THOMPSON, Paul, *The Work of William Morris* (1967), Quartet Books, Londres, 1977/2a.
VEBLEN, Thorstein, *Teoría de la clase ociosa* (1899), FCE, México, 1971/2a.
WATKINSON, Ray, *William Morris as a Designer* (1967), Trefoil books, Londres, 1983/3a.

The modernity of William Morris

William Morris died just over a hundred years ago, on October 3, 1896. Even though we are living in times over-given to commemorating anniversaries and happenings from the past, it is true that they are a good excuse for reviewing the past, reconsidering the figures of people who influenced history, and underlining the changes in our way of understanding their influence. The case of William Morris is, in this sense, a paradigm. A hundred years after his death, he is still an author who is talked about, even in this magazine, and for all sorts of reasons. Therefore, I believe it is worth taking advantage of the anniversary to add new data to the debate or, at least, to stress all the aspects of this author, who is, in my opinion, one of the most interesting from the perspective of the history of industrial design.

If William Morris is stimulating for me, it is precisely because of the multiplicity of the aspects of his thought, because of the paradoxality of his whole life, and because of the pluralism of his professional work. I do not believe that in his case calling him eclectic can be disdainful; it is rather a good way of describing him and what brings him closer to our time. It is fair to say that the word eclectic at one time had been praise; it was applied to people who were not sectarian, those who did not defend a unique truth in absolute terms. In the case of William Morris, his eclecticism must be understood, as well, from a historical slant: his professional life took place during that peculiar phase of 19th century historicism sometimes called Domestic Revival, sometimes Queen Anne Revival, and sometimes simply eclectic.

In fact, the decades between 1861, the year William Morris and his artist friends decided to set up their business, and 1882, the year of the first meetings of «young» designers to join together in an association which was to be the Art Workers Guild and which was to give way to the Arts & Crafts movement, are the years in which the battle of styles had ended in a tie and architects and designers of the time had begun to pay more attention to the specific problems they faced than to the stylistic correction of their projects. Need-

less to say, William Morris played an essential role in this change of course, as can be seen in many of his designs for calico and wallpaper or in the Sussex chair sold by the Morris company from 1868. However, from the specific perspective of design and its history, William Morris' modernity, that is, the most stimulating aspect of his work, lies precisely in his way of focussing on the problem of design for industrial products, beyond the understanding of artisan tradition for which he is better known.

1. Morris & Co.: development of a business

That William Morris took into account products made by industrial processes, though it may seem a surprising statement, can be proved if we consider his real professional work. In fact, his business, which began as an artistic artisan workshop run by artists with artistic purposes, suffered transformations during years till it became a modern business, perfectly adequate to production and consumption habits of the industrial era, run according to business criteria adequate to the product and market potential of the moment. It is worth briefly following this evolution through some of the most illustrative data.

In 1861, when William Morris was newly married and living in the Red House surrounded by his friends in the typical environment of Bohemian artists, one rowdy night Dante Gabriel Rossetti had the idea of creating a business to produce and sell objects with great artistic quality for decorating the home, as the decoration of the Red House, currently under way, was succeeding so well. When distributing responsibilities, Morris was assigned the role of manager and director of production as, of the group, he was the only one who came from a rich family, had an account in the bank, and, above all, was the only one of them who did not yet have a definite calling or a decided profession. It was the beginning of the 60's of the last century, a time when in general terms the work of the Reformers —Henry Cole, Owen Jones, Richard Redgrave and others— as well as the mastery of Pugin, who had died only nine years before, had begun to bear fruit. There was a progressive abandonment of the Neo-baroque, a much-criticised and much-exaggerated style which had been popular in the 50's; at the same time, the Gothic style, Neo-gothic design inspired more by the traditional and vernacular models of the popular classes than by the great monuments and cathedrals, was rapidly becoming a true option for finding real solutions adequate to modern needs. Besides, there was a growing public disposed to buy products for aesthetic criteria, especially if they had the guarantee of artistic quality. This was Rossetti's great intuition when he proposed the creation of the business: the prestige of the artist partners, some of whom were quite well-known in the London artistic circles of the time, offered the necessary artistic guarantee. The procedure was clear: Cole had theorised it in terms of «Art Manufacture». For Rossetti and the Bohemians of the Red House, it was not necessary that they be «manufactures», it was enough that they be «objets d'art» which could be used in home decoration and furnishing. In this way, Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. (MMF&Co) was born as a true workshop for artistic artisanship where the stress was placed more on the idea of art than on the process of artisan production which evidently, and by necessity, it was. In the company's presentation circular which appeared on April 11, 1861, attributed to Rossetti, they defined themselves as «Fine workmen in Painting, Carving, Furniture and Metals» and established their own fields of action: «Any species of decoration, mural or otherwise, from pictures so properly called, down to the consideration of the smallest work susceptible of art beauty.»[1]

It did not take long for things to change. When introducing the business to society at the London Exhibition in 1862, Morris realised that some outlines had to be modified. Presenting themselves at a fair required a catalogue and, above all, a stock of articles manufactured with no specific previous comission, and, therefore, having to imagine possible and likely comissions. This was the first step in the internal change of the company towards an industrial structure, a change which was not completely achieved till 1875. There is a key person and a key fact in this change. The person was Warington Taylor (1835-1870), the accountant or person in charge of the economic area of the company, who had substituted Faulkner in the post when the latter, who was a professional mathematician, decided to remain as professor at Oxford. The fact was the design and production of the Sussex Chair due to Taylor's in-

1. See Henderson (1950), appendix 1; MM CW II, Introd. p. 10; Watkinson (1967) p. 16.

spiration and request. When speaking of design history, we can say that it was Taylor who best understood, in the Morris company, what modern needs were as to furniture, and who realised that the proposals of furniture design of the older partners —the properly called Pre-Raphaelites— were much more advanced than those of Morris, Webb, and Burne-Jones, that is, respectively, the young, the eclectic, the symbolists.[2] The catalogue for Sussex Chairs, whose production and sale began about 1868, was kept constant for a long time. It is probably one of the most advanced products, in the spirit of design and in the finishings, in the whole of the company's catalogue. It is thus not to be wondered at that it soon had a great success among the public, to the point that it was often pictured among the home furniture of the sneered-at «aestheticists» of the 90's.

It was a turned wood and reed chair, stylised and painted black, with an almost lacquered finish, and whose components locked together. It could thus be perfectly manufactured in series. It was light, slender, and simple, perhaps not as simple as Michael Thonet's, but more elegant than this, more elegant than the popular chairs it was inspired by, and more elegant than the Windsor models.

