



*The audience for the Annual Symposium
in the Fireside Room at Boettcher Mansion,
January 18, 2020*

ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM:

RUSKIN INSPIRED THE ARTS & CRAFTS MOVEMENT

By Dennis Barrett

However hard the work, if it is fulfilling, then the worker will be happy and the product will have a beauty and a life of its own. That was the essential message of John Ruskin (1819 – 1900) that endured in, and inspired, the Arts & Crafts Movement. But Jim Spates, the speaker at the CACS Annual Symposium at the Boettcher Mansion on January 18th, built his case for Ruskin carefully and richly, and kept the rapt attention of the crowd of CACS members and their guests through a long and rewarding evening.

Spates, a Professor Emeritus at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in NY, began by considering two threads in Ruskin’s life: 1. He was born to wealth, educated at Oxford, and quickly gained recognition as the foremost art critic, in England, Europe and the United States. 2. He observed and took to heart the wretched plight of the factory worker of his time, in the mid-nineteenth century “dark satanic mills.”

Of the elegance and importance of Ruskin’s art criticism, Spates left no doubt. He quoted, for instance, Virginia Woolf’s praise: “(Ruskin’s) style ...

takes our breath away. We find ourselves marveling, as if all the fountains of the English language had been set playing in the sunlight for our pleasure.” The speaker provided ample examples of Ruskin’s prose, reading them with spirit (and flashing each text up on the screen too, for the visual learners!) And Ruskin’s talent was recognized. He was as famous in his time as any Victorian – Dickens, Disraeli, Gladstone, George Eliot, the Brontës.

But the force of art, to Ruskin the critic, depended always on its effect on the viewer, the partaker, as made clear in his definition of architecture: “the art which so disposes and adorns the edifices raised by human beings for whatsoever uses, that the sight of it contributes to their mental health, power, and pleasure.”

As he grew from art critic into fighter for workers’ rights, he stressed both the deadening emotional force of factory labor and the physical concomitants, especially air pollution. The art critic knew that where the workers had no pleasure in the work they do, “their souls wither

Ruskin Symposium

(cont.)

within them." By the writing of *The Stones of Venice* (1851-53) he mentions both the emotional and the physical, calling for "healthy and ennobling labor."

Spates is clearly a master teacher, and provided examples which we could experience, to bolster each point. As one instance, he compared San Marco with San Giorgio, two cathedrals in Venice. San Marco was constructed in the Gothic period by thousands of artisans over hundreds of years, each contributing what he did best. San Giorgio was built in a brief period by competent workers following orders from a competent architect, Andrea Palladio. He flashed up pictures of the two, and accused S. Giorgio of being *boring*. As we all nodded, he pressed home the point: S. Marco *speaks* to us; S. Giorgio *murmurs*! After other brutal examples of the difference – the beautiful town plaza of Abbeville, France, as it existed in medieval times *versus* the entirely prosaic plaza as it was rebuilt after its destruction in WWII; Rome's Fontana di Trevi *versus* a soulless modern fountain in Cupertino, CA – he asked "How do you think the people who built that *felt*?" And *we* felt, keenly, the loss of ennobling labor as Ruskin saw it.

In his own day, while Ruskin was lionized as an *art* critic, he was widely deprecated as a *social* critic by the ruling class. Workers' rights, after all, interfere with profits! But it was the confluence of his artistic and social ideals, in the vision of the ennobling work, that inspired William Morris (1834-1896), and through him the Arts & Crafts Movement. Before Morris wrote the line we all know him for, "Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful," he had written "Art is the expression of man's pleasure in his labor" (in his preface to the elegantly illuminated Kelmscott edition he published of Ruskin's "The Nature of Gothic," a chapter from *The Stones of Nature*.) Surely a capsule of Ruskin's philosophy!



An enthusiastic crowd enjoyed a richly-illustrated exploration of John Ruskin's influences on the Arts & Crafts Movement, by Prof. Jim Spates (pictured).

