



THE FURNITURE HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

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MARGARET JOURDAIN: 'FEW RIVALS AND NO SUPERIOR'

When her will was proved in September 1951, (Emily) Margaret Jourdain left an estate valued at £4813 13s. 8d.¹ Braemar Mansions, the block of flats in Cornwall Gardens where she lived for nearly twenty years, bears no trace of her occupancy, though there is a blue plaque commemorating the tenancy of her domestic partner, the novelist Ivy Compton-Burnett. The *Dictionary of Art Historians* refers to Margaret Jourdain as 'a scholar of eighteenth-century English furniture and decorative arts'.² Her name might never be mentioned in a contemporary course of study of the decorative arts.

Yet Margaret Jourdain did leave a precious legacy within the decorative arts in England: for nearly half-a-century she oversaw the development of its scholarship, the broadening of its accepted parameters and the deepening of the scope of its enquiry. She had a keen eye for detail and her furniture books were some of the first to describe construction methods of eighteenth-century makers. It is, regrettably, a legacy that has frequently been overlooked and that has been largely forgotten. Twenty-first century students of the decorative arts may be unaware that the wealth of knowledge available to them today was not at the disposal of their predecessors and that Margaret Jourdain and her contemporaries developed it over a century ago. The development of scholarship in the decorative arts owes an enormous debt to Margaret Jourdain, to those writers she took as her example and to those who, in turn, took her as their model.

Born in Ashbourne (Derwent), Derbyshire in 1876, the eighth of ten children of cleric Reverend Francis Jourdain, Margaret's maternal grandfather was a Manchester surgeon and her paternal ancestors descended from Huguenots. According to the DNB, as well as

¹ CGPLA Eng. & Wales, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004, online edition 2007).

² *Dictionary of Art Historians*, Lee Sorensen, ed., www.dictionaryofarthistorians.org

being intelligent, Margaret's siblings were 'caustic and highly competitive'.³ Her eldest brother, Francis Charles Robert Jourdain, was a pioneering ornithologist and another brother, Philip Edward Bertrand Jourdain, a historian of mathematics and logic. Eleanor Frances Jourdain, Margaret's eldest sister, became principal of St. Hugh's College, Oxford. In 1887, Margaret herself obtained a 'degree' from Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford. According to author Hilary Spurling, Margaret went up to Oxford on a Hall scholarship, yet attained only a third on leaving, perhaps due to the fact that, even as an undergraduate, Margaret had insisted, 'on following her own road rather than anyone else's'.⁴ The quality of Margaret's degree may be, in any case, a moot point since it was not until late in 1920 that women became eligible for admission as full members of the university and were given the right to take degrees.⁵

Her family's modest finances required that Margaret attain early financial independence. Both of her younger siblings suffered from Friedreich's Ataxia, a hereditary disease causing progressive damage to the nervous system that eventually resulted in their premature deaths. Although she remained living with her widowed mother for twenty years after leaving Oxford, helping to care for Philip and Melicent, Margaret also embarked on a writing career. Her early literary output was varied and included *Pompei, The City, Its Life & Art* by Pierre Gusman, (1900); *Translations of the Odes of Horace* (1904), a collection of prose poems titled *An Outdoor Breviary*, (1909) and *Diderot's Early Philosophical Works* translated and edited by her in 1916. The eclectic nature of this early work indicates the broad nature of Margaret's classical education and the wide range of her interests.

Written in three volumes during the period 1924–27 by the pioneering furniture historian Percy Macquoid and Ralph Edwards, later Keeper of the Department of Woodwork at the Victoria and Albert Museum, *The Dictionary of English Furniture* is an important book in the history of English furniture writing; the number of contributions made to it by Margaret Jourdain signified her rising importance in the world of English furniture. Her signed contributions included work on everything from chimney furniture to window curtains to the work of English architects William Kent and James Wyatt. As an original contributor to the *Dictionary*, Jourdain took her place among such well known and respected furniture scholars as Oliver Brickett (writer of the first book on Chippendale, published by Country Life Limited),⁶ Francis W. Galpin, Ingleson C. Goodison, John Seymour Lindsay,



Fig. 1 Margaret Jourdain as a young woman

³ James Lees-Milne, rev. Hilary Spurling, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: 2004, online edition, 2007).