Another outstanding aspect of Taylor's work enters into what is now known as design management. Taylor was one of the first people to bring up what a company producing and selling design could be and how to bring it about; he considered matters such as putting a price on works of artistic artisanship whose making took so much time, what value to put on artistic competence, what the price of a design might be, what importance the idea had in the end value of an article and what the difficulty in the manufacturing process, the cost of work and labour, cost of quality material and technical equipment: altogether, where the benefits for the company were. In view of Morris' later political development,[3] it is needless to say that Warington Taylor's image is not very flattering; but we must also add that, if William Morris did not go altogether bankrupt then, and was able to refloat the company to a new economic success, it was due to Taylor's work. It was he who made William Morris face the unavoidable alternative between industrialising the company, modifying the product catalogue, and attending to accounts and commercial management, or admitting total bankruptcy, which William Morris had been risking for several years. With the economic crisis of the later 70's, Morris' family income had come to an end and, from then on, his family finances could only depend on the company's success. In 1873, when he was thinking of restructuring the society, Morris still took into account Taylor's warnings:

> I should very much like to make the business quite a success, and it can't be unless I work at it myself. I must say, though I don't call myself money greedy, a smash in that side would be a terrible nuisance. I have so many serious troubles, pleasures, hopes and fears that I have no time on my hands to be ruined and get really poor; above all things it would destroy my freedom of work which is a dear delight to me.[4]

In fact, William Morris took no notice of Taylor's advice till after the latter's death in 1870. It was then that, in view of the Sussex Chair's success, he definitely chose Taylor's option. It was basically not depending on comissions for *objets d'art*, beginning production on a stock basis, diversifying articles according to price and use, and supplying products according to seasonal demand. The model was clear. It was the one promoted by the Reformers in the pages of the *Journal of Design* in the 50's, the same occupying other designers. In fact, there were many coincidences between the arts and articles commented on in the magazine and

2. In fact, the first experiments in designing modern chairs inspired on the popular models from regions of Sussex had been begun by Ford Madox Brown in 1864. Taylor was aware of the value and functional quality of these models, and put pressure on Morris to continue experiments inspired on models from the same regions from 1865. Beginning in 1868, they began the production of other models, the most famous of which and which for a long time gave most profit to the company, is also known as the Morris chair.

3. I also believe Morris was a convinced Marxist. I also think that, although in some matters he was very close to anarchism, he never really was one. His failure as leader of the Socialist League when it was dominated by the anarchists, and his leaving the party point towards this. However, the question of whether he was a Marxist or not is no longer very important nor interesting, but rather quite the contrary. The interest in his political theories lies in many other things. See Calvera (1992), the chapter on the debate on his political thought; for the opposite thesis, see Martínez Allier «Urban Sprawl and Ecology», *Temes de Disseny* 11, Barcelona, 1995. In any case, see Morris' *How I became a Socialist* (1894).

4. Letter to Aglaia Coronio 11-2-1873 [MM CW X, Introd; Kelvin (1984) p. 178].

the catalogue Morris' company put out. The change carried out specifically consisted of selling embroidered pieces, suitable for cushions, for example, and designs drawn for buyers to embroider, all at accessible prices; promoting the production of painted tiles with repeated ornament in series which could be sold alone without having to accompany a scene; restarting the production of wallpaper, beginning cotton stencilling, and, finally, setting up the making of Jacquard fabrics and carpets.

All this was carried out progressively in the six years following Taylor's death, in separate phases, incorporating one trade after another in the company workshops as William Morris studied their characteristics, learned the technical procedures, and mastered their designs. In 1881, when Morris decided to enlarge the workshops and take them outside London, this company, refounded in 1875 under the name of William Morris & Co., was already a modern decoration business, prepared to work as a factory if necessary or, more usually, as a design publisher which could supply everything needed for a project of interior decoration, a job they also undertook, and, as well, at prices equal to the competition's, neither more expensive nor cheaper.

From the business point of view, the change in that artistic artisanship workshop went through the following phases: in 1870, after Taylor's death, Morris incorporated the changes already mentioned in the embroidery and tile sections, diversifying the sort of articles on sale, maintaining the leaded glass workshop with an artisan outlook as he no longer had much to do with it, and started the production of wallpaper again after the fiasco of the 1864 experiments. In this section, Morris opted for designing in the company and contracting printing out to another company, Jeffrey & Co., Islington, which manufactured for other clients. In 1873, Morris began similar experiments in cotton printing but, dissatisfied with the colours obtained, began research into tints and dressings which lasted several years, collaborating with other companies in the same field.[5] It is now not worth lengthy explanations about these years of research; it is only interesting to underline that they are interesting for an understanding of his work systems, his way of facing the technical conditioners of each craft when designing, what his concept of design was and what he meant by the idea of technical designer which he often used in his writing.[6]

In 1874, Morris took the helm and rid himself of the founding partners, becoming the sole owner of the firm. The truth is that he alone had faced the economic losses when they arrived, while the rest of the partners had always been paid for the work they contributed, when and if Morris commissioned it. On the other hand, almost all the partners were artists with enough prestige to live of their art; even Webb had become, as an architect, one of the firm's main clients. This was not the case with Madox Brown, a brilliant and innovating designer during the company's first phase, increasingly less known and valued as a painter. Because of this, he did not agree with the changes proposed by Morris, and this led to a distance between them and with Rossetti, who had sided with Madox Brown. There were no ideological differences as to the running of the business. In fact, the new Morris & Co. which rose after the restructuring was perfectly satisfactory for Rossetti and his first idea for the founding of the company. There were other problems, of a personal nature, which led the old friends apart. Needless to say, faced with the applied and utilitarian slant taken on by the company, the artistic Rossetti —then become an aestheticist admirer of Japan— manifested a certain disdain: from then on he referred to Morris as «the poetic upholsterer». In any case, after years of discussion, at the beginning of 1875 the reconstitution of the company was signed as Morris & Co., and with Morris as sole owner. The firm could then begin to develop till it became —in a very few years— one of the leaders in its field, as is proved, on the one hand, by the fortune won by Morris during those years, and on the other, by the suits brought by the company against imitations of its models and style.[7]

1876 was an important year in this process: William Morris began carpet design, many of which were machine-woven by companies specialising in different techniques;[8] he installed Jacquard looms bought directly from Lyons to make Jacquard fabrics with different types of threads; and, rather significantly, he fi-

5. «I am up to the neck in turning out designs for papers, chintzes and carpets, and trying to get the manufacturers to do them», Letter to Murray 25-5-1875 [Kelvin (1984) p. 255].

6. See *Technical Instruction* 17/3/1882 to MM (1936) I, pp. 205-225.

7. On the suits and actions undertaken by Morris against imitators of his products, see Mackail (1899) II, p. 97; E. P. Thompson (1955), p. 249; Lindsay (1975) and Kelvin (1984).

8. See Linda Parry (1983).

nally decided to establish a shop to sell his products. The Morris & Co. showroom opened at number 264 (later 449) Oxford Steet in London in Easter Week 1877.

