

The Arts and Crafts Movement

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

This tutorial covers the Arts and Crafts Movement. By the end of this lesson, you'll be able to identify and define today's key terms, describe the motivation behind the Arts and Crafts Movement, and identify examples of products from the Arts and Crafts Movement. This will be accomplished through the exploration of:

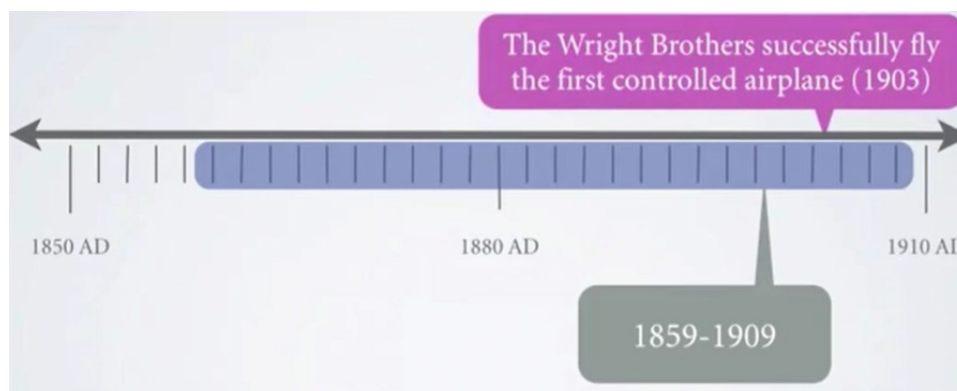


BIG IDEA

One of the principal philosophies of the Arts and Crafts Movement was a rejection of machine-made decoration in favor of a focus on the qualities of the materials.

1. Period and Location: Arts and Crafts Movement

The design and architecture that you will be looking at today covers the period between 1859 and 1909 and focuses geographically on three locations: Syracuse, New York, where Gustav Stickley died in 1942; London, England, the home of William Morris; and Pasadena, California, the location of the Gamble House.



2. Arts and Crafts Movement: Philosophy and Historical Context

At its core, the **Arts and Crafts** movement was centered around anti-industrialization. Its philosophy defined its aesthetic, emphasizing the handmade and quality crafted objects produced through skilled, meaningful labor. This was a direct response to the mechanization and automation of the Industrial Revolution.



TERM TO KNOW

Arts and Crafts

A 19th-century movement in architecture and design that reacted against the Industrial Revolution by promoting a return to beautiful, handcrafted objects.

3. William Morris

William Morris was a very important early figure in the Arts and Crafts Movement. He helped define its philosophy and emphasis. Morris was an artist and writer with many contributions to the Arts and Crafts Movement in fields as varied as architecture, typography, and textile design.



DID YOU KNOW

As a typographer, Morris focused on recreating the styles of the 15th century and founded the Kelmscott Press in London as a way of producing books using traditional methods.

In terms of architecture, he helped design the aptly named Red House—his home—which is one of the best examples of the Arts and Crafts Movement in architecture in Britain. In the visual below, notice that it adheres to the Arts and Crafts aesthetic in its use of ordinary building materials, such as red brick, and stylistic references to the traditional English cottage. Morris envisioned the home as a place where art could be produced and appreciated.



Red House by William Morris and Philip Webb

1859

London, England

Morris' contributions to the Arts and Crafts philosophy include his idea that labor should be meaningful, that objects should be beautiful and useful (**decorative arts**), and that all the elements in an interior should work together to create a **total work of art**. Now, this idea of a total or complete work of art went beyond the Arts and Crafts Movement and took hold as a fundamental aspect of the Art Nouveau movement, as well as in later schools of design, such as Frank Lloyd Wright's prairie style or prairie school architecture.



DID YOU KNOW

The total work of art idea wasn't completely new. A version of it actually existed within the Rococo period as well, where the concept extended as far as to include the actual people that were in the room and the way that they dressed.

Morris' philosophy seemed more rooted in tradition or perhaps nature and how the different aspects of home, such as the exterior design, the interior wall coverings such as the **textile** shown below, and the art within it, complemented each other to function almost like an organism.



Tulip and Willow Design by William Morris

1873

Woodblock printed fabric

The Arts and Crafts Movement rejected machine-made decoration and focused attention on the quality of materials. Here is a photograph of the Gamble House in Pasadena, California, one of the best and most iconic examples of craftsman-style architecture in the United States. It was designed by the architectural firm Greene & Greene for David and Mary Gamble of Procter & Gamble fame.



Gamble House by Greene brothers (Greene & Greene)

1908-1909

Pasadena, California

Notice the emphasis on wood and earth tones. There's a strong emphasis on horizontal lines in this example, and the influence of Japanese architecture—something that would become important for craftsman-style architecture in the United States—is evident with the large, overhanging eaves of the roof; the wide porches; and the integration of interior spaces and exterior spaces, as shown below.



Porch at Gamble House

You can also tell how well the house seems to function as a complete unit. Every element seems appropriate and applicable—a total work of art.



Exterior of Gamble House



DID YOU KNOW

Do you notice something familiar about this house? The exterior shots were used for Doc Brown's home in the movie *Back to the Future*.

One of the most interesting things about the Arts and Crafts style is its longevity. It is actually still around today, having drifted in and out of popularity throughout the years. This is due in large part to its central philosophy of quality handmade construction, an idea that seems to resonate with every generation. It may also have to do with the fact that, because of the design philosophy, the objects seem to last forever, being passed on from generation to generation.



TERMS TO KNOW

Decorative Arts

The design of objects that are both beautiful and useful; could include furniture, jewelry, and pottery, among other things.

Total Work of Art

The idea that all of the elements in a space (the furniture, fabrics, wall treatments, lamps and other accessories) are designed to work together to create a harmonious and aesthetically pleasing space.

Textile

Cloth made by weaving or knitting.

4. Gustav Stickley

Craftsman furniture would fall into this category of objects with longevity. The artist and designer Gustav Stickley is, like Morris, one of the most important early figures in the Arts and Crafts Movement. Stickley's furniture designs, such as the desk shown below, emphasize horizontal and vertical lines, a lightly stained wood, and the implication that the furniture was handmade, even though pieces of it were partly mass-produced in a workshop.



Desk by Gustav Stickley

1904

Walnut, inlaid copper, and pewter

This next example of an adjustable-back chair by Gustav Stickley is one of the most iconic designs to emerge from the Arts and Crafts Movement. It's a design that can still be found in furniture produced today.



Adjustable-back chair by Gustav Stickley

1900-1904

Wood and leather

The overall design is simple and functional, largely contributing to its long-term success. It's a lightly stained wooden chair with a strong emphasis on horizontal and vertical lines. Again, the very simple surfaces are unadorned. It's essentially stripped down to its basic functionality, but it still looks beautiful. There are no elaborate decorative elements to hide what the designer wants to convey, which is the quality of the materials and the construction—a true masterpiece of design.



TERM TO KNOW

Craftsman

The manifestation of the Arts and Crafts style in the United States, it occurred primarily with architecture and furniture design, the latter emphasizing clean, straight lines; natural materials; and handmade carpentry.



SUMMARY

In today's lesson about the **Arts and Crafts Movement**, you learned how to identify and define today's key terms and describe the philosophy and motivation behind the Arts and Crafts Movement. You also learned about artists and designers **William Morris** and **Gustav Stickley**, viewing their work to learn how to identify examples of products from the Arts and Crafts Movement.

Source: This work is adapted from Sophia author Ian McConnell.



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