⁴ Hilary Spurling, *Ivy: The Life of I. Compton-Burnett* (London, 1974), p. 319.

⁵ www.ox.ac.uk/...university/...oxford/women_at_oxford/index.html/ (Oxford, 2011).

⁶ John Cornforth, 'Hudson's Choice', *Country Life*, Vol. CXCI (London, June 12th, 1997), p. 139.



Fig. 2 Margaret Jourdain taking tea with her lifelong friend and companion Ivy Compton-Burnett (1942)

W. A. Propert, John C. Rogers, H. Clifford Smith, H. Avray Tipping and W. G. Thomson.⁷ She was the only female contributor.

In considering the world of the decorative arts as it was when Margaret Jourdain was establishing her career, mention must be made of the company, B. T. Batsford Ltd., a leading publisher of works in the decorative arts. According to what Harry Batsford, the company's last managing director said in 1943:

Our longest connection with a woman writer is with Margaret Jourdain. She has done 35 years of serious work for us . . . Miss Jourdain delights in unearthing the names and careers of craftsmen of decoration and furniture in wood, plaster and metal during the 300 years covered by her books.⁸

It seems likely that writing on the subject of textiles gained Margaret Jourdain the opportunity for employment with the London decorating and furnishing firm Lenygon & Co. and it was with the publication of *Decoration in England from 1660 to 1770*, in the autumn of 1914, that Margaret Jourdain moved from being an occasional and specialist writer in the decorative arts to becoming a recognised authority on its English history and development. The firm was paying her a retainer and Miss Jourdain allowed this book to be published under the name Francis Lenygon. Whether she did so out of loyalty to the firm or from recognition of the greater marketing potential of male furniture writers and historians at the time, it was a move she was later to regret. Margaret simultaneously published a complementary volume, entitled *Furniture in England from 1660 to 1760*; it, too, was distributed under the pseudonym Francis Lenygon.

⁷ Ralph Edwards, *The Shorter Dictionary of English Furniture* (London, 1964), preface.

⁸ Hector Bolitho, editor, *A Batsford Century, 1843–1943* (London, 1943), p. 131.

It has recently been suggested that Francis Lenygon was eminently capable of writing the two books, since he had previously published a book in 1909, before officially having become associated with Margaret Jourdain (though it is possible that she also wrote text for Lenygon prior to 1911).⁹ However while it is true Lenygon was *capable* of writing the works under consideration, there is no convincing evidence that he did so, and the writing of their text is much more likely to have been entirely the work of Margaret Jourdain.

In 1922, Margaret Jourdain published a sequel to the Lenygon volumes, titled *English Decoration and Furniture of the Later XVIIIth Century 1760–1820*, this time under her own name. It formed the third volume of the *Library of Decorative Art*, replacing the W. G. Thomson book on tapestry.¹⁰ The last in the four-volume *Library of Decorative Art* series, entitled *English Decoration & Furniture of the Early Renaissance 1500–1650*, was published by B. T. Batsford Ltd. in 1924, under the name of Margaret Jourdain. In 1934, Country Life Ltd. published *Regency Furniture 1795–1820*, a book that helped establish Margaret Jourdain's reputation as a 'furniture expert'. As Ralph Fastnedge wrote in the Foreword to the revised and enlarged fourth edition, published in 1965:

(Margaret Jourdain) had been acknowledged for many years past as a leading authority on English furniture and decoration and had written extensively within that field of study. Regency Furniture was a pioneer study which she revised and enlarged in 1948, and revised again in 1949; and it has remained a classic for more than a quarter of a century.¹¹

In *The Regency Country House: From the Archives of 'Country Life'*, John Martin Robinson claimed it was Margaret Jourdain 'who pioneered the study of Regency furniture' and in another posthumous tribute, written in 1953, her colleague, Ralph Edwards, said:

The list of her books, which appeared at short intervals from before the first world war onwards, is so long as to constitute a small reference library on her chosen themes — a library, moreover, so authoritative that it is not likely to be superseded.¹²

In 1948, Country Life also published what some people consider Margaret Jourdain's identifying work, though not all agree it was her finest. *The Work of William Kent* contained 144 illustrations and an introduction by Christopher Hussey, architectural editor of *Country Life* magazine whose extensive career had been spent considering architecture in the light of its social history (fostered by Hussey's own mentor and predecessor, H. Avray Tipping).