In 1881 then, when he moved the workshops to Merton Abbey and became associate to a potter so as to have more articles, giving him the tile production, Morris & Co. was a modern company, perfectly suited to the industrial dynamics of production and sales. The only thing setting it apart from the model 18th century factory was the lack of a steam engine. Probably, William Morris never considered installing one. He never spoke of it; it is not clear, however, the degree of ideological adversion he felt for it as a work tool. Only once, in a conference on Jacquard fabrics, he affirmed that the presence of a steam engine had no kind of influence on the aesthetic quality of results obtained from a loom,

> since the manner of doing it has with some few exceptions varied little for many hundred years; such trivial alterations of the lifting of the warp-threads by means of the Jacquard machine or throwing the shuttle by steam power, ought not to make much difference in the art of it, though I cannot say that they have not done so.[9]

It is worth mentioning that installing one would not have been profitable in view of the investment required and the sales volume of the company, even in the most successful moments.[10] But for deciding on the company's modernity it seems much more relevant to me to look at its company and productive structure and not the specific technical equipment with which it worked, which is also difficult to generalise. Thus, even when we understand the idea of design in relation to the industrial era and as a conscious process of creation directed towards a determined aim, I believe Morris has full right to a place in the history of design if only for the fact of having set up, directed, and made a success of a design enterprise with an unheard-of popularity then and which would be difficult to obtain even today.

With this background it is not unusual that Morris should become interested in the problems of designing industrial products and all their aesthetic derivations. One last fact might here prove meaningful. The only trade Morris practiced with no interruption till shortly before his death was the design of wallpaper. The last came onto the market in 1894, when he was already ill, while the first, which admittedly had no success, was from 1862. Between 1873, when he restarted production, and 1894, two different models appeared regularly every year. Thus, wallpaper is the best part of William Morris' work to follow the development of his style and of his concept of design, as other researchers have already postulated.[11] It is therefore understandable that when he wrote his conferences he should save quite a few comments for industrial products such as stained paper, cotton stencils, and fabrics which had taken up much of his time. It is also logical that it is these, seen from the distance of just over a hundred years, which give William Morris a role in the history of industrial design.

2. Morris & Co: a policy of design and a model of comfort

It is not only significant that William Morris was interested in the design and making of essentially industrial products; the type of product, material and and technique is also. Here, it is worth mentioning the experiments carried out in design for linoleum flooring after 1875 and abandoned not much later for many different reasons. Neither paper rolls nor flat print on cotton, and much less linoleum, are expensive and noble material, but quite the contrary and, in any case, they are even less so in the sense which Ruskin had defined as material adequate for true and honest artistic work. This proves, at least, the great distance between the attitudes inspiring William Morris' professional work and many of Ruskin's ideas, especially those relating to the concept of art. But this could be the theme for a specific essay. As to Morris' theory of design and the modernity of his research, the industrial nature of these products and the market sector to which they

9. *The Lesser Arts of Life* (1882), CW XXII, p. 249.

10. Morris, in an article in *Commonweal* 6-8-1897 stated: «because my capital can't compass a power loom». Quoted by P. Thompson (1967) p. 117. On Morris' ideas on machines expressed in conferences, see Calvera (1992).

11. The first three models of stained paper, «Daisy», «Trellis» and «Pomegranate» or «Fruit», now quite famous, did not sell at all, so that Morris preferred not to continue the experiment. As to the study of Morris' papers, see Floud (1959), Fiona Clark (1973) and Parry (1983).

belong is much more important. Morris himself announced, clearly enough, his manifest interest in that sort of activity: «The quite modern and very humble, but as things go, useful art of printing patterns on paper for wallhangings.»[12]

What is currently known in the trade as stained paper was at that time printed paper to decorate walls as a cheap system for achieving the decorative effects of mural painting, and they were technically known by the generic name of pretty paper. Thus it can be said that they are products which come from the advance of industry and which represent the new era. Appearing at the beginning as substitutes for more noble artistic techniques, they ended up having their own character and identity. It is true that they were already popular in the 18th century and even earlier. Then, they really were stained paper, that is mural paintings on a paper base and, thus, unique models adequate to the needs of a specific room. Because of this, scenes, landscapes, personages, and everything more proper to painting was painted on them. The arrival of industry radically modified the nature of the product, the way of producing it —exemplified in the printing process— and the function they served, for which reason the concept and criteria of design logically varied. The appearance of the paper roll towards 1842 allowed, in the first place, long strips of paper which, in length, tended towards infinity while, in another dimension, they had to join between themselves, also tending towards infinity. The measurements of the pattern thus no longer depended on the measurements of real spaces. It was therefore necessary to modify completely the concept of pattern represented in them. There was a possible model for solving this in another similar product which was cheap and available, printed calico. Flat weave was also available on spools, and repeating pattern ornamental designs were printed on them, by stamping or by cylinder machines, which could be combined together till infinity in all directions of the two-dimensional plane. In both cases, when William Morris began his experiments the problem of design for industrial printing had been defined some years before: the solution consisted of establishing modular patterns which could be combined by repeating the elementary module, which could overlap infinitely and be held in stock to be sold by the metre or by pieces. The aesthetic effect now depended on the results obtained by the combination, working on the basis of an idea of an unlimited surface.[13]

Wallpaper, as well as calicos, cotton stencils, linoleum and, eventually, ornamental tiles also, are not only products born of the advance of industry; they all belong as well to industrial mass-production, cheap and available at the time. It can be said that, in those days, the problem of designing for industry was especially brought up, peremptorily and innovatively, in those sectors, as well as in that of Jacquard fabrics, but not in gold or silver work or furniture, which were still in the ABC's of mechanisation.

Apart from all this, it is worth coming to some conclusions in regard to the historical figure of William Morris. They would refer to the image usually had of him, that of the great artist and master craftsman occupied only in recovering of some obsolete *Beaux Arts* and in defending artisan production processes. But if it is worth underlining his interest in cheaper products of an industrial nature because it contradicts that other idea, no less widespread than the former, according to which the products of Morris & Co. were very expensive because they were produced in the artisan manner and were thus out of economic reach for most people. It is true that Morris was attracted by antique artisan crafts, but it is also no less true that this interest was sometimes due to an artistic question, as in the case of tapestry, or, much more often, to a business interest, as in the case of pottery and his association with William de Morgan. They were useful to keep up the artistic prestige of the firm and were, therefore, at the same time the proof and the guarantee of the artistic quality of all his products. William Morris was perfectly aware of this fact, as is proved by an 1878 letter sent to a supplier: «...my artistic knowledge and taste, on which the whole of my business depends.»[14] In any case, the different degree of constancy Morris dedicated to one or another of the crafts is a good hint: he soon gave up the leaded glass workshop and only participated giving a general supervision, the same as he did with em-

12. *The Lesser Arts of Life* (1882) CW XXII, p. 260.

