

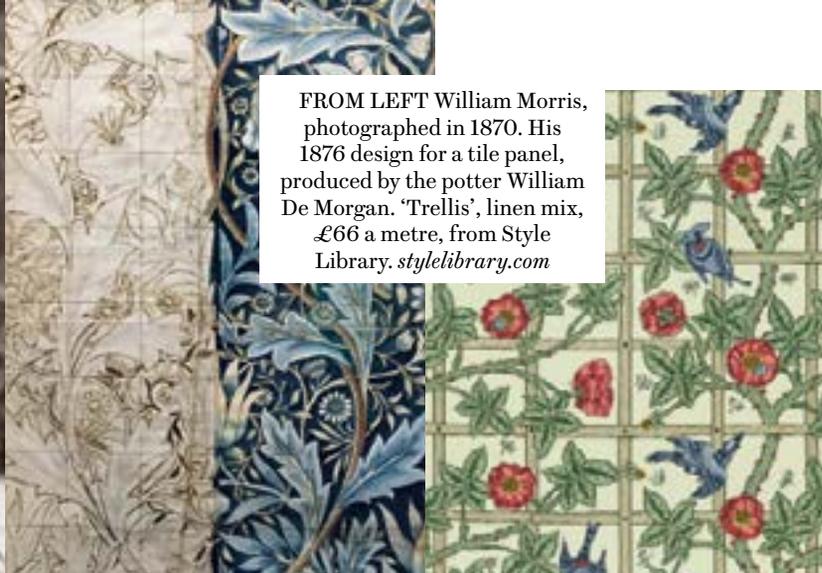
*Design ideas*

# ARTS AND CRAFTS

ELIZABETH METCALFE considers how a movement that began in the late nineteenth century is still relevant today and highlights how its distinctive designs for fabrics, wallpapers and furniture continue to inspire interiors



In this sitting room designed by Rose Uniacke, ebonised chairs by Edward Godwin sit in front of hand-blocked wallpaper, which is based on an original Godwin design in the Victoria & Albert Museum. Rose had it recoloured in fresh tones. [roseuniacke.com](http://roseuniacke.com) ▷



FROM LEFT William Morris, photographed in 1870. His 1876 design for a tile panel, produced by the potter William De Morgan. 'Trellis', linen mix, £66 a metre, from Style Library. [stylelibrary.com](http://stylelibrary.com)

for example Edwin Lutyens, who was renowned for his imaginative adaptation of traditional building styles, and Philip Webb, who is best known for designing the Red House in Bexleyheath as a family home for Morris in 1859.

Designer Ben Pentreath, who decorated an Arts and Crafts house in Hampstead featured in the May 2018 issue of *House & Garden*, is an advocate of its contemporary appeal. 'Is there anything more soothing than the idea of a generous, friendly bay-window seat, overlooking a herb garden; or a deep inglenook fireplace, with wide oak boards on the floor and a gentle ticking of a Charles Voysey clock on the mantel?' he asks.

Despite their rejection of Victorian frivolity, the proponents of Arts and Crafts embraced ornament – as long as it was 'secondary to the thing ornamented'. Wallpapers and carpets were acceptable, as long as their patterns were not 'suggestive of anything but a level or plain'. Hence the rather flat, simplified style of Arts and Crafts patterns, which continue to capture our imaginations today.

## Living pattern

William Morris created his first pattern, 'Trellis', in 1862. His designs, which featured British flora and fauna and naturalistic colours, gained popularity in the 1880s and 1890s, and a huge

number are still available today through Style Library. 'We launch prints, weaves and embroideries based on designs from the Morris archive every year,' says Clare Vallis, creative director of Morris & Co at Style Library. Morris & Co's most popular collection is 'Pure Morris', which launched in 2016 and features neutral coloured, pared-back designs. 'This range has taken Morris's designs to a new audience who found the original colour palette did not work in their homes,' says Clare. In May, Style Library is launching a collection in honour of May Morris, William's youngest daughter, who was a very accomplished embroiderer and textile designer. 'She was ahead of her time,' says Clare.

Others followed in Morris's footsteps, including the architect CFA Voysey, whose patterns featured bold repeats and colours. Some of his designs are available through House of Hackney, Lewis & Wood and US company Trustworth Studios. ▷

**Y**ou may have noticed that the Arts and Crafts movement is having a bit of a moment, with some of today's naturalistic wallpapers and fabrics, rustic furniture and pared-back interiors seeming to have their roots in this style. Spanning 1860 to 1920, Arts and Crafts was a celebration of simple, honest craftsmanship. It was a reaction against mass production and the excesses of Victorian design, which were flaunted at the Great Exhibition in 1851. This showcased contemporary industrial design and featured more than 100,000 objects. It was an exciting spectacle, but it did have its detractors, including William Morris, one of the movement's most famous figures. He was so appalled by the show's excesses that it reputedly reduced him to a bout of sickness.

If it was originally a response to industrialisation, then perhaps its current resurgence is a reaction to digitisation and the pace of the modern world. 'The ethos of the Arts and Crafts movement is very relevant to life today,' says antique dealer and designer Christopher Howe. 'There is a renewed interest in the way furniture is made, which values materials and the revival of craftsmanship.'

