with fine taste and smiling good humor, just as the illustrious printers Aldus Manutius and Plantin had done in the past. He is indeed just as one would imagine after reading his books. I have here his principal work, in which he develops with abundant precision his seasoned advice on designs suitable for carpets, embroideries, and the various applications of decorative art. Such questions cannot be treated with greater authority, greater knowledge, or more certain judgment. Mr. Morris is a master theorist.

Mr. Lewis F. Day—an industrial designer, a book illustrator, and a professor, I believe, for some time at the school of South Kensington—is also one of the proponents of the doctrines represented by the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society. He has published several books on these questions, the most recent being devoted to the study of the elements of nature in ornament. This is a subject he knows well, since in most of his numerous designs for fabrics and wallpapers he employs motifs that seek to preserve the impression of life and the natural grace of plants and flowers, seeing their flexible stems as an aspect of reality, unlike our French designers. When he says that “it is not enough to choose a motive arbitrarily and to arrange it symmetrically along fancy lines,” Mr. Day is undoubtedly right. One cannot but agree with him when he declares that a professional decorator “must know the structure and the mode of the plant’s growth, just as the painter must know the skeleton and the organization of the animal he wishes to reproduce.” But by assigning a very important place, justifiably, to the science of ornament, to the distribution of patterns, and to the interweaving of harmonious and balanced lines, does Mr. Day give sufficient attention to the sentiments of the decorator who must preserve freshness in his translation of nature? What does science matter if it engenders only coldness? Here we touch upon the fundamental point that seems to separate the theorists of the new English school of decorative art from their French colleagues.

Mr. Walter Crane is on the same path. He leaves aside the question that if one submits the representation of nature to excessively formal rules, one can, under the pretext of decorative science, fall into convention and mannerism. Instead, he presents a rare example of a supple, fertile talent that is applied with amazing ease to all genres: painting, goldsmithery, stained glass, book illustration, tapestry, wallpaper, etc. He is in the prime of life, having been born in Liverpool in 1845, and already enjoys a considerable reputation. He also writes books
in which he airs his theories. I found some very curious pages in his volume *The Claims of Decorative Art*. Proposing that modern art is the victim of machines, he compares it to a new Andromeda, chained to the terrible rock of economic conditions. He maintains that salvation lies in the emancipation of industrial designers, who are currently slaves of the market for cheap manufactures. He says that neither the artist who produces a composition nor the craftsman who executes it is ever in contact with the person for whom the object is destined. How could they create anything with the qualities of a work of art? Of all the artists in our time, only painters have enjoyed the privilege of entering into a direct relationship with the buyer; painting has this advantage, even over architecture.

In France, a country where the finest artists are not those who write theories, Mr. Walter Crane would be called an intellectual. The son of a miniature painter, he began by studying engraving with W. Linton, became passionate about Raphael, then fell in love with the Japanese, whom he abandoned to return to the Renaissance and the Greeks after seeing the magnificent marbles of Lord Elgin at the British Museum. His talent, as we see, has received various influences. His fame came almost immediately after the publication of his picture books for children, of which *The Baby’s Opera* (1877) and *The First of May* (1881) have acquired an extraordinary vogue. Anyone other than Mr. Walter Crane would have been satisfied with such a success, but he has broader ambitions. A decorator at heart, he cannot conceive that a true artist could be content with a single means of expression, and he endeavors to speak the language of all the crafts, as was shown at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition. He is armed for the struggle. As he said to me himself a short time ago in his home at Holland Street, a tranquil retreat bordered by tall leafy trees: “We make war on mercantilism, against those manufacturers who declare themselves ready to deliver all the styles under the sun to the public instantly!”

I shall not go any further in analyzing the character of the chief leaders of the movement that has manifested itself in England for the transformation of the decorative arts. I tried to understand their preferences and penetrate deep into their thoughts. Now let us see their works.

IV

The Exhibition consisted of about five or six hundred works. There was no attempt to show only recent productions, for among that number there were compositions of masters such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti, who was already dead,
and cartoons for stained-glass windows and tapestries by Mr. Burne-Jones and Mr. W. Morris, which were over twenty-five years old. But the Committee of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society had concentrated its efforts on combining compositions conceived within their program, the tendencies of which I indicated above, and which did not, on the whole, strike a discordant note. In this, the show was perfectly successful.