Her growing reputation led to another very important source of income as an advisor on antique furniture. Jourdain did not function as a dealer but rather, she acted as a 'friend' or intermediary, a friend kept on a retainer by many of the wealthy and well connected among her wide acquaintance. Hilary Spurling asserts that:

Her own reputation for disinterested scholarship did not stop her working for Dealers like Acton Surgey or Phillips, obtaining pieces on commission from the trade and placing them with her own wealthy clients ... She generally relied on at least one steady client or patron (the Hon. Mrs Levy or Lady Assheton-Smith, Herman or Derek Patmore or Basil Ionides, for example) whose collections she helped build up and tend.¹³

As well as being a regular contributor to *Country Life* magazine, Margaret Jourdain also wrote for other periodicals and publications related to the fine and the decorative arts, such

⁹ Eleanor Dew, PhD candidate at the Bard Graduate Center, New York.

¹⁰ Dew, op. loc.

¹¹ Margaret Jourdain, *Regency Furniture 1795–1830* (London, 1965), p. 11.

¹² Ralph Edwards, Document obtained from John Hardy at the V & A Furniture Department, July 2011.

¹³ Spurling, op. cit., p. 310.

as *Apollo*, *The Burlington Magazine* and *The Connoisseur*, as well as newspapers and specialist publications. Colleagues as knowledgeable as Ralph Edwards valued Jourdain's opinions. In a posthumous tribute to her written in 1953, Edwards pointed out that although her opinion also was solicited in questions of interior design, her 'approach ... was factual and scholarly rather than visual — strictly an art historian, subjective criticism and the passing of aesthetic judgments was not in her line'.¹⁴

Margaret Jourdain had an indirect connection with the National Trust and its presentation of historic interiors through the prodigious amount of work done for them by John Fowler; a more direct connection came in her friendship with James Lees-Milne. Appointed secretary of the trust's Country House Committee in 1936, Lees-Milne consulted Jourdain on many of his projects, including Polesden Lacey.

Whether or not Margaret Jourdain always succeeded, the point to be made is that she tried very hard to 'get it right'. She was diligent in her research and wide-ranging in her sources. Margaret Jourdain set a standard of scholarship and adopted methodologies that still have relevance today. Moreover, she often had the great advantage of studying furniture and the original records of its manufacture and sale while they were still stored under the same roof. Much of what she recorded for posterity about the decorative arts in England now has been lost forever. Michael Hall commented in *The English Country House: From the Archives of 'Country Life'*, that she 'became one of the founders of English furniture history'.¹⁵ In tribute to her, Ralph Edwards famously said that, 'in her own field ... she had few rivals and no superior'.¹⁶

It is time not only to revisit Margaret Jourdain's twentieth-century contribution to the decorative arts in England ... but also to celebrate it and carry it forward into our own time. Her obituary in *Country Life* said that Miss Jourdain was mourned, 'no less for her integrity and good taste than for her expertise'.¹⁷ The currency of integrity must never be undervalued in any area of scholarship.

Heather Burnet

¹⁴ Jourdain and Rose, *English Furniture, The Georgian Period*, (London), 1953), p. 9.

¹⁵ Michael Hall, *The English Country House: From the Archives of 'Country Life'* (London, 2001), p. 62.

¹⁶ Margaret Jourdain and Fred Rose, op. cit., p. 9.

¹⁷ 'Obituary', *Country Life*, Vol. CIX (London, April 13, 1951), p. 1090.