13. Pugin, as well as O. Jones, or William Dyce at pedagogic and methodological level, and other collaborators of *Journal of Design*, had compared design of printing on fabric and paper and had centred the conceptual problem in theoretic terms on the question of model designs, of ornamental motives (pattern designing, to use the exact term) rather than on the rule of technical conditioners in the elaboration of each article. On the history of wallpaper in Victorian England, see Floud (1954, 1959), Parry (1983) and Gloag (1961).

14. Letter to Wardle 15-11-1978. Kelvin (1984) p. 275.

broidery, tapestries, and hand-knotted carpets, but not, as we have said before, with weavings, calicos, and stained papers.

In regard to the price of products, it is necessary to clear up a few points. Obviously, Morris & Co. products were beyond the means of the working classes of the time, but in those days, the working classes was not yet part of the idea of market, and was excluded from consumption. It was not till quite a few decades later, and only in the developed countries, that a truly mass culture and market began. It was not the same for the middle class, as can be seen in the novels of manners of the time, in which William Morris products became an identifying element for a modern social class which was attentive to aesthetic matters. In any case, the benefits obtained by Morris & Co. in just ten years, as well as the fact that the workshops and the shop lasted until the Second World War, make clear at least that this was a business suited to the times, which knew its sector and its market potential and that, although its artistic prestige depended chiefly on the production and exhibition of hand-made articles, the commercial and business importance depended on industrially produced products, especially the cheaper ones: the calicos, the stained papers, the decorated tiles, and the Sussex chair.

It is evident that everything that gave support to the usual image of William Morris has a real basis. In the first times of the company, during the artisan, artistic, and Pre-Raphaelite phase, all the products made were expensive. The as yet incipient market was in the work of art, even though it was an applied art. The most eloquent witness to this is the description Henry James made of William Morris after a visit to the family.[15] However, when the change in the company was established after the signature of the refoundation, its philosophy had changed, and the need to continue brought about a clearing up of business policies in regard to management, investments, and research techniques developed there. William Morris' letters addressed to suppliers, friends, confidantes and collaborators during the years between 1870 and 1875 prove it. It can also be seen to what point Morris knew the potential market sector, what he considered the element that distinguished his products to be, and what the pricing policy should be. The result was a business in search of a quality market, of excellence, in his own words, whose inhabitants were the intellectual and cultured middle class looking for quality products. Morris is quite clear in this respect,

> because on the whole, one must suppose that beauty is a marketable quality, and that the better the work is all round, both as a work of art, and in its technique, the more likely it is to find favour with the public.

In this also, William Morris proved to be a man of his times. The economic viability of companies dedicated to the production of well-designed objects had been debated for years, and had been tried by many other professionals. In 1868 Charles Eastlake had set it out in the most poignant terms: «What they want is a shop where such articles are kept in stock and can be purchased for £2 or £3.»[16]

From the current point of view, the Morris option no longer seems that idealistic crusade wanting to revive a dreamy past. Quite the contrary, it becomes a modern business option which can only be understood from the logic of market competition. Its greatest value lies in having remained faithful to an idea of design and having been coherent in company policies.

3. The Morris aesthetics of design: the decorative function

In his writing, William Morris also made a great many efforts to the treatment of industrial products, joining in on the debate on them which was taking place in London at that time. In this case, his research continued that of the Reformers, and it was with them that his dialogue continued most openly. He had taken from each and every one of them the principles of good

15. Letter from Henry to Alice James (1869): «He is a manufacturer of stained glass windows, tiles, ecclesiastical and medieval tapestry, altarcloths, and in fine everything quaint, archaic, Pre-Raphaelite —and I may add— exquisite. Of course his business is small and may be carried on in his house (he refers to the time when the workshops and exhibition rooms were all at the Queens Square house in Bloomsbury). The things he makes are so handsome, rich and expressive (besides being articles of the very last luxury) that his fabrique can't be on a very large scale. But everything he has and does is superb and beautiful.» Faulkner (1973), p. 77.

16. Respectively, *Technical Instruction* (1882) [MM (1936) I, p. 209] and Charles Eastlake: *Hints on Household Taste* (1868) London; Dover Publications, New York, 1969; see Pevsner (1968) p. 330.

design, as well as the most adequate methods of design, and, in fact, he had applied them in his work. However, between his design style and those of Redgrave, Jones, and Dresser, there were some differences which were not derived only from the preference for what was more classic in the former or the attraction for the Gothic in Morris. Actually, Pugin had also been Neo-Gothic but his exposition was the same as that of the Reformers and Morris overcame them both. If the Reformers and Pugin established the characteristic style for the 60's, leading to the great reformation of Victorian taste and imposing a geometric, two-dimensional and heraldically conventional style, Morris' style, which was its continuation, incorporating an organic and organistic presentation, defined the model for the 70's and 80's, which, in its turn, overcame the *japanoiserie* of William Godwin and the aesthetes ten years later. Thus, William Morris' work came to be a development of the work of earlier authors and shares with them the departure point and the main criteria which were, basically, understanding the craft of pattern design in terms of modules and unlimited space which depends on creating a basic geometric structure and a flat convention in the treatment of the modular patterns represented: «the making of a recurring pattern for a flat surface».[17]

In this context, Morris' explanations on how —and based on what criteria— patterns must be designed are, besides being an exposition on how he worked, a hint on his aesthetic mechanisms. It is true that he never dedicated a text to considerations on industrial products in and of themselves. There is, on the other hand, a paper on the art of decorative pattern design, *Some Hints on Pattern Designing* (1881) which he illustrated with lithographs taken from Jones' *Grammar of Design* exclusively dedicated to fabrics (*Arts & Crafts Essays*, 1892); another dedicated to the history of the ornament, *History of Pattern-designing* (1879); another on criteria governing design in all the decorative arts and in projects for interior decoration, *Making the Best of It* (1880); and another to all the decorative arts, *The Lesser Arts of Life* (1882),[18] the text where we can perhaps best see how his point of view varies when considering manual work and industrial work according to whether it refers to the nature of the technical procedure of each craft —as in fabrics or pottery— or if it is derived from the capitalist spirit —the commercial interest— when it becomes a social question and of civilization. In fact, the production system was never a sufficient criterion for classification in itself for Morris, although it definitely was quite important for an understanding of design criteria derived therefrom. He was much more interested in explaining what they were used for, how they were to be used, and why. Thus, from this point of view, it is even more meaningful that he treated the more humble crafts and the cheaper products together, even comparing them, with the more expensive or noble ones (tapestries and embroideries). His research was, in the first place, to understand these arts which have always supplied the community with tools for living, as he nearly always explained in his conferences, and, in the second place, as is clear in the introduction to *Some Hints on Pattern-designing*, that he considered all resources available for decoration equally: «after all, the widest use of pattern-designing is the clothing of the walls of a room, hall, church, or what building you will». [CW XXII, p.183].