Spates went on to extend the line of connection between Ruskin and Morris, on to Elbert Hubbard (who said, "The love you liberate in your work is the only love you keep.") And then further (for his Western audience) on to Bernard Maybeck and Greene & Greene in California, and Vance Kirkland and then Hugh Grant in Denver.

As time passes, all else of these earlier builders has passed: the powers, the rewards, the victories. Only their art remains, to remind us of the joy of its creators. And so Spates finished with a statement of Ruskin's importance to us: the spirit is in all of us, let it develop and you will find your soul, on "A New Road on which the World Should Travel," (a line from Morris' abovementioned preface to Ruskin's *The Nature of Gothic*, which was used as the title of a recent collection of essays written for the Morris Society about the intersections between Ruskin and Morris.)

After the hearty applause, questions were few. I had the impression that most felt, like me, that we had much to digest. But one member of the audience asked about the distinction between the Arts & Crafts Movement and the Aesthetic Movement, and Spates brought into focus much of what we had learned. Ruskin, he replied, would have said that style doesn't matter, as long as it's yours and it comes from the heart.

GATHERING OF THE GUILDS

APRIL 26, 2020



By Julie Leidel

The Gathering of the Guilds Show & Sale is just around the corner and we invite you to come and join us on **Sunday, April 26, 2020 from 10am to 4pm**. Our Gathering of the Guilds will be held once more in the heart of downtown Golden, at the **American Mountaineering Center** located at 710 10th Street, Golden, CO 80439.

This popular event is the only place where local guilds and artisans inspired by the Arts & Crafts Movement can come together to celebrate their craft. Exhibitors will include a wonderful collection of professional artists, metalsmiths, potters, woodworkers and weavers selling their handcrafted items in the following categories: Art, Antiques, Book Binding, Calligraphy, Ceramics, Fiber, Furniture, Glass, Jewelry, Paper, and Textiles.

There will be demonstrations and presentations throughout the day.

General Admission is \$5. So mark your calendars and we hope to see you in Golden on the 26th of April. For more information contact cshaw@jeffco.us.



The Omni Park Grove Inn, site of the the annual Arts and Crafts Conference where Robert Rust will be speaking. Built in 1913 with its distinctive undulating red clay tile roof and Roycroft furnishings, Grove Park Inn captures the essence of the Arts and Crafts movement

BERT HUBBARD TALK

FEBRUARY 15, 2020

Robert Rust will be giving a preview (for members only) of his talk "Bert Hubbard The Forgotten Son who saved the Roycroft" which he will present at the 33rd Annual Grove Park Inn Arts and Crafts Conference in Asheville, NC on February 22nd.

Most collectors know of Elbert Hubbard, but what about the trials and tribulations of another important family member? This talk will reveal how Bert saved the Roycroft Campus after his father's death in 1915 aboard the *Lusitania*.

The preview will be Saturday, February 15th at 2PM at a location to be announced by email soon.

For more information on the conference, visit: arts-craftsconference.com

BE THE CHANGE:

MY INSPIRATION FROM GANDHI TO ETHEL LARCOMBE

By Julie Leidel



As the idea for my next painting rolled around in my heart for a few weeks, I knew I wanted to have a strong visual to bring it alive with connection. I wanted this artwork to resonate with the historical time between 1890-1910 when the Art Nouveau Movement flourished and the time in which Mahatma Gandhi lived. The monarch butterfly has represented change across many cultures for centuries.

This female figure in my artwork is not meant to be a fairy however, but it is more of a representation of the "hats" we wear in our lifetime. Similar to putting on a uniform, this is a way we become the job. It's more of a nostalgic take on why a super hero would wear a costume. I've heard many interviews with

ordinary citizens put in extraordinary circumstances where the news heralds them "A Hero." Almost always, this hero never feels deserving of the title, they were just doing their part. That's exactly the point behind putting on your wings. We all can be that hero to someone by being the change we want to see in this world.