MAJOR ACCESSIONS TO REPOSITORIES IN 2011 RELATING TO FURNITURE AND INTERIOR DESIGN

LOCAL

Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies: National Association of Decorative & Fine Arts Societies: Chiltern group records incl. minutes, newsletters 1965–2008 (D 281)

Cheshire Archives and Local Studies: National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts Societies, Cheshire: St Peter's Chapel, Tabley House, record of furnishings 2003–10 (D 8032)

East Sussex Record Office: James & Frank Dengate, builders, decorators and undertakers, Sedlescombe: records 1924–48 (ACC 11001)

Glamorgan Archives (formerly Glamorgan Record Office): HM Owen, cabinet maker, Cardiff: business diaries, job notebooks 1964–2001 (D769)

Somerset Heritage Centre: Yatton Local History Society Collection: deeds rel to the Wall family, manor of Yatton, directors' minute book for Wake and Dean Ltd, later Avalon Furniture Co, survey of Yatton, 1821, deeds for cottage at Claverham Cross, day books for Stuckey Bros, butchers, Yatton 1751–1997 (A\ACC)

West Sussex Record Office: Jim Wakefield & Leslie Staniforth, builders and decorators, Shoreham: records c. 1930–79 (Acc 16166)

NATIONAL

Victoria & Albert Museum, Archive of Art and Design: Robin Day, industrial, interior and furniture designer: additional designs and papers incl material by Lucienne Day 1947–2006 (AAD/2011/9); Elisabeth Tomalin, textile designer: papers c. 1930–60 (AAD2011/1)

SPECIAL

Glasgow Women's Library: Margaret Meades Whalley: collection of textiles and wallpaper designs, oral history interview c. 1960–90 (2011–2)

UNIVERSITY

Bangor University, Archives and Special Collections: William Evans, cabinet maker, Bangor: papers 1860–1925 (Bangor 39504)

Oxford University: Bodleian Library, Western Manuscripts: John Stefanidis, interior designer, London: additional files for client projects (6628)

University of Birmingham: Cadbury Research Library: Special Collections: John Hardman & Co. Ltd., artists in stained glass, Birmingham: designs for stained glass windows in churches and other religious buildings 20th cent (MS785)

SUBSCRIPTIONS 2012–13 YEAR

Subscriptions are now due from members who pay annually by cheque or credit/debit card. Members who have already paid by banker's order on 1 July should ignore this request. Members who pay UK tax and have not provided a gift aid declaration are requested to do so. If you are uncertain if payment has already been made please contact the Membership Secretary. No surcharge is being made on subscriptions paid by card.

Dr Brian Austen, Membership Secretary, 1, Mercedes Cottages, St John's Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH16 4EH. Tel/fax 01444 413845. Email brian.austen@zen.co.uk

ANNOUNCEMENTS

FURNITURE HISTORY FOR SALE

A member has kindly donated to the Society a run of *Furniture History* to be sold in aid of Society funds. This consists of Vol IV (1968) to XLVII (2011) inclusive, less volume X (1974) plus the four index volumes and a copy of 'Furniture History: Forty Years On'. The condition is good throughout. If you would like to purchase, make an offer for the run or such volumes as you wish to acquire. All offers will be considered on 30 November. The volumes are currently at Haywards Heath and may be inspected there. The purchaser would need to collect them or pay the cost of carriage.

Contact Brian Austen on brian.austen@zen.co.uk or tel/fax 01444 413845 or by post.

FUTURE SOCIETY EVENTS

NEW EVENTS SECRETARY

The FHS Council is delighted to announce the appointment of Anne-Marie Bannister as the new Events Secretary. Her address is given in the Bookings paragraph of Future Society Events and on the final page under Officers and Council Members in this *Newsletter* and also on the blue Events Booking Form. The Events telephone number will remain the same as in the past, 07775 907390. The email address for Events, is furniturehistorysociety@hotmail.com until further notice.