As to the aesthetic nature of the decorative arts, Morris knew, partly because Pugin had said so but above all because it had been thoroughly proved by the Reformers —especially Dyce, Redgrave, Jones, and Wornum— that the aesthetic appreciation of objects of everyday use did not work in the same way as in the plastic arts, and this way of thinking estranged him irretrievably from Ruskin and his idea of art.[19] For William Morris, the aesthetic purpose of a stained paper, a print, flooring, or a ceiling, or any other decorative object, even the interior decoration of a room, was the search for a quiet and restful aesthetic pleasure, like the atmosphere people wish to find when they come home. An idea of comfort, then, practical and comfortable, but above all, agreeable and cozy, if we must define it in aesthetic categories. Thus, the main criteria directing design in these cases is renouncing plastic effects or those aesthetic experiences characteristic of the *Beaux Arts*. In some of his writing, Morris notes, in opposition to Ruskin, that it would be exhausting to

17. *Some Hints on Pattern-Designing* (1881) CW XXII, p. 175.

18. See *Some Hints on Pattern-Designing* (1881) and *History of Pattern-designing* (1879) both published CW XXII. See also the essay on fabrics in *Arts & Crafts Essays* (1893).

19. See Ruskin's, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), the paragraphs about art applied to train stations and in *The Two Paths* (1875) the controversy with Wornum about ornament.

arrive in a living-room in which all the walls made you think about the great spiritual problems of mankind, as it would be in an atmosphere excessively stimulating to the senses, provoking excessive artistic sensations in the inhabitants.[20] If this is the general standard when speaking specifically of design, the distance as to painting and the plastic arts is proposed in terms of content and graphic treatment:

> The absolute necessities of the art are beauty of colour and restfulness of form; its colour may be brought about by the simplest combinations; its form may be merely that of abstract lines or spaces, and need not of necessity have any distinct meaning or tell any history expressible in words. On the other hand, it is necessary to the purity of the art that its form and colour, when these bear any relation on of the facts of nature (as for the more part they do) should be suggestive of such parts, and not descriptive of them.

In another paper, Morris is even more specific:

> Now, again, as to paperhangings, one may accept as an axiom that, other things being equal, the more mechanical the process, the less direct should be the imitation of natural forms.

He said the same when he wished to explain the drawings for raised fabrics. The criteria are always the suitability of the medium for which one is designing.[21]

In this sense, I believe that one of the most innovative aspects in the reflection on Morris' aesthetics is assuming the decorative nature of most consumer goods, and having done so while accepting the most humble and less attention-calling aspects. It is necessary to see if this proposal can be taken as a whole within a generic concept of decorative function which can be equated in some aspects to those of the aesthetic function, but is, however, quite specific in many others. There are enough elements in the way of explaining decoration to indicate this. Doubtless it is most important to accept a merely agreeable aesthetic finality, as well as describing it in formal and formalist terms, while trying to explain even the degree of conventionalisation desirable in drawing only in formal terms. This is what happens in all those paragraphs dedicated to explaining how printing is to be designed, when he speaks of the degree of abstraction in the treatment of graphics, the level of conventionalisation and stylisation in the shape of the pattern, of the importance of form and colour, of formal resources such as silhouetting and solids, of the organisation of the geometric structure and all possible standards, of how to translate into shapes the conditioners derived from the way of placing and perceiving these prints; but even more so when he faces questions such as the degree of mystery desirable in patterns, an aspect basic to him which he explains in terms of visual interest or pregnance; or that of meaning, that is, the degree of identification desirable in what is represented and the explanation of themes convenient to use:

> What we have to do [...] is to create due paper-stainers' flowers and leaves, forms that are obviously fit for printing with a block; to mask the construction of our pattern enough to prevent people from counting the repeats of our pattern, while we manage to lull their curiosity to trace it out; to be careful to cover our ground equably. If we are successful in these two last things, we shall attain a look of satisfying mystery, which is an essential in all aptterned goods, and which in paperhangings must be done by the designer, since, as aforesaid, they fall into no folds, and have no special beauty of material to attract the eye.

20. See *Some Hints on Pattern-Designing* (1881) CW XXII, p. 176-178. The quote is long but amusing: «Take note, too, that in the best of art these solemn and awful things are expressed clearly and without any vagueness, with such life and power that they impress the beholder so deeply that he is brought face to face with the very scenes and lives among them for a time; so raising his life above the daily tangle of small things that wearies him, to the level of the heroism which they represent [...] This is the best art [...] yet its very greatness makes it a thing to be handled carefully, for we cannot always be having our emotions deeply stirred: that wearies us body and soul; and man, an animal that longs for rest like other animals, defends himself against the weariness by hardening his heart, and refusing to be moved every hour of the day by tragic emotions; nay, even by beauty that claims his attention over-much [...] Meantime, I cannot allow that it is good for any hour of the day to be wholly stripped of life and beauty; therefore we must provide ourselves with lesser art to surround our common workaday or restful times; and for those times, I think, it will be enough for us to clothe our daily and domestic walls with ornament that reminds us of the outward face of the earth, of the innocent love of animals, or of man passing his days between work and rest as he does. I say, with ornament that reminds us of these things, and sets our minds and memories at work easily creating them.»

21. See in this order: *History of Pattern-Designing* (1879) CW XXII, p. 209, *Some Hints on Pattern-Designing* (1881) CW XXII, p. 190, and *The Lesser Arts of Life* (1882).

Perhaps it is true that William Morris did not understand or defend the aesthetic value of pure forms in three-dimensional objects, or of structural simplicity *per se* in architecture and interior decoration, and that inevitably makes him a good representative of Victorian taste. However, he did consider abstract forms as a two-dimensional ornament:

> Our wall may be ornamented with mere horizontal stripes of colour [...] what beauty there may be in these will be limited to the beauty of very simple proportion, and in the tints used, while the meaning of them will be confined to the calling of people's attention to the charm of material, and due orderly construction of a wall.[22]

What is more, even when he explained the characteristics of good prints, he always went back to structural elements such as the variety of posssible combinations of the background geometric pattern, colours and their contrasts insofar as flat tints, and the play on tracery and spotting which make up a pattern and organise a relief between two-dimensional planes. In this way, the aesthetic effect of a print, or of any ornamental model, depends exclusively on its internal quality and its richness, that is, its degree of formal elaboration, as a factor opposed to the more usual exuberance or quantity of decoration.

