THE INFLUENCE OF ARTS AND CRAFTS IDEOLOGY IN SOUTH AFRICA

Jeanne van Eeden
Department of Visual Arts and History of Art
University of Pretoria
0001 Pretoria

Die invloed van "Arts and Crafts"-ideologie in Suid-Afrika

Hierdie artikel bied 'n oorsig van "Arts and Crafts"-ideologie en toon dat dit 'n sterk invloed uitgeoefen het wat ver buite die spesifieke Britse en negentiende-eeuse oorspronge daarvan gestrek het. Oor die algemeen het "Arts and Crafts" 'n waardering vir die plaaslike en traditionele kunsbeoefening gestimuleer. Terselfdertyd het sy ideale van sosiale opheffing 'n belangrike impak op ontwerpetiek vroeg in die twintigste eeu veroorsaak toe baie van "Arts and Crafts" se gedagtes deur Modernisme opgeneem is. Hierdie artikel poog om aan te toon hoe dat "Arts and Crafts" gedagtes dikwels die implisiete onderliggende begroting vir artistieke en argitektoniese ondernemings in Suid-Afrika sedert ten minste die einde van die negentiende eeu gevorm het.

This article presents a summary of Arts and Crafts ideology and shows that it exerted an influence far beyond its specifically British, nineteenth century origins. In general Arts and Crafts generated an appreciation for the local and the traditional. At the same time, its ideals of social upliftment had a significant impact on design ethics early in the twentieth century, when many of its beliefs were incorporated by Modernism. It is shown in this article how Arts and Crafts notions often formed the implicit grounding for artistic and architectural enterprises in South Africa since at least the end of the nineteenth century. The article concludes with a short review of the relevance of Arts and Crafts ideology in contemporary South Africa, and suggests that in their applicability today many of William Morris's initial thoughts have once again become pertinent and indeed viable.

Introduction

The main tenets of the Arts and Crafts movement of the nineteenth century will be examined

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in this article,\(^1\) and it will be argued that precisely because its ideological stance was as strong, if not stronger than its stylistic agenda, it was able to exert influence well beyond its historical confines. It will be suggested that although Arts and Crafts initially appears insularly British, it was able to spread outside Britain with surprising ease and adaptability. Some aspects of the influence of Arts and Crafts ideology in South Africa will then be briefly surveyed and a few exponents will be examined. Finally, the question will be raised whether or not there has been a revival of these ideals in the late twentieth century. The validity of the hypothesis that there has indeed been a revival may be defended by referring to the essential nature of Arts and Crafts, which was an engaging mixture of the regressive and the progressive.\(^2\) Perhaps equally relevant today is John Ruskin's belief:

that national style reflect[s] the moral values of a society: if a society [is] unable to produce good design then the fault [lies] in its ethical system — a nation's art [is] a symptom of its moral health.\(^3\)

**The origins of Arts and Crafts ideology in Victorian Britain**

Arts and Crafts was initiated partly as a reaction against the endless eclecticism of Victorian design, and partly because since at least the 1830s designers, architects, theorists and critics such as Ruskin had been protesting against the negative effects of mechanisation on both aesthetics and social life.\(^4\) This specifically Victorian context is important in understanding the origins of Arts and Crafts, because it encouraged idealized, romanticised notions of Medievalism that were implicitly opposed to industry, capitalism and alienation.

In many respects Ruskin's beliefs were fundamental to the ideology of the Arts and Crafts movement. Ruskin believed that mechanisation had led to dehumanisation and to the concomitant debasement of life, art and craftsmanship in general. In his essay "On the nature of Gothic" in *The stones of Venice* (1853), Ruskin associated his ideas on art and architecture with ideals of social reform. He advocated communal, unspecialised handwork and craft instead of mechanisation, and in defense of this championed the "Gothic style.\(^5\)

Ruskin believed that craft and design could, and indeed ought to, create symbolical national identity and unity, specifically by means of visible manifestations such as in decorative schemes for public architecture.\(^6\) As will be suggested later in this article, the belief that design could be used "to express a country's identity [which was known as] romantic nationalism"\(^7\) was extremely important when Arts and Crafts's aesthetics and