BOOKINGS

For places on all visits please apply to the Events Secretary, Anne-Marie Bannister, Bricket House, 90 Mount Pleasant Lane, Bricket Wood, St Albans, Herts, AL2 3XD (Tel: 07775 907390) enclosing a separate cheque and separate stamped addressed envelope for each event using the enclosed booking form. Some advance event information (including week-ends) will be available by email, please send your email address with your application to events@furniturehistorysociety.org

Applications should only be made by members who intend to take part in the whole programme. No one can apply for more than one place unless they hold a joint membership, and each applicant should be identified by name. If you wish to be placed on the waiting list, please enclose a telephone number and email address where you can be reached. Please note that a closing date for applications for all visits is printed in the *Newsletter*. Applications made after the closing date will be accepted only if space is still available.

CANCELLATIONS

Please note that no refunds will be given for cancellations for occasional visits costing £10.00 or less. In all other cases, cancellations will be accepted up to seven days before the date of a visit, but refunds will be subject to a £10.00 deduction for administrative costs. Separate arrangements are made for study weekends and foreign tours and terms are clearly stated on the printed details in each case.

N.B. PLEASE REMEMBER TO SEND SUFFICIENT STAMPED, SELF-ADDRESSED ENVELOPES FOR ALL APPLICATIONS, INCLUDING REQUESTS FOR DETAILS OF FOREIGN TOURS AND STUDY WEEKENDS

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND WORKS IN PROGRESS TALKS

Saturday 24th November 2012

East India Club, 16 St James's Square, London SW1Y 4LH
(Men are required to wear jacket and tie)

- 10.30 am Coffee/Tea on arrival
- 11.00 am Furniture History Society Annual General Meeting
- 11.30 am 50th Anniversary Appeal

Followed by Works in Progress Talks

- 11.40 am Christopher Rowell, Curator of Furniture, The National Trust
- 11.55 am Dr Susan Jenkins, Senior Curator, London & East, English Heritage
- 12.05 pm Christopher Wilk, Keeper, Department of Furniture Textiles & Fashion, The V&A Museum, will update on the Department
- 12.15 pm Joanna Norman, Department of Furniture Textiles & Fashion, The V&A Museum will update on the Europe 1600–1800 Gallery
- 12.25 pm Rufus Bird, Deputy Surveyor of the Queen's Works of Art, The Royal Collection
- 12.40 pm Dr John Martin Robinson — Recent Works at Wilton House
- 1.15 pm Close and Lunch

Please inform the Events Secretary if you will be attending. Lunch (optional) to include a glass of wine (£20 per head) Lunch must be pre-booked with the FHS Events Secretary at least 7 days in advance

THE 37TH ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM OF THE FURNITURE HISTORY SOCIETY

The Wallace Collection, Hertford House, Manchester Square, London W1

Saturday 9 March 2013, 10.00 am – 5.00 pm

The Architect as Furniture Designer

The subject of architects designing furniture, for their own buildings or for commercial sale, was first investigated by Charles Handley-Read in the 1960s in his researches into 19th century architects and interiors. However, there have been few attempts to take a broad look at the subject since the exhibition and associated catalogue by Jill Lever in the RIBA Heinz Gallery in 1982. This symposium brings together a number of distinguished scholars and curators to speak on architects from the 18th century to the 21st century and their moveable contributions to the interiors of their buildings. The sessions will be chaired by Charles Hind, Chief Curator, RIBA Library and Julius Bryant, Keeper of the Word and Image Department, Victoria and Albert Museum.

Dr Susan Weber, Director, Bard Graduate Center, New York
The Furniture of William Kent

Dr John Harris, Curator Emeritus, Drawings Collection, RIBA Library
Sir William Chambers and the French Connection

Dr James Yorke, Furniture Historian
H. W. Inwood (1794–1843), the Erectheion and the Grecian furniture of St Pancras Church

Max Donnelly, Curator of 19th Century Furniture, Victoria and Albert Museum
John Pollard Seddon and the Medieval Court of 1862

Matthew Williams, Curator, Cardiff Castle

William Burges and the Marquess of Bute — the furniture at Cardiff Castle and Castell Coch

Dr Irena Murray, Sir Banister Fletcher Director and Research Director, British Architectural Library

Modern Movement Furniture in Central Europe between the two World Wars

Dr Alan Powers, School of Architecture, Design and Construction, University of Greenwich
The furniture of Raymond Erith (1904–73)

Abraham Thomas, Curator of Designs, Victoria and Albert Museum

Contemporary Architects and Limited Edition Furniture

Tickets must be purchased in advance and early booking is recommended.

