

CRAFT IDEALISM AS AN INFLUENCE ON DESIGN

WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO FURNITURE AND INTERIORS

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The hands of James Krenov, worker in wood.

PREFACE

While working as a designer of furniture and interiors for the commercial market in Natal during the later 1960's and early 1970's, I was exposed to rural Zulu handcraft offered for sale on the roadside in outlying areas. The work revealed a special quality and an "integrity" which I was unconsciously looking for in my own field of design.

It was in this experience that the concept of looking to craft as a source for design was to originate.

The contrast between this simple and honest expression of art and craft, albeit commercially oriented, and the sophisticated area of design where I was obliged to function, became apparent. Not only was it the marked stylistic difference that impressed, but there seemed to be an underlying social significance to the work. This prompted me to make a record of all the examples of craft I could locate when travelling through the rural areas of Natal. There was no motive at that stage other than personal interest and the observations were not structured as research. It was only years later, when embarking on this study that these impressions became relevant.

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The contents of this dissertation represent my own work and the opinions contained therein are not necessarily those of the Technikon or the Human Sciences Research Council.

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ABSTRACT

In industrialised societies which are becoming increasingly reliant on computer technology the proliferation of handcraft would seem to be an anachronism. This phenomenon has been explored from the viewpoint of the discipline of design and more specifically in the areas relating to interiors and furniture.

Against the background of a survey of contemporary activity in South Africa the historical evolution of craft has been examined in an attempt to trace the relevance of this recent occurrence.

The quality of idealism has been identified in that category of craft which emerged from the Arts and Crafts Movement of last century. This idealism in concert with the crafts emanating from the earlier material cultures of southern Africa has been proposed as a possible influence on design.

A practical component has been included in the study in the form of experiments in handcrafting pieces of furniture. The intention has been to gain understanding of the process and assist in furthering this particular craft.

EKSERP

In industriële samelewings wat al hoe meer op rekenaar-
tegnologie staatmaak, klink die toename in handwerk byna na 'n
anachronisme. Hierdie verskynsel is ontgin ten opsigte van die
ontwerpdissipline, veral op die terreine van interieur- en
meubelontwerp.

Teen die agtergrond van 'n opname oor die hedendaagse bedrywig-
heid in Suid-Afrika is die historiese evolusie van handwerk
nagevolg in 'n poging om die toepaslikheid van hierdie onlangse
verskynsel te ondersoek.

Die kermerk van idealisme is geïdentifiseer in die
kategorie van handwerk wat gedurende die vorige eeu uit die
"Arts and Crafts Movement" voortgespruit het. Hierdie
idealisme, tesame met die vroeëre materiële kulture
van suider-Afrika, word voorgehou as 'n moontlike invloed op
ontwerp.

'n Praktiese komponent in die vorm van eksperimente in
handgemaakte meubelstukke is by die opname ingesluit. Die doel
hiervan was om die proses beter te leer verstaan en om hierdie
spesifieke vorm van handwerk te bevorder.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS OF RURAL CRAFT IN NATAL IN THE EARLY 1970'S

The consequence of the impressions described in the preface has been the stimulus for embarking on this project of investigation into the significance of craft in the field of design.

As the research has progressed, and the meaning of the idealism of craft as an influence on design has formed, it has seemed worthwhile to return to the notes made in Natal and attempt to interpret why this spontaneous response to craft had occurred.

Over a period of approximately four years a variety of locations, conditions and people were seen. Contact was made not only with the Zulu craftsmen mentioned previously, but also others of Nguni stock and people of several nationalities, both local and foreign, including Afrikaans, English, German and Scandinavian. These contacts were recorded factually in terms of place, date and articles seen, also objectively, in so far as there

was no intended aim at the time. Yet when re-evaluating the notes, there appeared to be some essential factor common to these disparate examples of craft. It seemed as if there was some accord amongst these craftsmen which could be described as an ethos. Each instance suggested the individuals might have drawn on a collective source to direct their activities, where in fact there was little contact or knowledge of the other craftsmen.

If there was some result common to these widespread and disconnected activities, it could be said to be a relationship of three factors:-

the work or craft object; the craftsmen or artist; and the location or environment. Not all three were necessarily in evidence on every occasion, yet it is proposed that it was the communion between these factors which imparted a special quality unique to craft.

To illustrate this quality which was identified in the notes of my observations made in Natal, three examples have been taken and summarised. Relevant extracts are quoted directly from my notes to convey the impression made at the time. Individual reference has not been given for each quotation.

"Tactile Hand Weaving" - A farm "Mielietuinhoek" Biggars Berg - near Ladysmith, Natal.

The farmer and his wife introduced hand knotted rugmaking which was produced by Zulu women working on the farm.

"... Work started in a cowshed using primitive equipment for example modified bicycle rims and parts as spinning wheels ..."

The designs were originally produced by an artist working from her studio in Johannesburg "which were duly posted to the farm where they were blown to full size and converted into rugs". The artist then bought a farm in the area and transferred her home. "Now that the designs were being created in the craft environment and had become deeply integrated into the production they took on a new depth and quality not evident before".

Through the influence of the rug making industry other crafts have been encouraged to be produced and a roadside shop was opened by the farmer's family. "... allied African crafts have assisted to focus this as an art and craft centre of very high standard which has been nationally recognised".

The ELC Art and Craft Centre - Rorkes Drift, Natal

"Situated near the Buffalo River which is the border of Kwa Zulu, the Mission consists of a widely spread group of buildings backing onto the Oskarberg, a rocky outcrop in an otherwise gently rolling terrain."

Three major crafts are practiced here: Kelim rug weaving, fabric printing and pottery. They are sold nationally and overseas. The adjacent art school was responsible for producing several renowned Black painters and sculptors.

Referring to the rugs "... The quality and the standard of designs have remained very similar over the years and if a certain disappointment is felt at not seeing new directions, it must be remembered that this is the pace of craft ...". The origin of the designs often came from experiences of daily life. "An example was seen on one occasion, where three weavers were working side by side on a large loom and producing a very complex design utilising a variety of colours, and no reference sketch was being used".

Mzila, a woodcarver in the Msinga Reserve.

"In the hot, dry and dramatic valley near Rugela Ferry, there is a sign on the roadside which simply states the existence of a Woodcarver ... "

"The artist is a most engaging personality, and reflects the creatively arranged grouping of the buildings where he lives and works. Of particular interest is a bicycle frame, mounted without wheels, in an open sided shelter. When propelled by some assistant, this machine provides the power to generate a small and simple lathe on which the woodturning is created ..."

In the three examples, evidence can be seen of people employing unique methods in environments which appear compatible to the nature of the work, and in each case the craft products seemed to be a direct expression of their origins. It is this condition that appears to exist in producing craft, but is less often found in the industrially related areas of design, which propounds an argument in favour of looking to craft as a means of reassessing design values in terms of both individual work and collectively.

What had been seen of the various independent examples when viewed in concert presented an impression of greater consequence than the sum of their individual contributions.

1.2 PERCEIVED CRAFT IDEALISM

So far the reason for these disparate individuals, in varying circumstance, responding simultaneously and turning to craft has not been discussed. No major upheaval had occurred in the 1960's which could have equally affected these people, other than a period of economic recession in South Africa. It could be assumed that this then would have been the reason. Although the potential income which could be generated by the craft was of importance, there was not however the same financial need in all circumstances, and if the motive was purely the generation of cash, was the production of craft necessarily the best way? For example the established farmer in the Biggars Berg could just as well have resorted to some industrial activity to supplement his income from his crops and stock, and the weavers of Rorkes Drift might equally have turned to the local towns to seek work. It would seem then that other stimuli were the motive for selecting craft work as a source of revenue.

Three reasons are proposed and will be discussed briefly under the sub-headings of tradition, cultural reaction and humanism.

Tradition is often considered to have a negative connotation particularly with a culture that is advocating rapid change, but it is the more positive sense of the first and third meanings given in the Concise Oxford Dictionary, as an "opinion or belief ... handed down ... to posterity [also] artistic ... principles based on accumulated experience or continuous usage", which is intended. In communities subjected to deprivation and the stress of displacement or relocation, traditional experience and custom may provide a stable factor in an otherwise insecure social structure. The turning to crafts, which draw on the heritage of their material culture, which many Black communities had almost abandoned over the past few generations, could be interpreted as an unconscious desire to find personal and communal stability. It could also be deduced that if the work is to give the craftsman some connection with a secure past culture, then the products which emerge are more likely to contain positive qualities than those to be found in products where the worker has no traditional connection.

Cultural reaction has been interpreted as it occurs more on an unconscious level and is applied here where the

change imposed on society and the individual is sensed by a few whose reaction consequently alerts the community to the adversity of which they are as yet unaware.

This is illustrated later in the section summarising the Arts and Crafts Movement in the Chapter titled Craft. The reference is to John Ruskin's reaction to the effects of industrialisation on the structure of the British society in the earlier part of last century. His response to his perception of the times was transmitted through his writing and inspired the whole movement of the Arts and Crafts which in turn were to bring a new awareness of design to the Western World.

In respect of a cultural reaction occurring in the South African context, it is suggested that what was observed in the 1960's and early 1970's of the European based crafts, was an unconscious response by these idealists to the pressures being exerted upon society through new technological advances. What they were, and still are, experiencing may originate in the Arts and Crafts Movement and could be traced through subsequent developments.

The nineteenth century was to witness the increasing development and employment of the machine and the

consequent decline of handcraft. Though the theorists of the Arts and Crafts were to decry the social implications of industrialisation and were able to influence the transition, the machine age came into being. It had nevertheless grown from a craft base, with the result that new manufacturing units embodied many of the craft traditions.

There was a respect for and pride in the skills which were required to operate the machines effectively. A social structure developed within the factories, not unlike the early guilds, where an artisan could progress from an apprenticeship to journeyman and foreman. A tradition of manufacturing in the small to medium factories evolved through the twentieth century and continued until after the Second World War (i). But as technology accelerated with the advance in electronics where machines take over

(i) This was personally observed, where working as a designer in the furniture industry from 1955 to 1972 I had extensive contact with the artisans and general workers and witnessed the effects of increasing mechanisation on the status of these people.

an increasing number of tasks and operators replace artisans and robots replace operators, then there arises concern for the unknown and more sinister side of a future in a society which may have little need for man's natural talents. Craft could be seen to be reacting to this threat of uncertainty by demonstrating how the act of making by hand is able to re-introduce factors which have always been known to man and possibly are fundamentally more important to his nature than many of the values imposed by our societies of the late twentieth century.

Humanism in relation to craft is employed in this dissertation in the sense of a devotion to human interests, from the point of view of both the individual and of groups making up society. The interests are those which should benefit man, at any level, and those concerned with his well-being. The reference of Crawford (1985:11) to "Ruskin's occasional onslaughts on the industrial system, on the division of labour as a murderous dissection of experience; on the use of machinery as the inhuman and convulsive emblem of a society gone mechanical in heart and head" refers to the middle of the last century but has parallels with today.

Craft is concerned with making, predominantly by hand, and even if mechanically assisted the materials and the processes relate to the human scale, not only as actual measurement but also as being appropriate in the process of its execution.

Apart from the scale of craft, another aspect of its human value is the concern with quality of life. For example if a comparison were to be made between the approaches used in establishing a typical factory and the development of a craft industry, it could be expected that in the instance of the factory, the workers would be enlisted after targeting the market, making sale projections, and physically preparing the operation. Whereas in the case of the E.L.C. craft centre at Rorkes Drift, the Church was aware first of the need to provide an income for the many residents of the area. The individuals were taught certain craft methods and gradually products became available for sale. Contrary to the factory approach the market was then tested with completed products. These crafts have been exhibited in international exhibitions and because of their unique quality are being sold in the sophisticated markets of Europe and the United States.

The comparative profitability of two such ventures would most likely favour the factory, but the quality of livelihood of the respective sets of workers would be richer for the handcraftsmen.

A perception of craft, based on the synthesis of the three motives of tradition, cultural reaction and humanism, can be summarised very concisely as "practical idealism". This has been taken from C.R. Ashbees description of himself as a "Practical Idealist" (Crawford, 1985:422) as it aptly expresses a collective impression. This may appear as an oversimplification of a vocation which has many facets and is difficult to define but, as this introduction has attempted to demonstrate, a concept relating to idealism can be identified. Based on this concept there seemed a possible link to design and the specialisation in interiors and furniture. It appeared that a study of craft and its ideals could provide a better insight into the complexities of design.

1.3 AREAS OF RESEARCH

Three areas of research were considered necessary to

develop the study. Firstly an historical overview, secondly a broad survey of the current state of craft and thirdly, practical experimentation. As these issues were explored other aspects became apparant and the final form indicated in the "Contents" was to evolve.

Firstly the historical research clearly revealed craft idealism as a specific aspect of craft practice which has its origins in the Arts and Crafts Movement. Also Third World material culture did not feature in craft idealism until the current revival, and only in terms of the local circumstances is it relevant to this study. This is also why the second factor, that is the current state of craft, follows directly from the history. The purpose of this section is not meant as a comprehensive study of international craft, nor is it attempting to document local activity.

Although the personal recordings and extracted references do supply evidence of craft functioning on a wide scale, other concerns have also become a part of the objective. By attempting to classify the many facets of craft it becomes evident how it has relevance to many disciplines,

fields and enterprises, such as art, industry, registered trades, social welfare, to name a few. These clearly demonstrate a need for greater attention to the activity of craft.

Regarding the third area of research, that of practical work, this is normally a component of advanced study in the design courses. In the specialisation of Interior Design this would usually comprise a submission of concepts, presentation drawings and models, all being supported by working drawings. The nature of the proposal and the contribution which the design offers has to be assessed from this form of communication. However, as this study is centred on hand craft it was decided that the practical component should in fact involve making the completed designs personally. This would further the understanding and introduce a means of realistically testing the design concepts. In terms of feasibility this precluded completed interiors and the objects have been restricted to single pieces of basic furniture or related elements.

By following this course of realisation of the design to a

final product, as opposed to representation of the design through drawings, problems which arose in the latter became more apparent. These are discussed in the chapter concerned with interior design, which attempts to clarify the actual role of interior design and to dispel some common misconceptions. The process of design is also referred to, illustrating how problems of visual communication affect its course from concept to completion. This is compared with the more direct course of handcraft.

1.4 SUMMARY

The introduction can be summarised as follows. A personal experience which produced the concept of a craft ideal as a possible influence on design has been described. Then the areas of research which will investigate this concept have been proposed and the composition of the dissertation has been outlined. But before embarking on the main body of the work the meaning of the principal words in the title need to be clarified, also the confines which shape the study and its intended aim should be explained.

The word Craft is intended to be understood in its traditional sense "handicraft" and implies a creative input combined with a skill, although at times in the text the more general form is used. A more specific definition and various meanings, including my own diagrammatic analysis, will be presented in the chapter entitled "Craft".

Idealism can be interpreted either in the philosophical sense, or in "the practice of idealising" and the latter is implied in the title as "the habit of representing things in an ideal form or as they might be ..."

Extracted from The Oxford English Dictionary, 1989. Two further extracts from this source illustrate this "1890 Hall Caine in Contemp. Rev. Apr. 479. I take realism to mean the doctrine of the importance of the real facts of life, and Idealism the doctrine of the superiority of ideal existence over the facts of life. [and] 1862 Ruskin. Unto this last i.v. 136 Three-fourths of the demands existing in the world are romantic; founded on visions, idealisms, hopes, and affections".

Design is discussed in the following chapter in its

application to interiors and furniture, but a general definition to "conceive mental plan for [and] draw plan of ... to be executed by others" from the Concise Oxford Dictionary, is the interpretation intended in the title.

Returning to the "confines of the work" mentioned earlier; although the international scene may be alluded to where it provides a general background in some passages and much of the discussion is centred on Britain, the focus nevertheless is on the situation in southern Africa. Unless otherwise stated, all comments are intended in the local context.

Finally, relating to this local context there is the aim inherent in the title.

If the acculturation of the western craft ideal emanating from the Arts and Crafts Movement and the crafts re-emerging from local material culture were to develop, a beneficial influence on design could be experienced.

2. INTERIOR DESIGN

2.1 AN INTERPRETATION OF INTERIOR DESIGN, WITH REFERENCE TO FURNITURE

Interior Design is often considered to be the service provided for the selection of furniture, fittings, furnishing and finishes applied to the interior of existing buildings. This activity however would more correctly be termed Interior Decoration. Although all the above mentioned processes do form a part of Interior Design, there are much broader considerations involved, and it could be said to be a specialised activity which has evolved as an aspect of architecture. It is a relatively recent development as a separate discipline, although it could be traced as having its origins in the work of Neo-classic^{ci} architect Robert Adam as early as the mid eighteenth century. (i)

(i) Formalised courses leading to recognised National Diplomas were started in South Africa in 1972 at institutions which were later to become Technikons. Polytechnics in Britain had been offering training for approximately twenty years prior to this.

Before continuing to discuss the activity of interior design it would be as well to consider the meaning of design as it will be applied in this dissertation.

Apart from the profusion of definitions of design which can be found in the Oxford Dictionary many commentators of design have given their opinions but the interpretation of Forty (1986: 6 and 7) is considered most relevant "... In everyday speech, the word has two common meanings when applied to artefacts. [taken here as furniture and interiors]. In one sense, it refers to the look of things: saying 'I like the design' usually involves notions of beauty, ... The second, more exact use of the word 'design' refers to the preparation of instructions for the production of manufactured goods, ... the special quality of the word 'design' is that it conveys both senses, and their conjunction in a single word rightly expresses the fact that they are inseparable: the way things look is, in the broadest sense, a result of the conditions of their making".

Forty's reference to the preparation of instructions is particularly relevant to the following section on the abstract process of design in interiors.

Interior design could be summarised as a creative function concerned with problem solving on a practical level, and the constraints which define its activity may be listed as:

- i. the physical limitations of the site in question, determined by volume, structure, materials and the technical services to be supplied
- ii. the requirements and needs of the occupants or users in terms of physical and psychological considerations related to commercial and financial dictates
- iii. the elements which the interior designer may design, or, select to be installed and by so doing modify the site to satisfy the human needs.

As no actual sites are involved, the constraints of item (i) do not feature in this study, however the human requirements and needs of (ii) are considered in the practical work. The main concern is with the activities of (iii), namely the designing of elements or more specifically furniture and the practical research work is focused here.

It could be questioned whether furniture design falls within the discipline of Interior Design. This evokes a further question as to the location of furniture design in relation to other disciplines, and whether it is a separate discipline. From the historical point of view of craft it is apart, as were all the crafts, and certain schools or departments of furniture design operate independently today. However, the majority of leaders of the Arts and Crafts Movement last century included furniture in their range of skills, which often comprised fabric and wall paper design, weaving, ceramics, silver-smithing, etcetera, all of which stemmed from an involvement in architecture. It could then be argued that as the above combination is what constitutes Interior Design as it is practiced today, furniture should be considered an integral part of this discipline. As most industrial design courses also embrace furniture as part of their scope of design, the following diagram attempts to clarify the interrelationships between the design disciplines which are relevant to this work, by showing how each is influenced and where common ground exists.

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

*

INTERIOR DESIGN

STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING DESIGN

*

FURNITURE DESIGN

MECHANICAL ENGINEERING DESIGN

*

*

INDUSTRIAL AND PRODUCT DESIGN

2.2 THE ABSTRACT PROCESS OF DESIGN IN INTERIORS

The following are observations of problems in the creative process in interior design.

Although interior design has been described in the previous paragraph as a creative activity, the actual time available in the cycle of a typical design operation for purely creative concentration is minimal. Under the stress of real and urgent problems involving time, space, building regulations and restrictions, availability of materials, suitable labour, etcetera, the designer is distracted and consideration for visual appearance and how it will relate to the practical design concerns, become a lesser issue.

It may be argued that the ubiquitous phrase that tends to absolve all designers from an area of responsibility "Form follows function" should provide the solution. It is not however the natural evolutionary process which it implies. "... for the form of designed things is decided by choice or else by change; but it is never actually entailed by anything what_ever". (Pye, 1978:13)

Decisions must be taken which are not a process of simple deduction. A response mechanism comes into play, and it is at a subconscious, intuitive level where the composition of form, texture and colour emerge. This intuitive level could be termed a subjective function which is generally accepted as being unconscious of time. If however pressures from the other areas in the "design process" affect this function through time restrictions, the forms, textures and colours selected can become derivative or even replicas of existing designs which are readily available in the designer's immediate experience. If the source which the designer relies on is also accepted by the peer group for example a current fashion, then the choice of forms can be made more readily and without fear of criticism.

This may be appear as an oversimplification of a highly complex psychological process. It is nevertheless interesting to observe that similar problems of developing three dimensional forms are experienced by interior design students as those confronting the professional designer, albeit caused by different types of pressure. After attempting to resolve the practical problems of planning, the students tend to "grope for shapes" to build up the three dimensional forms, which may result in an amorphous composition, or alternatively they slavishly follow the current fashionable trends.

In some schools of design this process of reproducing readily available forms is the means by which design is taught as it offers a convenient means of communicating with the student. Possibly this method of teaching is carried-over from the Beaux Arts approach to the schooling of architects, which was followed well into this century, where the student was required to copy exactly the facades of many existing buildings before being allowed to produce modifications or designs of his own.

It is the contention that this reliance on superficial observations or easily accessible material, often

encouraged through teaching methods and aggravated through commercial pressures, gives rise to a proliferation of repetitious forms which become, if sufficiently promoted, a fashion, and eventually through over-exposure and misuse, a cliché.

The distinction between fashion and style should be clarified here as applied to this work. The Concise Oxford Dictionary gives four meanings of the word fashion, two of which are applicable. "Prevailing custom, especially in dress [and] Conventional usages of upper class society - whatever is in accord with these for the time being". Style is given eight meanings, the third being relevant. "Collective characteristics of the ..., artistic expression or way of presenting things or decorative methods proper to a person or, school or period ...". From the above fashion suggests impermanence associated with a form of peer pressure, whereas style implies a more cohesive development.

It is not suggested that all three-dimensional form and composition should not in any way be derivative, or that there is no merit in the development of style. An

evolutionary process is inherent in most creations and the progressive refinement of a style can produce a quality of form, which is in fact the essence of traditional craft.

A further observation concerns drawing. The process by which a design relating to interiors usually emerges is through a series of drawings which could be called a communication bridge. Starting with the concept sketches, scaled presentation drawings develop, which are then translated into detailed working drawings of a technical nature. The drawings could be described as two dimensional illustrations of thoughts which could become three dimensional realities. The problems involved in producing the drawings themselves can demand the major creative energy, and the actual design can be relegated to a secondary role. William Morris was said to have abandoned architecture "Because he could not get into close contact with it. It had to be done at second hand". (Lambourne, 1980:21)

In the teaching situation it is the drawing which is the primary means of communication from student to lecturer, and those students with greater skills fare better as their drawings are inclined to evoke a more favourable

response. Also students have been seen to abandon concepts if they encounter problems when trying to develop the design through the medium of drawing.

Handcraft however is inclined to move along an alternative path. It was experienced during the practical research that although some preliminary sketches or concept models were necessary, the creative activity is carried directly into the making. It is not being implied though that the interior designer should physically attempt to execute or construct his designs. The scale of the work and the organisational problems would make this impossible. What is being proposed is, that if the designer can at times work at the interface of concept and final work without the distraction of communication problems, a greater awareness of the multifaceted creative process in design can emerge.

Another factor which imposes stress on the designer when working through the creative process, is one which initially would appear to be an advantage, and that is rapidly advancing technology. To be constantly presented with new materials and manufacturing techniques may seem

to offer great stimulation to the designer and at times it does, but when it becomes a question of "over choice", and not being able to refine one approach before being confronted and persuaded by the manufacturers to adopt others, this can induce uncertainty in decision making.

The sophisticated technology developing in production and ever increasing advances in materials places few boundaries on the form which a product may take. Wood can be shaped in almost endless fashion even to being reconstituted so that it has no grain. Stone is chipped, and rebonded with resin. Glass fibres are used to reinforce cement. Cement is mixed with cellulose to form sheets. Adhesives provide virtually unbreachable bonds. Plastics can be moulded into any chosen shape. Metals are blended and can even be foamed. Polymers can be combined in ever increasing forms. Glass can be toughened to resist high impact. Synthetic fibres are available for a multitude of purposes. Ceramics are undergoing incredible changes. These are some of the recent developments which have or will be confronting designers.

Craft on the other hand is inclined to concentrate on one

or two materials and through specialisation develop methods of refining forms which on completion reflect an understanding and sensitivity by the craftsman, toward the material and the way it can be fashioned. Not that craft work should lack innovation, as can be seen where a particular skill has been adapted to another material. An example can be cited where women in the Black townships in Cape Town have used their weaving skills to produce articles from waste plastic packets.

It is not the intention to be prescriptive by attempting to offer specific solutions to the designers problems: of coping with the imposition of fashion, maintaining control of a design through the communication procedure, and dealing with an overchoice of technological advances, which were the three aspects identified. Interior Design was described earlier as having emerged as an aspect of architecture, but it also has its roots in that period of the last century when Ruskin, Morris and other theorists concerned with the association of art to industry grappled to find a moral solution. As the craft idealism to emerge at that time is more or less as we know it now, it is suggested that by looking to craft the designers of today may find a direction for addressing some of the problems with which they are confronted.

3. CRAFT

This chapter is an investigation into the meaning of craft to attempt to clarify the intention of the work and will be dealt with under five sections. Firstly a general definition of craft is given as a background, developing into the interpretation on which the research is sited.

The three sections that follow consider the historical circumstances which lead to this interpretation, defining it as idealism. Material culture and folk art have been considered as influences that run parallel to the other two sections which trace craft from antiquity till it emerges as idealism in the late nineteenth century. The final section on craft revival is too recent to be viewed in an historical context and has been compiled from personal observation and limited available documentation.

