Plate 5: Valerie Kirk
(see page 154) Tapestry, Pineforest Quilt - Applied, Used, Discarded, woven in mixed yarns on a cotton weft in Canberra in 1994. (150 x 90cm)

'The image in the tapestry...has been developed from drawings of the pineforest plantations and areas of native vegetation...I am intrigued by the farming/forestry/building creeping up the hillsides around Canberra. It gives a sense of being part of ongoing pioneering... processes... The overall format is that of a quilt, playing on the idea of the quilt/forest as a covering and looking at women in the domestic environment reshaping fabrics to provide a cover.' Valerie Kirk, artist's statement 1994.

This tapestry brings together a collection of traditions. Trained in Scotland, Valerie Kirk (b1957) settled in Australia in 1987. Remembering a family quilt of Scottish tweed suiting samples, Kirk has integrated into her environmental drawings, motifs from two early quilts in the Powerhouse Museum's collection. The Medallion Quilt, (here with a pine-cone replacing the unusual central shield), was made by Mrs 'Grannie' Brown, from Bowning, NSW in about 1895. The other, with its pattern of triangles, is a 'Wagga' quilt of woollen suiting samples made by Caroline West, in Trundle, NSW in about 1930.
Chapter 2:
Between ‘beautiful and useful’ and ‘form follows function’: art, craft and design ideals to the 1960s

This chapter will briefly identify the history of the separation of ‘art’ from ‘craft’, then consider the background of the early ideals of the contemporary crafts movement. The movement’s sources will be found in the educational and cultural philosophies of both the Arts and Crafts movement of the 19th century (as beautiful and useful) and the development of Modernism (as form follows function) in the early 20th century. In the context of post-war responses to Modernism, the chapter will look particularly at the development of crafts communities and specialist crafts groups that were an expression of a shared philosophy and identity where most were interested in making beautiful and useful utilitarian items in the context of a supportive community.

Introduction
The history of the philosophical separation of ‘art’ from ‘craft’ has had a strong bearing on the values of post-war crafts practitioners and on what was to emerge as an organised international crafts movement in the 1960s.

This history includes changes over time in the status and value placed on the ‘fine’ and ‘useful’ arts and the people who made them; changing relationships between industry and art, the crafts and design; and changing views on the role of the individual in society. The contemporary identity of the crafts has also been affected by the contradictions that occur in reviving traditions while seeking contemporaneity and modernity.

A fundamental issue is the intellectual separation (in Western art) between what we know as the high or fine arts and the useful or decorative arts, including the crafts, and the associated change in their relative status and value. The split between art and craft is commonly acknowledged to have occurred during the Renaissance in the sixteenth century. Before that time artistic work was carried out in much the same way as any other work: by skilled artisans working collectively through guild systems with masters and apprentices. Art tended to be the expression of shared cultural beliefs and crafts guilds ensured among other things, the maintenance of standards and the passing on of traditions, including those of painting and sculpture.

The word ‘art’ in the West, for example, originally meant skill, and was not necessarily associated with intellectual ideas; while ‘craft’ originally meant power, strength and force, and even magic, before it came to mean a ‘calling requiring special skill and knowledge’. Refer Shorter Oxford English Dictionary.
Arnold Hauser contends that from as early as the seventh century B.C. poets had demanded to be recognised as the creators of their works, and thus gained a competitive status over other artists. The courts of ‘commercial princes’ became the cultural centres of the time, and collecting points for works that, contrary to earlier purposes, now had ‘absolutely no magic or healing function to fulfill’. The separation between art and craft came about largely as a result of efforts to redress this earlier distinction: that between the liberal arts (grammar, logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy, and extending to include history, poetry, comedy, tragedy and dancing) and the mechanical arts (meaning any contrivance such as painting, sculpture and the crafts). The term ‘liberal’, said John Houston, ‘suggested freedom in the special sense of independence. This freedom, to study for its own sake, implied the leisure to do so. The liberal arts were the preserve of those who ruled. In that sense they overshadowed those arts which depended on manual labour and commerce.’