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1. This article is based on a paper delivered at the annual conference of the South African Association of Cultural History in Pretoria on 30-6-1995. The theme of the conference was "Two hundred years of British influence in South Africa". It is also fitting that 1996 marks the centenary of the death of William Morris, the founder of the Arts and Crafts Movement in Britain.
2. In the sense that it combined a progressive social agenda with a reverence for a revivalist Medieval style, coupled with a renewed interest in Medieval ethics regarding art and craft.
5. H. Osborne (ed.), *An illustrated companion to the decorative arts*, p. 49.
ideology were disseminated outside Britain.  

William Morris

William Morris (1834-1896) read Ruskin's essay "On the nature of Gothic" whilst at Oxford, and identified ardently with most of Ruskin's ideas. Morris also challenged the then current ideals of industrial progress, and believed that the negative effects of capitalism could be suppressed through the alternative of handwork. The founding of the firm Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. in 1861 in London was instrumental in establishing the Arts and Crafts movement: Morris employed artists such as D.G. Rossetti, F. Madox Brown and E. Burne-Jones who designed stained glass, furniture, metalware, tiles, textiles and wallpapers that reflected Morris's medievalizing ethos and aesthetics.

It is important to stress that Arts and Crafts was immediately labelled a movement and not a merely a style, thereby admitting its underlying political or philosophical stance, which was consciously based on social and moral considerations. Morris envisaged a dual purpose for Arts and Crafts: not only was it opposed to the unchallenged expansion of industry and its encroachment on the workman's way of life, he also believed it could be used to improve the conditions of working people. Morris thus felt that design held remedial potentials and that life "could be transformed by design and thus provide relief from alienation in an industrial society". Morris's lectures and writings on design reveal his twofold "conviction that a campaign for the renewal of art also involved political commitment to the Socialist cause", as reflected in his famous maxim: "art made by the people, and for the people, as a happiness to the maker and the user".

Morris's ideal of social, economic, moral and aesthetic upliftment through handcraftsmanship and the production of well-designed, affordable, everyday objects has also been discernible in South Africa, and makes Arts and Crafts ideology relevant even today.

Arts and Crafts and feminism

Arts and Crafts ideology furthermore encouraged incipient feminism since women gained entry to the public sphere of design directly through Arts and Crafts. This happened initially because women formed the nucleus of Pre-Raphaelite iconography, whose Medieval fantasies included the image of the woman at work upon her embroidery. As a consequence of this the decorative and minor arts such as art pottery, which were seen as delicate, painstaking and refined, "were thought by the Victorians to be peculiarly suited to female talents ... and

10. These artists had been linked with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, which had also espoused an interest in the Middle Ages and the ideals of non-specialization.
11. H. Osborne, An illustrated companion to the decorative arts, p. 49.
12. I. Ancombe, A woman's touch. Women in design from 1860 to the present day (Harmondsworth, 1985), p. 16.
14. H. Osborne, An illustrated companion to the decorative arts, p. 49.
15. H. Osborne, An illustrated companion to the decorative arts, p. 49.
... a new profession for women emerged".16 Women embraced their part in the Arts and Crafts movement with alacrity because it allowed them to be active, creative and professional, and to engage in respectable work. Walker contends that the Arts and Crafts movement "provided women with alternative roles, institutions and structures which they then used as active agents in their own history".17

Many women adopted skills such as embroidery, book-binding, art pottery and china-painting,18 which as a result became entrenched as gendered activities. Famous women of the day such as Jane Morris and her daughter May executed embroidery for Morris & Co., and by their example they created a new sphere of professional activity for the middle-class woman.19

Arts and Crafts was definitely associated with liberalism and education and could therefore espouse the cause of women who were beginning to aspire to greater freedom and equality. Upper and middle class women in Britain and America formed organizations to teach and market crafts, "usually for the benefit of less fortunate members of their sex".20