Fee: £40 for FHS and RIBA members (£35 for FHS / RIBA student members and FHS / RIBA OAP's)

All non-members £45. Ticket price includes morning coffee and afternoon tea.

A light lunch will be available for FHS members in the Meeting Room at the Wallace Collection at a cost of £20.00 to include a glass of wine. Tickets for lunch must be purchased at least 7 days in advance from the Events Secretary. The Wallace Collection Restaurant will be open for bookings (Tel: 0207 563 9505) and there are plenty of local cafes / restaurants.

All ticket bookings must be made via the Events Secretary, email: furniturehistorysociety@hotmail.com tel. 07775 907390

GRANT ASSISTED EVENT FOR 'EARLY STAGE CAREER DEVELOPMENT' FHS MEMBERS

TEFAF MAASTRICHT FAIR, VISIT FRIDAY 22 – SATURDAY 23 MARCH 2013

The Oliver Ford Trust, as part of its remit to promote scholarship for young people, is organising an intensive specialised visit to the world renowned Fair, through the Tom Ingram Memorial Fund (FHS Grants). The group of a maximum of four participants will be led in their study of the furniture by Leela Meinertas, Curator in the Department of Furniture Textiles & Fashion, Victoria and Albert Museum. There will be 1½ days at the Fair for close examination and discussion of the exceptional furniture being exhibited, meeting exhibitors and general discussions about the current market. Part and full grants will be available for the cost of travel by train to Maastricht from London on early Friday morning returning Saturday evening, meals and one night's accommodation (the full cost being £220).

Applications are invited from junior museum/heritage curators. Those who are interested in participating in this visit should apply to the FHS Grants Secretary, Clarissa Ward, email grantsfhs@gmail.com, for an application form. This should be completed and submitted, with Curriculum Vitae and a note (400 words approx.) outlining professional and academic career development benefits envisaged by the applicant. Applications should be submitted by 12 December 2012, will be considered by the FHS Grants Committee, and successful individuals notified by 12 January 2013.

EXHIBITIONS AND LECTURES

Please note that the following are not organised by the Furniture History Society. Information/booking instructions can be found under individual items.

SECRET SPLENDOUR: THE HIDDEN WORLD OF BAROQUE CABINETS Exhibition

27 October 2012 to 6 January 2013

The Holburne Museum, Bath

This theatrical exhibition casts new light on some of the most magnificent furniture ever made. Made from a wide variety of rare and exotic materials including ivory, tortoiseshell, pietra dura and silver, cabinets-on-stands were one of the great status symbols of the seventeenth century. Their outer doors open to reveal exquisite interiors, originally designed to impress only the most privileged of guests. For the first time, a splendid array



*Cabinet-on-stand (detail), Dutch, oak and walnut
with marquetry of various woods, c.1670
© The Holburne Museum, Bath.*



of cabinets from the V&A Museum, Corsham Court and the Holburne Museum will be displayed fully open to enable visitors to see their extraordinary interiors, an experience formerly reserved for a select few.

The Witcombe Cabinet, English, japanned and silvered wood, c.1697 © The Holburne Museum, Bath.

WOOD INSIDE AND OUT — Lecture

22 November 2012, 7.00 pm, Economic Botany Collection, Kew

Peter Gasson offers a fascinating insight into wood, illustrated with timber samples, photographs and microscope images. He will explain what wood is and how trees produce it, from familiar native species to tropical timbers. He will also look at the importance of Kew's research into wood.