The term ‘artist’ was originally used to identify a student of the liberal arts, and only later, the mechanical arts, and remained largely a description for a skilled individual. From the fifteenth century in Italy, a review of classical learning brought scholars, architects and artists further together with rich patrons who were interested in works of allegory and illusion, so ‘those who could meet the intellectual demands of the new relationship... enjoyed an enormous advance in their personal prestige’. The courts, the church and wealthy merchants, who were competing for artists to supply them with artworks and buildings that would give them greater status and distinction, provided a working framework in which artists had an increasing measure of intellectual freedom. The artists who were supported by this patronage, like Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo Buonarotti in the sixteenth century, achieved a status as people who worked with their heads, or intellect, that separated them from those who worked with their hands. Art began to be seen as the expression of independent personalities when these artists began to break from merely inheriting and passing on skills and traditions, started to carry out their own mathematical and anatomical research and were individually identified by their own interpretations of themes. As artists worked less on commissions for a particular patron, so the notion of the individuality of the artist became established. Successful art was perceived to be the result of inborn human genius.

Arnold Hauser points out that up until this time the question of the artist’s social status was of little consequence. Most artists came from the lower classes, and although their skills were highly valued, they had to adapt their work to the needs of the client. ‘From the beginning of the Renaissance,’ he

51 Arnold Hauser The Sociology of Art (1982) 257-8
52 John Houston Image and Idea: a view of Contemporary Ceramics in Britain (1980) 6
53 Houston op cit (1980) 6
54 See, for example E H Gombrich The Story of Art (1972) 218-219
says, 'artists shared the status of craftsmen, but they did not regard it as an honorable one. They begin to join together in new and special sorts of association and gradually transfer the functions of the guilds to the academies which are beginning to develop'.

John Houston observes that our current concept of art became institutionalised with the foundation of the French Academy of Painting and Sculpture in 1648, where eventually, director Charles Lebrun 'directed several hundred craftsmen without having shared their training. Their skills were at his disposal, but only as a means to an end, for these men were no longer artists or craftsmen. Artisan was the new term'. By the eighteenth century, with the increasing division of labour through industrialisation, 'fine art' became further separated from 'craft', and the 'fine artist' separated from society. Modern usage of the term 'artist', where the objective is 'mainly to gratify aesthetic emotions' is documented from 1853.

Many of our contemporary perceptions of the visual arts, crafts, design and industry have their immediate roots in the development of this history into eighteenth and nineteenth century philosophical beliefs on the nature of art and aesthetics, the changing roles of artists and artisans as an effect of the Industrial Revolution of that time and the expectations of both the fine and decorative arts by the new middle class. Almost without exception, as Raymond Williams points out in his analysis of key words in current usage, twentieth century cultural theories of art and aesthetics and the language used to explain them, are linked with developing notions of individuality, personality and uniqueness, which were largely associated with the rise of the nineteenth century merchant middle class and its cultural aspirations of entrepreneurship and ownership.

For example, one of the results of the Industrial Revolution (with the division of labour in many trades, an interest in standardising products, and an increasing attention to technology and mechanical systems) was a decline in the need for and value of hand skills, and a loss of feeling for materials. As well, the division of labour further removed the makers from the designers, who were by now more often industrial manufacturers. Penny Sparke points out how eighteenth century designers and entrepreneurs like furniture designer Thomas Chippendale, pottery manufacturer Josiah Wedgwood, and metal

55Arnold Hauser op cit (1982) 143
56John Houston op cit (1980) 7
57Edward Lucie-Smith The Story of Craft: the Craftsman's Role in Society (1981) chapters 1, 9. Lucie-Smith points out that there have been many earlier examples of division of labour, and industrial processes, but that these had still been based on a hand-made product.
58Refer Roszika Parker and Griselda Pollock, in 'God's Little Artist', in Old Mistresses (1981) 82, quoting the Oxford English Dictionary, which cites F.D. Maurice in Prophets and Kings (1853) as the source.
59Raymond Williams Keywords (1985) 42
60See Edward Lucie-Smith op cit (1981) Chapter 9
manufacturer Thomas Boulton were all pioneers in the production of consumer goods for a growing middle class in Britain.\(^61\) Their factories not only separated the artist/designer from the maker of objects, but also separated the production of goods from their markets. This was in marked contrast to the previous system of home or village crafts production for largely local markets. Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock identify this time as co-incidental with the strengthening of the parallel identification of women with ‘craft’ and men with ‘art’, as part of the social definition of women as dependent, virtuous - and domestic.\(^62\)