As the study falls under the discipline of interior design and has a particular reference to furniture, the comment is from this viewpoint. However unless specific mention is made to furniture, the term craft applies in its general sense.

Diagram D.1 Indicates the evolution of craft idealism, on which the construction of the chapter has been based.

Diagram D.1

THE EVOLUTION OF CRAFT

Primitive Toolmakers		
All products are individually crafted		
*		
Methods introduced to assist production and repetition work begins		1000
*		
Guilds evolve		
*		1400
Renaissance		
* Craft Production controlled by Guilds	* Intellectual separation of art	1500
* Increase in standardisation and piece work		1600
* Craftsren loose control of design	* Rural Crafts	1700
* Rapid advances in technology		1800
* Industrial Revolution	* Arts and Crafts Movement	1900
* Crafts evolve as specialist Trades		1950
* Rapid advances in technology	* Crafts Revived in First World	1960
* Electronic Revolution	* Contemporary Craft in South Africa	

3.1 A DEFINITION OF CRAFT

Craft has not only many meanings, but also many interpretations. What is commonly understood by the term craft today is indicated by a brief survey of this classification in any general library. The majority of publications are predominantly concerned with giving detailed instructions on how to make up existing designs, most of which are directed toward teaching dexterity at primary and secondary school levels. This is not the interpretation which is being discussed.

Lucie-Smith (1981:11) in *The Story of Craft* makes the following comment "The word 'craft' is like so many important words in English, brief, pungent and ambiguous". Selecting the sixth of the nine basic meanings given in the *Shorter Oxford Dictionary*, "A calling requiring special skill and knowledge; especially a manual art, a handicraft", he then refers to the meaning which immediately follows this - "the members of a trade or handicraft collectively".

These broadly satisfy the general reference to be used,

however the more specific meaning contained in the title that is implied in the dissertation and applied in the practical experiments needs further definition.

"... CRAFT involves the idea of skilled labour in material. 'Craftsmanship' is not to be identified with 'handwork'. First, there has lain behind the word 'handwork' since its introduction into education the idea of manual dexterity, of manipulation, and usually of hand-and-eye training, almost as opposed to the training of the mind. This is very different from the attitude which sees craftsmanship as the whole body involved in an expressive rhythm relating mind and material for a specific purpose in the world of men". Robertson (1961:27) in *Craft and Contemporary Culture*, emphasises the term "craftsmanship" rather than craft which supports the opening comment of this chapter.

To look for the meaning in earlier history, that is from when the only means of making was by hand and then through the various stages of increasing mechanisation, does not provide a definition in today's context. It is only from the period when John Ruskin and William Morris lead a

movement to reinstate handcraft that it is possible to look for an understanding as it may be applied now. Even then it is not completely relevant. What was occurring in the late nineteenth century were social and aesthetic issues reacting to an industrial avalanche. Today, having lived through more than a century of industrialisation we have "acclimatised" ourselves, in varying degrees, to a world which is dependant on the technology of machine processes for the forming of materials. But now there can be said to be new threats from a new technology, which is beyond the average comprehension. These appear to be leading in a direction which is affecting our perceived way of life and creating a period of radical change. As a result the crafts people appear to be emerging again and it is this reaction or revival of tradition in "First World" cultures, or as is the case in southern Africa an acculturation with the "Third World", that provides the meaning of craft applied in this study.

It was discovered during the historical research and the observation of recent craft that even within the above context a wide variety of interpretations can be found. These are determined by the degree of involvement in one or more of several factors which include creativity, technology, social structure, market and industry and can

best be described in the form of a diagram (D.2) below:

<***** Craft Industry *****>

mainly by hand tools

mainly by power tools

Sculptor

Artist-Craftsman

one off items
creativity and
high skills.
jewellery
#furniture
glass
metal work
ceramics
fibre art

Artist-Craftsman

semi-repetitive
high skills.
weaving
pottery
glass
printing
lace making
knitting

Craft/trade

makes up from
designs.
furniture
printing
metal work

Designer-Craftsman

high creativity
supervises making.
furniture
fabric
metal work

Craft

repetitive
specialised skills.
decorate pottery
weaving

Product
Design

Craft/trade

light industry.
patterns
prototypes

Home Crafts

semi-skilled
minimum design
works from patterns.
knitting
tapestry
rugs
embroidery

Major
Industry
trade/
craft.
Patterns
Dies
Tools

Piece Works

No special skills
repetitive
assembles
products

indicates the area where the practical work in the research falls.

Though not intended as a definition, the following extract from *Craft and Contemporary Culture*, the author herself an internationally known potter, reveals the idealism and romantic association of craft.

"It is by his attitude to his materials, to his tools, and in his understanding of the needs his products serve that we recognise the essential craftsmen.

Yet it is only when the craftsman is in touch with some source of life, drawing on the deep well of age-old tradition as does the peasant craftsman, or surging forward on a contemporary wave like the Renaissance craftsman, or when he is one of the blessed few modern men who bear within themselves their own perennial spring, that craftsmanship in its full sense can flower".
(Robertson, 1961:36).

3.2 MATERIAL CULTURE AND FOLK ART IN RELATION TO CRAFT

In an historical context the so called Third World and peasant crafts do not contribute directly to the theme of craft idealism in the First World and will be dealt with only in relation to craft development in South Africa.

Material Culture

Whereas constant changes occurred in the nature of craft in Europe and North America due to major reforms, predominantly the Renaissance and industrialisation, the material cultures of the Third World have evolved more consistently. Gradual transition has taken place through migration and merging of cultures caused by conflicts between groups or nations. Trading and infiltration also introduced new influences, with European colonisation being the most significant. But despite this European influence the traditional crafts continued, particularly in the rural areas, until the social structure of a particular community changed in favour of a new lifestyle and the artifacts produced for their old culture ceased to fulfil a need.

Ellert (1984) introduces The Material Culture of Zimbabwe with the following observation "In pre-colonial Zimbabwe, technology and the arts were successfully combined to produce the material requirements of a culture dating back a millenium ... the people of Zimbabwe had developed a technology appropriate for the manufacture of tools, implements, weapons, vessels, musical instruments and ornaments ... which demonstrate ... a sophisticated understanding of the natural environment ..."

There was no distinction between function and aesthetics. Every object evolved through need and inherent in the making was its form and decoration. Grossert (1985) in his introduction to Zulu Crafts states "In Africa there was no concept of any particular object being "art" in the European sense of the word, which possibly stems from the Renaissance interpretation of the Platonic philosophy and the glorification of the individual as an artist."

The grouping of individuals to form an individual unit where labour would be divided into specific repetitious operations was not part of the culture. Apart from the metal smelters, who sometimes were a group who had secret

knowledge and lived separately Shaw (1974) most people were craftsmen and both male and female produced objects for use and enjoyment by their immediate family.

Davison (1983) in her study of Lobedu Material Culture describes pottery and woven baskets being made by women but the beer strainers by the men, and both were involved in the making of sleeping mats. The woodcarvers were men, but "Even these skilled craftsmen were not full-time specialists and they seldom specialised in making only one type of object". (Davison, 1983:102)

The time allocated for craft work was dictated by the seasons and centred around the family's need to plant or harvest or rethatch the huts. Because of this direct connection to the family, there was no need for the formation of guilds to protect particular crafts, as had happened in Europe, although according to Shaw, (1974:119) "Woodcarving was for the most part a specialised craft and confined to men".

Further extracts from Shaw's record of woodcarving have been used as they are relevant to the theme of furniture and its possible introduction as a rural craft.

"The art of wood-carving was not nearly as well developed in South Africa as north of the Zambezi ... Nevertheless decorative work on utensils reached a fair standard among the Zulu, some Sotho groups and the Venda ... Traditionally there was no joinery - each article was cut out of the solid." (Shaw, 1974:119)

Tools generally consisted of an axe for felling, an adze for outside shaping, a gouge for hollow objects and a knife for finer work. Decoration was of two kinds - carved or branded. Carving of grooves and ridges was mostly used on sticks, clubs and pipes. Branding was with a hot iron or else the whole surface was blackened and sometimes polished with grease.

"The objects made were troughs for feeding animals, mortars, pestles, drums, doors (Venda and Lobedu doors were elaborately carved) bowls and dishes, milk pails, ladles, spoons, snuff-boxes, pipes, knife-sheaths, head rests, shafts for spears, hafts for axes and adzes, staffs, sticks and clubs," Shaw (1974:120) who does not cite any examples of furniture in the sense which it is generally known, or is found north of the Zambezi, but

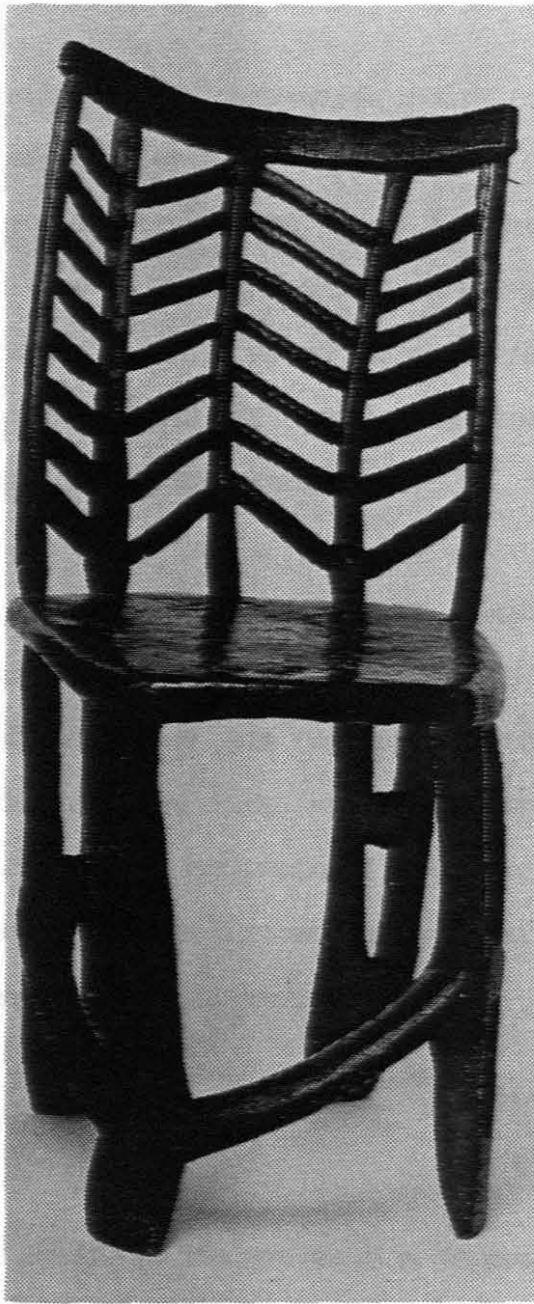


Fig. 1. Cetswayo's chair. Natal Museum.
photo. Exhibition poster for African
Art Alternative Aspects. Thatham Art
Gallery May-June 1987.

instances of ceremonial chairs for the nobility have been preserved which would appear to be an influence from European traditions, and are not part of the material culture. Davison records an example of chairs made by the Lobedu people which closely resemble the early Cape chairs. This influence would seem to have travelled north with the Voortrekkers.

Other crafts will not be dealt with as they are too numerous and do not relate as directly to furniture. Although they are of interest they constitute more of an ethnological study, which is beyond the intentions of this work. The influence of the material culture will however be discussed further in the later section of this chapter dealing with the revival of craft.

Folk Art

Although in its generally accepted sense folk art has no direct influence on craft in South Africa today, there could be said to be a comparison with early material culture. Recent examples of craft development confined to specific social groups may also suggest a form of folk art



Fig. 2. A Lobedu woodcarver making a dish using a long-handled gouge. photo. E.S. Krige, 1936-8. (Davison, 1984 : 102).



Fig. 3. 'Riempie' chairs, first made by Lobedu craftsmen in 1930. photo. P. Davison, 1975. (Davison, 1984 : 112).

which is emerging locally. These two possibilities will be considered by clarifying what is meant by folk art.

The references are drawn predominantly from eastern Europe but also occur in northern Europe and the areas bordering the Mediterranean. The traditions of this art crossed with the immigrants to North America where in Pennsylvania and eastern Canada extensive evidence of craft can still be found. The New Encyclopaedia Britannica 1988 "refers to the art of the people, as distinguished from the elite or professional product that constitutes the mainstream of art in highly developed societies". This general definition could apply to certain aspects of local craft but the origins of folk art should first be discussed.

The so called peasant art of Europe was recognised in the later nineteenth century. Bossert (1954) writes of Alois Riegl who in 1894 produced one of the best works in the first studies of folk art. He dates their origin back to pre-Christian times and maintained they were created by the needs within the home, which precluded exchanges of items between families. "Shapes and ornamentation of articles belonging to one family group did not change in

the course of hundreds of years ..." according to Bossert (1954:4). This stage of folk art could be equated with the early material culture in South Africa. "Nothing is accidental or without meaning in primitive art". These words of Bossert's are very close to those of Grossert's in his comment on Zulu craft earlier in this section. p.40

Yet it is only in the early period of peasant art that this similarity with material culture can be seen. Once the former became distinct from its surrounding culture it represented a different function to material culture which continued as a utilitarian art.

A present definition of folk art is quoted from the New Encyclopaedia Britannica "as the art created among groups that exist within the framework of a developed society but for geographical or cultural reasons, are largely separated from the cosmopolitan artistic developments of their time and that produce distinctive styles and objects for local needs and tastes".

As these groups gain access to the latest ideas made available through industry, commerce and transportation

the true art tends to decline. Once the pattern is broken the product becomes undervalued, and the Encyclopaedia Britanica comments on "Subsequent revivals, extensively sponsored by organisations, craft groups, governments, or commercial enterprises, are no longer the same thing".

It is in this light that a comparison can be made with local craft. As in folk art material culture cannot be revived in its earlier form as the circumstances have changed. The craft which is emerging from this source cannot strictly be termed a folk art either as it does not conform to the above definition. It may be an "art of the people distinguished from the professional product" but it is too consciously directed toward a sophisticated market to be classified as folk art. Other areas of craft have undergone a process of acculturation and could not be considered as folk art either.

The contemporary craft may draw on comparisons with material culture and folk art but it is primarily a reflection of its time and a consequence of recent influences and should be seen as such.

3.3 AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF CRAFT IN THE WEST FROM ANTIQUITY TO THE INDUSTRIAL AGE

Concerning this general overview of the long period from the first tool making man to the effects on civilised societies through increasing mechanisation, a definitive reference work pertaining to craft can not be found other than that of E. Lucie-Smith, *The Story of Craft: The Craftsman's Role in Society*. On consulting his bibliography this would appear to be confirmed, as the ninety five references which he has drawn from either deal with a single craft or refer to specific shorter periods of history. To attempt to research the references to evaluate his interpretations would be a task out of proportion to its relevance in the overall study. *The Story of Craft* has therefore been used as the main source of reference to provide the basis for an overview of the general history of craft leading up to the period of the Industrial Revolution in Europe and is dealt with under the following sub sections.

- 3.3.1. Craft and art: the only means of making
- 3.3.2. Art separates from craft
- 3.3.3. Evolving mechanisation

3.3.1. CRAFT AND ART: THE ONLY MEANS OF MAKING

"... that a work of utility might also be a work of art, if we care to make it so" William Morris: from an essay on Printing. William Morris Gallery n.d. Introductory Notes.

Surrounded as we are by manufactured products which support our lives and are taken for granted, it is important to appreciate that in a pre-machine age society any object, from a practical tool to items of comfort, could only be obtained by man's ability to fashion it from some naturally available material. Each individual article, apart from being unique, would have had a value and a life of its own, quite different from the products of our world of disposables and planned obsolescence. Also the maker earned the respect and appreciation of the community for providing necessary articles which could be obtained through no other source. The process of making was a part of the process of living, the products grew out of the individual's need and projected the culture in which they evolved. The forms which emerged as three dimensional objects and their surface treatment became

the art of the people. Craft and art were inseparable. This applies broadly to a variety of early civilisations over a range of time; it indicates the early phase of the evolution of craft which appears to be common to emerging cultures throughout the world.

The more recent concept of handcraft idealism could have had no meaning for the people of these early cultures; Handwork was tiring and slow for the craftsmen whose task it was to supply the demands of the more affluent. If a means to ease the effort or speed up the process could be found it was adopted. Three directions appear to have been followed to assist in terms of energy.

Firstly hand tools were developed to ease each operation. These had been standardised in the forms which are familiar today, as early as the eighth century in Europe and Britain. The Egyptians, far earlier in 2500 B.C., employed some very efficient wood-working tools and were able to produce chairs similar in construction to contemporary methods. The wood plane is an example of one tool which appeared to

fall from favour after its use in ancient times and was not revived until the twelfth century.

The second development which was to ease the workload on the human body was the harnessing of energy from flowing water. This advanced the making of textiles by increasing the individual's output. The employment of this energy was however dependent on the third factor, that of energy conservation, which was the understanding of the mechanics of kinetic energy. Levers and pulleys which were devised to assist human energy to lift materials on building sites, were adapted to become some of the earliest machines, some made of wood, for transferring water power.

The third advance in the understanding of mechanics was the development of the cogwheel, which was used in the making of the first clocks. This invention apparently originated in China in the eleventh century and had appeared in Europe by the end of the thirteenth century. This consciousness of time which came with the development and proliferation of the clock also brought other changes in the nature of craft.

In Europe the variety of crafts normally undertaken within the home separated into specialist operations which were more efficient. These were to emerge as crafts practised by specific groups of people who formed themselves into self protecting organisations or guilds. The evolution, and the influence of the guilds on the whole of European and British communities occurred over a period of several centuries, and produced a very complex social structure. "The purpose of the guilds was to maintain standards of skill, and at the same time protect the craftsman - not merely, or even primarily, against technological changes, but against the burdensome demands of the feudal system. For this reason guilds were an urban phenomenon". (Lucie-Smith, 1981:126) But in time they developed monopolistic tendencies and went beyond the aim of freedom from serfdom. They ensured that each craft remained separate and they eventually developed into organisations of great power controlled by "master craftsmen", who delegated the actual work to journeymen. The latter were discouraged from attaining mastership and a hierarchical practice emerged within the guilds in the Middle Ages and continued into the Renaissance.

A development which originated in the early guild system was the introduction of standardisation within the various crafts. Through the revolutionary invention of moveable type in the craft of printing, the contents of a page could be reproduced in identical form for as many copies as required. From this influence the division of labour into specialised operations began to occur in other forms of craft. It became accepted that a craftsman could reproduce many identical items which would each be part of a complete product made up of several components produced by other craftsmen, for example the separate parts which were finally assembled to make a clock. Not all craft was to move in this direction, but the concept where one individual would develop and control each part to make up the finished whole was beginning to fall away.

The focus of this historical perspective remains directed mainly on events in Europe and England as this lead to the Arts and Craft Movement, this being the period most relevant to the history of craft idealism. Influences from the East, Africa and the Americas are briefly referred to when relevant to the theme.

3.3.2. ART SEPARATES FROM CRAFT

"If this lesser art will really be enough to content us, it is a good thing; for as to the higher art there never can be much of it going on, since but few people can be found to do it; also few can find money enough to possess themselves of any portion of it, ..." A lecture delivered at the Working Men's College - London. December 10, 1881. (Morris n.d.)

The next major relevant identifiable phase in the development of craft emerged during the Renaissance and introduced a change in attitude which was to become established later during the seventeen -and eighteenth centuries. The changes were brought about more by the new modes of thought which characterised the Renaissance than by major developments in materials and techniques.

This period saw the beginning of the separation of art and craft. In the new atmosphere of freedom of thought there was an upsurge of individual creative energy and artists, sculptors and architects emerged in their own right. The conceptual leaps of which men such as

Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo were capable, moved their work in new directions away from craft. The artists began to seek personal expression in their work and would not be bound by the craft traditions. As an example of this independent attitude Lucie-Smith (1981:152) cites two accounts where the sculptor and goldsmith Benvenuto Cellini is rebuked by Francis I of France and even imprisoned by Pope Clement VII for not completing commissions according to his assignment.

The craftsmen on the other hand although admired for their skills in manipulating materials were tied to a process of accumulated knowledge inherited from previous generations and locked within the control of the guilds. These organisations had grown in strength and number and by 1422 one hundred and eleven guilds, each practising their own specific craft, were recognised in London.

The growth of the cities produced a class of craftsmen whose social position was rooted in their skills of producing the objects needed by the affluent and the noble. For them, a craft was an occupation to be

worked at, and which brought recognition in their particular skills. These skills were jealously guarded under the powerful protection of the guilds, where the rigid hierarchical system of mastercraftsmen, journeymen and apprentices, stringently controlled each craft as well as the lives of the individual craftsmen. This system which had emerged during the Middle Ages, became entrenched during the Renaissance.

One of the crafts which maintained a link with art was goldsmithing. Several of the foremost painters and sculptors also worked as goldsmiths and jewel setters. A possible explanation is that the goldsmiths had powerful noble patrons and were exempted from restrictive guild regulations, or alternatively it was the material itself, with the strong symbolism that surrounds it, that attracted the artists.

Whereas most of the crafts were undergoing gradual transitional development, furniture making experienced a major advance during the Renaissance in northern Europe. Until that time, flat planes required in a

construction were worked from solid oak, whereas the new approach was to make up frames into which small panels were fitted, held in place by rebates, but still able to expand and contract with changing atmospheric conditions. As the process involved the joining together of smaller components it became known as joinery and a joiners guild was formed. Joints employing dovetailing, mortices, tenons and wooden dowels and wedges were developed, and are very little changed in today's furniture construction. Further sophistication occurred by joining boards side by side and locking them with a flush fitting dovetail joint. Onto this flat surface it was possible for veneers shaved from exotic logs with attractive grain structure to adhere. This was to develop into a new craft form which became known as cabinet making, a term generally applied to most furniture making today.

The earlier frame and panel, or joined, furniture was superceded by cabinet making in the cities where the response to the dictates of fashion was evident. It continued to be made in rural areas, however, where craft was characteristically meeting the needs of the

community and evolving at a slow pace, a pace which was to keep the traditions alive when the decline of craft was to occur after the Industrial Revolution.

Art was to separate further from craft as they developed through the seventeen -and eighteenth centuries. This is demonstrated very graphically by Lucie-Smith (1981:166) in his *comparison of the careers of Sir Joshua Reynolds and Thomas Chippendale*. Chippendale continued the traditions of the craftsman. Although he received acclaim for his products from the nobility and wealthy upper-class, he did not expect a change in his status; he remained a mastercraftsman and a businessman. Reynolds on the other hand expected personal recognition from his sitters who became progressively more aristocratic and important. He presided over the professional body of painters, the Royal Academy, which was concerned with the status and social upliftment of its members, quite unlike the old craft guilds which were structured to maintain the status quo.

The changing directions that art was taking were further emphasised by the books which each of these men published. Chippendale produced an illustrated guide

to furniture style which he called "The Gentleman and Cabinet-maker's Director". It set him above his peers but it was not intended to elevate him to the level of his clients. However, Reynold's "Discourses", evolved from a series of his lectures, was aimed at justifying his practice as a painter and presenting his theory of art to his patrons.

Later in his career Chippendale made up several items of furniture designed by the architect/designer Robert Adam. The craftsmen in his workshop were becoming purely the means of execution and had moved a long way from the creative process of earlier handcraft.

Although few machines had been developed by the mid eighteenth century, the beginning of a factory system had been established. The tasks were mostly manual, and usually applied to basic products which could still be identified as crafts. The labour was divided into several operations each to be executed by a different person who was required to master one specific task, generally a very basic one. This is an indication of

the level to which many so-called crafts had degenerated.

A very powerful stylistic influence on furniture making was felt through the "marchand mercier", or mercers, an established guild in Paris. They originally traded in textiles and embellished articles from other crafts. When they became involved in furniture they had an effect on the cabinet makers in that they commissioned furniture to be made according to the styles dictated by them. The Rococo and Neo-classical pieces which emanated from the workshops through their influence had a marked effect on the development of western furniture.

3.3.3. EVOLVING MECHANISATION

"... Arkwright may have introduced much wealth into his family, and into the country; but as a tourist, I execrate his schemes, which, having crept into every pastoral vale, have destroy'd the course and beauty of Nature;" extract from The Torrington Diaries 1792. (Forty, 1986:13).

Revolution suggests an immediate change of authority and the complete restructuring of existing systems. The Industrial Revolution, however, was much more a process of evolution. Certain aspects were fairly sudden, such as the inventions of Hargreaves and Arkwright: the Spinning Jenny of Hargreaves for instance appeared where nothing like it had been seen before. Yet most development of machinery was sequential, building on the experiences of the forerunners, and because of limited communication, knowledge of these developments did not necessarily reach those who were not directly involved. But the effect of the growing mechanisation on the lives of the workers is well known, the spinners and weavers being the worst affected and suffering great hardships and degradation in the new textile industry.

In many rural areas the old crafts which were relevant to village life continued, but in the more densely populated areas other crafts were undergoing changes which had to do with standardisation, division of labour and mass production. As machines had not yet been invented to assume many of the tasks these were

still being performed by hand. Josiah Wedgwood's ceramic industry is probably the best known example of this stage of development.

Although Britain was the leader in the new age of industrialisation, France and other countries of Europe were also affected. The clock and watch factories were examples of advanced methods of production, as well as symbols of the new age in which timekeeping was becoming increasingly imperative. Inevitably these influences spread beyond Europe. America, having established its independence, was to play a later role, but the more immediate effects came mainly from India and China, also from Japan. A two-way process developed, with the outward thrust of colonisation on the one hand, and unexpected returning influences from the colonies on the other. Exporting manufactured goods to the colonies in return for raw materials was the European intention; however the long-established traditional handcrafts which were produced by poorly paid peasant labour in these countries were able to outsell many European products and soon found a ready market in Europe. It was this trade threat from the

East that created the incentive to develop machinery which would produce lower priced articles and so re-establish the trade balance.