A whole room was devoted to drawings for book illustration. There one could appreciate the peculiar feeling that at present inspires so many English artists. Whether it be vignettes to adorn the text of modern novels, children’s stories, or even ancient authors who were more or less famous, the effect is always of a delicate archaism, which, one would say, borrowed vaguely from the miniatures of the fifteenth century. It is a calculated naiveté, imprinted with some mysticism, which, in most cases, does not agree with the subject, and which can render the work conventional and artificial. It is certainly fair to put the drawings of D. G. Rossetti on the *Legend of the Sangreal*, *The Love of Dante*, or *Saint Cecilia* (catalogue nos. 333–38) into this category. But these are, nevertheless, truly masterly works with a profound poetry, an appropriateness of interpretation, and a sincerity of emotion that is admirable. The composition executed to illustrate the poems of Tennyson, dated 1857, in which we see St. Cecilia seated before the organ, her eyes downcast, while a genius in the form of a young man places a kiss on her forehead, is a pure marvel. Another drawing shows us the saint on her knees. What nervous and ardent fervor is translated in the pretty movement of her whole body, which is suggested under the folds of her long garment! D. G. Rossetti is a first-rate artist. It is unfortunate that in France he is almost ignored. But he is an exceptional artist who belongs to the period of romanticism. To return to the contemporary English illustrators, their craving for archaism is tainted with a little mannerism. Take Mr. Lewis F. Day, for example, whose drawing is so correct, so learned, and who has composed floriated designs and book covers in a pleasant Renaissance style. But why, when illustrating the first page of the catalogue of the British section at the Chicago Exhibition, has he adopted a principle of decoration that one would think of being from the sixteenth century, with an intertwined pattern of roses and thistle leaves in three divisions? What does the sixteenth century have to do with the Chicago Exhibition? I must admit that I do not much like the most recent illustrations in color by Mr. Walter Crane, especially those in which we see the heroes of mythology engaged in their exploits. Hercules has the physique of a gentleman and carries his club with the familiar elegance of our sportsmen, who walk, as is fashionable, with a cane in their hand—but one weighing 60 kilos. There is no truth in
the gestures, no nobility in the attitudes; it is a drawing made without a model. And, begging pardon of the author, if there is any spirit in the compositions, it escapes us. Other illustrators, such as Louis Davis, R. Hallward, Heywood Sumner, Henry Ryland, and Fairfax Murray, exhibited florets and ornate letters that in France would not be disavowed by the artists of our “Symbolist” school. One might think that artists who would normally be reading the Lives of the Saints are now interpreting fairy tales. I recall, not without pleasure, a composition of Mr. Hallward for a children’s story, Love One Another.  Here we can recognize landscapes where there are only faded tones, pale greens, light-blue skies, orange-yellow grounds, and many young people who all have red hair—a ferocious red. Ah! Red hair, how they seem to love it in England! In all this art there is much preciousness and a certain grace that is sometimes subtle, but there is no vigor and masculine simplicity of observation that springs from the direct and healthy study of nature.

In order to assess the true value of the movement that the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society seeks to impart to the decorative arts, it is most important to examine its architectural applications. Indeed, a draftsman may execute a likeable illustration or a sculptor model a graceful trinket, and while their results may not be without interest, their work cannot modify the general direction of art. This is precisely one of the grievances that English critics invoke, without reason, against contemporary French art. “You have,” they say to us, “only a delicious art of whatnots.” Decoration that has a fixed destination in the home is of a very different significance: by the originality of its lines, it can bring about a radical change in the construction or in the external appearance of an object. It is from this that a style is constituted. It is more difficult to find a new type of furniture than to conceive of ingenious ornamentation in a piece of goldsmith’s work. But the day that a new type of furniture is discovered by an artist and is accepted by the public, one will immediately see all the decorative accessories change in unison: drapes, tapestries, woodwork, ceramics, glassware, jewelry and goldsmiths’ work, and even clothes will transform themselves in their general lines and coloring so as to remain in harmony with the principal motif.