In order to recognise the interest of Morris' contribution, we must forget the many negative connotations in ideas on decoration, due mostly to the evolution in plastic arts in the 20th century, but this points to a possible operativity of the idea of decoration in phenomena such as design and everything linked to the experience of everyday life. Such is the case in graphics, typography, posters, packaging, and signs. It is about that particular aesthetic dimension of things that the Pop movement added to plastic arts. If now and then decoration is often a synonym for frivolous or banal, the decorative function explains quite a lot of people's aesthetic behaviour, among which, evidently, modern life's most frequent trap: «horror vacui».[23] But besides, if it is considered in relation to the later development of design and architecture when the aesthetics of objects for everyday use became even more of an intellectual and abstract phenomenon, Morris' position can be seen as an option, determined and very specific, addressed to that sector of the market which the Modern Movement always searched for and never found; that same sector which, in the words of Adolf Loos, «were saddened and down-hearted» when they heard his message: really «what mattered to them was knowing that a new ornament could not be produced».[24] From this point of view, Morris' reflection becomes a search to find the criteria for aesthetic quality ruling the decorative function and, thus, the way of actively intervening in the improvement of the aesthetic quality of the surrounding environment. An environment which, as we have said, must be calm, restful, quiet, and comfortable.[25]

4. Ornament and decoration: two design procedures and two types of aesthetic effect in objects

What has often been considered Morris' most original and important contribution to the theory of design are the many considerations on diverse materials with which each decorative art works, and above all, the fact of having turned the quality of the material into a definite priority conditioning design process. However, in his analysis it is not only the material which imposes limitations on design, but also the procedures for carrying out the techniques of each craft. Thus the act

22. *Some Hints on Pattern-Designing* (1881) CW XXII, p. 191 and 183 respectively.

23. In this sense, see Branzi's arguments for the incorporation of the design of decorative elements in current design activities: «Decorativo è spesso sinonimo di vulgarizzazione dei fenomeni grafici e figurativi, che sarebbero transformati nei processi ripetitivi della decorazione in segni privi di qualsiasi capacità di comunicazione culturale», Andrea Branzi, *La casa calda*, Palermo University Press, Palermo, 1984, p. 92.

24. Morris, who also asks himself why humanity has invested so much time and effort on an activity such as ornament, gives an answer which is not a very flattering sketch of people who, like Loos, prefer having white-washed walls: «Doubtless there will be some, in these days at least, who will say: "Tis most helpful to me to let the bare walls alone." So also there would be some who, when asked with what manner of books they will furnish their room, would answer, "With none." But I think you will agree with me in thinking that both these sets of people would be in an unhealthy state of mind, and probably of body also; in which case we need not trouble ourselves about their whims, since it is with healthy and sane people only that art has dealings.» In *Some Hints on Pattern-Designing* (1881) CW XXII, pp. 175-6.

25. See chapter 2.3 in Calvera (1992), p. 231 and ff.

of designing consists of taking advantage of them and turning them into spurs for creative imagination. In this also, as well as in many other aspects of his thought, we can see the depth of Morris' synthesis. If on the one hand he applied generic suggestions of suitability and coherence to material and techniques given by the Reformers, on the other he retook Ruskin's description of artistic «falsehoods» and «lies» contained in his *Lamps of Truth and Beauty* (1849); but he also incorporated all his practical knowledge derived from so many years of experience as the designer and technical director of the company. In this way, defining the nature itself of material and technique as the basic tool of creation in the decorative arts, Morris managed to turn a golden rule of crafts and plastic arts into a principle valid as well for designing for mechanised manufacture, something which is derived from the fact of using the same criteria as a beginning for the description of all the crafts he considered, whether mechanised or not.

At the same time, regarding the aesthetic behaviour of material and results obtained by means of varied techniques, he realised how the devices by means of which the several applied arts achieved the decorative function varied, and how necessary it was to modify design criteria to adapt to each case and extract the maximum aesthetic effect from them. The great borderline was set up between the decorative arts in which the quality of the material, the traces of the work, and the technique naturally achieved the decorative function by means of their own qualities, and those that did not; these then needed the addition of an external ornamental treatment. Thus, in Morris' point of view, the more humble, cheap, and expressionless the material or the elaboration process, the richer and more elaborate the design of the ornamental motive must be, in the sense noted above. It is worth following Morris' argument:

> In these wares which are stretched out flat on the wall, and have no special beauty of execution about them, we may find ourselves driven to do more than we otherwise should in masking the construction of our patterns. It gives us a chance of showing that we are pattern-designers born by accepting the apparent dilemma cheerfully, and setting our wit to work to conquer it. Let me state the difficulty again. In this craft the absence of limitations as to number of colours, and the general ease of the manufacture, is apt to tempt us into a mere twisting of natural forms into lines that may pass as ornamental; to yield to this temptation will almost certainly result in our designing a mere platitude. On the other hand is the temptation to design a pattern as we might do for a piece of woven goods, where the structure is boldly shown, and the members strongly marked; but such a pattern done in a cheap material will be apt to look over-ambitious, and, being stretched out flat on the wall, will lead the eye overmuch to its geometrical lines, and all repose will be lost.[26]

Even though Morris did not say so in these terms, we can refer to this difference by means of the notion of Ornament and Decoration. Through a series of circumstances proper to the history of words, ornament and decoration are nowadays almost synonymous, or at least so students of decorative arts own.[27] There is, however, a very subtle difference which is useful when explaining Morris' ideas, as well as for understanding the debate in theory and in art history, begun by Alois Riegl, who studied ornament, against Gottfried Semper, who worked from decoration —and who, in passing, had collaborated with Henry Cole— or for understanding the ideas of Adolf Loos and contrasting them with his professional practice. In fact, the difference between the several kinds of ornament was the best way to realise the aesthetic function of the industrial object, that is to say, those perfect finishes which could only be obtained by machine work; in the same way it was useful for understanding the aesthetic proposition of crafts, of hand-made artistic work with irregular finishes which, however, had no need to be shoddy, and were characteristic of human work.

Taking as a basis the terminology established by Morpurgo Tagliabue (1960) when analysing Loos' famous article on ornament, decoration refers to satisfying a stylistic need while ornament refers to an extrinsical type of decoration. To what extent the original German word has this meaning or became fixed during the 19th century, either through philosophical analyses of aesthetics or as a consequence of a linguis-

26. *Some Hints on Pattern-Designing* (1881) CW XXII, pp. 190-191.