The revolutionary changes which this rapid industrialisation had brought about in English society were to cause a reaction which ultimately emerged as the Arts and Crafts Movement. But it was not only the outward manifestations of change; it was also a question of changes in thinking and in public attitudes toward styles. These appear to have evolved almost independently of the major industrial forces restructuring society.

The changes which occurred in furniture manufacture illustrate what was taking place. The over-indulgent forms of Baroque and Rococo which were evident, particularly in Chippendale's middle period, had transformed into the purer elements of Neo-classicism, a style rediscovered in the relics of ancient Greece and Rome and typified in the furniture of Robert Adam, which in turn produced two effects. Firstly the simplification of the style curtailed much of the woodcarvers' work and the number of craftsmen was

considerably reduced. The methods employed to reproduce the classical forms seldom had regard for the intrinsic qualities of the materials which were often forced to follow the prescribed forms of the new fashion.

The second factor was the proliferation of styles which emerged alongside Neo-classicism. Prosperity had produced a new monied class, the industrialists, who had the desire to own the luxuries possessed by the upper classes, but did not have the discernment developed over generations of patronage. The new manufacturers no longer needed the support of a patron and consequently became the arbiters of style for the emerging market. Forty (1986:60) refers to J.C. Robertson the editor of *Mechanics Magazine* (1835) "Robertson was attributing bad design not to the workmen's lack of skill, but to the capitalist system of manufacture, which always put quantity and profit before quality ... his explanation anticipated what William Morris later had to say about the causes of bad design ..." It was against this situation that A.W.N. Pugin and later John Ruskin were to speak out, arousing the awareness of Morris and the craftsmen who followed.

3.4 A SUMMARY OF THE ARTS AND CRAFTS

"No one was prepared for this sudden urban influx or for the drastic changes that were occurring - any more than we are prepared today for the effects of the second Industrial Revolution of cybernetics, automation and atomic power". (De Mare, 1972:4).

The first identifiable reaction stemming from ideological or moral motives was not in fact traceable directly to the effect of machine produced articles and industrial development, as is generally accepted. "What the critics of design were unable to see or refused to acknowledge, was that capitalist manufacture, itself the cause of the specialised work of design becoming necessary, was simultaneously responsible for the quality of design deteriorating. Yet the artists, architects and intellectuals who involved themselves in design reform in the mid-nineteenth century, were far too closely associated with industrial and commercial wealth to dare venture on such a radical line of criticism". (Forty, 1986:61) As previously stated it was more a reaction of taste to the popular styles and the eclectic approach to

design of the time.

As early as 1830 A.W.N. Pugin, a talented young architect and designer, was making strong statements about the goods produced in the factories as those "inexhaustible mines of bad taste, Birmingham and Sheffield". (Naylor, 1980:14) His conversion to Catholicism had brought him to declare Gothic forms as a Christian cohesive style and Neo-classicism as a pagan influence. In his book "The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture" he wrote: "The two great rules for design are these: first that there should be no features about a building which are not necessary for convenience, construction and 'propriety'; second that all ornament should consist of enrichment of the essential construction of the building". (Naylor, 1980:14) His sentiments applied equally to furniture and other elements of design. Pugin is important in relation to craft as he represents a stage of development which prompted two essentially different courses of design philosophy.

Henry Cole, a self-appointed cultural reformer of the mid-nineteenth century, was to spearhead the one belief of bringing art into industry, and through his influential

contacts he was able to put many of his aims into practice. "To all these endeavours he brought the eminently Victorian virtues of diligence and dedication, the ability to rush in where others feared to tread and the enthusiasm of the ambitious amateur". (Naylor, 1980:14) One of his numerous endeavours was to introduce design education into the schools system to reinforce his beliefs which were more concerned with students of design being equipped to meet the needs of industry rather than industry being influenced by good design. His best known achievement was his initiation and organisation of the Great Exhibition of 1851.

Despite his enthusiasm and influence concerning this mammoth event, it was "The absence of any fixed principles in ornamental design apparent in the Exhibition", as stated by The Times (Naylor, 1980:21) and a general lack of unity amongst the various crafts and products which caused the reaction of the design theorists. It was this unsuccessful marriage of art and industry that became the theme John Ruskin was to employ in his idealistic message conveyed through his

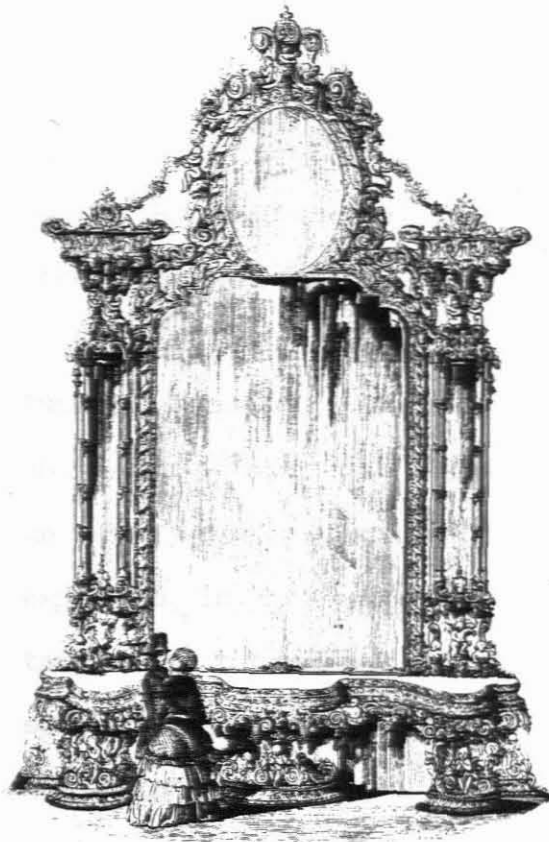


Fig.4. Ornamented console table and looking glass.
The Great Exhibition 1851.
photo. (De Maré, 1972 : 50).

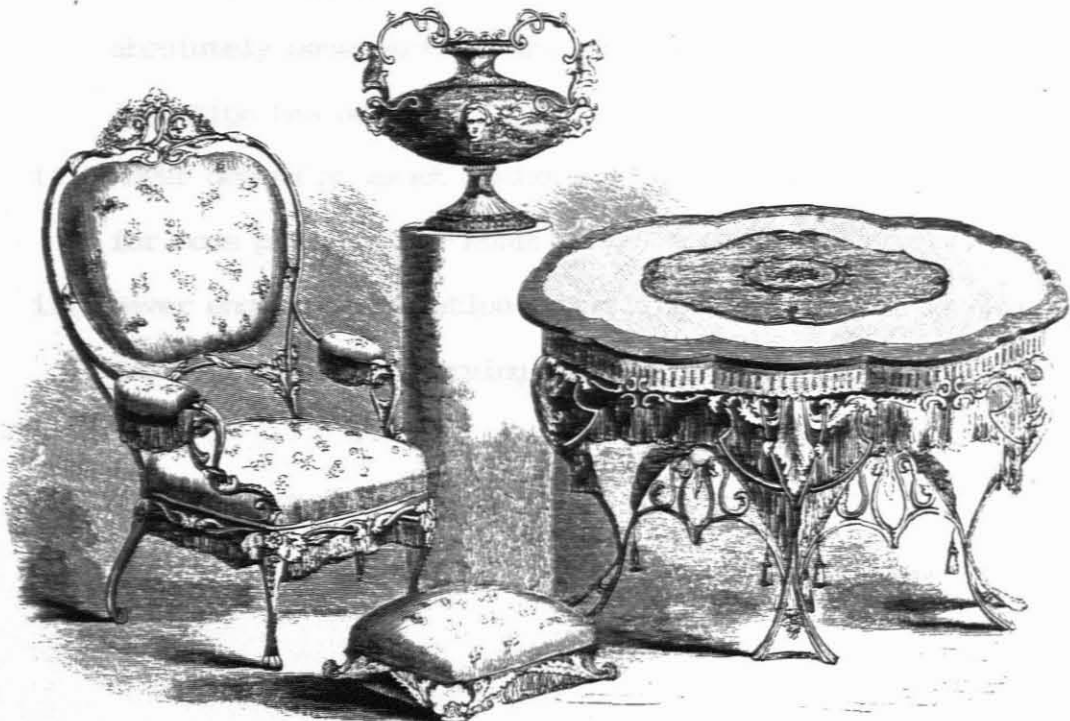


Fig.5. Furniture from Austria made from iron tubes
The Great Exhibition 1851.
photo. (De Maré, 1972 : 50).

publications, and which was taken up by William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones and the many others who followed the other course of design, the Arts and Crafts Movement.

Ruskin, born in 1819, was primarily a commentator on art and architecture, and although he was not a practitioner, he was to exert a great influence on design. The idealism expressed in his writing for example, "Drawing may be taught by tutors, but design only by Heaven, and to every scholar who thinks to sell his inspiration, Heaven refuses his help". (Naylor, 1980:22) indicates a strong romantic motive. Lucie-Smith (1981:209) quotes Ruskin's rules for craft, from *The Stones of Venice* published from 1851 to 1853.

- "i Never encourage the manufacture of any article not absolutely necessary, in the production of which Invention has no share.
- ii Never demand an exact finish for its own sake, but only for some practical or noble end.
- iii Never encourage imitation or copying of any kind, except for the sake of preserving records of great works."

His followers, who were to shape the direction of the

Movement, became imbued with his sense of romanticism which is clearly visible in the ethics of their methods and the aesthetics of their work.

To describe the rise, influence and decline of the Movement is in effect to describe the lives of several prominent personalities who represented its spirit. These idealists, during the period 1850 to 1930 were stating through their individual expression a common belief not only in the nature of their design, but also the issue of its place in society. It could be said that the continuity and ultimate decline of the Movement was due to it being built upon personalities. With their passing the impetus was lost and no underlying structure survived to be transformed as was the case in Germany where Herman Muthesius a diplomat, who had been to England to observe the "British aesthetic" on behalf of the Prussian board of trade, was influential in forming the Werkbund. This body of industrialists and craftsmen whose aim was "... to restore unity and national identity to German culture through the medium of improved industrial production ..." (Sparke, 1986:58) was to provide the background for the origins of the Bauhaus. Also in Scandinavia, small

craft orientated factories were a tradition, here "... the Swedish Design Society was formed, in 1845, to protect the crafts.." (Sparke, 1986:57) which continued after the decline in Britain.

Of all the individuals who played a part, William Morris, born 24 March 1834, is accepted as the central figure determining the path of craft from 1860 and beyond his death in 1896. His extensive activities and influence are widely known: it is possible here to make only a few observations which are pertinent to this project. While at Exeter College, Oxford in 1853 Morris and Edward Burne-Jones, who became a life long friend, turned from a course destined for the Church, when they discovered the Romantic poets and the social comment of Dickens novels. But it appears that it was Ruskin's influence through "The Seven Lamps of Architecture" and "The Stones of Venice" which was to shape Morris' vocation.

After going down from Oxford, he spent a year training to be an architect, writing poetry and learning to paint. He abandoned architecture "Because he found he could not get into close contact with it: it had to be done at second hand" (Lambourne, 1980:21) He then became associated

with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood through Dante Gabriel Rossetti and worked with him on a fresco inspired by Arthurian legends, which became his link to the Middle Ages and the source from which his romantic idealism flowed. Morris, although a theorist and philosopher, was able to surrender himself to the intuitive process of creative design and to apply himself to the practical skills of shaping the design in its final medium. Beyond this he was able to express himself not only as a writer but also as a formidable orator of his own theories and beliefs. The image perceived of him from many descriptions is of a compelling personality able to fire a latent idealism within the hearts of his contemporaries and of the younger aspirant designers who were to carry the cause into the next century.

As a devout and outspoken socialist Morris saw the making of craft not only as an aesthetic endeavour, but more as a symbol of a class struggle for recognition. "Throughout his career as designer, craftsman, bibliophile, painter, poet, story-teller and political polemicist, Morris was inspired by the arts and manners of the Middle Ages, not only for their surface beauty, but for the complex

connotations which he attached to them; ..." (Morris, 1979 ed. by J. Redmond, :14).

Although not entirely accurate, he presented labour in the Middle Ages as being respected as an honest expression of life: "... the chief source of art is man's pleasure in his daily necessary work, which expresses itself and is embodied in that work itself ..." (Briggs, 1962:140) It was this "necessary work" which the machine ethic within the industrial system was removing from the life of the common man, and with this, Morris believed, his opportunity to express his art. "Every real work of art, even the humblest, is inimitable. I am most sure that all the heaped-up knowledge of modern science, all the energy of modern commerce, all the depth and spirituality of modern thought, cannot reproduce so much as the handiwork of an ignorant, superstitious Berkshire peasant of the fourteenth century; ..." From a lecture delivered by William Morris at the Working Men's College London on December 10, 1881, procured at the William Morris Gallery, in the London Borough of Waltham Forest. The house was Morris' home during his later school years and while he was a student at Oxford. [In June 1986 this gallery was

visited and also Morris' last home Kelmscott Manor on the Gloucestershire/Oxfordshire border where he founded the Kelmscott Press and where he died and lies buried.] This then, in very simplified terms, was Morris's message, a message inspired by Ruskin that was to be carried forward to several individual designers, of whom a few brief descriptions follow, and which emphasise their contribution to those aspects of craft under discussion.

Arthur Heygate Mackmurdo, born in 1851 the year of the Great Exhibition, was a man equally committed to science and art, and was initially more influenced by Ruskin with whom he had travelled and worked, than he was by Morris whom he only met in 1877. Although he trained as an architect he found this had given him no art and he turned towards the crafts. "I schooled myself in the techniques of modelling and carving, trying my hand at some ornamental stonework ... I learned to do repoussé work in brass ... and embroidery ... I learned enough about materials and constructive processes to design pieces of furniture". (Naylor, 1980:116). This is indicative of the attitudes of these men and their concern to bring their art in touch with the practice of making. Where Morris had initiated a firm, Morris & Co., to

execute domestic interiors, Mackmurdo founded the Century Guild in 1882 "to render all branches of art the sphere no longer of the tradesmen, but of the artist" and to "restore building decoration, glass painting, pottery, wood-carving and metal to their rightful place beside painting and sculpture". (Naylor, 1980:117) The introduction of the term "guild" rather than firm was a response to the ideals of the Movement. It was to convey connotations of the Middle Ages and of co-operation instead of exploitation or competition.

Mackmurdo's fret back chair is of special interest as he draws his inspiration directly from nature, following the tenets of his mentor Ruskin, and creates an asymmetrical design in a chair back which would not have been conceivable before. These same forms were carried into the title page of his book on "Wren's City Churches". This single piece of art work has been ascribed as the precursor of Art Nouveau or Jugendstil, a movement from which Mackmurdo completely disassociated himself. Yet a comparison of the signets of Morris & Co. and the Century Guild support Lambourne's observation of the famous title page "In this, it typifies the complex ambivalence of



Fig. 6.
Mackmurdo's fret back chair.
photo. (Anscombe and Gere,
1983 : 123).



Fig. 7.
The famous title page of Mackmurdo's
book of 1883.
photo. (Pevsner, 1973 : 42).



Fig. 8.
The "formalized naturalism" of the signet of Morris and Co.
(1861) left, compared with the "sinuous elegance" of the
Century Guild signet (1884) right. photo. (Pevsner, 1973 : 45).

Mackmurdo's achievement, for his Century Guild is of equal importance, not only for its anticipation of Art Nouveau, but as a seminal influence on the nascent Arts and Crafts Movement" (Lambourne, 1980:37)

Although not extensively referred to by the other biographers of the Arts and Crafts Movement, Pevsner (1968:117) says "Charles F. Annesley Voysey must be regarded as the central figure in English architecture and design during the two decades around 1900". As a contributor to the furniture of the period he must be documented. Born in 1857 he was six years junior to Mackmurdo who influenced him stylistically in fabric, wallpaper and furniture. "These asymmetrical patterns contrast with the bold, simple forms of the furniture, and in particular with the writing desk of 1886, with its distinctive geometrical finials, the thumb print of Mackmurdo's architectural style". (Lambourne, 1980:44)

He was nevertheless a very individual designer as seen in the illustration for the Kelmscott Chaucer and it is perhaps due to the fact that he was for a time an associate of the Century Guild and did not establish a

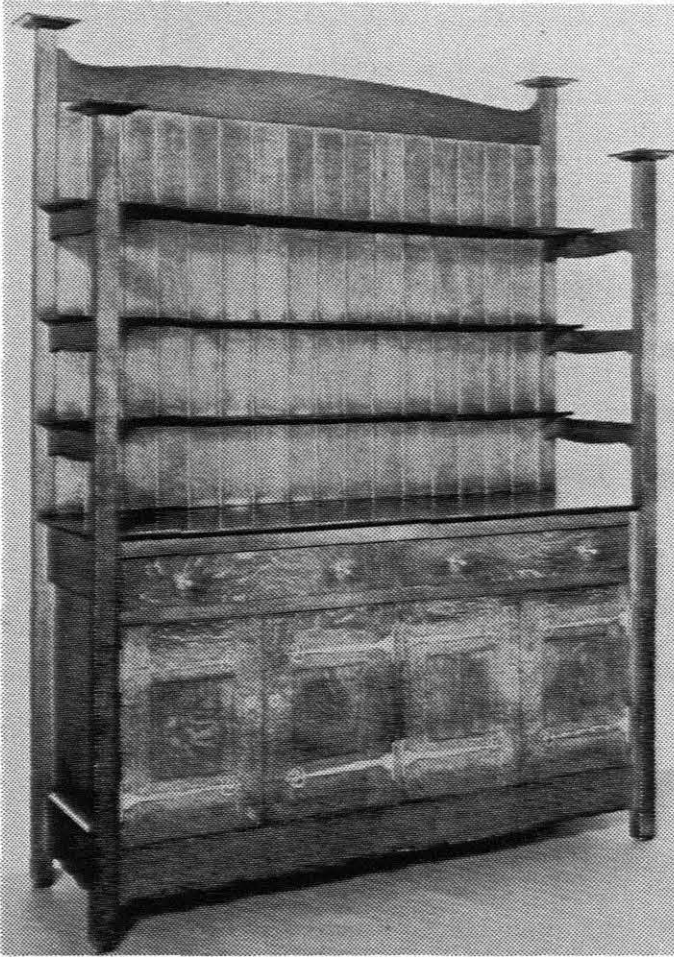


Fig. 9.
Voysey's sideboard. 1900.
photo. (Lambourne, 1980 : 47).



Fig. 10.
Voysey's oak cabinet "the
Kelmscott Chaucer" 1899.
photo. (Anscombe and Gere,
1983 : 127).

guild of his own that more focus is not placed on him or that he is not more quoted. His extensive grounding in craft was to enable him to make the transition to industrial design. "As far as the style is concerned, it mattered little whether what Voysey designed was in the end made by the craftsman or the manufacturer. The Style is moderate, sensible, always graceful, whether in furniture or in textiles or in metal work". (Pevsner, 1968:127)

Charles Robert Ashbee, like Mackmurdo and Voysey trained as an architect and was to carry the Arts and Crafts influences into the twentieth century as they all lived until the early 1940's. Although born (1863) into the upper middle classes he probably developed more of an understanding of the working craftsman than did many of the Arts and Crafts leaders, according to Naylor (1980:166), as he worked in the East End of London for fifteen years, and it was from his connections there that he formed the Guild of Handicraft. He is relevant to this study as he is one of the most important personalities of the Arts and Crafts Movement in the middle and later stages of its development. He was a theorist and well

able to express himself but he was also a practicing craftsman not only as a designer but also physically involved in the making process. Many examples of his silverware have survived as testament to his craft. His ideals of the essence of craft being in touch with natural processes encouraged him to move the operation and the people of his Guild of Handicraft from its base in a depressed suburb of London to the small town of Chipping Campden in the gentle countryside of the Cotswolds. Although the enterprise was to suffer setbacks and finally closure, due to a variety of reasons most of which could not be blamed on the enterprise itself, it provided an inspiration for craftspeople universally which is evident in the craft revival of today. (Lambourne, 1980:130) describes the venture as having "... the Utopian glamour of all lost causes".

Another of Ashbee's contributions was the link which he provided with the American movement where the writings of Ruskin were already well-known and Morris was revered by the devout exponents of craft. But Ashbee was to see the changes which the later period of the Movement was

experiencing. He visited Frank Lloyd Wright (1869 - 1959) in America and a reciprocal visit was made by Wright to Chipping Campden. There appears to have been a mutual respect despite strong differences of opinion between the two men. Wright at this stage was respectfully attacking the Morris doctrines and in a speech in 1901, referring to Morris, said "... That he miscalculated the machine does not matter. He did sublime work for it when he pleaded so well for the process of elimination its abuse had made necessary; when he fought the innate vulgarity of theocratic impulse in art as opposed to the democratic, and when he preached the gospel of simplicity". (Lucie-Smith, 1981:226 and 227)

It may have been Ashbee's contact with Wright which was to bring about his re-evaluation of the role of the machine, and by 1911 he had begun to accept that its products could have an aesthetic value. In a publication "Shall We Stop Teaching Art?" he made the following radical statement "Modern civilisation rests on machinery, and no system of endowment, or the encouragement, or the teaching of art can be sound that does not recognise this". (Lambourne, 1980:143)



Fig.11. The Guild of Handicraft Carvers, indicating the traditional craft methods:
photo. (Crawford, 1985 : 142).

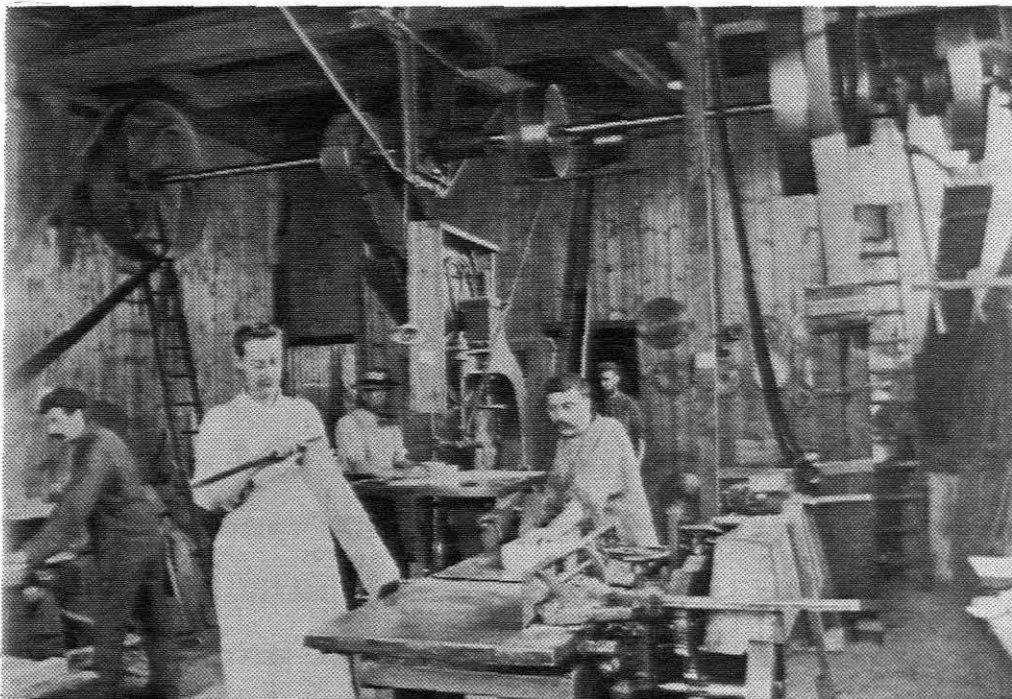


Fig.12. The Guild of Handicraft Woodworking shop at Chipping Campden. The transition from handwork to machines is apparent.
photo (Crawford, 1985 : 219).

The importance of Ashbee and how his vision links him to the designers of the later part of this century is shown by two extracts from his book "Where the Great City Stands" published in 1917.

"Axiom VI. The distinction between what should and what should not be produced by machinery had in many trades and crafts now been made. This had been the discovery of the last twenty-five years". (Lambourne, 1980:143)

"Axiom X. In an industrial civilization, the reconstructed city cannot be stable without a corresponding reconstruction of the country. Town and country should be correlated and react upon one another. This correlation is a natural consequence of the conditions of the machine age".(Lambourne, 1980:143). (i)

Whereas "Ashbee and his guildsmen were self-taught, acquiring their skills by trial and error". (Naylor, 1971:167)

(i)The urban sprawl engulfing the countryside and the encroachment of industry into residential areas in South African cities indicates how urgent and relevant the message from the Utopian Craftsmen is to us today.

William Lethaby is known primarily as an educator. His contribution to the Arts and Crafts Movement as a teacher, design theorist and leader is relevant to this summary.

Having worked in a senior position in the architectural practice of Norman Shaw for almost seventeen years he became the co-founder, with George Frampton, of the now legendary Central School, in London in 1896. Under his leadership it was soon "considered the most progressive art school in Europe" (Naylor, 1980:179) and retained this status until the Bauhaus was recognised in the 1920's. His foresight and leadership was again shown when he emerged as one of the initiators of the Art Worker's Guild, (to be described later) from which he drew his teaching staff for the Central School. The aim of the school established by The Technical Education Board was for the "industrial application of decorative design" (Naylor, 1980:179) but with its strong ties with the Art Worker's Guild "... it was a school of craftsmanship - its pupils went there to make, not draw, ..." (Naylor, 1980:179) The staff were practicing designers teaching part-time and the students had to be engaged in some form of craft.