The crafts as they developed in Australia in the nineteenth century, reflected these histories. They were practised by both men and women in the ‘making-do’ tradition, through necessity, as they were far from familiar suppliers; and by skilled local tradesmen, such as silversmiths and furniture makers, using imported styles, often adapted to include Australian motifs and to accommodate local materials. While Australia was still very dependent on the factories of England for its supply of domestic and industrial wares, there were some local industries such as industrial potteries and glassworks. As well, what was understood by and expected of knowledge, science, art and industry in the nineteenth century was reflected in the ways in which schools, museums and galleries were organised in Britain and established in Australia, and the ways in which ‘knowledge’ was taught and classified.\(^63\)

Throughout design history from this time, which includes the story of ‘crafts revivals’ as a resistance to industrial development, Penny Sparke identifies a number of continuing sub-themes, ‘among them the changing nature of the designer, the vexed question of mass culture and taste, developments in technology, and the influence of design reform’.\(^64\)

The influence of efforts to redress social and industrial divisions in Britain and the United States also reached Australia by the early twentieth century through various strands of democratic and utopian philosophy. The immediate precursors of related design influence, not only on Australians at this time, but also on what was to be the contemporary crafts movement fifty years later, were the ideals of the nineteenth century British design reformers, the Arts and Crafts movement from the 1880s and the development of early twentieth century Modernism in art and architecture.

\(^61\) Penny Sparke, *Design in Context* (1987) 11

\(^62\) Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, ibid (1981) 82-83

\(^63\) See Richard While, *Inventing Australia* (1981) 59-62, for his observations on the development of cultural institutions, from British models, that were set up to provide a moral education for a politically democratic, culturally materialistic society that was following in the footsteps of the United States.

\(^64\) Penny Sparke, op cit (1987) 8
Chapter 2: Between ‘beautiful and useful’ and ‘form follows function’

A precursor of ideals: the Arts and Crafts movement

Design reform

From 1851, following the first Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations, in London, large exhibitions of the products of art and industry that combined the use of natural resources with the application of industrial skill and design, became very popular, both in the United Kingdom and its many colonial outposts (such as in Sydney in 1879 and Melbourne in 1880), and in Europe and North America. But by the mid-nineteenth century the British system of manufacturing, from which Australia derived its model for education and aesthetic taste, had come under fire from a number of sources.

One source of criticism was the work of liberal reformers, who, believing in education and the potential of human nature to do good, embarked on programs of political and social reform to change working conditions. Their programs took practical effect in some of the ‘new’ countries, such as Australia, New Zealand and America, which were considered to be social laboratories, even before they did in Britain. The development of socialist thought centred around Karl Marx, who moved from France to England in 1849, was also influential at this time. His perception of a ‘fundamental crisis in modern society’ and his ideas for resolving it, provided ideas that have since influenced almost all areas of Western intellectual life.

At the same time, rapid developments in industry had resulted in what architect Augustus Pugin described as ‘a confused jumble of styles and symbols borrowed from all ages and periods’. ‘There was a consensus,’ said Penny Sparke, ‘among those individuals who sought to reform the design standards of the mid-nineteenth century that, as a result of both the increased level of production and the emergence of new classes of consumers, the taste of the nation as a whole was in a state of decline.’ Neil McKendrick also noted of this time that: ‘Novelty, new fangledness, must be the matters of excitement for an aggressive commercial and capitalist world: ever increasing profit is not made in a world of traditional crafts and stable fashions.’