Arts and Crafts: ideology and style

The ideals of Arts and Crafts are well-known, and include the following: the morality of hard work; the ideals of handwork as opposed to mechanisation; workshops reminiscent of Medieval guilds in idyllic, rural surroundings; the single person conceiving and making one object from start to finish; classlessness; individualism; honesty of production and construction; fitness for purpose; experimentation; anti-materialism; joy in labour; and non-specialisation. Furthermore, it advocated truth to materials; the use of local materials such as English oak; regionalism based on vernacular tradition and inspiration from nature; the use of natural materials and vegetable dyes; avoidance of unnecessary applied ornament; anti-urbanism; closeness to nature; organic unity between architecture and natural environment; and above all, honesty and simplicity. Arts and Crafts abhorred Victorian eclecticism, and its own initial Gothic revivalism was expanded to include Elizabethan and Jacobean motifs, eighteenth century Queen Anne, Neo-classicism and Japanese influences.

It has been recognized that Morris’s lofty ideals of handwork and refusal to accept the machine made his goods more expensive, and therefore they could not actually be "for the people".21 By stating that he did not want art to be only for the few, Morris was in fact admitting the need for mass-production,22 and it is undeniable that he did not confront the economic potentials of machine production. Gradually the idioms of Arts and Crafts became separated from working class ideals, and by the 1870s Arts and Crafts appealed to the avant-garde middle classes: according to Anscombe "it was a sign of modernity to furnish one’s home with Morris & Co. rugs, chintzes and simple 'Sussex' dining chairs, demonstrating that

16. I. Anscombe, A woman's touch. Women in design from 1860 to the present day, p. 11-12.
18. I. Anscombe, A woman's touch. Women in design from 1860 to the present day, p. 17.
19. I. Anscombe, A woman's touch. Women in design from 1860 to the present day, pp. 21-22, 33.
20. E. Cumming & W. Kaplan, The Arts and Crafts Movement, pp. 152,154. Once again, traces of this ideal are relevant in contemporary South Africa.
22. I. Anscombe & C. Gere, Arts and Crafts in Britain and America, p. 64.
one espoused art, romance and social concern".\textsuperscript{23}

Morris encouraged the individual expression of the craftsman, yet in many respects production, especially of handblocked wallpapers and textiles, was monotonous, and infinitely better suited to the machine.\textsuperscript{24} Unfortunately, only a small minority of British craftsmen were indeed directly influenced by Morris's high ideals. Yet his humanitarian concern with the welfare of the worker was cardinal, specifically his notions regarding work satisfaction and the provision of recreation facilities for leisure hours,\textsuperscript{25} a concern which had a definite influence on Bauhaus ideology, for example, and on Modernist design ideals in general.

The Arts and Crafts movement stimulated the founding of numerous similar craft guilds in Britain, Europe and America, and its stylistic influences can be seen in Art Nouveau (ca. 1890-1910) and the Omega Workshops (1913-1919).\textsuperscript{26} It is crucial to realize that above all Morris wanted to show people that craft and craftsmen were worthy of protection\textsuperscript{27} and that craft, perhaps to a greater extent than art, could be enlisted as a tool in moral reform.\textsuperscript{28} According to Pevsner, Morris "made young painters and architects in all countries turn to craft or design ... [and] directed them towards helping people in their everyday lives".\textsuperscript{29}

Morris encouraged interaction between artists and manufacturers,\textsuperscript{30} and although Modernism firmly established the binary hierarchy of art over craft, this was an irrelevant distinction for Morris, who in many respects made it possible to translate the craft ethic into the ideology of Modernism.\textsuperscript{31} The Bauhaus, for example, attempted to extend craft values to industrial design, and in America F. Lloyd Wright averred in "The art and craft of the machine" (1901) that "the machine could be controlled to fulfil the Arts and Crafts humanistic vision of design".\textsuperscript{32} It was primarily Arts and Crafts's desire for better standards, by implication also in mass production, that influenced the ideology of Modernism. Thus in early twentieth century Europe, under the influence of Arts and Crafts, an "anti-industrial stance was modified ... into an acceptance of mechanization in pursuit of aesthetic and social ideals".\textsuperscript{33} During the Second World War Arts and Crafts ideas were enlisted to produce a range of "Utility" furniture in England,\textsuperscript{34} and craft revivals have proliferated worldwide since the 1960s, although now in a Postmodern, post-industrial paradigm. The ramifications of this will be examined later in this article.