Demonstrating his ability as a practitioner as well as a theorist Lethaby formed Kenton and Co. with Gimson and the two Barnsley brothers, who are mentioned later, and two other craftsmen. Unlike the Guilds "They issued no manifesto, preferring to direct their energies to experimenting with remarkably daring technical innovations". (Lambourne, 1980:168)

Naylor (1980:183) shows Lethaby's understanding of the direction which his craft philosophies were moving by 1920, when she quotes from his own work "Form in Civilisation" "The house of the future will be designed as a ship is designed, as an organism which had to function properly in all its parts".

An observation can be made here of Lethaby, who like Ashbee, having spent their lives devoted to the pursuit of craft, were not left with antiquated ideals when they moved into the twentieth century. They were both able to see with clarity the path which design could follow as it became increasingly technologically involved.

In the latter stages of the Movement there were a few who were to continue the practice of craft unaffected by advancing technology. Amongst these were Ernest Gimson

and the Barnsley brothers Sydney and Ernest, mentioned earlier as business partners of Lethaby, who moved to Gloucestershire after the failure of Kenton & Co. They are not recognised for committing their thoughts and beliefs to paper as were many of the other artist craftsmen, but the work they produced, both in domestic building and furniture has established them as some of the most able although lesser known contributors to the Arts and Crafts Movement. They were joined by Peter Waals a Dutch cabinet maker and the work which emanated from the group was very basic, simple but well executed furniture in true craft tradition. They are sometimes referred to as the "Cotswold School" taken from the area where they chose to settle.

It was possible to visit the Cotswolds briefly in 1986, the intention being in trying to find a better understanding of the craftsmen and their work, by experiencing the environment to which they had been drawn, and where they must have felt they could be most productive. Following this, examples of the work of Ashbee, Voysey and Gimson were seen in the Cheltenham Museum. The outcome of the experience when considered in

conjunction with the idealism of the craftsmen of the period, suggested the essential factor of craft proposed in the introduction. Namely the synthesis of the work, the craftsman and the environment.

The personalities of the Arts and Crafts Movement most relevant to the theme have been briefly described. These were the men who shaped its direction through their independent endeavours, but some reference should be made to their influence when they exhibited as a group. Although the various firms and guilds did represent groups of craftsmen they were nevertheless each lead predominantly by a single individual.

In 1884 The Art-Workers Guild, which was formed to offer a forum for the interchange of ideas, represented a broad spectrum of the "... craftsmen in architecture, painting, sculpture and the kindred arts". (Naylor, 1980:120) and came into being as a reaction to the policies of the Royal Academy and the Institute of British Architects. Although the Guild provided a focus for creative people under the leadership of several craftsmen amongst whom were Lethaby and Walter Crane, a renowned illustrator, it was not a

strong promotional body. (i) An important outcome nevertheless was the "Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society" which did give promotion, and exposure for the craftsmen. Although it did not originally carry this title, when the first exhibition was being planned for 1888 in the New Gallery, as the "Combined Arts", T.J. Cobden-Sanderson, a book binder, apparently coined the name "Arts and Crafts" which was adopted for the exhibition and subsequently became applied to the whole movement, according to Anscombe and Gere (1983:57).

Despite William Morris's scepticism about the success of a public exhibition he did display work from his firm and also delivered an address. The prominent exponents of the crafts were all represented, amongst whom were William De Morgan whose ceramics provided a special feature, and the

(i) "British designers had, in fact to wait until 1930 for the formation of their professional body - The Society of Industrial Artists" (Naylor, 1980:121)

The South African Society of Designers is an affiliate of the British Society and came into being almost thirty years later.

work of others such as Walter Crane's illustrations, Macmurdo's Century Guild exhibit, Burne-Jones' cartoons for stained glass, Cobden-Sanderson's books, and W.A.S. Benson's copper and silver ware. Lambourne (1980:58 to 67), who describes many of the exhibits, then refers to the sequel "The second exhibition in 1887 proved still more successful, to the delight of Morris ... The exhibition continued to show the supremacy of Morris's influence ... the Galleries becoming the crowded venue for the delivery of his famous lecture on Gothic Architecture. Lectures on aspects of individual crafts by their practitioners were a regular feature of all the exhibitions". The first president of the Arts and Crafts Society, Walter Crane, wrote in an essay at the time: "The Movement ... represents in some sense a revolt against the hard mechanical conventional life and its insensibility to beauty (quite another thing to ornament). It is a protest against that so-called industrial progress which provides shoddy wares, the cheapness of which is paid for by the lives of their producers and the degradation of their users". (Naylor, 1980:124)

The third, and last annual exhibition lacked novelty and

was less successful "... because a number of items on display had just that quality of amateurism which Morris had feared would appear". (Lambourne, 1980:68) But the Arts and Craft shows continued to be held at the New Gallery until 1910.

The exhibitions were important because they demonstrate the common purpose that existed amongst these individualistic craftsmen who believed so strongly in their cause and committing themselves to pursue its ideals. "The Arts and Crafts was less concerned with what things look like, with style, than with how they were made and taken as a whole, the objects which the Movement produced present a picture of splendid confusion ... There was no single Art and Craft style. And yet there were, ... elements of taste rather than of style ...".

(Crawford, 1985:208)

The events that followed were to prove that they did influence certain sections of the community particularly the designers in industry who were to follow, but the exposure was also to show, as seen by the infiltration of amateur work, that their message was a very subtle one, and not easily understood by society at large. Morris was

quoted as saying "... the general public don't care a damn about the arts and crafts ..." (Naylor, 1980:123)

It must also be realized that theirs was not the only stylistic influence displayed to the public both in the earlier and later stages of the Movement. The artist craftsmen were not concerned with promoting a style. It was rather the underlying belief entrenched in the philosophies of craft that had come through interpretations of Ruskin's perception which determined the forms that emerged in the various crafts. It would seem doubtful whether the public were aware or prepared to understand the meaning behind the objects which they were asked to compare with objects in other styles.

In the early 1860's when Morris was establishing his firm and building on the medieval traditions of rustic craft other craftsmen were evolving styles based on a form of "Neo-Renaissance" and later through renewed interest in Japanese art the style referred to ^{as} Japonisme evolved.

These directions were to be called the Aesthetic Movement. "... it is necessary to look briefly at Late Victorian design in general, and to notice the fact that

the Arts and Crafts enjoyed no special monopoly of handcraft. Ruskin and Morris did not put an end to the confusion of styles they denounced. They only made people momentarily uneasy ... By the 1870's imitative Japonisme had evolved further into a new style, ... This was the so-called "Art" style, which was the expression of the Aesthetic Movement". (Lucie-Smith, 1981:216 and 217).

Although the ideological impetus of the craft movement was to emanate from England it is appropriate to refer at this point to the role America was to play in events preceding the Arts and Crafts Movement, as well as being an important contributor to the later part of the movement itself.

It was a new and expanding country, as opposed to the established societies of Europe, but some similarity in the pattern of development is evident. The colonists were of European descent and there was a considerable amount of contact of one sort or another between the two continents. Two observations can be made on early nineteenth century America which were to have an effect on craft.

Firstly, the Shaker religious sect which followed a strictly disciplined ascetic existence, evolved a simple, unadorned style of furniture which reflected their way of life. The nature of the designs was well suited to the pioneering communities in general, and the Shakers found a ready market which led them to establish standard methods of production on factory principles. These simple repeated components in the designs were ideally suited to these methods, and the manufacture spread beyond the Shaker communities.

"The austere world of the Shakers had been a national curiosity since the late eighteenth century. It became widely known after its exhibition in the 1876 Centennial show at Philadelphia. The plain severity of its furniture made a direct appeal to a young man who visited the exhibition, who was to become one of the leading exponents of the Arts and Crafts ideals in America, Gustav Stickley (1857 - 1942)" (Lambourne, 1980:150)

Although the Shaker designs were to lead into factory production, the style and forms employed are very close to the work of some of the British Arts and Crafts

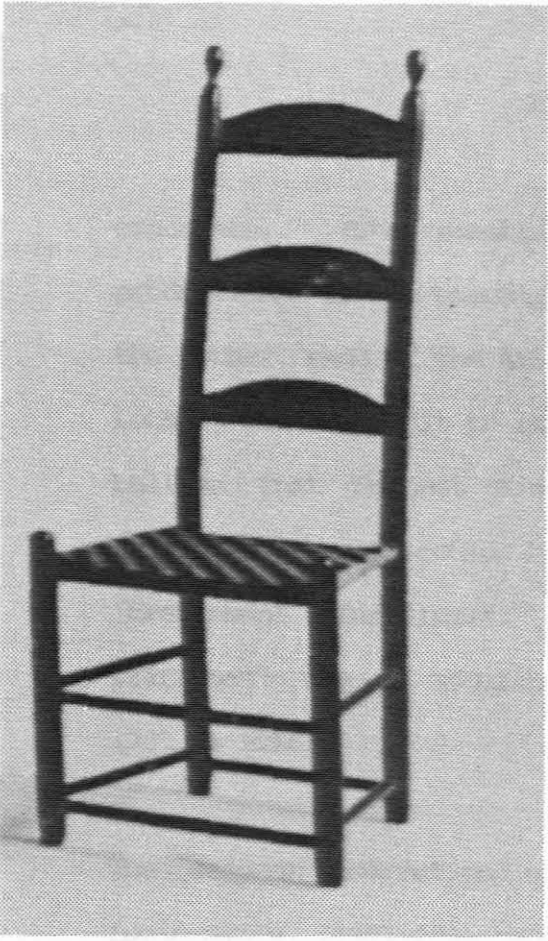


Fig. 13. A Shaker chair.
photo. (Lucie-Smith,
1981 : 205).



Fig. 14. A chair designed and made
by Ernest Gimson.
photo. (Naylor 1980 :
Fig. 61).

exponents. "The resemblance of many of the pieces to the productions of the exactly contemporary Cotswold School on the other side of the Atlantic is striking. Stickley met Iethaby on his visit to London in 1898, and it was hard to believe that Earnest Gimson and Sydney Barnsley [of the Cotswold School] could have been without knowledge of 'Craftsman' furniture". (Lambourne, 1980:152) "The Craftsman" was a magazine which Stickley published from 1901 to 1916.

The second observation of the American scene is what Lucie-Smith (1981:204) refers to as a "paradox". The true craft which grew from the practical needs of the American pioneers was considered a temporary phase in the civilisation of the prairies, and became the incentive to strive for rapid industrial growth, whereas in Britain and Europe it was the industrialisation and painful restructuring of an established society, which was the motivating force.

But it was Frank Lloyd Wright who, through the "Prairie School of Architecture" had connections with the Craft Movement, was ultimately to produce the strongest

influence from America in his lecture "The Art and Craft of the Machine" in 1879 which Lambourne (1980:162) quotes from. "The day of the machine is not over - instead it is just about to begin. The Machine does not write the doom of Liberty, but is waiting at man's hand as a peerless tool ... the creative Artist will surely take it into his hand, and, in the name of Liberty, swiftly undo the deadly mischief it has created". Lambourne then makes the comment "The Arts and Crafts Movement, in both America and England was never to be the same again, for his words [Wright] mark the beginning of the rejection of Ruskin and Morris's advocacy of hand craftsmanship as the only solution to social, architectural and artistic problems".

Returning to Britain, there is one designer who though generally is referred to under Art Nouveau must be mentioned in the later stages of the Craft Movement. Like Frank Lloyd Wright, Charles Rennie Mackintosh (1868 - 1928) and his associates of the Glasgow School were not part of the Arts and Crafts and were certainly not appreciated by the members of the Movement. Anscombe and Gere (1978:169) emphasise this. "In 1896 the 'Glasgow Four' were invited to send work to the Arts and Craft

Exhibition Society [twenty pieces of work were exhibited] where their posters were met with astonishment and distaste; a reaction which was to become familiar in England". Yet, if it was Voysey who initially influenced Mackintosh, "The Glasgow School artists made more valuable contacts abroad than the craft revivalists," according to Anscombe and Gere (1978:168) who also suggest that Mackintosh was to transcend the decline in Britain. "Thus were the ideals of Morris and Ashbee, which were eagerly listened to on the Continent, made aesthetically acceptable within the more stylised framework of decorative design in Austria and Germany".

Lambourne (1980:92) also addresses the problem of the rejection of Mackintosh's work, although clearly craft based, by the British Movement which seemed to regard "... its dangerous tendencies towards the fraught tangles of continental Art Nouveau". Lambourne continues by referring to "... the complexity of the dichotomy between Art Nouveau and Arts and Crafts principles" and suggests that "... Mackintosh's inspired building, the Glasgow College of Art, reveals individual chairs, tables, electric light fittings which all speak of the

individuality of the craftsman ... [and] although Arts and Crafts in individual detail, is far more forward-looking ... being indeed one of the first great modern interiors".

Wright and Mackintosh could be said to have forged the ideals of the Arts and Crafts Movement into new forms, which each employed in different ways, yet both were to lead into the Modern Movement.

Three divergent examples peripheral to the Craft Movement are cited to illustrate the circumstances in its later stages. Though unrelated they provide background to understanding Morris' idealism of craft as it moved toward industrial design.

The first is an example of being a contemporary of, rather than being influenced by, the Craft Movement. Christopher Dresser was born in 1834, the same year as Morris, and qualified as a Doctor of Botany. But his design background was in the Henry Cole circle, whose aim was to match art and industry, and totally against Morris's beliefs. Although Dresser designed for factory production

and could be considered one of the first professional industrial designers in metal work, he had developed an appreciation of plant forms. It was this and his understanding of materials that link him in some respects to the Craft Movement. As Lambourne (1980:76) observes, his work "... Like that of the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, has been more influential on the twentieth century than it was during his own lifetime". He could therefore be considered a forerunner to the influence which the craft ideal was to have on design in the modern movement.

The second example is the role that the organisation Liberty and Co. was to play in popularising Arts and Crafts designs as a style. The founder "Arthur Lazenby Liberty ... was shrewd enough to see the potential of the craft ideal in commercial terms, ... He rejected any idealistic concern with handcraftsmanship and integrated the craftsman-designer with the established manufacturers, ... this plagiarism of the craft ideal reached a far larger public than the lovingly hand-crafted works of the guildmen" according to Anscombe and Gere (1978:189) who also note that it "... was finally recognised by the craftsmen that to produce art for the masses required



Fig. 15. An advert from 'The Studio' showing the commercial plagiarism of Arts and Crafts design. photo. (Anscombe and Gere, 1983 : 30).

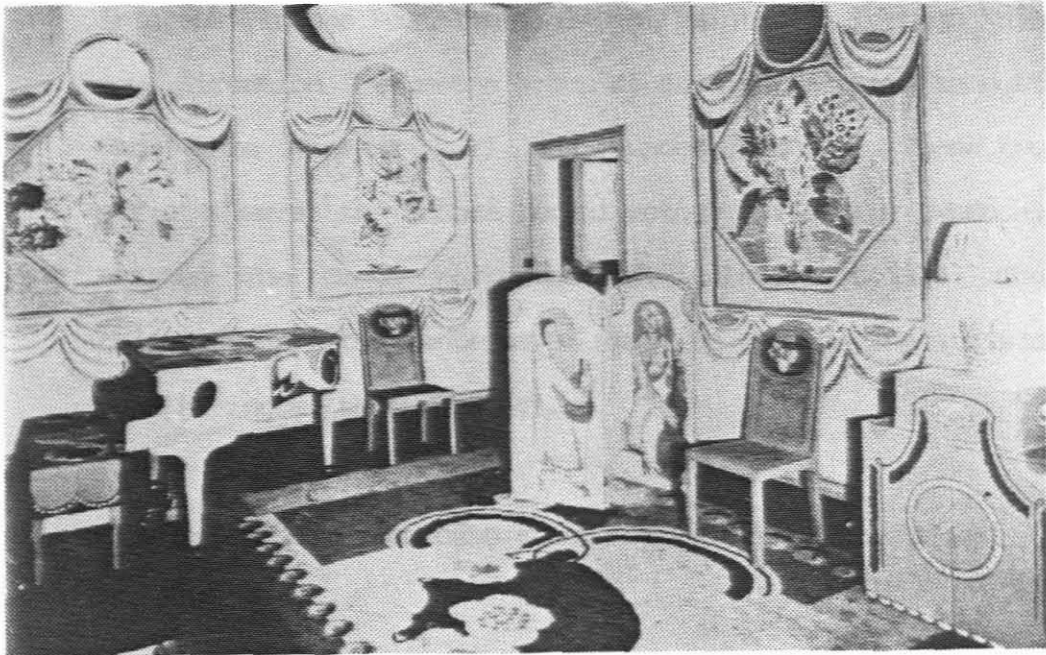


Fig. 16. An Omega interior indicating the concentration on surface decoration. photo. (Anscombe, 1981 : 30).

mass-production ... [also] Morris was deeply disappointed to find that his patrons were invariably rich aesthetes ..." and he was not reaching the masses as he had believed possible. The majority of examples considered to be "Arts and Crafts" which have survived until now, will have originated through a source such as Liberty's. They represent a "style" one stage removed from the ideals of Morris, Macmurdo and Ashbee.

The third example is the antithesis of the second as it is concerned with ideals and not with promoting a style. Anscombe (1981:8 to 12) writes of Roger Fry, a friend of Ashbee, who having been curator of the Metropolitan Museum in New York, returned to London where he developed an interest in the Post-Impressionist painters. Through this new direction he met a group of British painters amongst whom were Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant. These two artists were to become co-directors with Fry when he started The Omega Workshops Ltd. in London in 1913. The objective of the enterprise was to provide the artists with an income through craft.

Although the impetus came through the riot of colour and

new appreciation of form of the Post-Impressionist painters the ideal was still to come from Morris. Anscombe and Gere (1978:208) describe, "When Roger Fry visited Ashbee in Chipping Campden to discuss the opening of the Omega, he found that although the ideals of the Guild of Handicraft still held good, the aesthetic had by then become irrelevant, remaining rooted in nineteenth century 'artistic' formulae".

Ashbee however disliked the work of Omega referring to it as "Too awful, simply a crime against truth and beauty ..." according to a letter in his papers. (Anscombe, 1981:31)

As painters the work was mainly concerned with surface design, not in the formal structural sense, and no link can be seen with the development of design in Europe. Simple bare screens, tables, chests, etcetera were made up by commissioning a factory, and these were then decorated by artists who were employed on a daily rate by the Omega Co. Fry had pots thrown and moulded for the artists to decorate the fired pieces. The inclusion of fabric design, needlework and even publishing suggests an influence of the guild tradition. Although the Workshops

were to survive the war years they closed in 1919, but Bell and Grant continued with decorative schemes for several years.

It would seem that the Omega project could not have developed, for this was an example where Fry had merely borrowed from an ideal, there was not the depth of meaning which the guildsmen had evolved, cultivating and empirically testing the theories of Ruskin.

Although several of the leaders and theorists of the Arts and Crafts Movement were to survive into the 1940's it could not continue in the form which Morris had envisaged. By the 1920's, apart from a few stalwarts such as Van der Waals, Barnsley's son Edward, and a few lesser names, who continued in the true craft tradition, the movement had ceased to be effective. It had undergone change and in its wake had come the shortlived but vibrant Art Nouveau; the Deutscher Werkbund had come into being, the Bauhaus had emerged and the transference had taken place into the Modern Movement.

"...in the spring of 1915 a small group of men and women

assembled at the Great Eastern Hotel in London to found a new association. The title chosen ... was Design and Industries" writes Carrington (1975:17) in his book "Industrial Design in Britain" and it is significant that in 1916 the last issue of Stickle's magazine "The Craftsman" was published.

Carrington continues by saying the time was "ripe for change", and though his subject is industrial design, he recognises the debt to the Arts and Crafts. Then referring to the new Design and Industries Association, he writes of "the teaching and example of William Morris, but they no longer believed that the way to redemption was to be found solely in hand craftsmanship ... [yet] Of those who joined in the first year something like a third were craft-workers or teachers of handicrafts".

Lethaby, of all the traditional craftsmen, could be considered the one who took the craft message through to industrial design. His teaching at the Central School and his involvement with the Design and Industries Association were major contributions and the message of Morris is

still evident in an address he delivered in 1916. He is quoted by Carrington (1975:103) "what I mean by art then is not an affair of a few but everybody".

Concluding the section on the Arts and Crafts Movement an extract from a lecture by Walter Gropius to the D.I.A. in 1934 indicates a new role for craft. "Handicrafts and Industry must be understood as opposites perpetually approaching each other. Handicrafts are now changing their traditional nature. In future their field will be research work for industrial production and in speculative experiments in laboratory workshops, where the preparatory work of evolving and perfecting new type forms will be done". (Carrington, 1975:150)

3.5 EVIDENCE OF A CRAFT REVIVAL

Before referring to a revival it must be understood that although the shift was from craft to industrial design throughout most of the Western World, in the period after the First World War certain communities and a few individuals were to continue in the craft tradition and to achieve great acclaim.

The Scandinavian countries are an example where "Societies relatively untouched by the industrial revolution and the war" (Lambourne, 1980:202) were to integrate the silversmiths, the glassmakers, the weavers and the furniture makers into small factory production.

In Britain Bernard Leach, (1887 - 1979) was an example of an individual craftsman in ceramics who received acclaim in the period when craft was dormant. He "did not begin his work until the movement had virtually ended [and] like William Morris, was one of those protean figures who is almost more important for what he represents, than for his actual productions". (Lambourne, 1980:207)

It was links such as these, plus the Third World crafts which had continued mostly unaffected by events in Europe and America which were to provide the pilot flame from which a revival starting in the 1950's could be rekindled.

The nature of craft is inclined to be a fragmented activity undertaken by individuals using their own methods of operating. In South Africa they are not required by law to join a recognised body, nor are they, in most cases, forced to register or be licenced through any state departments, hence no official records are available of the number of practicing crafts people in any given area. Various craft bodies, of voluntary membership, have emerged locally though, such as the guilds and several self-help organisations in the homelands and recently the Cape Crafters association. These give some indication of the extent of craft activity and will be described further.

In Britain the Crafts Council, a State subsidised body, has information which was made available, and will be summarised later. Nevertheless it was through personal observation or the records of observations of others where

most information had to be gathered. Evidence was looked for in the generally applied sense of craft namely all aspects ranging from art to industry and involving any material, but where possible attention has been focused on furniture.

The following list of contributors to the World Craft Council has been included as it indicates the existence of international craft activity. However in terms of the theme of craft idealism the situation in Britain and South Africa provide sufficient information for the argument. Hence evidence has not been sought in the countries listed.

NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS CONTRIBUTING TO THE WORLD CRAFT COUNCIL

Australia	Crafts Council of Australia
Austria	Austrian Crafts Council
Canada	Canadian Guild of Crafts (Ontario); Canadian Committee of the World Crafts Council
Colombia	PROARTE
Cyprus	Folk Art Association
Czechoslovakia	Ustredie Umeleckých Remesiel
Denmark	The Danish Society of Arts and Crafts and Industrial Design
Ecuador	Centro de Diseño y Artesania
Ethiopia	National Museum
Finland	ORNAMO
France	Association Française des Métiers d'Art et de Création; Maison des Métiers d'Art
Germany	Arbeitsgemeinschaft des deutschen Kunsthandwerks
Ghana	National Association of Craftsmen
Greece	WCC Greek Section
Hungary	Iparművészeti Vállalat
Iceland	Iceland Handcrafts Association
India	Crafts Council of India; All India Handicrafts Board
Indonesia	Fine Art Division, Ministry of Education and Culture
Iran	Iranian Handicrafts Centre
Ireland	Crafts Council of Ireland
Israel	Israel Designer-Craftsmen's Association
Italy	Wcc Sezione Italiana
Japan	Japan Foundation
Jordan	Jordan Crafts Council
Korea	Korea Design and Packaging Center
Lebanon	Maison de l'Artisan Libanais; Ministry of Information
Liberia	Liberian Arts and Crafts Association
Malta	Malta Crafts Centre
Mexico	Comité Mexicano Pro Artesanos Artes Populares
Netherlands	Centraal Orgaan voor het Scheppend Ambacht (C.O.S.A.); Netherlands Art Foundation; Plastic Art Section, Ministry of Culture, Welfare, and Social Work

New Hebrides	Résidence de France
New Zealand	New Zealand Crafts Council, Inc.
Nigeria	Nigerian Arts Council
Norway	Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst
Papua New Guinea	Papua New Guinea Public Museum and Art Gallery
Peru	Asociación Nacional de Artesanos
Poland	CEPELIA
Senegal	Office Sénégalais de l'artisanat
Sierra Leone	Ministry of Trade and Industry
Spain	Agrupación de Actividades Artesanas del FAD
Sweden	Svenska Slöjdföreningen
Switzerland	WCC Swiss Section; Cultural Division, Federal Department of the Interior
Togo	La Division de l'Artisanat, Secrétariat d'Etat Chargé du Commerce, de l'Industrie et du Plan
United Kingdom	International Committee of the British Crafts Centre; The Crafts Advisory Committee
United States	American Crafts Council, International Department
Venezuela	WCC Venezuelan Section

The local craft is dealt with first as the original motivation for the project emanated from this source. In the South African context it is difficult to consider craft activity as a homogeneous entity. Two separate sources are identifiable, firstly the indigenous or ethnic crafts evolving from earlier material culture and secondly, the more recent example, mostly amongst the Whites, of crafts originating from European cultures. A third area has also emerged and could be referred to as a blending of cultures or acculturation where on the one hand, Whites have involved themselves with traditional Black crafts to encourage and promote latent skills in dormant crafts, and have, through their involvement, influenced the direction of the work. On the other hand examples can be found where Whites, very often through the missionary churches, have introduced European crafts into Black communities, and as a result an African influence has been developed in these imported crafts.