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65 Reformers included Jeremy Bentham, Thomas Carlyle, Matthew Arnold and John Stuart Mill.
66 Richard White op cit (1981) 50, 86
67 Marx believed that human beings create their world through labour, but that in a class society they are alienated by ‘the division of labour, private property and the capitalist mode of production in which the worker loses both the product of his labour and his sense of his own productivity, following the expropriation of both by capital’. Raymond Williams op cit (1985) 35
68 See Eugene Kamenka in Malcolm Long (ed) Marx and Beyond (1973) 10
70 Penny Sparke op cit (1987) 58
People like Henry Cole, founder of Summerly's Art Manufactures in England in 1847,72 were especially critical of what they saw as the shoddiness and lack of design in British manufactured goods, particularly those displayed in the first Great Exhibition of 1851. Cole believed the solution lay in education, and the programs he and his followers set up in schools were supported by a stream of books and magazines on design and decoration. It was in this framework that from 1864 the National Art Training School in South Kensington, London, later the Royal College of Art, organised its courses, which were to be of such influence on Australians. Gillian Naylor observes however, that in spite their reforming zeal, the education programs in the design schools became obsessed with decoration rather than form, established few valid links with industry and had little understanding of manufacturing processes, so they largely failed to achieve their aims.73 Herbert Read, writing in the 1930s, described them as having moved in an 'unreal world of taste, divorced from any connection with the tools, the processes and the materials of manufacture'.74

Meanwhile, architect Augustus Pugin's solution in the 1830s and 1840s had been to seek to revive Gothic ideals, where he insisted not only on 'integrity of design, but also on integrity of construction'.75 Historian Edward Lucie-Smith considers that these views placed Pugin at the parting of the ways between contemporary industrial design and the crafts movement as we know it today. Philosopher John Ruskin made his assessment of design reform ideals in the context of social concerns. Through his influential writing, from around the 1850s, Ruskin led the way in rejecting neoclassical or 'pagan' architecture and ornament and the deceit of using one material to represent another, and advocated that works should show that they had been made by human hand by showing the individuality of imperfection. Rather than reducing standards, he believed this would lead to a new aesthetic through celebrating the dignity of labour.

William Morris and his followers
The writings of Ruskin and the development of socialist thought, combined with the Pre-Raphaelite art movement which renewed an interest in medieval art as an alternative to the academies, all influenced designer William Morris. His ideals and example provided the stimulus for the Arts and Crafts movement, dozens of guilds and societies, and practices and philosophies that extend into the present day. Morris established 'the Firm' of Morris, Marshall, Faulkener and Co. in 1861, and its furniture, textiles, wallpaper, stained glass, metal and glassware, and tiles were commissioned extensively - by rich clients

72Henry Cole was also head of the Schools of Design in Britain for twenty-one years, and founder of what became the Victoria and Albert Museum.
73 See an argument to this effect by Gillian Naylor The Arts and Crafts Movement (1971) 22
74Cited from unidentified source in Penny Sparke op cit (1987) 62
75Edward Lucie-Smith op cit (1981) 208
- throughout the next decades. The principles he espoused, as Caroline Miley summarised:

*... included a reliance on manual and traditional methods of manufacture; a desire to express, rather than conceal, the construction of an object; faithfulness to the material of which an object is made; avoidance of meticulous finish for its own sake, and the use of appropriate motifs drawn from the natural world... The arts, crafts and architecture were complementary, and should be united wherever possible.*

Gillian Naylor further observes that ‘the cardinal principle upon which all his theory rested centred round his conviction that the designer (or architect) must have a personal knowledge of the potentials and limitations of the materials he is working with if he is to produce work of any validity, and such an understanding of the process of design must be learned at first hand.’

*From the late 1870s Morris started to write and lecture about his beliefs: ‘Never forget the material you are working with’, he said:*

*... and try always to use it for what it can do best: if you feel yourself hampered by the material in which you are working, instead of being helped by it, you have not so far learned your business... it is the pleasure of understanding the capabilities of the special material, and using them for suggesting (not imitating) natural beauty and incident, that gives the *raison d’être* for decorative art.*

A. H. Mackmurdo’s Century Guild, formed in 1882, was a younger group that sought to ‘render all branches of art the sphere no longer of the tradesman but of the artist’, and to ‘restore building, decoration, glass painting, pottery, wood-carving and metal to their rightful place beside painting and sculpture’. Mackmurdo was interested in new music and literature, the simplicity of Japanese aesthetics, popular at the time, and new systems of economic reform. A related influential development was designer C.R. Ashbee’s co-operative Guild of Handicraft, which he established in a large house and retail premises in London in 1888. In 1902, when the lease expired, about 150 people transferred to Chipping Camden, where not only did Ashbee envisage that their wide range of crafts would still be practised, but that cultural and physical activities would also be provided for the people from the village.