It heralded a new approach in which architecture, furniture and adornments were all intended to sit in harmony. Many of the period's key players were architects,

## GET THE ARTS AND CRAFTS LOOK



1. 'Strawberry Meadow' wool-mix **carpet** (peacock), £149 a square metre, from Alternative Flooring. [alternativeflooring.com](http://alternativeflooring.com)
2. 'Acanthus' **wallpaper** (aegean blue/off white), £165 for a 9-metre roll, from House of Hackney. [houseofhackney.com](http://houseofhackney.com)
3. 'Voysey Park' (verdure), **linen**, £96.31 a metre, from Lewis & Wood. [lewisandwood.co.uk](http://lewisandwood.co.uk)
4. 'Lioness and Palms' **wallpaper** (midnight), £140 for a 10-metre roll, from CommonRoom. [commonroom.co](http://commonroom.co)



ABOVE LEFT In this bedroom, Ben Pentreath has paired Morris & Co's 'Willow Bough' wallpaper, which provides an excellent backdrop for art, with antique wooden furniture. ABOVE CENTRE 'Honeysuckle' is an 1883 design by May Morris. ABOVE RIGHT Charles Voysey's 1926 design 'Apothecary's Garden' (\$210 for a 523 x 53cm panel, from Trustworth Studios) looks lovely in this child's room by Jersey Ice Cream Co. [trustworth.com](http://trustworth.com) | [jerseyicecreamco.com](http://jerseyicecreamco.com)



LEFT Rachel Chudley has toned down Morris & Co's lively 'The Brook' wallpaper, £92 a metre, with simple brown furniture in this dining room. [rachelchudley.com](http://rachelchudley.com) BELOW LEFT 'Temptation' (\$210 for a 523 x 53cm panel, from Trustworth Studios) is one of Charles Voysey's early designs, but in this bedroom by Jersey Ice Cream Co, it has a contemporary feel



This richly layered room by Rose Uniacke is a masterclass in using William Morris designs in a contemporary way. She has chosen 'Brer Rabbit' (£68 for a 10-metre roll, from Style Library) for the walls, but kept the furniture clean lined. The white ottoman and blind, and the seagrass flooring stop the walls overwhelming the space



For this Arts and Crafts house in north London, Ben Pentreath freshened up the original panelling – a typical element of this style of interior – by painting it in Farrow & Ball’s ‘Shaded White’. The antique ‘Sussex’ bench by William Morris continues the theme, as does the complementary look of the Edward Bawden linocut. [benpentreath.com](http://benpentreath.com)

### *Elegant simplicity*

In a lecture in 1880, William Morris said that ‘simplicity of life, even the barest, is not a misery, but the very foundation of refinement.’ Arts and Crafts furniture followed a similar vein – it was clean-lined, relatively free of adornment and made of solid, quality materials, such as oak. ‘The

great thing about this furniture is that it is easy to look at,’ says antique dealer Paul Reeves, who specialises in Arts and Crafts furniture and textiles, and counts Veere Grenney and Ben Pentreath among his clients. ‘It can go in all sorts of interiors – from the grand to the country cottage.’ The downside? ‘Some of it can be too big for the modern home.’ ▷

## FURNITURE WITH THE ARTS AND CRAFTS LOOK



Oak ‘Blythe Tall Chest’, 145 x 48.3 x 50cm, £849, from Heal’s. [heals.com](http://heals.com)



Walnut ‘Avery Armchair’, 81 x 57.5 x 50cm, £880, from Pinch. [pinchdesign.com](http://pinchdesign.com)



Oak ‘Bucknell Table’, 75 x 107 x 54.5cm, £3,840, from Jamb. [jamb.co.uk](http://jamb.co.uk)



Ash ‘Tenta Side Chair’, 83 x 48 x 39cm, £698, from Sitting Firm. [sittingfirm.co.uk](http://sittingfirm.co.uk)



Oak ‘Edwin Trolley’, 93 x 85 x 56.5cm, £2,400, from Balineum. [balineum.co.uk](http://balineum.co.uk)

## DECORATING | DESIGN IDEAS

Key designers from the period include Charles Rennie Mackintosh, the Scottish architect who crafted distinctive high-backed chairs, Ernest Gimson, best known for his traditional ladder-back chairs, and Philip Webb, who produced simply constructed rustic furniture. What should we be buying now? 'George Walton, who was a friend of Mackintosh, is very under-rated, perhaps because his designs are rather subtle,' says Paul.

If your budget does not stretch to original pieces, there are contemporary designs that have their basis in the Arts and Crafts. Heal's has released the 'Blythe' collection, which nods to the pieces designed by Ambrose Heal in the early twentieth century. Russell Pinch's work also takes its reference from Morris. 'I was exposed to his work a lot as a child and it has had a lasting impact,' says Russell, whose 'Avery' chair has its roots in Morris's rush-seat 'Sussex' design. 'It is all about the simplicity of the line in this chair – it is still so relevant to today,' he explains. It is not just the aesthetics that relate to the Arts and Crafts, but also Russell's approach to craftsmanship. 'Morris worked tirelessly with makers to keep them going and I want to celebrate the unsung heroes in the workshops that we use. Can we raise a toast to them?' □



An oak table and 'Spiderback' chairs by Lutyens Furniture & Lighting reflect the Arts and Crafts heritage of this house, decorated by Keech Green. [lutyens-furniture.com](http://lutyens-furniture.com) | [keechgreen.com](http://keechgreen.com)



LEFT In the restoration of this house, Collett Zarzycki did not want to slavishly emulate the architect Charles Voysey, but chose similar natural materials and shapes for the sitting room. [collett-zarzycki.com](http://collett-zarzycki.com)  
BELOW The drawing room of William and Janey Morris's Red House in Bexleyheath. [nationaltrust.org.uk](http://nationaltrust.org.uk)