"Be the change you wish to see in the world" is a beautiful quote, but it's not word for word from Gandhi in printed format. After some research, it is based on his printed teachings from 1913: "If we could change ourselves, the tendencies in the world would also change. As a man changes his own nature, so does the attitude of the world change towards him." In 1989, the L.A. Times asked Gandhi's family about the quote and this was their response. "The Gandhi family states that M. K. Gandhi was known to say this verse many times in his lifetime and believes it to be original with him." So to be as accurate as possible, this is why I wrote "Inspired by Gandhi" on the artwork. Notably in 1976, Arleen Lorraine wrote with the same idea "Receive all people as beautiful exactly where they are. Perceive problems as opportunities. **Be the change you want to see happen** instead of trying to change everyone else..."

Many times the idea for my art's verse, and the idea for my art's composition & visual layout don't happen at the same time. I knew I wanted to base a painting off of Gandhi's teachings in Sept. of 2019 and include monarch butterflies. For my creative process, I muse over different ideas (usually just in my head) as the artwork starts to take shape in a very natural way. I keep my mind open and on the look out for inspiration. New Year 2020 comes around, and I can always count on my dear friend Robert Rust, co-author of *The Arts & Crafts Home*, and *Arts & Crafts Architecture & Design Library* to post the most wonderful, antique illustrations & cards on social media.



I saw this amazing greeting card drawing (above, early 1900s), and I was in love.

I stayed up all night on Dec. 29, 2019 creating my conceptual layout for the art. At the time, I didn't know who "LE" was, and neither did Robert. Weeks later, Laura Euler, author of *The Glasgow Style*, and *Arts & Crafts Embroidery*, gave us the missing link. LE is British illustrator Ethel Larcombe (1876-1940.) Anytime I can stumble across a new (to me) female A&C illustrator, I'm all in. I want to share my research of this amazing artist that was also thriving in the time of Gandhi (1869-1948), albeit in a much lesser known capacity.



1900 children's book illustration by Ethel Larcombe.



Ethel Larcombe's 1899 submission to *The Studio Magazine* entitled "Summer"

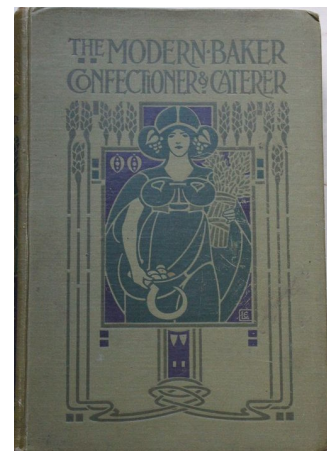
Ethel Larcombe was born in 1876 in Exeter, England where she lived all her life. Not to be confused with Ethel Thomson Larcombe (British tennis player, 1876-1965.) Her early influences included the book illustrations of Walter Crane and Kate Greenaway, whose work she studied and copied. William Morris's *Kelmscott Chaucer* in 1896 inspired her to explore the Arts & Crafts style, and her artistic influences shifted to painters like Edward Burne-Jones and Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

In the following years she decreased her use of medieval elements and concentrated on more modern Art Nouveau designs and winning many competitions. Her work was featured in *The Studio Magazine*. Other publications that featured her work were *Stone*, *Von Larisch*, and *Salwey*. Her typographic lettering was shown in 1902 in Italy, and a German publication alongside an original alphabet by Charles Rennie Mackintosh.



The Letter O from Larcombe's 1902 original alphabet design.

This style soon caught the eye of prolific book designer Talwin Morris, the Art Director of Blackie & Son in Glasgow. He commissioned her to design several book bindings for the firm and its London subsidiary, Gresham, between 1904 and 1912. Today, many of Larcombe's bindings are misattributed to Talwin Morris. Larcombe's work was usually more compact compared to Morris's. She also provided the title pages and initials to Walter Shaw Sparrow's *Women Painters of the World*, published in 1905, seen to the right.