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76 Caroline Miley *Beautiful and Useful, the Arts and Crafts Movement in Tasmania* (1986) 9

77 Gillian Naylor *op cit* (1971) 104

78 William Morris *Arts and Crafts Essays* (1899, reprinted 1903) 38, cited in Naylor *op cit* (1971) 104

79 Cited, unauthored, in Gillian Naylor *op cit* (1971) 117

80 The philosophy of this community was quite probably the model for Winifred West who, having established Frensham School at Mittagong in New South Wales in 1912, set up the Sturt workshops there along similar lines in 1941.
Of the various groups and guilds that formed as followers of the ideas of Ruskin and Morris, it was the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society (1886)\textsuperscript{81} that had the greatest influence in Britain, and in countries like Australia that had British connections, through what became known as the Arts and Crafts movement. Its effect was felt through its exhibitions, through the example of its products and philosophies in the magazine \textit{Studio}, which was launched in 1893, and its influence in reforming art schools.

At the same time, the Aesthetic movement, that had grown out of the interests of the Pre-Raphaelite artists, ‘existed simultaneously with the Arts and Crafts movement, and shared some of its reforming idealism.’ However its theories were less social than aesthetic; its focus was on fine art and literature; it provided a model for a fashionable way of life for the new middle-class; and it sought ‘to “aestheticise” the environment as a response to what it saw as declining standards of contemporary taste.’\textsuperscript{82} By the time of the Great Exhibition of Art and Art Industry in Paris in 1878, Penny Sparke noted that:

‘Art’ had become a powerful incentive to sales in international markets, and it was generally accepted by the more successful practitioners in the semi-craft industries...that their products should be ‘designed’, and that consultants and specialists [like Morris’s Firm, the Century Guild and the Arts and Crafts designers] should be used for this purpose.\textsuperscript{83}

The terms ‘art-pottery’, ‘art-glass’ and ‘art-metalwork’ became characteristic of this time, and remained ideals in Australia throughout the early decades of the new century. In the ceramics industry, for example, artists were employed as designers and decorators in the manufacturing process. Henry Doulton worked with the Lambeth School of Art in London from 1871, and encouraged artists to decorate salt-glazed stoneware and later painted \textit{faience} wares in the Doulton & Co. factory. At the same time, Doulton’s commissioned their English painters to decorate wares with Australian wildflowers (and no doubt those from other countries), and Australian artists like Lulu Shorter to produce Australian designs for them. Artwares like these became a feature of ceramic industries, and the fashion for painting on ceramic wares spread to amateur china painters from the late 1800s, in Australia often associated with Arts and Crafts societies and Technical College courses.

‘Art’ therefore, was seen as something that could be associated with, or applied to, functional forms to give them, as ‘artwares’, a higher status and value.

\textsuperscript{81}The Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, formed in 1886, was an offshoot of the Art-Workers Guild, and offered an alternative to the Royal Academy and the Institute of British Architects. The term Arts and Crafts was first used in connection with this society.

\textsuperscript{82}Penny Sparke op cit (1987) 71

\textsuperscript{83}Gillian Naylor op cit (1971) 148
The individual and the machine

The Arts and Crafts movement marked a stage in the 'realization that technical progress does not necessarily coincide with the improvement of man's lot.' But it also marked a stage in the development of both the ideal of the artist (craftsperson or designer) as an identified, creative individual, and an aesthetic based on the use of the machine.

When the National Art Training School in South Kensington became the Royal College of Art in 1896, with William Richard Lethaby setting up the school of design within it in 1901, teaching became more craft-workshop-based. It aimed more to produce resourceful people and thoughtful workmanship, than apply the 'rigid application of rule'. But Peter Floud pointed out in a comparison of crafts practice in both 1893 (during the Arts and Crafts movement) and 1953 (the early years of the contemporary crafts movement) that the most unexpected fact to emerge was that, despite the valuing of craftsmanship, the identity of designer and craftsperson, so much an issue later, received little attention in 1893. He observed that it was teachers like Lethaby who 'by first stressing the didactic and therapeutic value of craftwork - paved the way for the present-day belief that craft products have a special value in that they express the individual personality of the maker'.