The Arts and Crafts Exhibition was an expression of the efforts made by the members of this Society to find furnishings in keeping with the trends of renewal, whose original principles I have sought to indicate. One showed a buffet, another a table; this one a seat, that one an overmantel; each one plays his part. All are faithful to the program of simplicity, logic, and rationalism that seem to be the watchwords of the group. In this respect one can only approve,
although the desire to be simple by going back to Gothic roots in order to better recapture good traditions of truth has led to an excess of sobriety, a dreary poverty in the materials employed, and a somewhat rudimentary dryness. For example, consider the piano executed from Mr. Cave’s drawings. It is of rough oak, its silhouette lacks in grace, and it is less ornate than the most modest wooden chests of peasants from the Middle Ages. Frankly, it is too monastic, and there is no modern drawing-room that can accommodate such a piece of furniture. It is true that the piano is there only to show us an innovation: its front feet extend to a height of about one meter above the keyboard and serve as candleholders for illuminating both the pianist and the musical score on the stand. The idea may be good, but the realization is deplorable. Mr. Ch. Spooner’s writing cabinet, of which some details are carefully studied, is equally unpleasant. Similarly, Mr. Voysey’s “lady’s work cabinet” is very heavy in form, quite massive, and coarse. Much better is the work (an escritoire) of Mr. Mervyn Macartney; its legs and feet are elegant. Two men are distinguished among all
the others for the qualities of their furniture: two architects, I believe, named Reginald Blomfield and H. Lethaby. From the first, we saw a mahogany dining room buffet with flower inlays of the most distinguished taste. He also exhibited a rosewood seat with originally arranged arms and, above all, a “drawings cabinet,” the merit of which rests in the delicacy of the profiles, the skilful encrustation of light walnut and ebony ornaments, and the execution of the drawers. These drawers are lined internally with a pink wood, silky and velvety like the skin of a fruit, to make clear the value of the engravings that will be enclosed within! The works of Mr. Lethaby do not have this character of savory perfection and wise restraint to the same degree. But there is a desire for originality and the talent of a colorist. I do not care for his wooden chest adorned with baroque sheep. On the other hand, his “nursery door” is an amusing fantasy, painted entirely in dark green within a framework of blacks, decorated with landscapes in monochrome tones whose perspective disappears as it becomes confused with the dyed texture of the wood. We know what role the fireplace overmantel plays in English houses: it is the most important piece of furniture, with superimposed shelves, mirrors, and small niches reserved for “objets d’art.” Mr. Lethaby has exhibited one of them that is charming and of a somewhat feverish elegance characterized by its oppositions of curved lines and very frail consoles. The marble sheets, alternately white and gray, which decorate the flat parts at the top, contribute to this effect.

There is a widespread opinion in France that the English have a marked preference for colors in sharp and garish tones. If this were true in the past, it must be said that such taste has long disappeared. On the contrary, what the English seek, and what they prefer in tapestries and carpets for their apartments, are broken shading and muted colors that are a little bland: blues mixed with green and gray, faded yellows, dull lilacs, and whites rubbed with gray and rose. To a Frenchman’s eyes, even one familiar with the silvery grays and the dissolved light that our modern impressionists make prominent in our exhibitions, these attenuated colors have something sad and sickly about them. These are the ones that abound in the wall hangings of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society. The magnificent highly finished tapestries from Mr. William Morris’s workshops, the cartoons of which have been furnished by Mr. Burne-Jones, are worthy of admiration. One abandons oneself entirely to their imposing charm whenever one emerges from the first surprise caused by the strange novelty of the coloring within an overall deep tonality, in which the clear notes of the flowers burst forth, standing out vividly against the dark background. The work representing *Sir Galahad and the Holy Graal* is a composition of great allure. The
drawing is in perfect harmony with the execution, and we recognize the science of technique Mr. Morris brings to such a work. We shall return to Mr. Burne-Jones and his penetrating poetry when speaking of the stained-glass windows. Among the designs for fabrics, we should mention first of all those of Mr. Day, who puts his mark on everything he touches. He creates a cleverly balanced arrangement of patterns of foliage and flowers: a conventional interpretation of reality with personal feeling nevertheless. It is too archaic in my opinion, but very firmly inscribed. I will also mention again various interesting embroideries, one of which, *The Vision of Dante*, is an over-door made from a drawing by Mr. Walter Crane. On the left, one sees Dante with a long red cloak, in front of which, in the midst of dark foliage, the terrible animals pass: a tiger in golden-yellow silk spotted with black, a wild lion, a black fox showing its fangs, and so on. Mr. Burne-Jones has also given a singular composition for translation into embroidery, employing violent tones that recall certain works of our compatriot.
Mr. Gustave Moreau. One sees a genius of colossal scale dominating a whole world of female characters, its two large red wings spread out over the blue background of a seascape. The embroidery drawing by Mr. Heywood Sumner (no. 145), *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, is certainly bizarre, even unacceptable, but the eye is captivated nevertheless by the singularity of the coloring and the somewhat perverse charm of the dancers, whose robes illuminate the night with phosphorescent gleams. One can also praise the curious work of the pupils from the Royal School of Needlework, such as a cream-colored satin portiere (no. 162) copied from an ancient work attributed to Mary Stuart, in which clusters of flowers and fruit, strawberries and grapes, are embroidered in the coils of an arabesque with a very vivid intelligence of effect. Finally, I would be remiss if I overlooked the dessert napkins, embroidered after designs by Mr. Walter Crane (nos. 158–59), the portiere (166) by Mr. Aymer Vallance, and the satin piano back (198) by Mr. Reginald Hallward, embroidered with flowers and fruit.