£5

See below for booking instructions

FROM TIMBER TO TREEN: USEFUL WOODS AT KEW'S ECONOMIC BOTANY COLLECTION — Lecture

22 January 2013, 7.00 pm, Economic Botany Collection, Kew

The Economic Botany Collection contains one of the world's largest collections of timbers and wooden objects. Its curator, Mark Nesbitt, will show you some of its amazing treasures, ranging from ancient Egyptian woodwork to Victorian furniture.

£5

For both of the above lectures, booking is essential, call 020 8332 5626 or email adulted@kew.org or go to <http://www.kew.org/visit-kew-gardens/whats-on/events-calendar/talks-courses/index.htm>

REQUESTS FOR HELP AND INFORMATION

Heather Burnet is continuing her research on Margaret Jourdain and is seeking information on her work and her life. If you have documents or insights that might be helpful, kindly contact Heather at haburnet@gmail.com

BOOK REVIEWS

Suggestions for future reviews and publishers' review copies should be sent to Dr Reinier Baarsen, Reviews Editor, Rijksmuseum, PO Box 74888, 1070 DN Amsterdam, The Netherlands, tel. 00-31-20-6747220. E-mail: r.baarsen@rijksmuseum.nl .

Françoise Bigot du Mesnil du Buisson and Etienne du Mesnil du Buisson, *Serrurier-Bovy, Un créateur précurseur 1858–1910* (Dijon: Editions Faton, 2008), 299 pp., 250 col. illus., ISBN 978-2-87844-109-3, € 97.

The publication of this monograph on Gustave Serrurier, the Belgian art nouveau architect and designer of interiors and furniture, came as something of a surprise, following, as it does, by only eight years on the book written on the same subject by Jacques-Grégoire Watelet (Éditions du Perron), the leading authority on the work of Serrurier since the 1970s. Watelet's monography provides a well-documented survey of the work of the artist from Liège. What might the new publication's added value be?

The book is based on the doctoral theses defended by its authors at the Université de Versailles Saint-Quentin en Yvelines in 2004 and 2006. In the introduction they immediately state in which respect their studies differ from Watelet's work. Unlike Watelet, they do not seek to present Serrurier-Bovy as an art nouveau artist, but as a precursor of modern design. This is doomed to be an idle attempt.

The first part of the book consists of a relatively brief biography of the artist. Trained as an architect, in 1888 he was more or less forced to join the decorating firm of his wife, Maria Bovy — hence Serrurier-Bovy. In 1894 and 1895 he participated in the exhibitions of *La libre esthétique*. As the firm continued to expand, it entered into partnership with the French architect René Dulong in 1903, selling its products internationally, through shops in Paris, Nice and The Hague, under the imprint Serrurier & C^{ie}.

The second part attempts to analyse the various influences and ideological principles underlying Serrurier's work. The third and largest section, devoted to his furniture, provides a profusely illustrated catalogue, accompanied by useful commentaries. The fourth and last section deals with Serrurier's architecture and interiors. The book more or less covers the same ground as Watelet's monography, but because of its structure some aspects of the subject are given more emphasis than others.

The second part, *Les idées, Une pensée d'avant-garde*, differs most clearly from what has previously been published about the artist. Here the authors' central idea is elucidated: Gustave Serrurier was a true precursor of modern design, a visionary in his intellectual approach. In order to substantiate this claim, the influence of the Arts and Crafts movement and of japonism is discussed, and Serrurier's rationalism and social feeling are identified as his leading principles. Although the argument is presented logically and well-supported by documentation, it fails to convince. Many artists of the second half of the nineteenth century were receptive to these same influences, and an entire generation of architects and designers was touched by the rationalism preached by Viollet-le-Duc. A sensitivity to social problems was also wide-spread in the last decades of the nineteenth century, being closely linked with the Arts and Crafts movement. Gustave Serrurier, very much a man of his own time, occupied himself with contemporary ideas and movements. From the background of these perceptions, he was able to distinguish himself and to develop an individual creative imprint. But this did not make him a particularly advanced precursor of modern design.