Other possible imported craft influences either from the East through the Indian, Malay and Chinese communities or the traditional "peasant" craft from Europe through the Greek, Portuguese, Italian, and German communities do not appear to have any effect on local craft.

To attempt to investigate the first source of craft described previously, namely the material culture of indigenous people of southern Africa, is in effect to move outside the theme of handcraft idealism. This craft source, although it must be considered as an influence on present craft activity, is nevertheless more of an anthropological or ethnological study, referring to that period in the history of craft before the effects of industrialisation or even before the separation of art from craft.

A general reference work which deals with indigenous craft as a specific activity, could not be traced. Excellent studies have been carried out on specific groups of people by researchers such as J. Grossert, P. Davison, H. Fleert, etcetera but cannot establish any overall pattern or give an indication of recent developments in craft.

Rogerson (1986) in his article titled "Reviving Old Technology?: Rural Handicraft Production in Southern Africa" appears to address the problem when stating in the abstract, "an examination is pursued of the historical evolution and current situation of rural craft producers

in Southern Africa". However no overall statistics are presented, although some definition is given of four different craft categories. These are extracted from an unpublished report for the H.S.R.C. and a further unpublished paper by Preston-Whyte (1983 and 1984). Rogerson (1986:178) is summarised as follows: - one "artifacts ... produced as functional objects for indigenous use rather than for actual sale". two "... traditional commodities ... baskets, clay pots, beer strainers, bead work and sleeping mats Also ... modern African art forms drawing upon 'Western' as well as indigenous technologies ... weaving of carpets and woollen tapestries on Western-style looms, pottery made on imported potters' wheels ... beadwork jewellery, using special beads in the latest fashion colours and local African designs", three "The complete break from the purely 'ethnic' craft ... a diverse mix of soft goods, knitted shawls, plant pot holders, crocheted bedspreads, and real or imitation leather goods. Also ... garments such as nurses or school uniforms" and four "... 'ethnic' but non-African, ... such as wall hangings, rugs or cushions covers, ... of high quality and often mass produced along factory systems of production".

These categories place a slightly different emphasis to those which have been identified but they do correlate, and what is emphasised is the difficulty in providing statistical information. Rogerson (1986:178) refers to "These rural handicraft projects spawned over the past ten to fifteen years exhibit marked diversity in terms of their aims, origins, nature of products, technology and systems of production" and draws on the B.A. (Hons) project of Titlestad (1984) dealing with the curio industry of South Africa, to give some broad figures ... "Although accurate statistics are unavailable, at least 150 different self-help craft production schemes were operating by the early 1980's ranging in size from schemes such as Botswana craft and the Kwa Zulu-based Vukahi ('get up and go') Association with over 1 000 members to a host of tiny mission-organised co-operative groups with less than five members ... Particularly notable concentrations of craft ventures occur in rural Kwa Zulu, the Transkei, the Ciskei and the scattered bantu states of northern Transvaal."

To support Rogerson's overview of recorded craft schemes in South Africa, a summary of my own recordings from Natal

in the early 1970's offer another perspective through a more detailed view of individual crafts people and outlets. Although some time has lapsed and changes will have occurred, it is nevertheless a valid indication of the craft emanating from earlier material culture and the cross cultural links of white and black crafts, which were two of the areas defined previously.

The numbers indicated relate to the accompanying map. The tense of the text is taken from 1975, when written.

1. Amazinzi District

1972, 1973, 1974

A thatched open sided stall on the road from Bergville to the Royal National Park. Established by the local chief Bangarie Niya, who claimed a percentage of the sales.

Craft available: Grass weaving of very high standard including baskets with lids and Basuto type hats. Pottery of poor quality and design, also bead work, but not the normal Zulu standard. Outstanding work from one woodcarver, finished with standard "burning" technique. On the third visit no activity was seen.

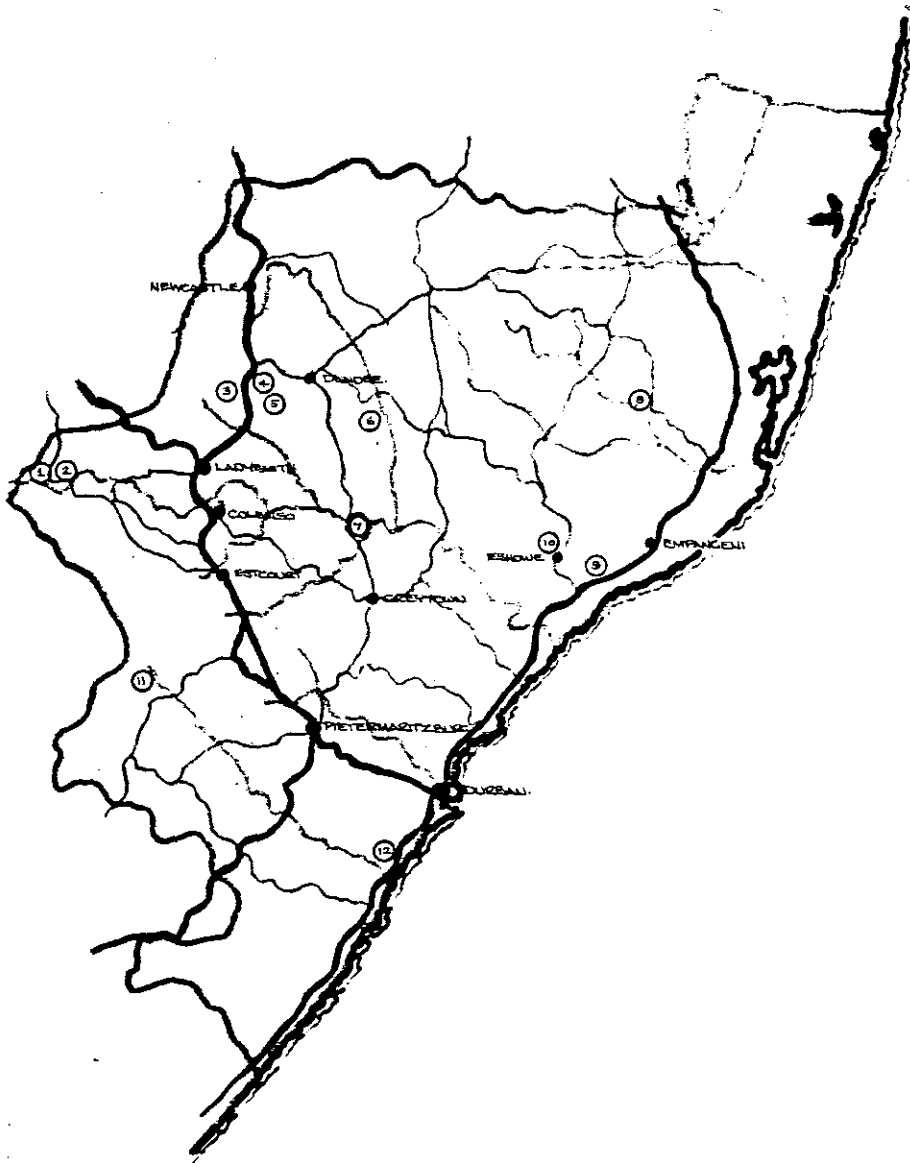


Fig. 17. Locations of craft recorded in Natal in the early 1970s.

2. Ondine Lutheran Church Centre

1972, 1973

A small roadside, thatched shop.

Very little work from the mission itself, clay and wood carved figures not well developed.

Grass lampshades and baskets were brought in from the E.L.C. Mission at Rorkes Drift.

3. Tactile Hand Weaving on the farm Mielietuinhoek

1972 to 1976

Biggars Berg near Newcastle. The old middle Eastern technique of hand knotting rugs has been introduced to local women employed on the farm. Design and supervision is by the owner and family. Simple equipment is used, eg. spinning wheels from modified cycle wheels, loomframes from gum poles.

Weaving has encouraged other crafts eg. wooden furniture and leather work.

4. Marie Radshidtz Mission - Biggars Berg near Wasbank

1972 to 1974

Crafts introduced to the peasant farmers to foster home industries.

Craft produced: Spinning and weaving local wool for fabric made into skirts, handbags and cushion covers.

Chairs and settees of woven willows onto steel frames, the latter not being compatible with rural craft, but no "design" advice was available to attempt alternatives.

Bead work had developed from "ethnic" skills and new creative forms employed for the "Western" market. A few creative sculptures in clay of poor quality. Disagreement amongst the groups of people is causing problems in the running of the Mission and affecting the craft work.

5. Wasbank Road - Biggars Berg

1974

An excellent example of decorated mud plaster, but no other craft was seen.

6. The E.L.C. Art and Craft Centre - Rorkes Drift

1967, 1971, 1972 and 1975 Buffalo River - Kwa Zulu

[As "Rorkes Drift" is well known both locally and internationally only a few extracts are taken from my observations.]

Govenious and his family were sent out from Sweden by the Lutheran Church to implement the craft scheme. In 1968 Otto and Marlin Lundbohm took over the direction and remained for six years. They were to be replaced in 1976 which is the policy of the Mission.

The Kelim method of weaving is employed by both male and female craftspeople to produce rugs and tapestries. The carding, spinning and dyeing is done at the centre but the raw materials are not from the local source.

Screenprinting of fabric is a more recent development than the weaving. Pre-dyed fabric is printed as continuous lengths on printing tables and the screens carrying the dyes are moved by hand for each pattern repeat.

Pottery is the third major craft, but took several years to progress, glazes and stoneware were eventually improved which lead to several National awards.

Woven grass lampshades are produced by retired members of the community, and these are combined with pottery bases.

The graphic art and woodcarving has been one of Rorkes Drift's greatest strengths, and several internationally recognised artists have emerged. Their work strongly influences the crafts produced.

7. Myila- A woodcarver. Msinga Reserve. Tugela Ferry

1972

He has been working at his craft for several years and is self taught. The work is of a high standard, executed in wild olive and other indigenous woods.

8. The Road to the Umfolozi Game Reserve

1972

Rhino, giraffe, kudu bulls and crocodiles are carved in an identical form and style by young Zulu males, spread over a distance of many kilometres along the roadside. An intense and aggressive, highly commercial sales approach is used. This craft would be classified more a curio trade.

[Travelling this road in 1987 there was no evidence of the young carvers.]

9. A market on the Main Kwa Zulu Road - near Gingindlovu

1972

A commercial enterprise established by a local chief. Galvanised sheeting on a gum pole structure make up a series of stalls. A variety of craft is offered. Woven grass mats of intricate "filigree" patterns in circular designs. Clay coil pots, low fired and finished with shoe polish. Bead work is based on traditional forms but very disappointing. Cheap plastic beads have been interwoven with natural dried seeds. Very little carving was seen, and a few chairs based on cheap factory production were in evidence. The proximity to a developing area is not providing the environment for the "craft expression" to evolve.

10. The Vukani Association

[not visited personally]

A self help organisation based in Eshowe.

The objective has been to encourage the community to revive latent talents. Although not able to see the craft in production, this is apparently a true example of cottage industry where up to forty groups of men and women are actively engaged in producing indigenous and original designs. A level of craftsmanship is being re-established in grasswork, woodwork and pottery which has not been in evidence for many years.

11. Rug weaving in the Loteni District

1973

A resident of Durban has established the nucleus of a weaving school on his smallholding in the Drakensberg foothills. It is hoped to provide occupation for the local residents and a profitable enterprise for the owners.

12. Two roadside markets near Umqababa on the Natal South Coast Road

1973 to 1985

The high volume of tourist traffic has eroded the indigenous craft forms and converted them to a confusion of styles, which include beaded bags, knitted scarves and



Fig. 18. A market on the main Kwa Zulu road, near Gingindlovu. photo. (Gower, 1972).



Fig. 19. A roadside market near Umgababa, Natal South Coast. photo. (Gower, 1973).

curio figures. The one exception is the fine examples of grass and palm leaf weaving.

The following centres were not recorded personally but the work had been seen through other outlets or through the media:

Pinetown Area

A religious African sect weaves chairs from split bamboo.

Shongweni

Plaited grass furniture has been produced under the direction of a local landowner.

The Sabantu Village - Pietermaritzburg

Handwoven products have been produced for many years.

Marionhill Monastery

A craft centre established by the monks produces a range of crafts.

Hoffman Handweaving - Marionhill

Although partially industrialised, produces hand woven fabrics and carpets.

The Muiden Valley - Near Greytown

A rugweaving industry has been established by a Mr Wagner using local craftspeople.

Jubulani Rehabilitation Centre - Near Empangeni

Production of handsewn leather goods from game skins.

Fawnleas - Near Greytown

A local farmer W.J. Donnet has attempted handcrafted furniture using local timber and training workers from the farm.

This summary of my article compiled more than fifteen years ago represents a variety of enterprises with a common purpose and all commencing within a few years of each other, yet otherwise, totally unrelated. It would suggest that some factor or a combination of factors were operating to produce this activity. Whether they were economic or social was not investigated at the time, but what is relevant to this study is, that there appeared a need to revert to a cultural resource, or some such intuitively known process as creating instinctively through the co-ordination of mind and hand.

What was emerging in southern Africa could be said to be a part of an international development for at this time the Craft Council of the United Kingdom was being formed and in the same year, 1971, the Crafts Council of Australia

was established. The occurrence in Britain was the result of almost two decades of craft emerging as a reaction to social and economic change. Locally extraordinary developments have continued since the 1970's in the so called "ethnic" or indigenous crafts and the acculturation of western and "ethnic" crafts, consequently they have by no means been fully covered. For example toys of tin, wood, clay and cloth, although most definitely a form of craft have not been referred to previously as they seem to constitute a category exclusive to themselves and range from complex sculpture forms and miniature engineering to naïve assemblies of metal or basic forms in clay.

Fortunately they have captured the interest of private art collectors and galleries, which an exhibition in Cape Town in 1986 in the Touch Gallery of The South African National Gallery was to demonstrate. Art centres such as FUBA in Johannesburg and the Katlehong Art Centre outside Germiston (which fosters several arts and crafts activities other than wire toys) have helped to produce artists of the calibre of Titus Moteyane and Billy Magubela who have both had international recognition for

their wire toys.

The craft work to be found in the curio shops aimed at the overseas tourist has purposely been excluded. Not on grounds of it being inferior, but more for its loss of identity. Seen amongst the discordant displays of curios and "tourist kitch" they seem out of context. Also the indiscriminate handling of work from many sources, although it may be acceptable to the foreign buyers, detracts from its meaning. Carving from Malawi, and further north, being sold in Cape Town under an image of "local African" is approaching that of the European tourist markets where miniature china clogs could be made in Taiwan to sell to Japanese tourists in Holland.

Referring to the more recent expansion of craft work originating from European cultures and practised more in the white communities, the following is a general survey of activity in the major centres based on information obtained in 1989 and includes some information on individual craft furniture makers.

An initial impresssion of crafts practised mainly by whites in South Africa, would be a description of a proliferation of stalls on weekends and public holidays in shopping malls, town squares, suburban parks, city lanes and other public places; selling an assortment of merchandise ranging from fabric and knotted garments, leather foot ware, body ornaments and jewellery, macrami, pottery, toys, ornaments, paintings, wall hangings and even bottled preserves. Although these all constitute handcrafts they are not necessarily always of a high standard or quality and can often be found amongst the bric-a-brac, second hand books, potted plants, and old hand tools and hardware of the flea markets. Not that some very good craft cannot be found in the flea markets, but a distinction is now beginning to be established between the flea markets and the craft markets.

In 1987 an Association of Handcraft Practitioners and Craft Markets of the Western Cape was constituted and now has a membership in excess of 800. It has legal status as a body corporate and is named the Cape Crafters Association. The main purpose of the association is to

promote the socio-economic interests of Western Cape craftsmen. Amongst its objectives are to act as a link between the craftsmen and the craft markets, to act in an advisory capacity, to collect and disseminate information, to organise workshops and seminars, to initiate research projects, to build an information centre and become the recognised mouthpiece on matters affecting craft, to help provide employment and to be a servicing body, independent of Government and of a non-political nature.

The affiliated Craft Markets aim to stimulate and improve standards of handcraft, to educate the public, and to create a highly visible public platform.

The affairs are managed by a committee. In 1989 the Chairman, Mrs Lorraine Bester, was able to furnish the following additional information. There are currently ten markets operating on stipulated days according to an agreed diary. These are situated at Hout Bay, Constantia, Meadowridge, Wynberg, Alphen Park, Pinelands, Rondebosch, Durbanville, Somerset West and the Medieval Craft Fair at Constantia. New exhibitors must have their work approved by a panel of ten committee members, to maintain a

standard.

Several of the established guilds and associations work in collaboration with the Cape Crafters Association for example The Cape Lace Guild, Cape Friends of Calligraphy, Good-Hope Quilters Guild, Cape Embroiders Guild, Potters Association, Cape Guild of Weavers, Cape Dollmakers Guild, etcetera. Links are being formed with various self help organisations to encourage participation in the markets.

The Transvaal Reef area is active and is being assisted by the Cape Association to form their own regional body, with the possible formation eventually, of a National association. The present outlets in Johannesburg and surrounding areas are: The Organic Village Market at the Waldorf-Steiner School, Bryanston; The Cresta Centre Market, Northcliff, with monthly outlets at The Bedfordview Craft Market; Sandton Arts and Craft Expo, Sandton Sun; The Veldskoen Craft Market, Randburg, the Germiston Craft Market and the Houghton Hospice Market.

In the Eastern Cape the Algoa Crafters Association is presently being formed with two markets in Port Elizabeth and one in East London.

A different method of marketing craft has developed in the midlands of Natal, north of Pietermaritzburg, where a group of potters and weavers, living on small-holdings scattered around Nottingham Road have created a craft tour, "The Midlands Meander" as it is publicised. These crafts people sell directly from their studios on particular days when they are prepared to be interrupted in their work. The concept of buying from the source and of meeting the crafters and seeing the equipment in the studios, adds greatly to the appeal of the craft objects.

Pietermaritzburg has one craft market and the formation of a constituted association is being discussed. In Durban the craftwork is at present being sold through the flea markets.

For a product which is so widely used, furniture is remarkably rare in a craft form. Very few examples relative to other crafts, were traceable either in Britain or South Africa. This is more understandable amongst the indigenous based crafts as there was no evidence of western style furniture in the earlier material culture, but should not apply to the crafts of European origin.

The only inhibiting factors that can be suggested are; the need for some knowledge of structures, the possible physical effort required, and the cost of equipment, tools and raw materials.

With such a sparsity of examples each known craftsman has been contacted or recorded from existing information but undoubtedly others will not have been known at the time of completing this dissertation. It has also been difficult to establish what work is craft and that which is intended for possible productions runs.

Reproductions or modifications of accepted period styles have not been credited to a craftsman as they have not been considered as a contribution to creative contemporary craft.

The following descriptions are not in any specific order.

Russel Walford, works from his small holding in Hillcrest Natal. He is from a family of craftsmen and artists, his brother Andrew being a highly renowned potter. Evolving his own techniques he has developed as a master craftsman in timber, producing sound pieces of furniture including cabinets, tables and chairs.

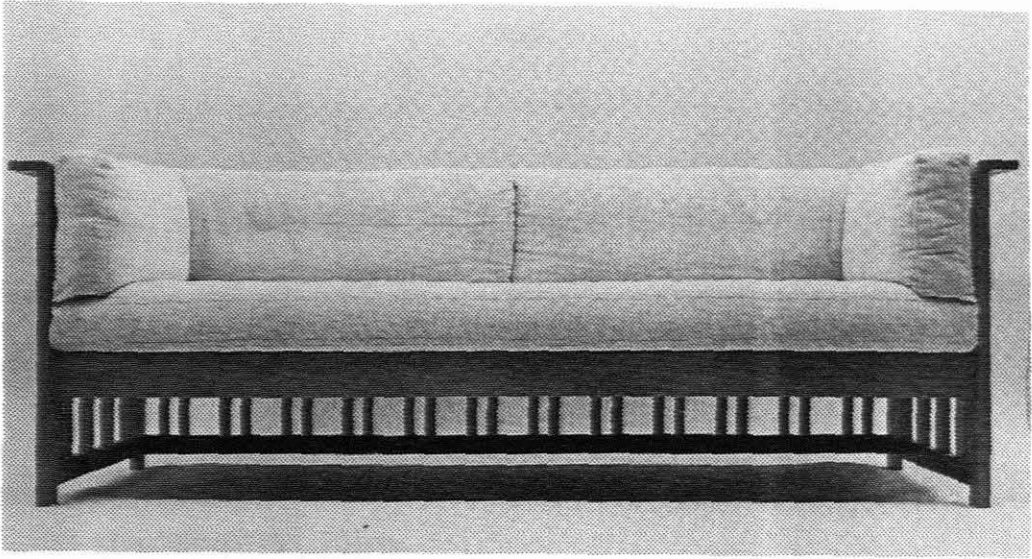


Fig. 20. Settle. J Bonadei.
photo. (Individual Statements, Habitat 1988).

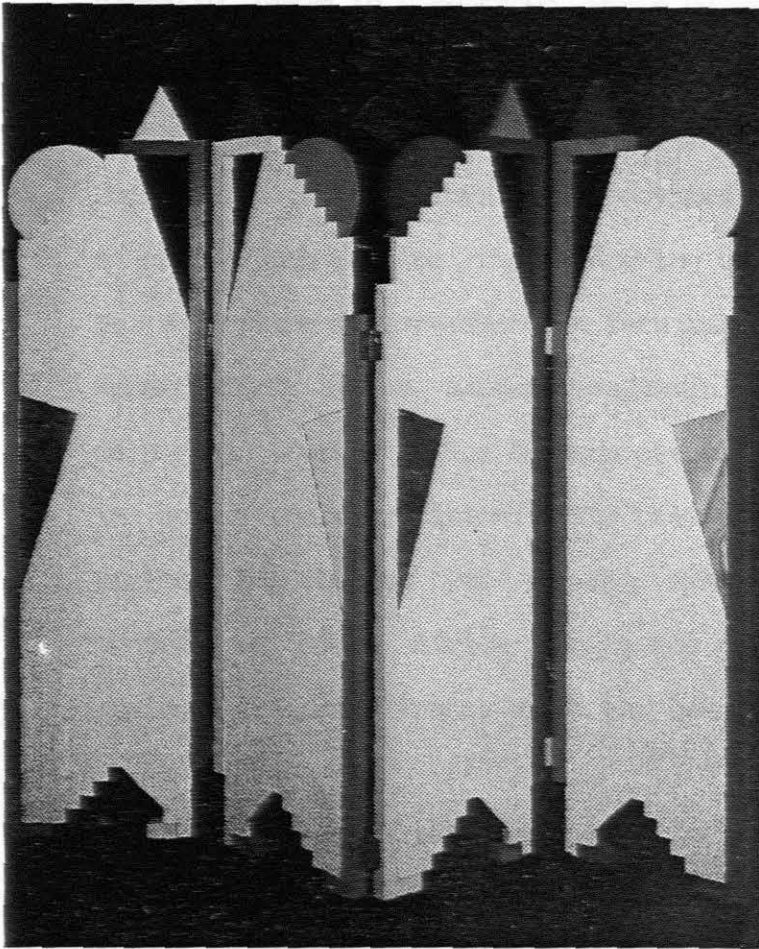


Fig. 21. Screen. M. Leurs.
photo. (Individual Statements Habitat 1988).

Jacqui Bonadei is a practicing architect in Cape Town who has executed some specialised pieces of furniture. She could be considered a designer-craftsman as she does not personally make up the work but supervises each operation.

Mike Leurs an interior designer in Cape Town is also a designer craftsman who has made up a variety of pieces in the "Memphis" idiom.

Roger Young is a graduate of the Michaelis School of Art of the University of Cape Town in wood sculpture. He is normally based in Simonstown, where he produces a range of sculptured furniture and small objects in imbuia and teak.

Jeremy Stiere, a recently graduated architect from the University of Cape Town has discovered "a drawing becomes a chair much easier than a drawing becomes a building". He is starting to experiment in furniture.

Robert Scott is a master craftsman in wood who works mainly in Durban. The designs are highly innovative yet in sound craft traditions. The precision of his work has limited his output yet it has been shown in the main centres of South Africa and he has recently exhibited a chair in St. Claud France which has been well received.

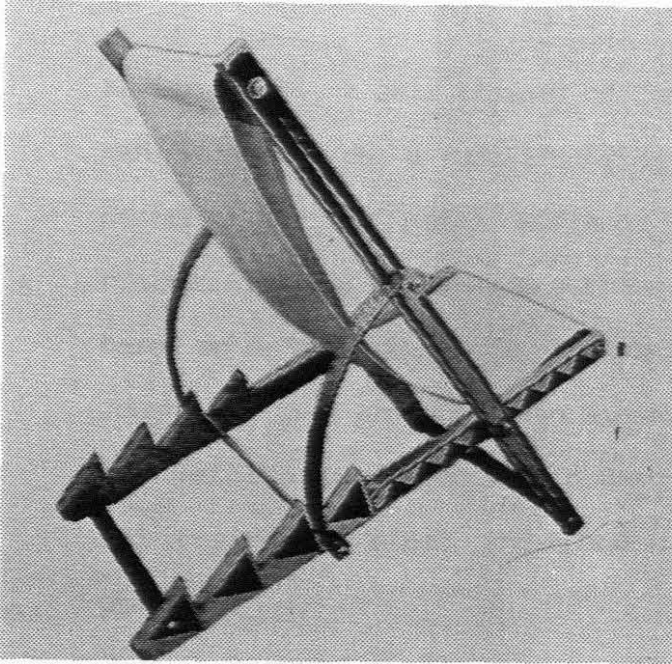


Fig. 22.
Reclining chair. J. Stiere.
photo. ADA, No. 6, 50.



Fig. 23.
Dining chair. R. Scott.
photo. R. Scott.