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23. I. Anscombe, A woman's touch. Women in design from 1860 to the present day, p. 20.
26. The Omega Workshops was founded by Roger Fry in July 1913 in London. It was an extension of Bloomsbury Group ideas into design, as well as a conscious continuation of Morris' thoughts. The South African artist Francois Krige was a member of the Omega Workshops for a while.
27. I. Anscombe & C. Gere, Arts and Crafts in Britain and America, p. 47.
29. N. Pevsner, The sources of modern architecture and design, p. 21.
30. I. Anscombe & C. Gere, Arts and Crafts in Britain and America, p. 64.
32. H. Osborne(ed.), An illustrated companion to the decorative arts, p. 50.
34. J. Heskett, Industrial design, p. 196.
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Figure 1. Morris wallpaper in Melrose House being uncovered during recent restoration.
Photograph: Melrose House.

Figure 2. Venus Graham, design for printed fabric, ca. 1925.
From: The Common Room Magazine, Summer 1925.
The spread of Arts and Crafts

Already by the late nineteenth century Arts and Crafts spread to many countries and proved its adaptability, although in some instances only its superficial stylistic elements were used to emulate a hand-made vernacular look. Countries such as Germany, Austria, Hungary, America, Holland, the Scandinavian countries, (and ultimately South Africa) were able to develop their own brand of Arts and Crafts, based on unique circumstances and contexts. As already noted, "the idea that every country should have an architecture that reflected its own particular history, geography and climate was central to the Arts and Crafts movement", and this made Arts and Crafts ideas suitable for appropriation by other countries. Ruskin and Morris's desire for "An English art for England" could therefore in principle be equally applicable to other countries, since they had essentially stressed the ideas of vernacularism and national styles.

Obviously South Africa never experienced the Middle Ages, but I would suggest that Arts and Crafts encouraged the search for appropriate images to encapsulate a burgeoning South African consciousness and style in the early twentieth century. It is thus possible to a certain extent to bring together two seemingly opposing strands in South African history, namely that of a British-inspired Arts and Crafts, and a South African nationalism as championed by people such as H. Pierneef, E. Mayer and G. Moerdijk.

Arts and Crafts in South Africa

Although the dissemination of Arts and Crafts does not seem to have been adequately researched yet, it appears to have come to South Africa via England and Holland, firstly directly by way of imported goods, and secondly through the influence of architects, designers and merchants who came to South Africa from Europe. In most respects Arts and Crafts developed approximately twenty years later in South Africa than in Europe, and indeed its influence was primarily felt only from the second and third decades of the twentieth century onwards.

The remainder of this article will be devoted to an examination of a few exponents of Arts and Crafts ideology in South Africa, mainly from the Pretoria region, and its possible revival and relevance for design today will be pointed out. Where applicable the issue of national style will be addressed, and I shall suggest that much craft in South Africa has been executed in the spirit of Arts and Crafts, though perhaps often unwittingly.

A typical example of the early use of imported Arts and Crafts is seen in houses such as Melrose House, built and furnished mainly in a conservative Victorian style. The use of fashionable Morris wallpapers, which were imported from England, was common. These were often subsequently papered over as taste and style changed (Fig. 1), but those in Melrose House have recently been restored to their original where possible by way of modern reproductions. We also find quite a few examples of textiles designed in a definite Morris style, for example in the work of M. Herring and Venus Graham, as late as the 1920s, at the Durban Art School. (Fig. 2).

