WILLIAM MORRIS AND THE PRE-RAPHAELITES:

REBELS IN ART, POLITICS AND LIFE

Dante Gabriel Rossetti, The Wedding of St George and Princess Sabra, 1857

DR. ADELA ROATCAP

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syllabus, illustrations, notes, bibliography
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"I do not want art for a few, any more than education for a few, or freedom for a few."

William Morris

They were the flower children of the Victorian age — a group of seven art students and fledgling poets who, “...with all the arrogance of youth, decoded to transform the world with Beauty,” — a tall order in squalid, Dickensian England. Whether they succeeded and what is their legacy, is the subject matter of this course. The Pre-Raphaelites influenced designers and architects by arousing interest in medieval design, such as stained-glass and the weaving of tapestries, which led to the establishment of the Arts and Crafts movement headed by William Morris, who wrote: “If I were asked to say what is at once the most important production of Art and the thing most to be longed for, I should answer, A beautiful House; and If I were further asked to name the production next in importance and the thing next to be longed for, I should answer, A beautiful Book.” At San Francisco’s Legion of Honor Museum’s exhibition “Truth and Beauty: The Pre-Raphaelites and the Old Masters” we will see paintings by William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, juxtaposed with the Old Masters which inspired them, such as the Italians Fra Angelico and Pietro Perugino, or the Burgundians — Jan van Eyck and Hans Memling. And — at the Rare Book Room of USF’s Gleason Library, we will see a splendid collection of books printed by William Morris at the Kelmscott Press or illustrated by Pre-Raphaelite artists.

Las Veneers (In Praise of Venus) by Edward Burne-Jones, 1873-75. Oil on canvas, 47 x 71 inches. The Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.
Also known as the ROSSETTI MANUSCRIPT, was bought by Dante Gabriel Rossetti on 30 April 1847. Now in the British Library.

Alexander Gilchrist, LIFE OF WILLIAM BLAKE, "PICTOR IGNOTUS." London: Macmillan, 1863. 2 vols. While Gilchrist knew Blake personally and this is the first biography, the book was finished by Dante Gabriel Rossetti. (Includes a reproduction of “Chaucers Canterbury Pilgrims,” engraved by William Blake in 1810)
THE REVIVAL OF GOTHIC: HORACE WALPOLE'S STRAWBERRY HILL AND WILLIAM MORRIS' RED HOUSE
FROM WILLIAM MORRIS' PREFACE TO JOHN RUSKIN THE NATURE OF GOTHIC

"....the lesson which Ruskin here teaches us is that art is the expression of man's pleasure in labour; that it is possible for man to rejoice in his work, for, strange as it may seem to us to-day, there have been times when he did rejoice in it; and lastly, that unless man's work once again becomes a pleasure to him, the token of which change will be that beauty is once again a natural and necessary accompaniment of productive labour, all but the worthless must toil in pain, and therefore live in pain. So that the result of the thousands of years of man's effort on the earth must be general unhappiness and universal degradation; unhappiness and degradation, the conscious burden of which will grow in proportion to the growth of man's intelligence, knowledge, and power over material nature...If Politics are to be anything else than an empty game, more exciting but less innocent than those which are confessedly games of skill or chance, it is toward this goal of the happiness of labour that they must make....Science has in these latter days made such stupendous strides, and is attended by such a crowd of votaries, many of whom are doubtless single-hearted, and worship in her not the purse of riches and power, but the casket of knowledge, that she seems to need no more than a little humility to temper the insolence of her triumph, which has taught us everything except how to be happy. Man has gained mechanical victory over nature, which in time to come he may be able to enjoy, instead of starving amidst of it. In those days science also may be happy; yet not before the second birth of Art, accompanied by the happiness of labour, has given her rest from the toil of dragging the car of Commerce...it may well be that the human race will never cease striving to solve the problem of the reason for its own existence; yet it seems to me that it may do this in a calmer and more satisfactory mood when it has not to ask the question, Why were we born to be so miserable? but rather, Why were we born to be so happy?"
PAINTING POETRY: ROSSETTI AND DANTE
PAINTING POETRY: ALFRED TENNYSON -- THE LADY OF SHALOTT
PAINTING POETRY: JOHN KEATS -- ISABELLA AND THE POT OF BASIL
PAINTING POETRY: PRE-RAPHAELITES AND WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

John Everett Millais: Ophelia
John Singer Sargent: Ellen Terry as Lady Macbeth
William Holman Hunt: Claudio and Isabella and The Hireling Shepherd
WILLIAM MORRIS AS PAINTER: SAINT GEORGE'S CHEST

EDWARD BURNE-JONES: STAINED GLASS WINDOWS FOR MORRIS & CO
KELMSCOTT PRESS REPRINTS OF WILLIAM CAXTON

1. THE GOLDEN LEGEND. By Jacobus de Voragine, 1892
2. THE RECUYELL OF THE HISTORYES OF TROYE. By Raoul Lefevre., 1892. (First book printed in English, in Bruges, 1473) Frontispiece
3. THE HISTORY OF REYNARD THE FOXE BY WILLIAM CAXTON. 1892
4. THE ORDER OF CHIVALRY, 1893.
WILLIAM MORRIS CALLIGRAPHER AND TRANSLATOR
A TREATISE ON THE ASTROLABE, PROLOGUS. A.D. 1480

For have I seen that a sufficient Astrolabe, as for our orisons, composed after the latitude of Oxonford; upon which, by meditation of this little treaty, I purpose to rehearse a certain number of conclusions pertinently to the same instrument. I see a certain of conclusions, for three causes. The first cause is this: treat it well that all the conclusions that have been learned, or else possibly might be found in one noble instrument as an Astrolabe, be unknowing pertinently to any mortal man in this region, as I suppose. Another cause is this: that sound, in any treatise of the Astrolabe that I have seen, there be some conclusions that were not in all things performen by bibles; & some of them ben to hand to thy tender age of ten year to conserve. This treatise, divided in five parties, will I show thee under full lights rewars & naked words in English; for Latin he causeth not himself to show the whole.

WALTER CRANE ILLUSTRATIONS THE FAERIE QUEEN, 1895 - 1897

IMITATION MAY BE THE MOST SINCERE FORM OF FLATTERY BUT WILLIAM MORRIS WAS NOT AT ALL AMUSED --IN FACT HE WAS FURIOUS.......