27. See Durand, Stuart: *La ornamentación* (1986), Alianza Ed. Madrid 1991, p. 7, and Gombrich, Ernst H.: *El sentido del orden* (1979), GG, Barcelona, 1980, Introduction. Among authors using this difference, Morpurgo Tagliabue (1960), p. 468, and Branzi (1984), p. 90.

tic analogy in people's speech, the fact is that ornament refers to everything which can be separated from the structural form, sometimes a superfluous addition, sometimes necessary to increse the brilliance of results, but almost always rhetoric.[28] Ornament thus consists in an external treatment applied to the surface of an object with an aesthetic and decorative end. In this sense, it is logical that ornament be treated as a system of forms and two-dimensional drawing, applied after obtaining a piece. As it is external and independent of a piece, and this is the concept of ornament derived from 18th century historicism as to style but especially in regard to methods of design, the repertory of ornamental forms has no sort of relation to the construction system, the material used, or the structural form of the project. In view of the fact that in industry obtaining raw material, creating new material, manufacturing processes for pieces, and coatings and finishes had become completely independent of construction and manufacture, ornament and ornament design soon became established as a specific production sector —the ornament industry— and the concept of coatings as a product in itself arose. In this context, it is understandable that a good part of the research of the Reformers of the mid-19th century, involved as they were in the aesthetic improvement of industrial merchandise, was precisely into the relations desirable between ornament and structural form, between ornament and its support.

On its hand, the other type of ornament, which I have called decoration, becomes an effect created by the treatment of the surface and is an attribute of the object's form. It inevitably and naturally arises as an effect of the process of execution of a technique and is the trace left by the technical equipment used in the elaboration of a piece, or by the qualities exhibited by the material. Thus, Branzi calls it «natural ornament» when explaining Loos' works. The feet of Roman lapidaries, the trace of fingers in the clay when it is worked on a potter's wheel, the texture formed by the weave of threads or the plait of vegetable fibre in basket weaving, the trace of the brush applied to a surface, the pattern formed by the bricks in an unplastered construction, all these are good examples of this sort of decorative effect on textured surfaces. As the results obtained are inevitable, because they appear as soon as the elaboration of a piece is begun and they are consubstantial to it, when designing for these techniques it is necessary to know how to control, and moreover take advantage of these surface values, derived textures. In fact, the work often consists of designing the textures themselves —actually, this is the decisive occupation when designing textiles, and that which gives it meaning, but also of the current of primary design which has recently been theorised on. Even though it is difficult to distinguish theoretically what separates these effects from the idea of form, it is evident that all along the history of decorative arts and design, the differences in warp, weave, quality of knots and material, the variety of thicknesses obtained by the different pressure on the pen when drawing or writing, have been expression resources repeatedly used to aesthetic and decorative ends. They are what Ruskin considered material proof of the joy felt by a specific creator during the execution of the work. Finally, the difference is such that usually in these arts, incorporating ornament in the sense noted above is almost impossible and always redounds to an aesthetic worsening of the result. The clearest case is basket-weaving. The only ornament possible, that is, the appearance of a pattern besides that made up by the plaiting, is of an abstract type consisting in a variety of material and tones of the same sort as give variety to the plaiting, but nothing else.

Once we have realised the aesthetic capacity of the surface's texture, plaiting of the reeds or the pattern of the weave, that is, the perception of a surface in itself, it is easy to see that the aesthetic capacity of the materials themselves, especially when they have a texture of their own which organises an abstract design and also a pattern, whether polished or unpolished. This is the case of wood and its veins, the roughness and striation of the different kinds of stone used in building, the grain of hand-made paper, the strips of carboard and its roughness, and, in general, of all noble material whose quality needs no application of additional ornamental treatment. The next step is obviously to discover that even industrial finishes, those which seek

28. As to theory of ornament in German aesthetics, see Morgan, D.: «The Idea of Abstraction in German Theories of the Ornament» in *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 50, Summer 1992, pp. 231-242. For an all-over view, see Gombrich (1979), and for the linguistic analogy in the 18th century concept of art and architecture, see Collins, Peter: *Los ideales de la arquitectura moderna* (1965), GG, Barcelona 1981/4a. As to the development of the ornament industry, see Giedion, Siegfried: *La mecanización toma el mando* (1948), GG, Barcelona, 1978.

maximum perfection, most uniformity and homogeneity in the surface of the material treated, also have surface values and operate in a similar way to natural material as to decorative effect obtained, manual techniques, and weaving processes. This is the case of stainless steel or chrome metal, where light reflections take the place of roughness and texture in natural material; as is also the case of rolls of paper or stuccoed paper, or wall plasters painted a uniform colour, or perfectly transparent glass. In the same way, it can also be seen in interlocking points, joints, and beams, that is to say, the structural components which have their origin in an assembly line can accomplish a decorative function according to the treatment given them; and this is the axiom which allows industrial design and the Modern Movement to definitely renounce ornament in mechanical production.

All this process somehow describes the evolution of design from Morris' day to the Modern Movement and even to the High Tech stream of the last few years. From this point of view, it is quite clear that, beginning with Loos, the preferred design option was taking advantage of decorative effects of material and its textures; thus, in a «modern» environment, there is a combination of artisan objects alongside the more industrial ones. It is worth emphasising here: the project option taken by the Modern Movement is closer to the aesthetic criteria of the artisan, that is to say, that model of craft idealised at the time, and it is, for the most part, its continuation as they preferred to work taking advantage of the decorative capacity of techniques and material. The importance of design then falls on the definition of form understood, in the case of industrial design, as beginning with the section and thus the outer silhouette, while in architecture there was a concentration on the ground plans of buildings to achieve a project of interior space. In this way there was a beginning of work with abstract form in itself, as the aesthetic charge fell on the material and techniques used, whether they were very highly textured or not. In fact, this is the way Christopher Dresser began in the gold and silver work sector in Morris' time. His designs took advantage of the aesthetic quality of such a noble material as evenly polished silver combined with wood, and thus the act of designing concentrated on structural construction points. It was also the case of William Godwin's characteristic investigation of interior decoration and aesthetically lacquered furniture. The Arts & Crafts people preferred fidelity to manual finishes and traditional natural material, exaggerating them while symplifying their forms.

There is a certain logic in the debate's appearing at that moment. The artisan/industry dichotomy still allowed an appreciation of results obtained by each system and a comparison between them. Thus, all the process described above, which suffered from a certain control like all models of interpretation, was very quick: between Morris and Dresser on the one hand, and Loos and the Modern Movement on the other, there were no more than fifty years. Modernism with its new style offered a great experimental laboratory. In this sense, the experiments carried out by the first modernists into the industrialisation of ornamental procedures for building, such as Domènech i Montaner's decorated tiles or hydraulic flooring were as important as studies on the ornamental use of the structural lines of the building or of furniture, which characterised another stream of the movement which has been called more rationalist.