Arts and Crafts was also popularised by the sale of goods and furniture, and in this

36. E. Waldeck, Oral communication (Pretoria), 12-6-1995.
respect the merchant T.W. Beckett (who was an immigrant from Britain) was of great importance in Pretoria and Johannesburg. His first store in Pretoria opened in 1875, and his new Furniture Emporium in Church Street was opened in 1898. In a newspaper article from 1898 Beckett said that his purpose was to develop local industry, especially cabinet making, by using Transvaal stinkwood, and in this ideal he was in sympathy with Morris who advocated the use of local materials. From extant examples and catalogues it would appear that simplified patterns of Morris furniture gave Beckett his inspiration, comparable to Liberty and Co. in England who had also appropriated and adapted many of Morris's designs for a larger market.

In the first decade of the twentieth century the Central South African Railways sponsored an Arts and Crafts Guild for its employees. It was very well supported and held regular exhibitions in Pretoria and Johannesburg. Similarly, the Johannesburg Trades, Arts and Industries Exhibition regularly exhibited "arts, crafts and other handwork". Apart from these and other scattered accounts, one of the best examples of using craft as part of a process of upliftment was to be found in Emily Hobhouse's Schools for Weaving and Spinning, the first of which was founded in 1905, which were both philanthropic and educational. It is ironic that one of the reasons for the closure of the schools was that hand-made goods could no longer compete with the prices of cheaper factory-made goods.

**Arts and Crafts at Olifantsfontein**

Some interesting chapters in South African Arts and Crafts, which I want to examine in some detail, were heralded by the founding of the Transvaal Potteries in 1907. This was initiated by the efforts of Sir Thomas Cullinan of the Consolidated Rand, Brick, Pottery and Lime Company, Olifantsfontein. Cullinan sent his son Rowland Vivian to Stoke-on-Trent to study the techniques of pottery, and as a result of this Sir Thomas "had contracted to bring a band of trained potters from Britain to the plant [at Olifantsfontein] under the management of Harold Emery, a skilled potter who was to manage the works". The team included a group of decorators, mainly women, such as Mrs. Taylor, employed as a "Paintress" (who incidentally earned less than the men who did the same work).

In true Arts and Crafts spirit, cottages and dormitories were built for the potters, forming the "potters' village", and a cricket ground and football field were provided for recreation. As part of a policy of upliftment, about eighty South African orphans of the

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38. There are many extant examples of Morris chairs that were made by local carpenters from indigenous woods.
Second Anglo-Boer War were taken in as "learners" or apprentices; the boys were paid £1 per month and the girls 15s. But the apprenticeship scheme failed. According to Cartwright:

The children ... found they faced a dreary round of work as fetchers and carriers to the potters ... Most of them were far too young to have developed the powers of concentration the work called for. 46

Clay for the Transvaal Potteries was initially imported from Britain, but later local sources were employed, and earthenware and tiles which had a recognisable yellowish tinge 47 were manufactured, as seen for example in the dinner service made for General Louis Botha. Despite exhibiting at the Industries Exhibition in 1909, 48 the Transvaal Potteries was not financially successful: the Transvaal inhabitants did not take to locally produced goods, preferring goods imported from England, and British and German mass-produced ware was cheaper. In spite of Cullinan's efforts to interest the Government in support for the industry, the Transvaal Potteries closed down in 1914 and the British potters returned to England. 49

In many respects this experiment had been true to Arts and Crafts ideas, which can of course be ascribed directly to the fact that the craftspeople had been brought from England.

The Ceramic Studio

The second chapter in the Olifantsfontein story had its origins at the Durban Art School where John Adams arrived in 1915 from England and established pottery as a new subject. 50 Adams held ideas that are strongly reminiscent of Arts and Crafts. For example, he believed that:

there is no need to emphasise the finer feeling in having a man-made instead of a machine-made [object], and the value such efforts have in contributing toward national self-respect and a national expression through the arts. 51

Four of Adams' Durban Art School students went on to study pottery at the Royal College of Art in London. When Gladys Short, one of these students, returned to Durban in 1923 she opened her own studio, together with Marjorie Johnstone. 52 The latter was befriended by Roland Cullinan, who suggested in 1925 they move to the vacant works in Olifantsfontein. They were joined there by Joan Methley, and set up The Ceramic Studio. In 1927 they were joined by Audrey Frank, also a graduate of the Durban Art School and the Royal College of

46. A.P. Cartwright, Diamonds and clay, pp. 86-87.
49. A.P. Cartwright, Diamonds and clay, pp. 87-89.
Figure 3. Marjorie Johnstone of the Ceramic Studio.