The craft aesthetic, summarised Gillian Naylor, 'was concerned with fitness and propriety; it demanded that materials and function should determine the design solution', and drew largely on the shapes, forms and colours of nature. 'These assumptions concerning the nature of the design process,' she said:

...were fundamental to nineteenth-century design philosophy, as it developed in England, and they had been formulated long before the Arts and Crafts movement appropriated them and associated them with the especial virtues of handwork. In the early part of the [twentieth] century, however, when a general concern for design standards was first being expressed, such ideals were considered appropriate to both craft and machine production, and, in fact, little attempt was made to distinguish between the two.

By 1905, designer Walter Crane was saying:

The arts and crafts movement has been the best influence upon machine industry during the past ten years...while we have sought to develop handicraft beside it on sound and independent lines, we have succeeded in imparting something of the spirit of craftsmanship to the best kind of machine-work, bridging over the former gulf between machinery and tools, and quickening

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84Gillian Naylor op cit (1971) 7
85Christopher Frayling The Royal College of Art, 150 Years of Art and Design (1987) 71
87Gillian Naylor ibid (1971) 147
machine industry with a new sense of the artistic possibilities that lie within its proper sphere. 88

Designer Christopher Dresser, who died the year before, in 1904, certainly understood the possibilities of links with industry, and successfully designed for industries producing carpets, wallpapers, furniture, metalwork, pottery, glass and textiles. However, lasting links with industry were never really made in Britain for either art or the crafts. As early as 1888, the first of three congresses was held by the National Association for the Advancement of Art and its Application to Industry, established in 1887 to promote the ideals of art in industry, brought together a wide range of interested bodies as diverse as members of the Royal Academy, socialists, scientific colour theorists, practical decorators, industrial villagers, manufacturers, art critics, painters and fine art professors. 89 'One is struck,' said Gillian Naylor:

...by the radicalism, the prescience and sound common sense of many of the proposals. In spite of the existence, on the one hand, of a seemingly flourishing art industry, and on the other of a healthy renaissance of craft ideals, it was obvious to many of the speakers that Britain's success was based on the flimsiest of foundations, and that sound conditions, both for the advancement of art and its application to industry, were virtually non-existent. 90

There was evidence even then of a rejection of Ruskinian ethics and aesthetics, and the beginning of a shift in attitudes towards the necessity of a machine, opposed to a craft, aesthetic. In his presidential address to the second congress in 1889, for example, architect R. Rowland Anderson said: 'The designing of machinery...has now reached such a high standard of excellence in function, form and expression that one is justified in saying that these things are entitled to rank as works of art as much as a painting, a piece of sculpture, or a building, and also that machinery is the only true constructive art that has been produced since the decline of mediaeval architecture.' 91 And in 1893 John Sedding argued that future programs of reform had to be directed towards factory production:

The designer should be part of the working staff of the factory, see his design take shape, and be consulted as required. We have had enough of mere design studios...[and technical schools]. The best school for art-industry is a

88Walter Crane Ideals in Art: 1905 30, cited in Gillian Naylor op cit (1971) 148
891888 congress of the National Association for the Advancement of Art and its Application to Industry, described by Walter Crane in Gillian Naylor op cit (1971) 162
90Cited in Gillian Naylor op cit (1971) 163
wholesome factory. And the ideal factory is a place where the artist-designer is a handicraftsman and the handicraftsman is an artist in his way.\textsuperscript{92}

Gillian Naylor observes that 'both Ruskin and Morris died frustrated men, having spent their lives proselytizing a seemingly indifferent public', while Ashbee wrote in his memoirs: 'We have made of a great social movement, a narrow and tiresome aristocracy working with great skill for the very rich.'\textsuperscript{93} It was not until just before World War I that Ashbee and Lethaby, by this time also influenced by American architect, Frank Lloyd Wright, himself a disciple of Arts and Crafts ideals and known for his 'prairie house' design style, began to 'recognise that production by machinery was not necessarily wholly evil'.\textsuperscript{94} Frank Lloyd Wright had said: 'the art of the future will be the expression of the individual artist through the thousand powers of the machine - the machine doing all those things that the individual workman cannot do. The creative artist is the man who controls all this and understands it.'\textsuperscript{95}

Thus, the later contemporary crafts movement or revival, developed in part as a reaction to the post-war mass-produced items of a machine aesthetic, was clearly founded in similar earlier contradictions between ideals of hand and machine, the individual and society, art and industry.