Kevin Murphy, a self trained craftsman has developed a one man workshop on a small-holding in the Nottingham Road district in the Natal midlands. He is producing finely crafted tables, chairs and settees in timber and upholstery based on a "universal modern" style.

Johan du Toit and Kobus van Schoor run an interior design and architectural practice in Cape Town. They make tables and chairs of steel and wood in conjunction with their practice.

Jurgen Brenner trained as a furniture maker in West Berlin. He now lives in Cape Town where he is studying architecture at the University of Cape Town.

Although an effort has been made to trace as many centres of crafts and individual crafts people as possible, the purpose of this subsection was not to compile a register of craftsmen but to establish the existence of some common movement, with the result that many omission must have occurred and some examples which have been included may have ceased.

Referring to South Africa the foregoing section constitutes an overall picture of craft activity of all types, and, ranges from local material culture to imported

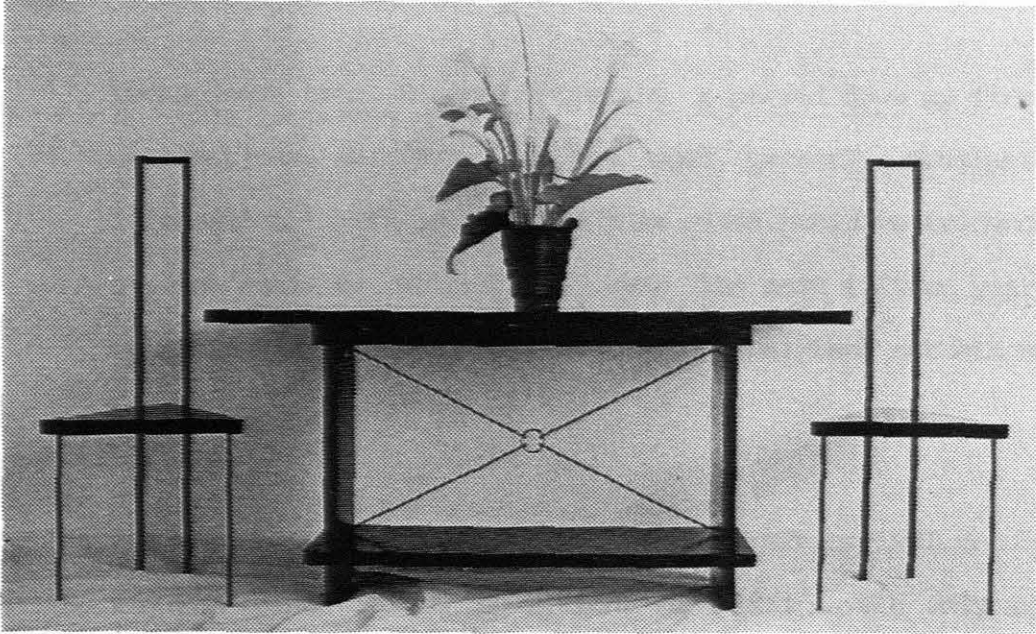


Fig. 24. Chairs and table. J. du Toit and K. van Schoor.
photo. (Individual Statements, Habitat, 1988).

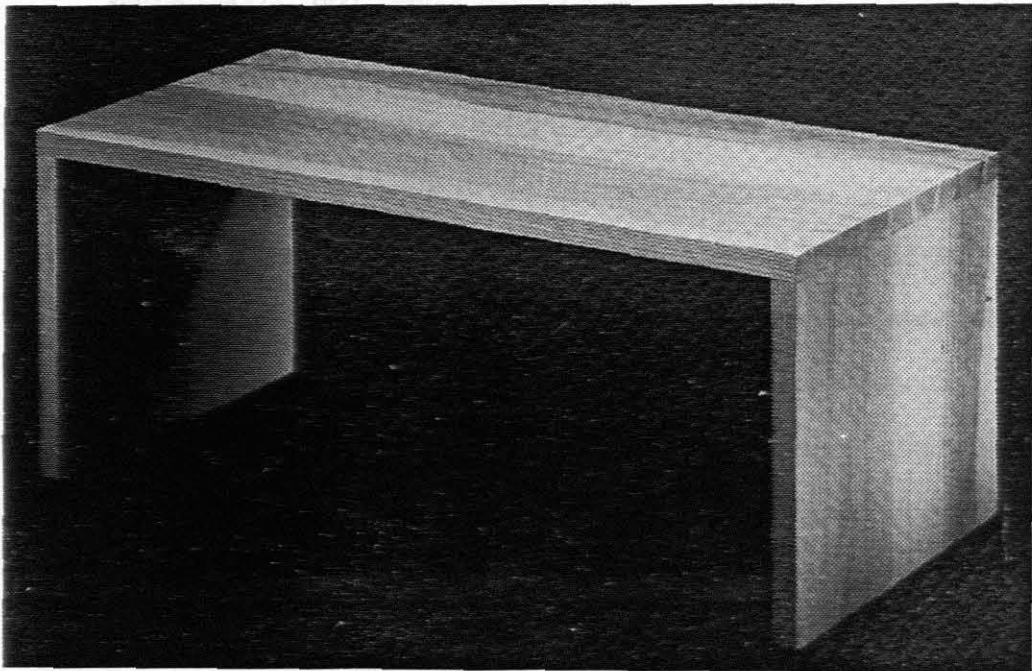


Fig. 25. Coffee table. J. Brenner.
photo. (Individual Statements, Habitat, 1981).

technology from Europe, covering a period from my first observations in 1972, to the most recently available information. It is believed this gives positive evidence of an activity which has, over the past fifteen years approximately, either maintained a consistent pattern or has shown increased growth.

It was felt that any comment on a craft revival should require a survey into conditions in Britain. Not only are there articles and publications indicating an abundance of craft activity, but because it was in England where the concept of craft idealism emerged just over a hundred years ago, and was indirectly to influence the path of design throughout the Western World. It was this idealism which fashioned the nature of craft as it is known today and being the source it warranted personal observation. Few examples of this earlier craft are still available for public viewing but it was nevertheless the specimens which were seen in the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Cheltenham Art Gallery, the William Morris Gallery at Waltham Forest, and Kelmscott Manor in Gloucestershire, which were of great value to the study. Though the work of the guildsmen was familiar through photographic records, the personal observation of the pieces of three

dimensional work was to provide the background to research the recent craft revival.

Contact was made with the Craft Council's office London, where articles of general information were made available, and amongst which was their report 1983 - 1985. The following is a summary of this report.

In 1971 the Craft Council of the United Kingdom was formed and 1977 saw the launch of the Wales Craft Council. The Royal Charter was granted in 1983 including both bodies.

In 1985 under the Chairmanship of Sir Nevil Macready, (Bart, C.B.E.), Managing Director of Mobil Oil United Kingdom Limited, with some high ranking members of the executive council, a prestigious front has been given to what is traditionally considered to be the fairly humble pursuit of craft.

Included in the report is the text of the Charter, details of all promotions over recent years, and the financial reports from 1983 to March 1985. Summarised from the above it was noted that the income for 1982/1983 of 1,609,374 Pounds has risen to 2,267,324 Pounds in March

1985 and that these amounts were almost entirely utilised ie. after operating costs, for grants, education, outlets at the Council's shop and the Victorian and Albert Museum, conservation and exhibitions. The Council also publishes a magazine of a very high standard which has world wide circulation.

After ten years of existence The Craft Council undertook a socio-economic study of the craftsmen and women in England and Wales. General surveys have been compiled, giving percentages pertinent to numbers involved, hours per week, income, type of craft, qualifications etcetera. The following are considered the most relevant extracts:

<u>Type of Craft</u>	<u>Estimated Numbers</u>	<u>% of the Total</u>
Graphic Craft	980	4.9
Leather	300	1.5
Glass	820	4.1
Pottery and Ceramics	5 380	26.9
Silver and Jewellery	2 760	13.8
Iron and Stone	320	1.6
Wood	2 560	12.8
Textiles	5 410	27.1
Toys and Instruments	1 030	5.1
Rural and Minor Crafts	490	2.4

Of the people working on a full time basis 67% of craftsmen and 53% of craftswomen found their craft earnings amounted to all or nearly all their total income, teaching being the most common additional source of income.

The greatest percentage of part-timers, ie. 66% men and 49% women, procured 20% of their income from craft. Of all craft people 43% held a degree or diploma in art and design, 19% had an academic degree or diploma not related

to art or craft, 15% a trade certificate or diploma, 26% a teaching qualification and 11% had other further education. 1.14% was the average number of qualifications per person.

An extract from the Introduction to the Craft Councils report by David Dougan, the new Director, is most pertinent. "... how much they had to offer the country in terms of design and other skillful application of aesthetics, if only business or government had the wit to recognise them".

Because of his past South African connections, it was possible to make contact with Mr Malcolm McIntyre-Read, Chief Executive of the Wales Craft Council and at his instigation it was possible to attend two craft fairs in the United Kingdom.

The first was a semi rural, village event, in St. Faggins on the outskirts of Cardiff in Wales, where the craft displays integrated well with the overall atmosphere, which aimed to present a traditional, national Welsh lifestyle. Two marquees, one displaying the Wales Craft

Council and the other, the Makers Guild in Wales, were in evidence, each containing a variety of individual exhibitors. The work in the Council tent was very varied, and it appeared that the philosophy adopted by the Council was to support and assist in promoting any legitimate producer of crafted products even if the design standards in some cases were not what was expected of traditional craft. This was confirmed by Mr McIntyre-Read and the impression gained was that the policy, although striving for standards, would not be exclusive and disallow certain products.

The Makers Guild tent presented a more integrated overall view giving the impression of collaboration between the individual exhibitors as could be expected from members of a guild, and the crafts were limited more to weaving and ceramics. Neither of the two displays were of any great size, the Council tent housing approximately fifteen small stalls and the Guild tent approximately eight. It had been expected that furniture or artifacts in wood and metal would be part of the St. Faggins Fair but nothing of this nature was seen.

The second venue visited, the British Craft Trade Fair at Harrogate 11 to 13 May 1986 was of a totally different nature. Firstly it was housed in a large, commercial exhibition hall and secondly it was directed specifically toward trade buyers to whom entrance was by invitation. The overall impresssion was of a well-organised highly commercial venture which apparently has been run annually several times.

The exhibitors see it as a purely business activity and an opportunity for securing orders in the same manner as any large industrial concern would at an international trade fair. The aim appeared to be financial viability with products being manufactured to satisfy the most lucrative sectors of the market. For example the most common stalls were of knitted garments, produced on small machines, the quality and designs being generally of a high standard but very repetitive.

From the general range of products displayed innovative design was more the exception and many items were derivative or copies of others being offered.

Certain examples could only be classified as "kitch"^s, or reflecting a very poor feeling for design.

Those stalls presenting outstanding work were mostly jewellery or ceramics and on enquiry were found to be the work of designers trained at the art and design colleges.

Only one furniture maker was present and although the work was imbued with fine craftsmanship and was of a simple unadorned "rural" style the overall approach lacked innovation. This exhibit was however of particular interest, not only as furniture is the main concern of this research, but also through what was revealed by the craftsman himself. His looks, manner and dress, plus the harmonious involvement of his wife with his work suggested no boundary exists between work and life style. As he chose to work alone, the time required to execute a piece of work, to the standards he felt compelled to strive for, could not be charged for at the rate he deserved. A basic sideboard on display had taken him a month to complete. Consequently his market is limited to buyers with fine discernment and an appreciation of a particular approach and style who also have the means to support this quality of work. The interview with this exhibitor demonstrated succinctly the condition of the true craftsman and how his committed striving classifies him in the role of an idealist.

The British Crafts Council and the Wales Craft Council were represented, giving collective displays in support of their members' work. Also in evidence was COSIRA, the Council for Small Industries in Rural Areas, whose Head of Sales Promotion confirmed their objectives and priorities, as being concerned with business development of a wide range of rural industries and not specifically with the advancement of creative craft.

The impressions gained from this major craft fair can be summarised as, a predominantly commercial event, professionally organised to display products of good quality but limited in the advancement of good design. It also demonstrated clearly the range which must be taken into account when applying the term craft.

Other than the fairs, examples of craft could be found in several small rural and urban shops, and some street markets. Due to limited finance and time available, the areas which could be reached were the Cotwolds, The Lake District and parts of west England but most examples were seen in Wales. The quality of workmanship appeared to be good, but the designs were aimed mostly at the tourist trade placing them more in the category of curios. Very little furniture, was seen although a register of

practising designers was consulted and several attempts were made to trace names listed, some of which were out of date or misleading. For example, a journey of several miles from Moreton in Marsh in the Cotswolds, to Warwick, revealed that the craftsman who had been contacted was primarily involved in teaching woodwork at a school and had none of his work to show.

The British Craft Centre (not connected to the British Crafts Council) is an organisation of associated crafts people committed to the encouragement of contemporary craft work. Its showroom, at 43 Earlham Street London had on display very good examples of well designed glass, rugs, lights, ceramics, fabric, jewellery, paper and metal work which could be classified as art/craft. Approximately three pieces of interesting furniture were also on display at the time of visiting but this appeared to be a minor category.

Parnham is an institution in Beaminster, Dorset, which since 1976 has incorporated The School for Craftsmen in Wood and The John Makepeace Furniture Workshop. Makepeace is a renowned craftsman whose name is synonymous with individual furniture and design of the twentieth century.

Contact was made with the School but permission to visit was refused. The specified days and times offered were not possible in the limited schedule. However the work of one of the graduates of the School, Lord Linley, was seen at his showroom in London. He works with a group of colleagues who share workshop premises south of London. They could be classified as designer craftsmen, as much of the making is done by skilled tradesmen, working under their supervision, using machines and hand tools. Although it was not possible to visit the workshop, Lord Linley was very communicative during a telephonic interview, from which it appeared that he works "on spec" and against orders for a market, which it is assumed, would be influenced by his position in society, being a member of the peerage.

The work on display in the showroom was fairly radical in design and very original. The anthropometric considerations and the stability of some dining type chairs was questionable but a collection of screens demonstrated a superb use of inlaid veneers.

The journal *Crafts* of 1981 records that Edward Barnsley the nephew of Sydney and Ernest Barnsley was continuing making furniture in the Arts and Crafts tradition at

Bedales, Froxfield near Petersfield in Hampshire. According to the article he was eighty years old, and at that time one of the last living links with the earlier Craft Movement.

This was the situation which was assessed in 1986 from available sources of information on Craft in England and Wales, and can be considered a fair reflection of the developments taking place at that time.

To summarise, it could be said that there is proof of extensive activity, but whether the majority of craftspeople are following the ideal which Morris had pursued is doubtful. The socialism which was one of the tenets of the Crafts' Movement of last century, has in many ways been fulfilled but the vision of its syndication with a communal aesthetic awareness seems an ideal still to be achieved. But there were the examples, which though stylistically may have alarmed the Cotswold guildsmen, were nevertheless, true examples of the Arts and Crafts. It may be possible that with the recognition these craftsmen are receiving they will eventually influence more of those from the general field of craft.

Carrington (1976:186) writing ten years prior to my comment is an indicator that the pace is slow, yet it is encouraging "So, with its Crafts Advisory Council, the artist-craftsman had regained a recognised status in the economy. Against what might be thought to be the general trend, the number of wholetime working craftsmen and women increases year by year".

4. PRACTICAL WORK

Before discussing the various sub sections of this chapter certain qualifications need to be made.

The examples of practical work displayed, and recorded in the dissertation, should not be seen in the accepted sense of an exhibition, where some overall statement is being proposed. The work has been approached more as a series of experiments into an aspect of handcraft to attempt to gain further understanding of the process and to support the overall research. The experience gained it is hoped, may assist in furthering craft activity.

Having worked as a designer almost exclusively in the preparation of drawings which have been executed by others, my entry into handcraft has been as a virtual novice. This lack of specialised experience has lead to empiric research into the materials and processes. As a result the observations have not been obscured by preconceptions based on previous knowledge. In view of the personalised nature of craftwork this method would seem preferable.

4.1 PARAMETERS RELATING TO PRODUCTS, EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS

The reason for conducting practical experiments has been discussed in the introduction. On approaching the work parameters had to be established to ensure a realistic programme that could without definition, become unmanageable. Some point of departure also had to be found to initiate the experiments and give an overall direction. These constraints needed to be rational and relevant to the overall work.

Firstly as the discipline is interior design and my commercial experience has included furniture design, in particular chairs, a combination of these two areas seemed appropriate. Chairs demand a specific approach as they engage more human contact than most pieces of furniture, combining formal composition with use. But other aspects of interiors such as doors or screens, it was felt, might also be applicable.

The second parameter introduced, was to consider what contribution the outcome of the study could offer. It had been noted in the early observation of Black rural craft

that virtually no furniture was seen, although there was the skill of woodcarving in evidence. As the "foreign craft" of weaving has successfully been introduced into several areas, a similar exercise it was felt could be encouraged with furniture. The problem with furniture however is that it is normally associated with factory production on a large scale. Even the few existing craft furniture makers use fairly sophisticated machines, and this apparent dependence on expensive electrically driven equipment seems to have inhibited its development as a rural or cottage craft. Based on this assumption it was decided to limit the experiments to the use of hand tools and exclude all power driven equipment. This would to some extent simulate rural or even certain "township" conditions and the experience gained could then be used to provide a basis for guidance if this craft could be promoted as a cottage industry.

Another self imposed limitation which stemmed from the above motive, was to restrict the material for the experiments to items which could easily be procured. Sections of trees not commercially viable for conversion to timber; standard planks of readily available local

pine; stock paint and adhesives, standard screws, nails, wire and some cement were used as the basic materials. They are all items which can be found or purchased from the typical suburban hardware centre or the rural "trading store".

To have worked exclusively with materials from their source would perhaps have been closer to handcraft idealism or to the ecologically sound rural material culture, but this would have necessitated establishing a specific location and working only with those materials available from that source. From the aspect of the pure design experience this would have been most rewarding but would not have provided a general example which could be applied in a variety of locations in both urban and differing rural environments.

4.2 INFLUENCES ON THE DESIGN DIRECTION

Following the practicalities of product, equipment, and material an attempt will be made to describe the intuitive behaviour or reasons for a certain approach taken as a result of subjective reactions to particular influences.

This refers to the point of departure, or the initiation of the actual experiments, mentioned earlier. It is not the intention here to attempt to venture into the complexities of subjective behaviour but it was possible to identify some of the influences which gave a direction to the work.

The first, concerns my initial exposure in 1970 to the rural craft in Natal and a personal discovery of an ethos which imparted a special quality into the craft objects, creating an effect which was sensed then, and which has remained, giving a strong although intangible motive in guiding the direction of the practical work.

The second influence is the result of a contrast. Having worked for several years almost exclusively with designs on paper to be translated into objects through machine processes, it was found that the work of the sculpture students of the School of Art and Design (as it was then called) at the Cape Technikon, suggested a link to rural craft. This occurred in 1984/5 when the possibilities of a comparative study of craft and design were being considered. Although it was not possible to evaluate the

sculpture, with a designed object, it nevertheless presented a means of understanding the interface between man and material when producing an artwork. It then became apparent that the same interface could be found in the creation of craftwork. This realisation seemed to provide "a place" where craft could originate. It shares the same interface as sculpture but does not necessarily venture into the realm of so called fine art, as it still must satisfy a functional need.

Leading from this was the third influence and that which directed the form or style the objects were to follow. The spontaneity of the students' sculptures previously mentioned, suggested more of the spirit of rural craft. It was this which influenced the direction of the work rather than a more precise and formal method used by traditional craftsmen, whose work I had seen. Here the emphasis seemed more on the skill of making known forms, as opposed to realising a design through a spontaneous process of making.

The work of the Omega Work Shops although more concerned with surface decoration than an integrated form of craft, nevertheless displayed this quality of spontaneity. It was a brief bold venture which drew attention in its time. It is possibly this genre of idealism which would be effective now in our local society, and could aptly blend "ethnic" tradition with contemporary craft.

Within the established parameters, entry into the practical work was through experiments with the various materials utilising basic hand tools. Initially no images or sources of reference were employed to direct the forms, as it was anticipated the material and the intended function of the object might lead the process into creating them. This consciously naïve approach assisted in understanding the nature of the materials and provided a means of discovering textures which were sympathetic, particularly in the use of pine, but did not easily lead to building up a composite form or structure. It then became apparent that an image of some sort was necessary. With a point of reference it was possible to hold the process on course, even if it was only loosely tied to an image of a plant for example, or giving a name

to the developing piece of work was sufficient. It did not seem relevant to determine a theme or attempt some overall statement as this would have involved other objectives and may have inhibited the purpose of discovery.

4.3 AN OBSERVATION ON THE USE AND EFFECTS OF TOOLS

A general comment is necessary concerning the hand tools and how they were to influence the experiments. No specific approach had been considered as to the nature of the tools other than they should not be power driven. The contents of the typical domestic tool box, used for the construction of basic furniture such as shelves, bed bases, cupboards etcetera appeared to be a reasonable starting point.

An early observation was to find to what extent the availability of a particular tool could influence the development of a design. This may appear to be a very obvious statement, but when considering the respective views of which is applied first; either to execute a task according to the tool, or to derive a tool to satisfy the

task, this has a most decisive effect on the design process. The former suggests perfecting skills to achieve the maximum variations within limited parameters, and the latter implies a conceptual leap prior to finding a method of execution.

Why certain tools have evolved at a particular time is not always obvious, Lucie-Smith (1981:124) mentions "The carpenter's plane, though known in antiquity, for some reason dropped almost completely out of use until it was revived in the twelfth century."

The versatility of a tool was found to add to its appeal and the more conversant one becomes with it the more it will influence a design. Davison (1983:101) describing the Lobedu woodworkers illustrates this. "The traditional tool-kit consisted of an adze, ... a poker, ... and a number of gouges ... For many years now scrap metal, motor-car springs and files have been heated and hammered into blades for tools and hafted in the old way. More recently modern tools have come into use and axes, saws, chissels, penknives, and drills are used ... The traditional tools, however, were well designed for their many uses and they have not been replaced."

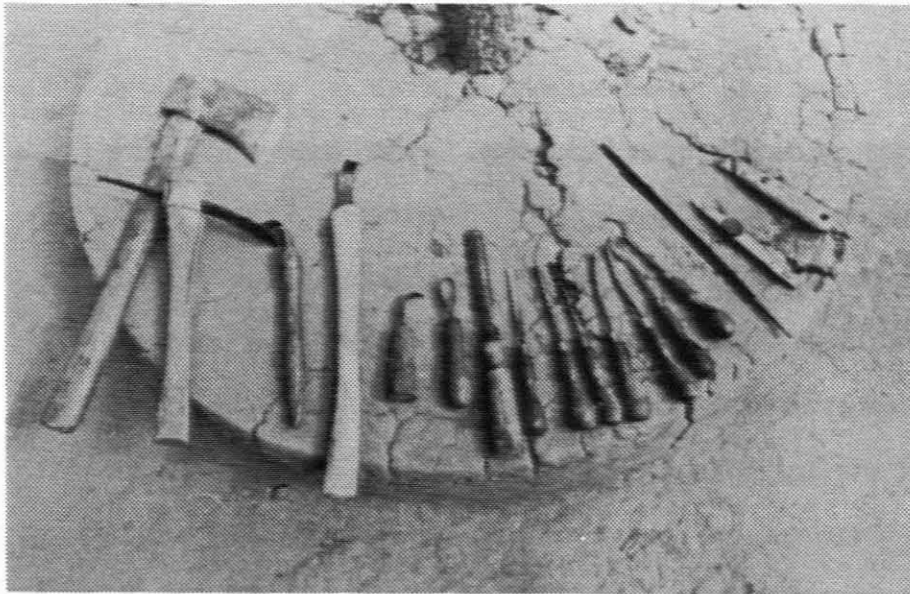


Fig. 26. A Lobedu woodworker's tools.
photo. P. Davison. (Davison, 1984 : 103).

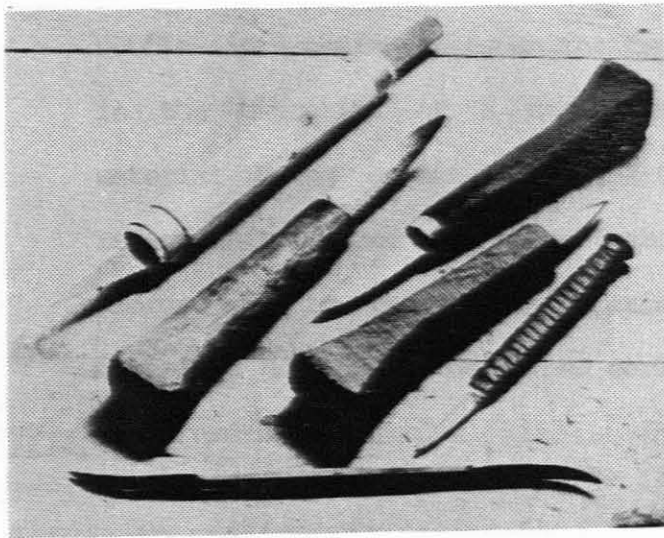


Fig. 27. "Some favourite tools" used by J. Krenov.
photo. (Krenov, 1981 : 121).

By adopting a fairly unstructured approach, tools were employed where they appeared most suitable, but were at times found lacking. For example, the fine setting of conventional metal "Jack plane" being designed for close grained hard woods is not always suitable for fibrous and resinous local soft woods. This malfunctioning of the tool leads to condemnation of the material which may not always be justified. Alternatively an outdated tool such as a "draw knife" (an exposed metal cutting edge guided by wooden handles at both ends) performed well under a variety of conditions once a certain skill had been achieved.