Figure 4. Audrey Frank’s tiles *Ships that called at the Cape*, Johannesburg Station, 1928-1931.
Art in London.

From the start the Ceramic Studio was successful and their tiles, modelled faience and colour-glazed garden ornaments\textsuperscript{53} were sought after, and are still considered collector's items today. In many respects the Ceramic Studio was more progressive than similar enterprises in for example England or America: in those countries women were exclusively used to paint, trace and decorate the finished pottery, they did not throw their own pots, and very few ran their own studios.\textsuperscript{54} In the 1920s Gladys Short and Audrey Frank threw their own pots,\textsuperscript{55} and each piece was glazed and decorated by hand. (Fig. 3). The fact that a group of women, supported by miscellaneous helpers, successfully ran the enterprise naturally attracted much attention, and the studio was inundated by curious visitors. The isolated, eccentric way of life of the "girls", as they were called, was commented on in the press. The South African Woman's Weekly wrote, for example: "They live on the property in a workman's cottage, which for all its external crudeness, has an interior which was recently described as a 'perfect Chelsea studio'",\textsuperscript{56} thereby perpetuating the Bohemian, Bloomsbury construction of artistic creativity.

The Ceramic Studio received many commissions for painted tiles for Government buildings,\textsuperscript{57} largely due to the influence of the Government architect J.S. Cleland.\textsuperscript{58} One of their major commissions was for 11,000 tiles for the Johannesburg Railway Station Building, which they produced at the same time as Pierneef was executing his Station Panels (ca. 1927-1932). (Fig. 4).

Joan Methley felt that pottery ought to reflect "the personality of South Africa",\textsuperscript{59} and Gladys Short insisted that a "South African atmosphere" be created in all Ceramic Studio ware.\textsuperscript{60} This was achieved by the use of motifs that reflected "South African" subject-matter: children, animals, flowers, fishes, domestic artifacts, Dutch homesteads, "Native" life studies, local trees and bushes, and the Great Trek were familiar and popular iconography.\textsuperscript{61} Thus although Ceramic Studio ware does not necessarily have the appearance of British Arts and Crafts ware, it was indeed created in accordance with Arts and Crafts vernacularism. (Fig. 5).

The Ceramic Studio underwent a name change and became known as Linnware, and finally closed down around 1955 as a result of increasing competition from other potteries. This situation was exacerbated by Gladys Short's refusal to admit the need for utilitarian mass-production.\textsuperscript{62} Short said she was not prepared to run a factory,\textsuperscript{63} and thereby came

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Figure 5. Glazed earthenware from the Ceramic Studio.

Figure 6. Haldane Martin and Conrad Hicks: Africa-inspired CD-racks.
to an end one of the more successful attempts at a craft enterprise in the history of South Africa.

**Arts and Crafts architecture in South Africa**

It is significant that just as in England Arts and Crafts received its initial impetus from the architectural ventures of Philip Webb and Morris, in South Africa many traces of Arts and Crafts convictions are also to be found in architecture. Although space does not allow a comprehensive examination of Arts and Crafts architecture in South Africa, a few examples must be mentioned briefly.

Arts and Crafts architecture in general embraced the ideals of organic integration between environment and building, honesty of structure and construction, individuality of expression for the craftsman, and the use of local materials. In The Red House Webb designed for Morris in 1860 we find the characteristic use of red brick without stucco, steep roofs, irregularly set windows, picturesque gables, Tudor revivalism, and an horizontal emphasis. Morris's ideas concerning architecture were not purely aesthetic: he believed that the reform of architecture and of people's everyday surroundings would initiate the establishing of values in everyday objects. This led to the change towards English Domestic architecture and to the so-called "garden suburb", as is also to be found in Port Elizabeth, for example.