\textit{Spread of influence}

The route to Australia was not direct: these new ideas were to filter through adaptations and modifications in other centres along the way.

Largely influenced by William Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement, various secessionist groups were formed in other European countries as alternatives to the art academies. In Germany, the Deutscher Werkbünd was formed in 1907, and the Bauhaus design school was set up in 1919 directly influenced by the co-ordinating ideals of the Arts and Crafts philosophy. The prestigious Wiener Werkstätte, set up in Vienna in 1903, served 'a rich, sophisticated and cosmopolitan clientèle...in forms and patterns that anticipate the stylistic preoccupations of the 1920s and 1930s',\textsuperscript{96} preoccupations that were initially centred on the ideals of Art Nouveau, a term that came into use in France in the 1890s for the new decorative style that followed the Arts and

\textsuperscript{92}John Sedding. \textit{Art and Handicraft} (1893), cited in Gillian Naylor ibid (1971) 165
\textsuperscript{93}C R Ashbee 'Memoirs' unpublished typescript 1938 vol IV, cited in Gillian Naylor ibid (1971) 9
\textsuperscript{94}Gillian Naylor ibid (1971) 165
\textsuperscript{95}C R Ashbee Memoirs Vol I 242, cited in Gillian Naylor ibid (1971) 174
\textsuperscript{96}The Deutscher Werkbünd was formed by Hermann Muthesius in 1907 as an organisation loosely based on the English guilds that he had visited, and werkstätten, or craft workshops, were established Germany from 1897. Similarly, the Wiener Werkstätte was set up by Hans Hoffmann in Vienna in 1903, modelled on the lines of Ashbee’s Guild, and further influenced by Mackmurdo in London and those around designer Charles Rennie Mackintosh in Glasgow. Gillian Naylor, in Philippe Garner (ed) \textit{Phaidon Encyclopedia of Decorative Arts 1890-1940} (1978) 30
Crafts aesthetic. Art Nouveau was characterised by romantic figures and abstracted floral motifs with sinuous lines, and continued in a popular form in Europe into the early twentieth century, and for some years longer in Australia and other more remote places.97

Denmark and Sweden developed national styles and led early modern design developments in Scandinavia, and the successful collaboration between artists, designers and industry in these countries, so influential from the 1930s, was first evident in the work shown in the Scandinavian exhibition in Copenhagen in 1888. 'By the 1950s...the Scandinavians had accomplished all that the Arts and Crafts movement had sought to achieve...', said Gillian Naylor:

They had used their rich natural resources to realize Morris’s ideal of a “decorative, noble, popular art”, and because their concern went beyond appearance and finish, their pioneering work in anthropometric research provided a vital service for architects, designers and industry.98

In Britain, by contrast, Naylor notes that as Morris had once pointed out ‘a reform in art which is founded on individualism must perish with the individuals who have set it going’, and this, she suggested:

...was to be the fate of the British movement which in spite, or perhaps because of its social preoccupations, relied on individual rather than collective solutions...[It] had spawned a progeny of crafts and eccentrics, the ‘arty crafty’ with their aura of the homespun and the country dance...Britain had failed to produce a Werkbund or a Bauhaus; its reformers made little impression on industry...and latter-day manifestations [of workshops]...only served to emphasize the isolation of the artist/craftsman and to set him apart from the rest of the community.99

Writing in 1971 about the ideals of the Arts and Crafts movement and its relationship to art and design, Naylor concluded:

The most urgent task for the twentieth century...was to reconcile the claims of the individual with the requirements of the mass market, to equate subjectivity with standardisation, and, in effect, to apply the Arts and Crafts ideals of fitness and truth to material to the machine-made product.100