The word design can have many meanings, and the authors are not clear about their reading of the term. In its broadest sense, it denotes the (artistic) design of any object, of whatever period. By presenting Serrurier as a precursor of design, the authors implicitly

interpret the word as denoting modern, industrial, design. Serrurier obviously strove to create modern designs, and he also ran an industrial firm. There are well-known photographs of the workshops and engine rooms of his enterprise, that give an idea of its large scale. It is a curious omission that these photographs are not reproduced in this book. The authors devote little space to Serrurier's role as an industrialist, although this is an essential aspect of the man. An investigation of this side of his activities could have lifted this book above comparable studies.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Germany pioneered the industrial production of the decorative arts. The German display of works in this category created a sensation at the Universal Exhibition held in Paris in 1900, because of the new principles of production and presentation. It inspired France to re-direct its own production of decorative arts. This was much discussed in the press, and it is impossible that Serrurier, himself prominently present at the exhibition with his enchanting restaurant, *Le Pavillon Bleu*, was unaware of it or that he failed to visit the German section. There was also a great deal of international interest for the opening, in 1901, of the *Künstlerkolonie* in Darmstadt, a prominent member of which was Peter Behrens. In 1907 Behrens was to be one of the founders of the *Deutsche Werkbund*, and he was one of the initiators of industrial design in Germany (AEG). Gustave Serrurier visited the exhibition in Darmstadt and wrote about it. In a pronouncement that is merely based on a quote concerning architecture, the authors of the book state that Darmstadt did not influence Serrurier. However, there are many stylistic similarities between the house Serrurier designed for himself in 1902 and several buildings in the colony in Darmstadt. And, moving beyond issues of style, it can be observed that Serrurier reorganised and expanded his business along modern lines in 1903; moreover, the new displays in the various shops reflected German principles. After 1903 Serrurier's work becomes more rigid, with straight lines predominating. It cannot be imagined that this change was not influenced by contemporary work from Germany.

Although the new monography on Serrurier is worthwhile, it is not the last word on this artist. A new approach and new research are needed to place this artist in an international context and to determine his true historical position.

Werner Adriaenssens

THE OLIVER FORD TRUST AND TOM INGRAM MEMORIAL FUND

In line with one of its roles — the promotion of interior design — the Oliver Ford Trust has generously expressed the desire to sponsor a place on each FHS study weekend or foreign tour. Applicants should either be a student with a particular interest in interiors or a junior museum professional. Application from non FHS members will be considered. Grants will be awarded by the Tom Ingram Fund, to which candidates should apply.

The Tom Ingram Memorial Fund makes grants towards travel and other incidental expenses for the purpose of study or research into the history of furniture (a) whether or not the applicant is a member of the Society; (b) only when the study or research is likely to be of importance in furthering the objectives of the Society; and (c) only when travel could not be undertaken without a grant from the Society. Applications towards the cost of FHS foreign and domestic tours and study weekends are particularly welcome from scholars. Successful applicants are required to acknowledge the assistance of the Fund in any resulting publication and must report back to the FHS Grants Committee on completion of the travel or project. All applications should be addressed to Clarissa Ward, Secretary FHS Grants Committee, 25 Wardo Avenue, London SW6 6RA, grantsfhs@gmail.com, who will also supply application forms for the Tom Ingram Memorial Fund and the Oliver Ford Trust. Please send sae with any request.

The FHS Grants Committee requests that applications for study trips/weekends be made well in advance of the deadline for booking with the FHS Events Secretary — preferably one month before.

COPY DEADLINE

The deadline for receiving material to be published in the next *Newsletter* is 15 December. Copy should be sent, preferably by email, to m.winterbottom@bath.ac.uk or posted to Matthew Winterbottom, The Holburne Museum, Bath BA2 4DB.

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Council members can be contacted through the Events or Membership Secretaries whose details are shown above. Contributors can be contacted through the Newsletter Editor who in the case of this issue is Elizabeth Jamieson at 10 Tarleton Gardens, Forest Hill, London SE23 3XN, tel 0208 699 0310 or email: ea.jamieson@tiscali.co.uk

This issue edited by Elizabeth Jamieson

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