The appropriateness of a tool was found to be part of a subtle interaction between the type of operation involved in the execution of a design and the nature of the material being used. Some of these operations will be referred to under the three categories of process which emerged as a result of experiments in the selected materials which were described earlier under the reference to parameters.

4.4 THREE PROCESSES OF MAKING

4.4.1 Reduction: carving from selected logs, or a combination of logs, to form artifacts for sitting.

4.4.2. Assembly: utilising commercially available timber and boards to be cut, shaped and joined to construct items of furniture incorporating standard metal fasteners, paint, cord or rope.

4.4.3. Modelling: using commercially available wire as tensile reinforcement and cement foundue as a compressive element to build structures of plastic form, suitable for exterior furniture and decorative building elements.

4.4.1. Reduction. In the initial experiments simple cut logs of stone pine and local oak were used. As the elementary form of the log provided a seat in itself it was possible to work spontaneously and allow the forms to develop through working into the cracks, knots, wild grain and other natural defects.

When the more complex configurations of parts of

branches were investigated a conflict arose regarding the extent to which the natural form should be altered through carving, as opposed to interlocking two or more unworked sections in some form of anthropometric relationship. This interlocking produced further considerations. The junctions between pieces of machined timber can be expressed harmoniously as a mechanically cut joint, but to resolve a junction between natural forms presents the problem of either appearing to conceal the join, or attempting an overtly mechanical union of organic forms.

Working in this medium it was not possible to develop a concept on paper and then relate a design to the natural forms. Here the raw material had to lead, and possibilities of function had to be attempted on an ad hoc basis until a workable solution could be devised.

Subsequently some examples of stools and headrests of central Africa have been seen in Sieber's "African Furniture and Household Objects" where the craftsman has also attempted to use the available form to suit the function rather than radically develop a new form through a process of wasting.

By allowing the character of the logs to direct the design, their asymmetry and eccentricity lead to a further discovery. The human form being essentially symmetrical, it is normally assumed that any construction which is made to support the body at rest should follow this. What is so often overlooked however is that even in a resting position the body is not still for any length of time and in fact an asymmetrical support can offer a variety of conditions which are conducive to comfortable sitting.

As could be expected, the tools most favoured for this work were more basic and of the types used in traditional material culture. For example an adze was not commercially available and one was procured on loan from a sculptor who had formed it from spring steel and pipe. A chopper, gouge and drawknife were extensively used, with a panel saw and brace and bit being two of the more sophisticated items.

One factor of personal concern in the process of reduction was the degree of wasting which occurred. The removal of large sections of good material eventually

became inhibiting and ways of assembling a rough form from components before refining to the final form, seemed more acceptable.

This lead into the next process of construction from machined timber which was referred to as;

- 4.4.2 Assembly. Here the problems were closer to those which confront the designer in commercial production where the resolution of the form can become arbitrary. The fewer constraints in the material encourage solutions offered through plagiarism or alternatively following fashionable trends. The decision not to use power tools became an advantage however, as this restriction enforced more meaningful solutions.

Where possible, found or partially machined boards were used to provide a point of departure for the design, but when confronted by clean, precisely sawn material it was necessary to look for some visual stimulus. It seemed appropriate to remain within the sphere of the material being worked, hence patterns in the growth of trees were observed, ranging from the silhouette of a grove, to leaf construction or the detailed forms of bark. These

patterns were then abstracted to suit the material and the function of the object.

Sketches were of more value than in the previous process as they offered an immediate means of investigating a concept, but they were seldom taken as far as an accurately scaled drawing. The process seemed too close to my commercial experience where an instruction was given via the drawing for a third person to follow. In that circumstance the drawing was creative input whereas in the craft process it became the work itself.

The recognition of an ambivalence which occurred when building up components into a whole form, should be recorded and some of the implications discussed. When working purely intuitively in an attempt to avoid unconscious plagiarism, it was found that basic structural principles were often ignored, with a result that exciting potential solutions had to be abandoned. On the other hand when known sound structure was being followed the forms lost spontaneity and tended to echo conventional furniture.

Similar tendencies were observed when comparing the work of students in the foundation courses in the School of Applied Art. When projects are set which are heavily task and function orientated as in the Interior and Industrial Design courses, the students seem less able to produce innovative forms. Robertson (1961:136) writing on Craft and Contemporary Culture discusses the training of designers for industry and expands on Walter Gropius' ideas from the Bauhaus period of 1919 - 1928 where "The students were introduced to a range of materials ... for exploring easily three dimensional form. They were encouraged to 'play' with the material, ... experimenting with what it would do, and finally making from it anything which seemed to fulfil and be perfectly appropriate to the nature of that material."

It is possible that craft, taking a course between the unbounded approach of fine art and the tight constraints of design could rekindle something of Gropius' philosophy where he was trying to reconcile a heritage of craft with the emerging machine age.

There was no conscious reasoning at the time for the

introduction of colour to the overall surface of these pieces, but a retrospective view would be that the material of the flat boards, and in some cases glue laminated sections, did not display the same quality as the natural structure of the logs worked with in the first process. Even here, once colour had been explored, there seemed a need to apply it to small areas of end grain or exposed knots.

The tools most suited to this process were more the conventional type used by a joiner or cabinet maker and included panel, tenon and keyhole saws, jack and smoothing planes, spoke shave, flat and carving chisels, cutting knife, rasps and files, brace and bits, scrapers and sand papers. One of the most fundamental items of equipment was a means of restraining the material being worked on. This could range from blocks, clamps, vice or a patent portable work bench.

In this process the need to bond two or more items often arose and suitable adhesive and clamping devices became necessary. Other materials such as screws, nails, metal pins etcetera and binding, or tensile elements of wire

or cord seemed compatible and fell within the set parameter of readily available material.

4.4.3 Modelling, the third process, came from observing the students' cement fondue sculptures mentioned earlier. The contrast in materials prompted a different attitude to that of the two previous processes and it was felt that this could be beneficial to both. A craft is generally determined by a particular material, whereas design involves an acquaintance with many materials. The latter poses the question whether working in more than one material is feasible for the craftsman today, where the pressures of technological advances and commercial sophistication mitigate in favour of specialisation. Possibly the versatility of the practicing theorists' of the Arts and Crafts Movement still has some message for the contemporary craftsman. This would however constitute a separate section of study in itself.

By applying the basic structural principle where a compound of wire as a tensile element and cement as a compressive element work in concert, some attempts

were made in creating original forms. The first experiments revealed that the compound indicated bone like structures might evolve. This concept was pursued and bones from a small collection gathered from the veld were used as reference.

This reference was of use in the detail but arriving at the overall form was problematic. Conceiving the structure through a drawing was not successful as visualising the complex organic forms focused on the drawing process and inhibited the flow of design.

By working with wire in miniature an overall form could be "drawn" but when this was scaled to full size and wire mesh was applied to hold the first application of cement the visual composition became lost. Building up the layers of fondue then became a different experience to the concept in wire. Even though the wire in the miniatures was coated with plasticine to simulate the cement, the materials being so different in behaviour, it only partially assisted in the process.

It would seem possible that certain elements could be cast and then modelled into a complete structure.

Despite being able to liken this method to any known craft, the few experiments have indicated that with further development many worthwhile objects could be produced. The two chairs displayed are proof of the strength and weathering qualities as they have been in use for over three years in a variety of circumstances and conditions.

4.5 CATALOGUE OF EXPERIMENTS

The individual items have been grouped under the categories of the three processes described in 4.4 but are not presented in the same order. Sequentially the cement fondue modelling occurred after the initial experiments in woodcarving and there was some overlap in the processes. Within each group the numbering indicates the progression.

Each item is described according to its function, the material source and finish, and the method of production. Commonly used terms for the materials have been applied as biological, chemical or technological terms are not considered necessary within the objectives of the experiments. The sizes, given in millimeters, represent the maximum height in each case.

Reduction

1. Squatting stool. Stone pine, oiled.
Carved from a single log. 470
2. Squatting stool. Local oak, oiled.
Carved from a single log. 470
3. Bench seat. Local cork oak, oiled and acrylic paint.

- Carved and assembled from three logs using dowels. 800
4. Seat with back rest. Poplar, oiled and acrylic paint.
Carved from two logs and assembled with connecting
dowels. 560
5. Balancing seat with back rest. Yellow wood, oiled.
Carved and constructed from a found branch. 700

Modelling

6. Chair. 580
7. Low chair with back rest. 980
8. Gate. 1700
Cement fondue on galvanized wire armature, natural
finish. Twisted wire frame tied at intersections and clad
with fine wire mesh. Cement fondue applied in layers.

Assembly

9. Squatting stool, for the right leg, with back rest.
Laminated South African Pine board, stained, oiled and
enamel paint.
Carved and assembled from two off-cuts. 470

10. Squatting stool with back rest. Sapele mahogany, oiled.
Carved and assembled using a variation of joints. 470

11. Squatting stool. Laminated South-African Pine boards,
acrylic paint and wax.
Carved and assembled from off-cuts using metal rods and
dyed cord. 420

12. Space deviding screen. Laminated South-African Pine
boards, painted in acrylic.
Sawn, glued and doweled, and carved. 1800

13. Seat, table, step combination. Stock South-African Pine
timber sections and laminated boards, painted in acrylic.
Carved and assembled using glued joints. 750

14. A pair of reception room chairs. South-African Pine stock
timber, painted in acrylic.
Carved and assembled using glued and pinned, lapped and
housing joints. 1600

15. Screen door. South-African Pine stock timber, painted in acrylic.

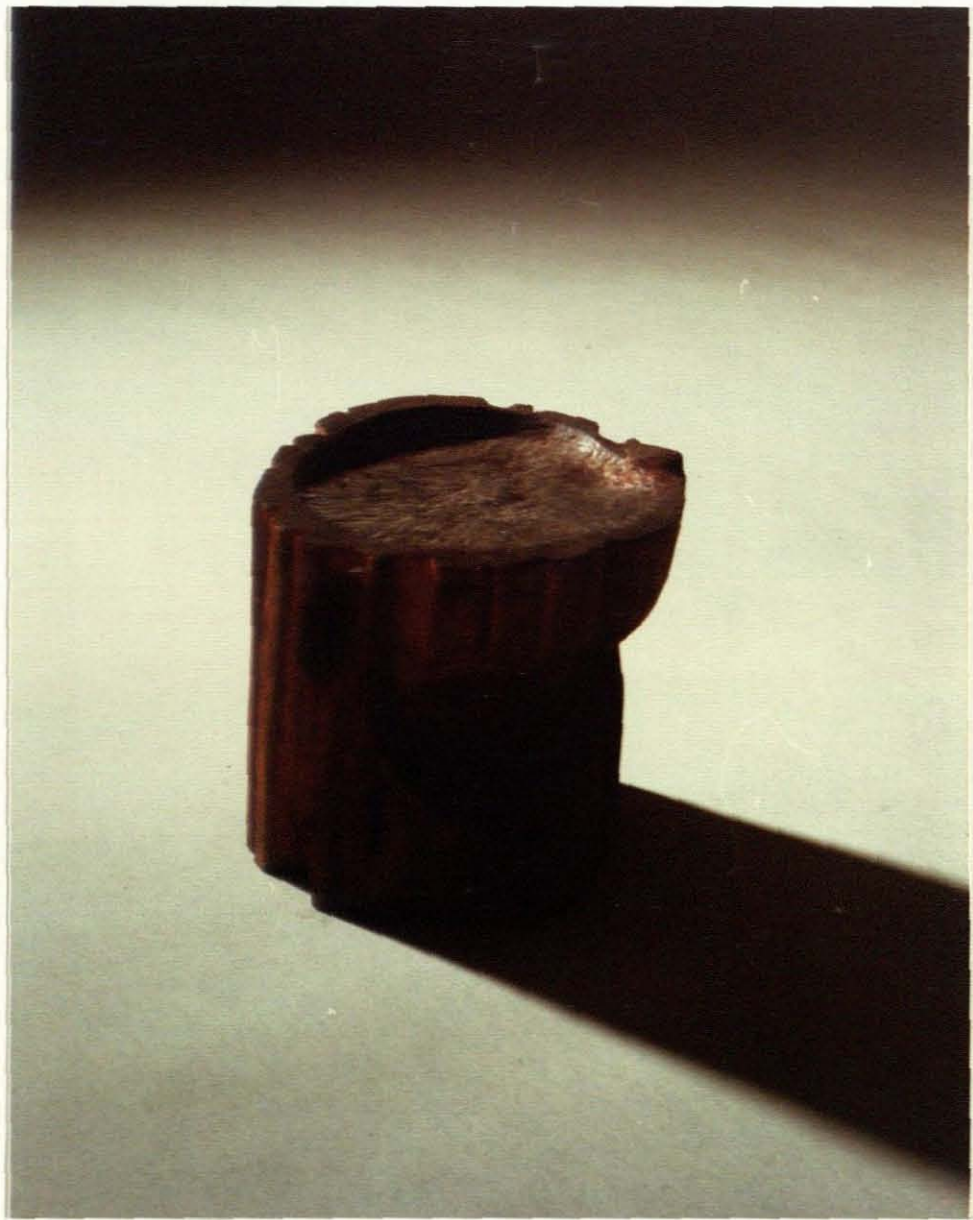
Carved and assembled using glued lapped joints pinned with copper nails.

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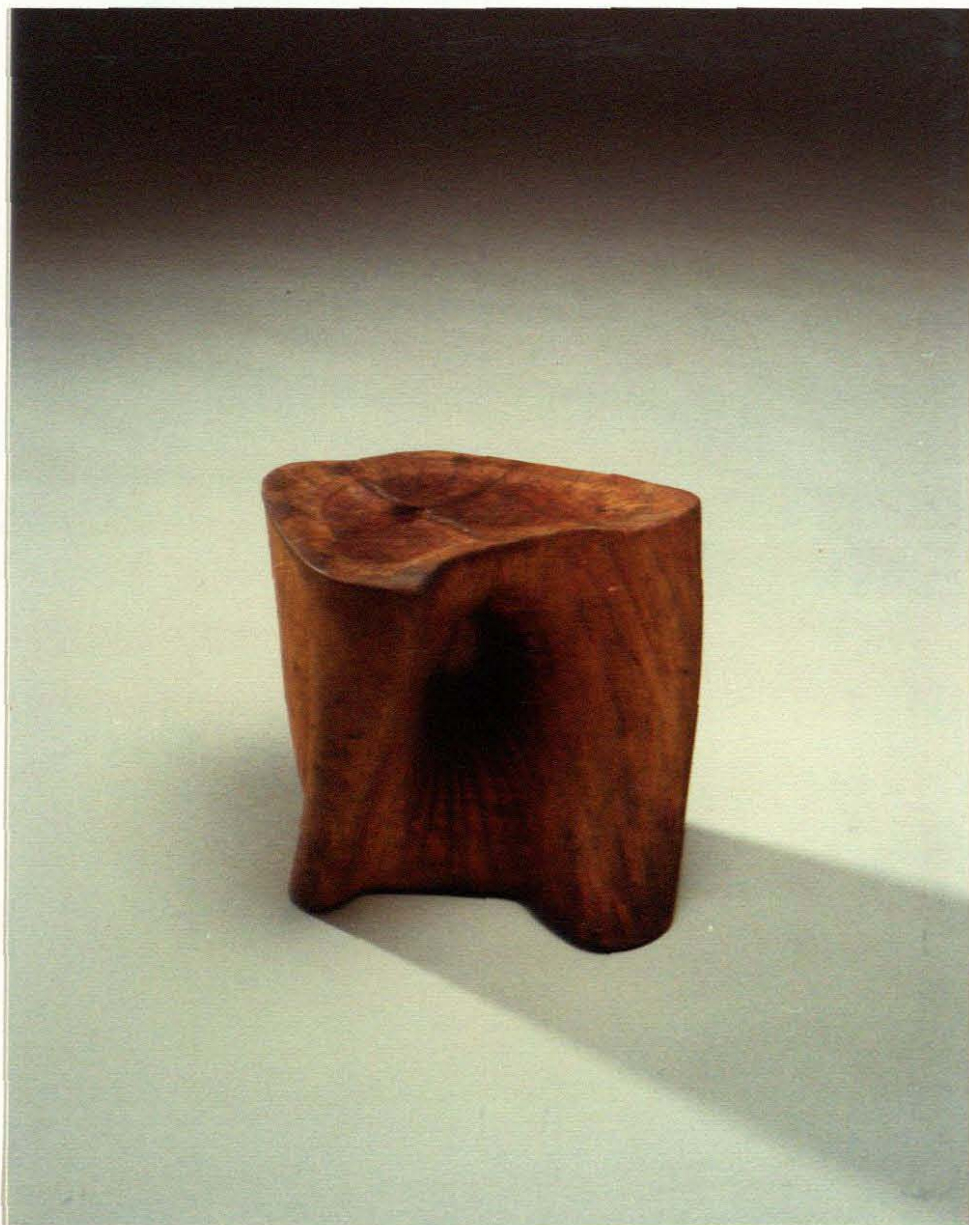
16. Occasional table. Stock South-African Pine timber sections and laminated board. Painted in acrylic.

Carved and assembled using glued and pinned butt joints.