English artists generally have a high opinion of their achievements in stained glass. They even think quite sincerely that nobody can dispute their superiority in this field. There is no doubt that they exhibit remarkable qualities and an excellent understanding of ornament and the use of glass, although their coloring is generally a little too monotonous and cold. I have not been able to judge whether further progress has been made in this field in recent times, for there was no executed work, only a large number of important cartoons for stained-glass windows. All the brilliant and warm talent of Dante Gabriel Rossetti is to be found in his series of six drawings for stained glass composed in 1852, which tell the story of Saint George. The one in which we see Saint George killing the monster, whose hideous tail is already coiled round the saint’s body, is superb in energy, power, and color. But the triumphant figure in this section of the exhibition is undoubtedly Mr. Burne-Jones, who has no less than seven or eight vast compositions, such as the *Martyrdom of St. Stephen*, the *Burning Bush*, the angels *Gabriel*, *Michael*, and *Raphael*, *Saint Paul in Athens*, and *Christ Blessing the Little Children*. In all of these, the great artist, adept at expressing the most subtle rarities of his poetic dreams and the exquisite seduction of his profoundly original modeling, knows how to revive the interest of the most mundane religious types. After having once seen the cartoons of his three angels, *Gabriel*, *Michael*, and *Raphael*, for example, is it possible to forget these striking figures, who carry within them the finest characteristics of English art? The most strangely refined and most charming faculty of the genius of Mr. Burne-Jones imbues all his creations with an intense, sharp, almost painful grace, so that his images are embedded in the depths of the soul. The angel Gabriel is adorable: his long
brown coat, which he raises with a feminine gesture, is accompanied by a violet-faced mantle that leaves uncovered the dark-red sleeves of his tunic. Under his pretty blue helmet, adorned on the side with a red shell, pass a few locks of his fair hair, cut short. If we did not see the two large wings, whose green tones are lost in the thick green of the background landscape, we might believe, in contemplating this graceful face with such tender eyes, that we are in the presence not of a symbolic figure of Paradise, but of an earthly daughter of Albion, a mystical flower of virtue and beauty. And it is indeed this combination of precision and poetry, of human reality in the most vaporous conceptions, which remains one of the salient features of English art. Alongside the works of Mr. Burne-Jones, the other cartoons for stained-glass windows lose their interest. Yet there are many that have merit. Such are those of Mr. Henry Holliday in *The Creation* for the Church of St. Savior; those of Mr. Walter Crane, such as *Christ Baptizing St. Peter* and *Christ and the Widow*; those of Mr. Selwyn Image, who composed stained-glass windows to excellent effect for private dwellings; and those of Mr. Madox Brown, Mr. Whall, etc.

Examining in detail all the other series of objects exhibited by the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society might seem tedious to the reader. I will therefore abridge and confine myself to indicating briefly the real pleasure I took in seeing the drawings for wallpaper by Mr. Lewis F. Day (nos. 233–34); by Mr. Sidney Haward (no. 420), who has been very skilfully inspired by the Japanese; and by Mr. Heywood Sumner (no. 235), who took the vineyard as the theme of a curiously arranged decoration. Additionally, I enjoyed a few glass works, various jewels, and a number of pieces of wrought iron, as well as entrance locks, door bolts, etc. (no. 419) of the utmost simplicity but of very pure taste, which were drawn by M. A. S. Dixon and executed by the Birmingham Guild of Handicraft at very modest prices. This is the record of the works I thought worthy of attention.

**Translator’s Notes**

1 This is presumably the article “French Decorative Art in London,” *The Art Journal* 56 (1894): 5–6.

2 This was the fourth exhibition of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, held at the New Gallery, 121 Regent Street, from October 2nd through December 2nd, 1893.


4 There were 516 works listed in the catalogue, although some numbers consisted of several items. *Arts & Crafts Exhibition Society: Catalogue of the Fourth Exhibition, New Gallery, 121 Regent St.* (London, 1893).

5 No. 362, as by “Mrs. Hallward,” in *Arts & Crafts Exhibition Society: Catalogue* (London, 1893).