Morris' reflections on industrial products and decorative arts are also placed in this context and, in fact, contribute important elements to both streams of thought. If in texturising and highly decorative techniques he always defended artisan procedures and the artistic value belonging to unique hand-made works —except in the case of fabrics and carpets, obviously—, in the case of cheap techniques and material deplored by Ruskin due to the mechanical finishes, Morris proposed the design of ornament as a creative resource for maintaining and increasing its aesthetic quality:

> Only you must remember that, considering the price of the material it is done on, this craft (printing on cloth, generally cotton) is a specially troublesome one; so that in designing for it you must take special care that every fresh process you lay upon a poor filmy piece of cotton, woth fourpence or fivepence per yard, should really add beauty to it, and not be done for whim's sake.

In this field, specifically in the case of wallpaper, printing on flat fabric, printed tiles and linoleum flooring, but also all coating material which arose from the advance of industry, everything depended on the knowledge of the trade of design, on the care and love put into design by the designer: «For the rest, the fact that in this art we are so little helped by beautiful and

varying material imposes on us the necessity of being specially thoughtful in our designs».[29]

All these aspects of Morris' investigation quite coincide with Riegl's. The similarities are such that Morris also accepts that behind the aesthetic quality of a product there is always an intention and an artistic will which belongs to someone. It is true that this is only individual, however. In fact, this is no more than what Ruskin defended when he spoke of the joy of the worker. In Morris' case, as well, there are also the requirements of the professional and aesthetic competence of this same worker. His premise was always: «remember that a pattern is either right or wrong».[30]

In this way, Morris was the first to try to formulate, by means of principles of design, a practice which was beginning to be applied in an intuitive manner by many professionals, both then and later. However, as regards Morris, what was most significant was probably the fact that of all possible industrial products, and differing from Dresser, Godwin, and Arts & Crafts, he was attracted by cheap products on the market, those addressed to the largest section of the population. As he conceived ornament, pattern-designing became a specialty within design, which, although the Modern Movement discarded it from interior decoration in its model of comfortable living, survived during the whole of the 20th century, developed by the more marginal styles of the avant-garde and always applied by industry of mass-consumption and large stores, with a quite important specific market. Thus, if all these ideas of Morris had continued to develop after Modernism, new referents could have developed for an important control of this production of decoration and ornaments —bibelots and «sub-design», if you like— and industrial coating sector which could have reached greater quality than what there is at present. It is not so long ago that these «provincial» printed papers inspired Sottsass, radical design, and Pop design. The great paradox of the 20th century is that precisely these are the only really industrial products and that from them has arisen real popular taste, current mass culture.

Quite definitely, then, both from the ideas expressed in conferences, and proposals carried out from Morris & Co., two different aesthetics can be seen, which tend to achieve similar effects. One, that of decorative and noble crafts, which could be summed up as an ideal of simplicity in life and habits, which did not necessarily translate into austerity but rather the agreeable comfort derived from the wise arrangement of furniture and the appreciation of aesthetic qualities based on the recognition of the creative effort and mastery of the craft. A model of simplicity which was simple only in appearance, due to the degree of culture and education needed to appreciate it, which Thorstein Veblen (1899) early called elitist, but which is what allows admiration of both the most primitive and rustic artisan pieces and the more conceptual works of current modern design.

The other is what is achieved through industrial coating and facing and which depends exclusively on the formal quality of the designs. Morris' proposal, then, could be qualified, from his own words, as an aesthetics of delicacy. An effect obtained with the delicacy of curves and the movement of lines which hide the geometric construction of the prints and which also depends on the type of conventional styling used in the treatment of the pattern, and the subtlety of the colour combinations. Possibly, today's eyes and taste find it difficult to discover the delicacy he speaks of in many of his prints, some of which are quite dark, others too vigourous and heavy in the line, others too rich and full of detail. It is true that the energy of the design is one of the defining characteristics of his style, what has allowed him to be called «the best classic designer of his time». In fact, together with the models which are still made and sold, those most clearly applicable according to modern tastes, there is also in his work a research on historical ornamental motives —vine-leaves, acanthus-leaves, willows (the same as were studied by Riegl in 1893)— some of them classic, some gothic, some Indian, on which he based his general ideas. In any case, there is no doubt that delicacy, like grace, elegance, agreeableness, and other similar aesthetic categories were values associated to everything wishing to be decorative. Thus, Morris' main aim was to proscribe vulgarity from designs, as well as affected bad taste and «nasty & shoddy» genteel sentimentality, warning against the dangers leading to there when manufacturing techniques impose no difficulties nor present insurmountable limitations, neither are they a mechanism for aesthetic control, as is the case in industry. When he made the difference between these

29. *Some Hints on Pattern-Designing* (1881) CW XXII, pp. 192-3, and *The Lesser Arts of Life* (1882) CW II, p. 260, respectively.

30. *Making the Best of It* (1880) CW XXII, p. 110.

two aesthetics and established different criteria for them both, Morris not only proved he was a man of his time engaged on modern matters; he becomes prophetic for an understanding of all that has come after, during the last hundred years, without having been a pioneer.

Bibliography and abreviations

BRANCI, Andrea, *La casa calda* (1983), Palermo University, Palermo, 1984.

CALVERA, Anna, *La formació del pensament de William Morris*, Destino, Barcelona, 1992.

FAULKNER, Peter, *William Morris. The Critical Heritage*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1973.

FLOUD, Peter, «William Morris as an Artist: A New View», *The Listener*, October 7, 1954, London; «Dating Morris' patterns», *The Architectural Review*, July 1959, London.

GLOAG, John: *Victorian Comfort* (1961), David & Charles, London, 1973/2a.

HENDERSON, Philip, *The Letters of William Morris to his Family and Friends*, Longman's, Green & Co., London, 1950.

KELVIN, Norman, *The Collected Letters of William Morris*, I, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1984.

LINDSAY, Jack: *William Morris, His Life and Work*, Constable, London, 1975.

MACKAIL, J. W.: *The Life of William Morris*, 2 vols., Longman's, Green & Co., London, 1989.

MORRIS, May, *William Morris, Artist, Writer, Socialist*, 2 vols., Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1936.

MORRIS, William, *The Collected Works of William Morris*, May Morris Ed., 24 vols., Longman's, London, 1910-1915.

MORPURGO TAGLIABUE, Guido, *La estética contemporánea* (1960), Losada, Buenos Aires, 1971.

PARRY, Linda, *William Morris Textiles*, Weidenfeld and Nelson Ltd., London, 1983.

PEVSNER, Nikolaus, *Estudios sobre arte, arquitectura y diseño* (1968), GG, Barcelona, 1983.

THOMPSON, E. P., *William Morris, Romantic to Revolutionary* (1955), Merlin Press, London, 1977/2a.

THOMPSON, Paul, *The Work of William Morris* (1967), Quartet Books, London, 1977/2a.

VEBLEN, Thorstein, *The theory of the leisure class*, MacMillan Company, 1899.

WATKINSON, Ray, *William Morris as a designer* (1967), Trefoil Books, London, 1983/3a.