Many architects came to South Africa from Holland and England and brought prevailing Arts and Crafts notions with them. These, as well as South Africans who had been trained in Europe, included Herbert Baker, Robert William Scott, William Shanks, Gordon Leith, Zytze Wierda, Willem De Zwaan, Francois Soff, Gerard Moerdijk and J.R. Burg. These architects succeeded in creating a readily identifiable South African Arts and Crafts architecture (which is also sometimes called the "Transvaal Style"). Perhaps the most important for disseminating and establishing Arts and Crafts principles in architecture was Herbert Baker, who emigrated to South Africa from England in 1892.

Baker's brand of Arts and Crafts architecture entailed "more a revival of building methods than of medieval forms and advocated the use of traditional building materials as opposed to industrialised and manufactured ones". Baker encouraged the use of local building materials, such as kopje stone and wooden shingles in the Transvaal. He gave new specifications for bricks, paving and roofing tiles to the Pretoria brick manufacturer J.I. Kirkness, and encouraged metal workers such as George Ness to make door and window fittings to his own designs. According to Greig, Baker trained craftsmen "to build soundly, using indigenous and natural material ... in the best Arts and Crafts tradition". Baker sought unity between building and environment, and made adaptations to suit the

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65. N. Pevsner, *The sources of modern architecture and design*, p. 32.
climate of South Africa. This is especially obvious in his domestic architecture in Pretoria and Johannesburg.

Even as late as 1925 the South African architect G.E. Pearse wrote that "by fostering the arts we are fostering the crafts and thereby opening up new fields of industry for the youth of the country." In the same year his colleague P. Walgate, who designed the typically Arts and Crafts Table Mountain Restaurant, stated that "a better understanding between architects, designers and painters should be cultivated in order to find every opportunity for decorative art, to be included in schemes for building." The ideas of Pearse and Walgate may clearly be traced back to the notions of Arts and Crafts.

Burgeoning national pride and the search for a South African identity, as sought and codified by figures such as Pierneef, Moerdijk, Van Wouw and Mayer in the early decades of this century, found, seemingly incongruously, an ally in many Arts and Crafts precepts that had originated out of a colonial sensibility. In many European countries nationalism encompassed a study of legends, languages, folk crafts and vernacular architecture. This meant that nationalism could comfortably accommodate Arts and Crafts notions that stressed tradition, the craft ethic and vernacularism for the creation of an individual, national identity. Similarly, Pierneef, Mayer and Moerdijk's attempts to formulate a "boerestyl" out of folk-art and indigenous influences are well-known, and did much to resurrect pride in the vernacular tradition.

The relevance of Arts and Crafts today

To conclude this article a few thoughts concerning the possible relevance and revival of Arts and Crafts ideals in contemporary South Africa will be suggested. What is most problematic in this regard is the validity of transposing values from a century ago to a contemporary post-industrial, post-colonial and Postmodern society. Revivalism, nostalgia and eclecticism are well-known components of Postmodernism, and its striving for inclusiveness makes the accommodation of an ethos from a previous century theoretically possible. However, one should not be tempted to label all current craft as indicative of a specifically Arts and Crafts revival, nor should "craft" be used to designate only African crafts, as some critics seem inclined to do.

In general we may point out two prevailing contemporary tendencies: the first is a definite revival of Morris style in the form of faithful reproductions of his textiles and wallpapers. The second is a more nebulous interest in the crafts based on the broad principles or spirit of Morris, but not necessarily subscribing to a particular Arts and Crafts style. This includes the mode for wood-blocked fabrics, hand-made papers, wire objects, pottery, basket- and bead-work and all manner of craft. The provision of employment and social upliftment is of course especially relevant in contemporary South Africa, and by tapping into a local tradition this may well be a reachable goal.