700



Experiment 1



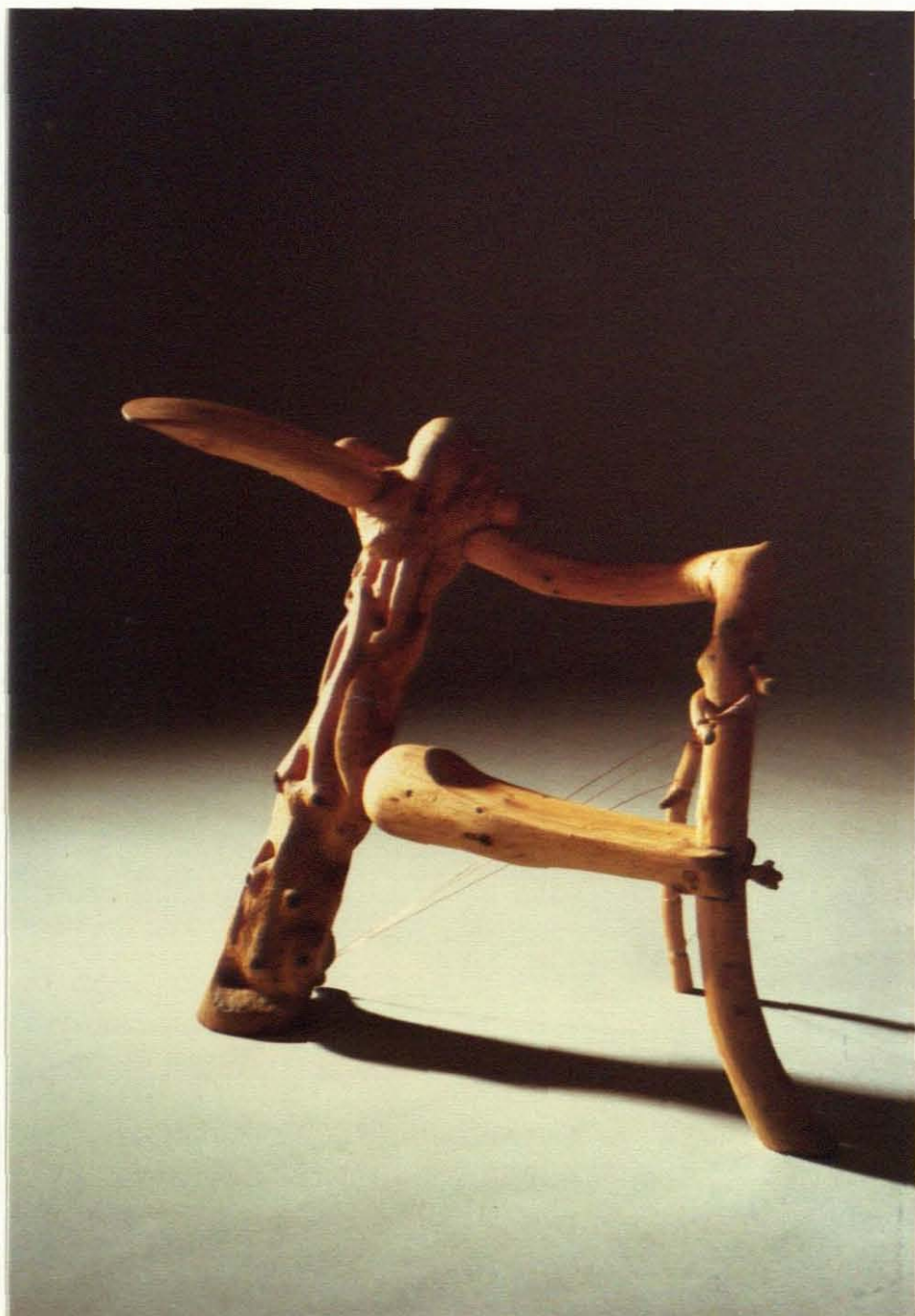
Experiment 2



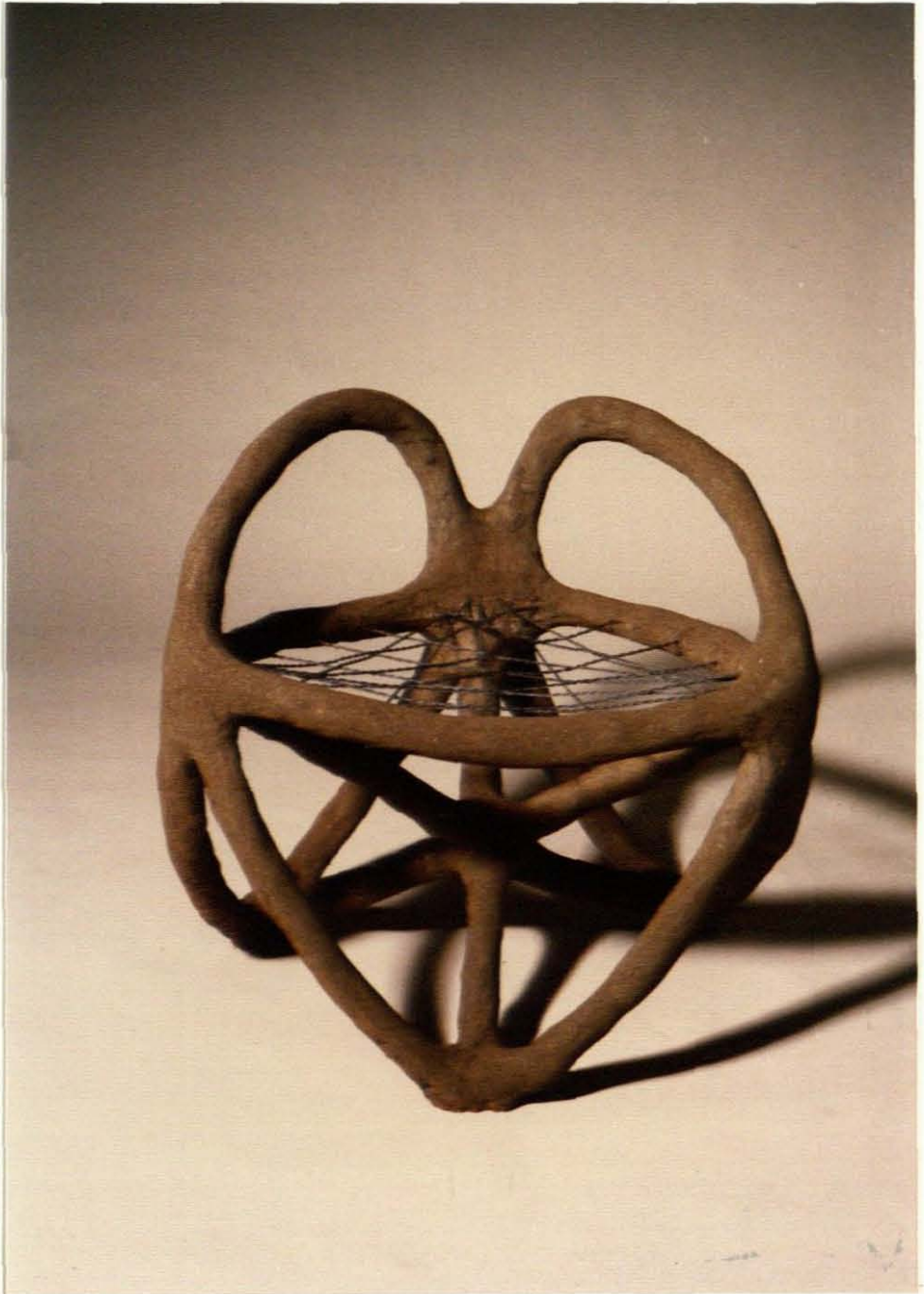
Experiment 3



Experiment 4



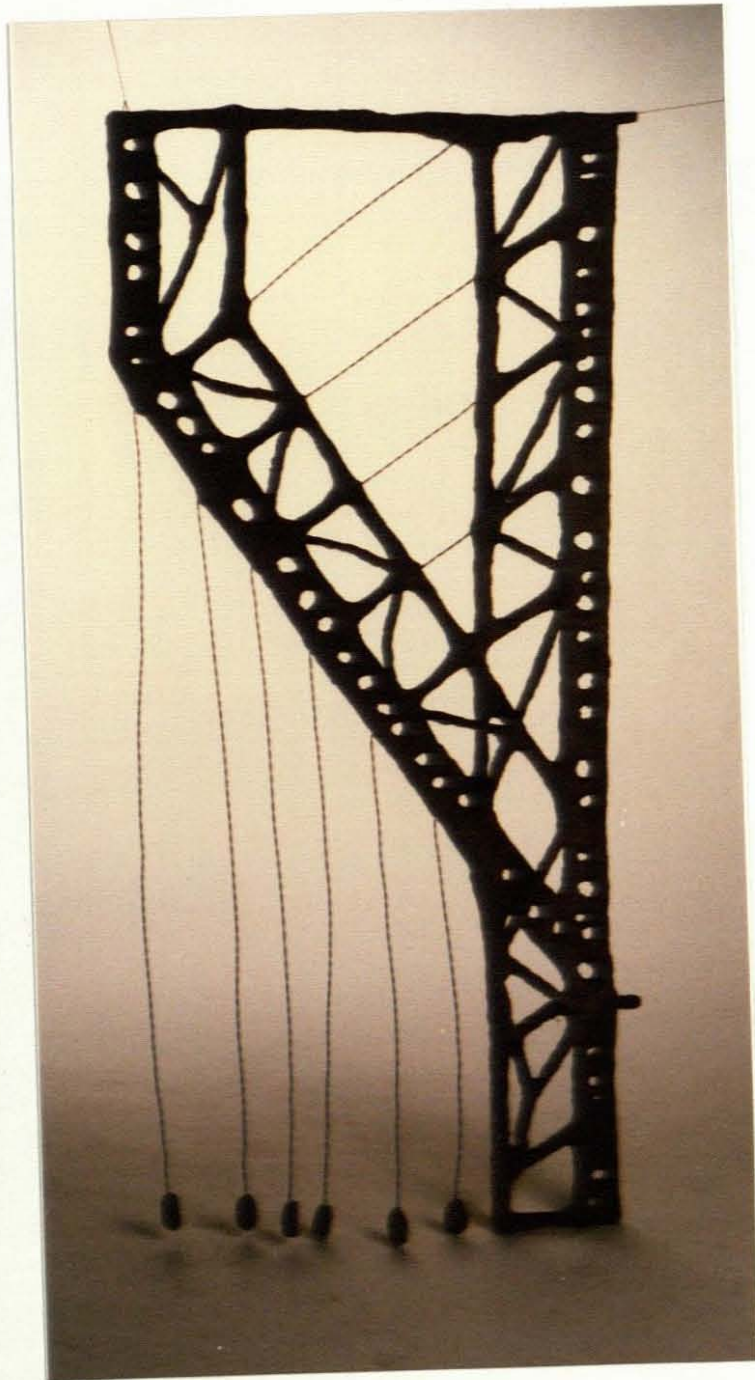
Experiment 5



Experiment 6



Experiment 7



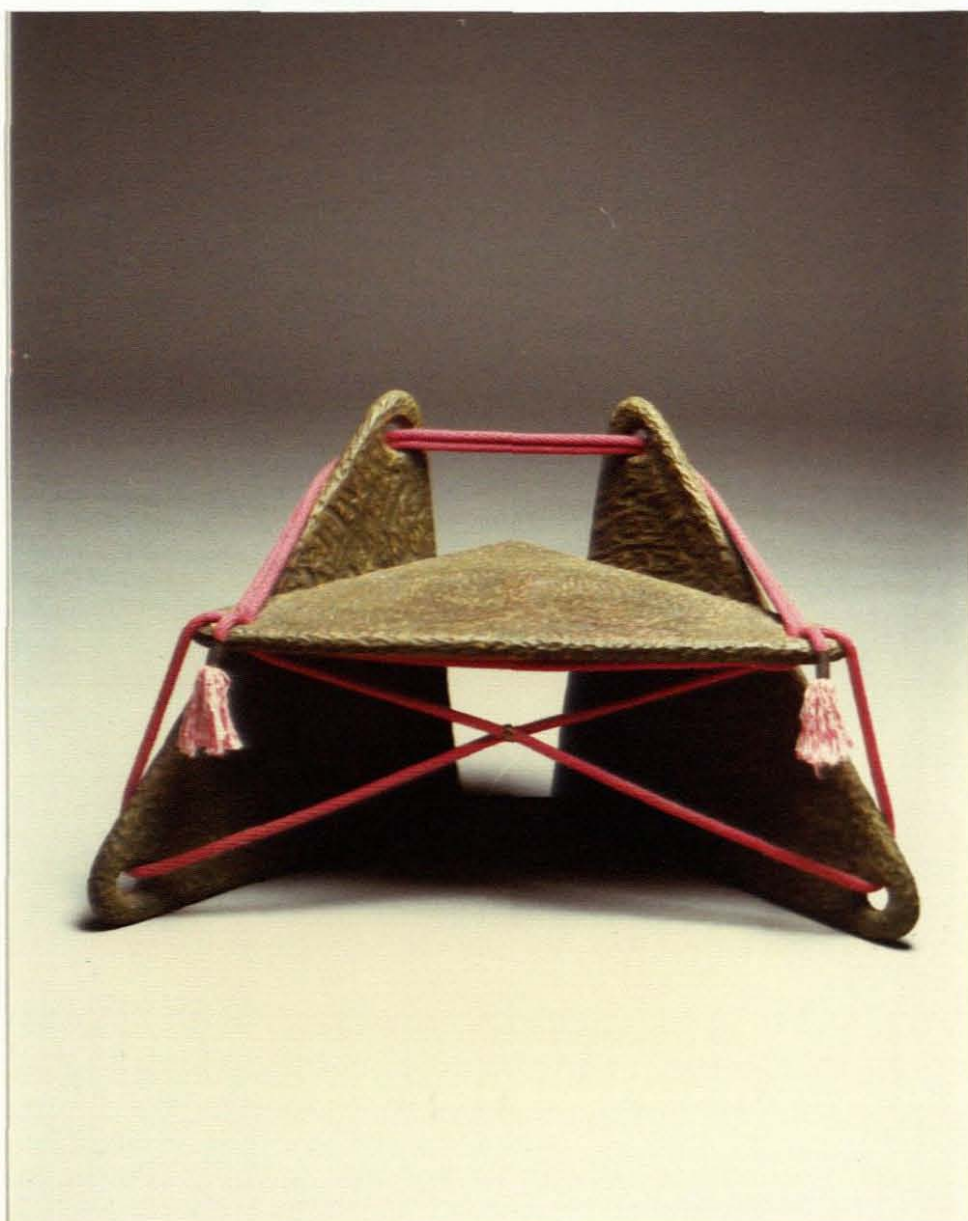
Experiment 8



Experiment 9



Experiment 10



Experiment 11



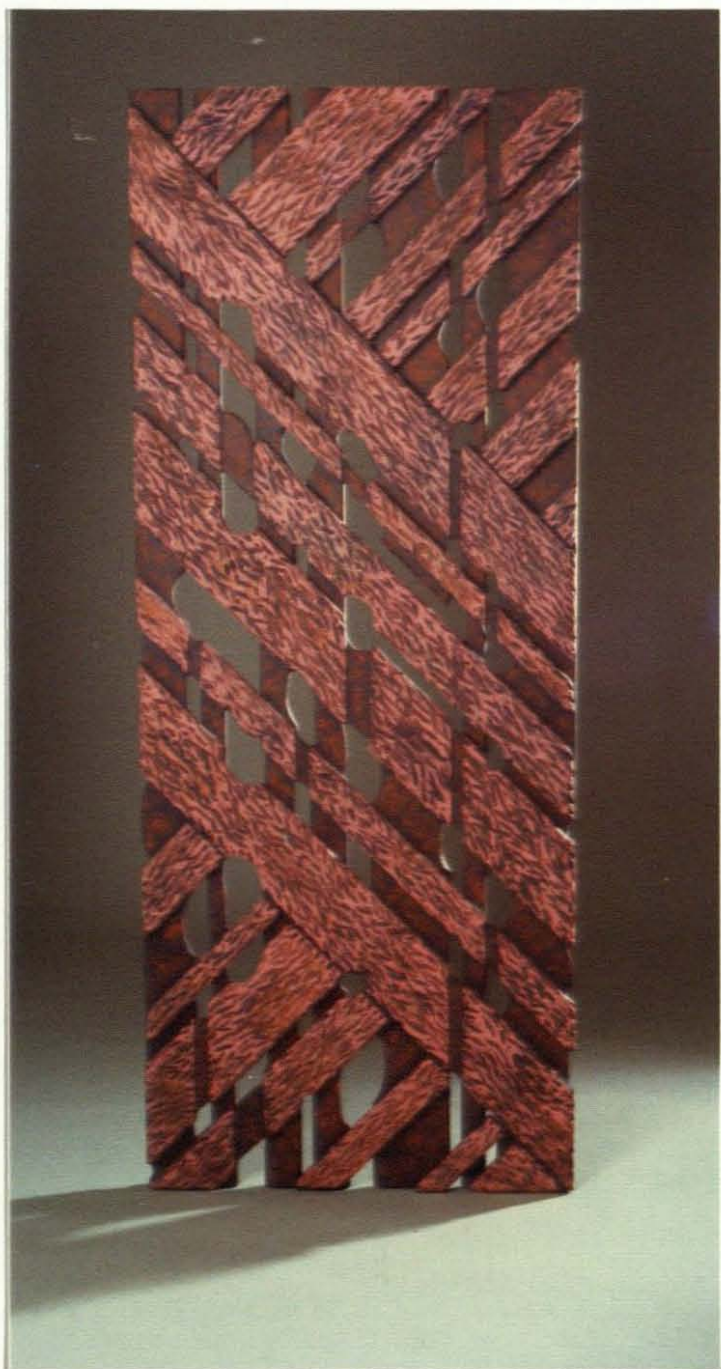
Experiment 12



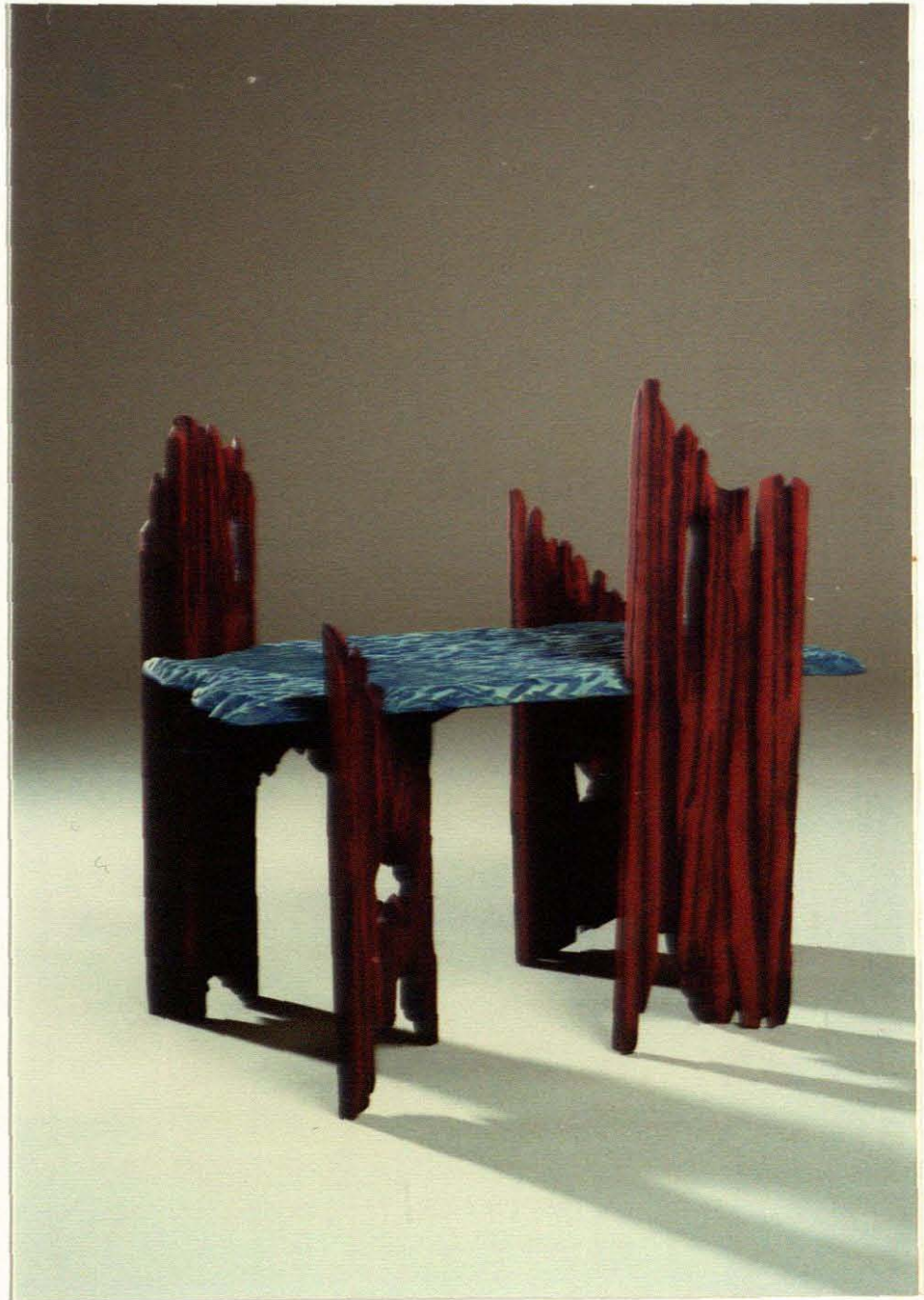
Experiment 13



Experiment 14



Experiment 15



Experiment 16

5. CONCLUSION

To present a single conclusion from this topic is not possible. A synthesis of the arguments propounded cannot lead to a single fixed point as the essence of the study is concerned with change. Since the original concept and even during the period of writing the dissertation considerable advances have occurred in local craft. Being an ongoing situation this creates the problem of having to experience from within, as opposed to viewing in a more historical context a specific period contained by a convenient point of termination.

In this state of transition it is possible only to propose a direction, one that will be subjected to indeterminable factors which may affect its course.

5.1 PROMOTION OF CRAFT

If craft is to be an influence on design it must be active and it must be evident. Notwithstanding the cultural social and economic changes which will be shaping the overall circumstance in South Africa, if craft is to be effective it will have to make a visual demonstration of

its idealism. Ruskin may have been the prophet of the Arts and Crafts Movement but it was Morris, who though himself a theorist, provided the practical lead upon which others could build.

The previous chapters have described different sectors of local craft which have been identified by Preston-Whyte (Rogerson, 1986:178) and others proposed by myself. But if some meaningful influence is to occur it is the whole spectrum of craft that needs to develop and be encouraged to dispel the image of "handwork" which is commonly accepted.

To discuss this spectrum as a whole, would however lead to an over generalisation. Alternatively to consider the various sectors of craft mentioned above seperately, would not contribute toward a conclusion. The term spectrum provides an analogy which can be drawn upon. It can be described as parts being arranged progressively and culminating in a pole either end, determined by wavelength, but the visual experience of the hues of these poles are closely related. This conveniently describes a means of reviewing the current local craft. At the one

2 pole there are the "community crafts", as they shall be referred to, and the other is represented by the individual "artist-craftsman", which does not imply a lesser artistic contribution by the former, as the analogy of the spectrum shows. By contextualising the many facets of craft referred to in earlier chapters, and discussing the two poles an overall conclusion can be deduced.

4 The "community crafts" broadly indicate those which are produced essentially to provide an income, either as no alternative exists, or as a preference to working under an alternative condition. They usually comprise some degree of repetition work and are generally sold through collective markets.

3 We have a favourable situation in South Africa which could lead to a high standard and a unique style in this area of craft. This could be attributed to two influences that have been discussed earlier but need to be summarised in relation to each other.

6 Firstly the material culture of the indigenous people. Though it has virtually ceased to exist as a result of

social change, and no longer fulfills its original need, there was in its production a deep and honest meaning, or as Grossert (1978:ix) says "... if we could consider them as Plato did, as partaking of the perfect form of their prototypes in the ideal world of Being, of which the philosophers were permitted to gain glimpses". This ideal could be said to be comparable with that of Ruskin and Morris, who were striving to revive in their society that which existed so naturally in these southern Africa cultures. Where they were looking back over several centuries for their source, we are able to draw from the immediate past in terms of the craft processes. It is from this well of material culture that the energy can be tapped to complement the second factor or other root of craft.

This is the revival of the crafts which have come through the idealism of the Arts and Crafts Movement and from those European countries, Scandinavia in particular, whose crafts survived the Industrial Revolution. These are the crafts which have been referred to previously as European based.

When these two sources merge, as has happened at the E.L.C. Centre at Rorkes Drift to cite an example, the successful results can be seen. So far, this acculturation has been seen in a few crafts but others need to be investigated.

One such possibility could be the introduction of furniture on a home industry basis. From the experience gained in the practical work it was found that if certain rudimentary items were provided, a variety of results could be achieved by creatively utilising a limited number of hand tools. Based upon this experiment it is proposed that if the traditional skills of wood working and carving could be revived and encouraged it would not be necessary for craftsmen to undergo training in the use of machines. Small units focussed on a "processing centre" could be instituted on a co-operative basis. Here design concepts would need to be established to allow the machining of basic components by a few trained artisans. The components could be distributed to the craftsmen who would in turn provide the individual creative input of shaping and carving then completing the product or returning it to the centre for final assembly.

As witnessed in the "cottage furniture" market there is a growing demand for "personalised" furniture. The appeal of handwork in these renovated pieces could indicate that craft would also satisfy this need.

At the other end of the craft spectrum is the artist-craftsman. What is meant by this person is one whose work by definition is a craft as it performs a practical function, but who works more in the manner of the artist or sculptor. Less concerned with perfecting a technique which is repeated he rather strives to make a statement with each new piece.

There is not as yet much evidence of this form of craft in South Africa with the exception of jewellery, specific ceramics and more recently fibre art. Some furniture is being attempted indicated in 5 of chapter 3 but the concept of "one off" pieces being sold through exhibitons in art galleries has not been promoted to any extent. South Africa is several years behind other countries of the Western World in this regard. Australia, a country which may be compared, is found to be far in advance in terms of craft promotion. A National Council has been

operating there since 1971 and its serial publication *Craft Australia* promotes the work of individual craftsmen according to *Craft Australia Year Book 1986*.

Another example which should be mentioned is that of an internationally renowned artist-craftsman of wooden furniture, James Krenov. Born in Siberia he spent his early years in Shanghai and Seattle, finally settling in Sweden where he studied furniture making. His work is exhibited in museums in Sweden and abroad. He has lectured and given workshops in Sweden, Denmark, Canada, Austria, England and the United States. (Krenov, 1981) Despite his reputation, the manner in which he writes indicates he has remained essentially a craftsman.

South Africa has the heritage to produce craftsmen of this calibre, who could achieve the recognition normally reserved for the fine artist. The realisation that craft generally denigrated to a level of a skill could emerge in the same creative process as art, presents possibilities which could have a bearing on design. The chapter on Interior Design states, "Although interior design has been described as a creative activity, the actual time

available in the cycle of a typical design operation for purely creative concentration is minimal".

The designer therefore needs a source from whence to tap a creative flow, which could be from art, but the languages of design and art have become remote from each other. Craft however has many parallels with design. Both share the aim of producing objects for human use, and therefore have a means of communication. Not only for the benefit of design, but for the whole spectrum of craft - the individual artist-craftsman needs to be promoted.

5.2 THE INFLUENCES OF CRAFT ON DESIGN

Apart from some textile and clothing design there is very little direct evidence of the influence of craft on production design in South African as yet and so far as the furniture industry is concerned there has been insufficient craft produced to have any pertinent effect.

It is not an overt or direct influence however which is implied in the title. What is likely to occur will be a subtle infusion of ideas followed by a shift in attitude before there is any visible evidence. Even then it is not anticipated that there could be major changes across a wide front of industry. Market research is the indicator which guides the nature of new products and the greater percentage of the market does not demand improved design, but is concerned rather with price and fashionable dictates.

Craft breaks this pattern and an example was discussed in the introduction where the E.L.C. centre at Rorkes Drift developed products based on the needs of the craftsmen and still created a new market, albeit a small and select one.

*What the
2nd years
were taking
about
Design*

The craft ideal offers a profound message which the forward thinking manufacturer may heed. By adopting some aspects of social value a craft can be modified for profit. For example creating work opportunities by enhancing products through incorporating crafted elements into a production design.

The subtle influences of craft can be seen by drawing on the example of Britain and its reflection of world events. Sparke (1986, Introduction) writes of the "growing dissatisfaction of the Modern Movement" after 1945 and "the myth that 'good design' is synonymous with the machine aesthetic ... the relationship between social change and design change ..." is also discussed and "whether economic necessity, public taste, available technology, or social need came first as causes for design innovation".

These comments are applied to design but they also forecast events relating to craft. Though its official recognition was to come with the formation of the Crafts Council in 1971, which was the culmination of growth over a period of several years, the beginning of the revival

can be traced to circumstances in the mid 1950's. In the aftermath of the Second World War the dominance of the Modern Movement and the machine aesthetic came under question and was challenged by the British historian Reyner Banham. Sparke (1986:51) indicates how he "... pointed out that the Modern Movement protagonists had created a confusion between the meaning of objectivity in mechanical engineering laws and its meaning in the laws of aesthetics, and that the concept of standardisation had been misunderstood in its equation with an ideal rather than a monetary norm ... [and resulted in] the creation of a dominant twentieth-century design aesthetic which was based on fallacy rather than fact".

Banham is referring to design but his criticism of "standardisation" and the "design aesthetic" can be equated with the reaction which re-introduced craft ideals.

Sparke (1986:191) alludes to "... world wide signs in the 1950's of a feeling of disillusion with the social and cultural implications of the marriage between design and manufacturing industry" and goes on to discuss the reaction of the visionaries and authors of "a spate of alarmist literature".

Richard Buckminster Fuller "had examined a number of ways in which technology could be used to serve the needs of men rather than those of industry". The journalist Vance Packard in *The Hidden Persuaders* in 1956 and the *Waste Makers* in 1961 wrote of "... the evils of object obsolescence and consumer manipulation [and] the dangers of U.S. capitalism gone mad ..."

Alvin Toffler in his book *Future Shock* identified similar problems but called it "information overload" and Ralph Nader exposed the physical dangers involved when styling takes precedence over safety. In 1973 Victor Papanek's book *Design for the Real World* tilted at the state of design in the West and called for attention "on the real human problems such as those presented by the handicapped, the Third World, the elderly and the demands of world ecology" "Sparke's" observations here are directed at her subject "Design and Culture in the Twentieth Century" and craft is not discussed, yet all the sentiments expressed provide the motives for craft revival. The design reforms being advocated are those which are inherent in craft, whose renaissance over the last two decades is offering a model for the socially conscious designer.

Aside from the general influence of a craft model, design could be more actively influenced through education. The various specialised courses in the recognised design schools in South Africa are normally preceded by a foundation year or semester, where there is an emphasis on handwork and developing skills in shaping materials. This to some extent embraces craft principles but these are not usually stressed, as "craftsmanship" is still often considered outmoded and inferior to "content" in the work.

Robertson (1961:135 to 136) refers to Walter Gropius' approach in the early period of the Bauhaus 1919 - 1928 where he "believed that the best training for a young designer or architect would have been the old type of apprenticeship to a master-craftsman who had both the aesthetic and practical aspects of his craft at his finger-ends". This may seem somewhat out of date but gains relevance when read in context with a much more recent comment by Reyner Banham that "the human chain of pioneers of the Modern Movement that extends back from Gropius to William Morris, and beyond him to Ruskin, Pugin and William Blake, does not extend forward from Gropius.

The precious vessel of handicraft aesthetics that has been passed from hand to hand, was dropped and broken, and no one has bothered to pick up the pieces" (Naylor, 1980:10). Banham's sentiments reinforce the need for craft to be re-considered as an influence in the training in design schools.

It is not only in the practical areas where the values of craft could be stressed in education, there is also its whole historical significance, which could offer the student a deeper insight into design. The problem is however that craft idealism and the story of the Arts and Crafts Movement is as much a social statement as it is an aesthetic one and it is not easily represented by a clearly defined style.

The student in today's world is confronted by "... the mass domestic design styles that followed rapidly on each other's heels - from stripped pine, to High-Tech, to period revivals, to Post Modernism - all defined themselves in terms of symbolism and life-style rather than function, rational production, or morality" (Sparke, 1986:121). In teaching, the temptation exists to emphasise aspects of design history which capture the

attention of the students of this society by presenting the more visually identifiable and obvious styles of Art Nouveau, Art Deco, International Style, etcetera. Added to this the increasing references to the styles of the forties, fifties, sixties and seventies reflects the state of design, where before the history of a period has formed through the passing of time, it is pillaged by designers in search of fashion to please the mass market. Sparke (1986:121) emphasises how the designer is trapped within the system. "The increasing importance of fashion to design means that all new trends, whether they emerge at street level or in the designer's studio, are open to commercial manipulation." "Styling follows sales" is replacing the purist slogan "form follows function". With this tendency to give greater emphasis to the immediate past in the teaching of history of design, the student is more likely to accept the status quo and perpetuate the emphasis on fashion. It is suggested that if more attention were given to the significance of the idealistic struggle of the craftsmen of last century, the meaning of design as a social responsibility could be imparted to the young designer.

Finally, when craft is practiced as an idealistic pursuit within a society which is experiencing uncertainty through accelerated technological advances it can be said to be a forerunner to design. This occurs as the craftsmen are usually people of romantic disposition who seem to intuitively sense a need for a reaction. This can be seen now and in the Movement of last century. "Ruskin and Morris were the children of history, holding up the present to the judgement of a Romantic past: they sensed an uneasiness in the industrial achievements that was symbolised in the great cities ... but it was the Romantic images of villages and fields and yeomen stock which excited national pride". (Crawford, 1985:12 and 13)

2 In South Africa, if design is to find some national identity as it must if it is to find a place in world markets, there should be greater recognition of the crafts. For it is the craftsmen who are exploring the rich compound of acculturation. As opposed to being drawn into a course of slavishly following a dependence on international technology and trends, they are offering an alternative road. It is the alternative road, similar to the one followed by Morris and the other guildsmen who turned the whole direction of design in the Western World, which could give South Africa its own statement of design.

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