In the Spring of 1917, American retailer Sears, Roebuck, & Co. hired her to design green-bordered cotton textile "coverettes" and catalogues to appeal to the female buyers looking to decorate children's rooms. Ethel is also well known for her illustrated "rag books" for Dean

BE THE CHANGE. (CONT)

& Son. Her designs were also used in postcards printed by E. W. Savory Co. and she provided graphical design work for Arts & Crafts furniture designers Neatby & Evans. Not much is known about Ethel Larcombe's personal life, sadly. She died in Exeter in 1940.

This is one of my favorite things about being a Revival artist; I love to bring back not only the style of the Arts & Crafts and Art Nouveau movements, but also I love to raise awareness to some of my personal unsung heroes, the lesser known artists from this era. As I was writing, I discovered a lead on the 1917 Sears pamphlets.

The last two images posted below have decorative designs that stand starkly against much of the other design work produced by Sears at that time, so I did

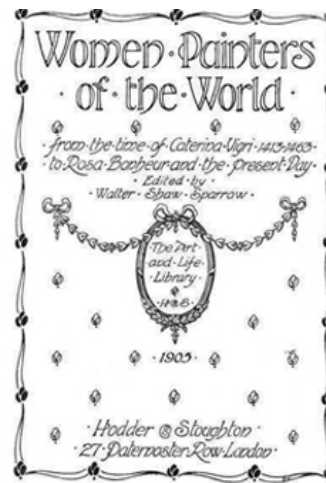
a little more digging. I have a hunch both of these are Ethel's designs. The Glasgow School of Art put together a wonderful "Treasures of the GSA Library" online after GSA lost their centuries-old library collections in two separate and devastating



1917 design work for Sears, Roebuck, & Co. Designer unknown, but fits Larcombe's book design aesthetic.

fires in May 2014 and again in June 2018 before all renovations were complete. I don't believe this digital collection was available before the fires. This image below shows Ethel's 1905 cover (left) next to a 1917 Sears ad (right). Ethel Larcombe's unique typography is unmistakable in both.

Lastly, I want the reader to understand that artists are inspired by other artists and have been since the beginning of time. Art history shows us time and time again how peers (and rivals) have influenced, innovated, and copied each others work whether they are living at the same time, or are divided by a century or more. When I saw this 1905 title page of *Women Painters of the World* illustrated by Ethel Larcombe, the first artist that popped into my 21st century mind was none other than Mary Engelbreit. I'd be willing to bet she's been influenced by this book illustrator too. It's a small world, after all.



COMING SOON: MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN ARTS AND CRAFTS MOVEMENT

Delays have only increased anticipation of the opening of the Museum of the American Arts and Crafts Movement in St Petersburg, Florida (pictured right), now slated for spring of this year. Robert Rust will write about the museum in the next issue of this journal.

The Colorado Arts and Crafts Society Presents

A GATHERING OF THE GUILDS



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It's Membership Renewal time!

*Once again it's time to renew your membership and keep **The Arts & Crafts Messenger** coming to your doorstep!*

The Colorado Arts and Crafts Society board continues to strive to bring new and exciting speakers and opportunities for you to learn more about the preservation and study of the Arts and Crafts Movement.

By promptly renewing your membership today you will not only keep this amazing publication coming to you but you will also be the first to learn about our exciting events. These include the spectacular Winter Symposiums held at the breathtaking Boettcher Mansion, the Spring Gathering of the Guilds show highlighting talented local artisans, and exciting field trips to Arts and Crafts sites!

Please take a moment to fill out the form below and return it to enjoy another successful year by renewing your membership today. If you have already paid your dues, we thank you for taking care of doing so!

As always, thank you for your continued dedication to CACS. We look forward to serving you for another year.

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