During the last decade there has been a growing recognition of an African stylistic

74. See for example the Kaross Workers project in the Northern Transvaal, E. Taljaard, Translating the traditional: designs for Shangaan embroidery, Image & Text (4), December 1994, pp. 32-35.
idiom which has impacted upon crafts, and which is typical of Postmodern eclecticism and its acceptance of the "Other". It is probable that this originated with recent European interest in Africa, leading to the incorporation of pseudo-African decorative motifs by, for example, the Memphis Design Studio in the 1980s. Africanism thus became fashionable, and having been blessed by European trendsetters, caught on in South Africa; it has been incorporated by many artists and designers in their search for a South African visual identity.

It is interesting to compare the current situation in South Africa with that of nineteenth century America. Since Arts and Crafts idealised the rural and the primitive, folk crafts were believed to contribute to the forging of a national identity; thus we find at the end of the nineteenth century in America that:

Native Americans were romanticized as the embodiment of the simple life ... The geometric patterns of Indian pottery, baskets and blankets were also compatible with the Arts and Crafts aesthetic of stylization.

This may perhaps be compared to the widespread local use of the Bushmen as an embodiment of Africanism, as well as to the use of Ndebele motifs to connote a stereotyped Africa.

According to Connellan the relevance of craft to today's society is obvious. She maintains that the "questioning of the consequences of capitalism, coupled to Postmodern and feminist thinking have led to a reassessment and reappraisal of the role of craft". Connellan states that the time is ripe for a rebirth of craft in South Africa, but one need not agree with her implicit suggestion that this necessarily means that only African crafts are relevant, which she discerns as "evident in the 'Western' or 'white' apparent need to absorb essential aspects of African craft and design". I would argue that today's craft need not necessarily be tribal or ethnic, but that it needs to be based on some sort of tradition, as envisaged by Morris. The adaptability of Arts and Crafts ethos is seen in the new craft, which according to Connellan:

is not necessarily based on the exclusive use of natural materials and handmade methods of production, but a craft that allows for free creative thought within the manifold possibilities of the technological age.

75. The Memphis Design Studio was founded by Ettore Sottsass in Milan in 1981 and exerted a very strong influence on the course of Postmodern design in the 1980s. It was international in membership and figures such as Nathalie du Pasquier displayed an intense interest in African and Mediterranean motifs. Comparable motifs are to be seen in the work of the local potter Clementina van der Walt.
The new craft furthermore displays a commitment to ecological issues, for example in innovative ways of recycling and re-using materials.

An example of the new craft may be seen in the work of the Capetonians Haldane Martin and John Vogel, who exhibited their designs at the New York International Contemporary Furniture Fair in May 1994. Some of their most popular items were an Africa-inspired range of compact disc racks made in animal shapes by Martin (Fig. 6), and Vogel’s cast aluminium furniture with legs that look like kudu horns (reminiscent of Helmut Starcke’s work). In the spirit of Ruskin and Morris’s ideal of "an English art for England", Martin and Vogel are exploring the boundaries of identity, "trying to decide what it means to be South African", and are attempting to give this voice through their vision of contemporary craft.

Conclusion

This article has attempted to show that the ethical notions encapsulated in the Arts and Crafts movement of the nineteenth century have exerted an influence that has outlasted its stylistic impact. Its beliefs coincided with and reflected nineteenth century historicist interest in vernacularism, tradition and national identity. These last ideas in particular had a profound impact on the course of Arts and Crafts outside Britain, and it has been shown that craft in South Africa was also touched by similar thoughts. The growing concern with crafts during the last few decades has presented an interesting combination of Modernist and Postmodernist thought: the social upliftment agenda of the former, built in many respects on the concepts of Arts and Crafts, has been allied with Postmodern interest in provincialism, tradition and eclecticism. It has been indicated how these ideas are especially pertinent in contemporary South Africa, providing a possible base for economic upliftment as well as for the formation of a vibrant South African visual identity.

83. It is interesting that many of the developments in a new craft consciousness have stemmed from the Cape, where there are many designers with an innovative approach to furniture and product design.