The Arts and Crafts movement in Australia

By 1900 the scientific, industrial and technical development that had taken place in Europe had resulted in the introduction to Australia of new engineering and technology, such as railways, steam trams, electricity, telegraph, refrigeration and motorcars. Training in metalwork, furniture, glass and pottery occurred through apprenticeships in those industries, to those who

97Art Nouveau was also known in different places as Jugendstil, Sezession-stil, Modern Style, Arte Joven, Nieuwe Kunst and Stile Liberty.
98Gillian Naylor ibid (1978) 193/4
99Gillian Naylor ibid (1978) 191
100Gillian Naylor ibid (1978) 177
had trained overseas. Most - but not all - domestic items, such as furniture, textiles, glass, crockery and cutlery, were still imported because it was cheaper than setting up industries for the, as yet, small local markets.

Like many imported ‘movements’, the Arts and Crafts movement, with its ideals of harmoniously integrating work and life, appears to have been practised in Australia largely as a hybrid style and philosophy, detached from its original socialist base. Its products often show elements of other influences, and while its activities have continued in different forms, the specific ideals of the movement probably lasted barely two decades.

The predominant influence in the arts and architecture in Australia was British, largely because the teachers here had trained in the ‘South Kensington’ system, subscribed to the magazine Studio, and continued to travel to and study in Britain. Arts and Crafts ideals, as they came to Australia, were also interlaced with the design style of Art Nouveau, and the Aesthetic movement that removed the arts from a social context and espoused ‘Art for Art’s sake’.

However, the thinking of American architects and designers such as those in Frank Lloyd Wright’s Prairie School of architecture, and the model of community crafts workshops like those at the Roycroft community in East Aurora, New York, further contributed to the hybrid aesthetic and philosophy that was developing in Australia. T. J. Jackson Lears describes these contemporaneous American efforts towards change, as an antimodernist movement that reflected a move from a religious and work ethic to that of a personal therapeutic ideal: ‘Towards the end of the nineteenth century,’ he said:

...many beneficiaries of modern culture began to feel that they were its secret victims. Among the educated and affluent on either side of the Atlantic, antimodernism sentiments spread [as a] recoil from an ‘overcivilised’ modern existence to more intense forms of physical and spiritual experience supposedly embodied in medieval and oriental cultures...Aesthetes and reformers sought to recover the hard but satisfying life of the medieval craftsmen; militarists urged the rekindling of archaic martial vigor; religious doubters yearned for the fierce convictions of the peasant and the ecstasies of the mystic.

Antimodernism, he argued, was a complex blend of accommodation and protest which tells us a great deal about the beginnings of present day values and attitudes. The crafts revival of the late nineteenth century in the United States drew on Puritan and republican traditions - particularly the deep distrust of urban ‘luxury’ and the faith in the ennobling powers of hard work and the

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101Elbert Green Hubbard founded the successful Roycroft workshops and press from 1905 after a visit to William Morris. See Leslie Green Bowman American Arts and Crafts: Virtue in Design (1990) 64
102T J Jackson Lears No Place of Grace (1981) xiii-xviii
ethos of evangelical reform, 'spawning innumerable utopian communities and benevolent societies designed to mitigate social chaos by promoting self-improvement.'

British and American ideas and examples undoubtedly affected thinking in Australia. In 1895 the new Australian magazine *Arts and Crafts* (1895-1898), drew attention to what the publishers saw as needs for great improvement in 'Art as applied to domestic purposes'. Despite its short duration, and apart from advocating for Australia what Peter Timms suggests was a probably unrealistic Ruskin and Morris-based doctrine, the magazine:

...did, however, campaign resolutely and intelligently for three reforms that would later become the cornerstones of the crafts movement in Australia: a system of arts education; the formation of working guilds of craftsmen; and the organisation of periodical arts and crafts exhibitions.

In the establishment of Arts and Crafts societies in Australia, a number of factors appear common. Architects were often influential initiators or supporters, combining architecture and design in their own work, and involving other craftspeople in their projects. Similarly, teachers of technical subjects and applied arts and artists who shared an interest and skills in the area, provided important instruction on the one hand, and on the other needed the demands of the movement to reinforce the establishment of their courses. Only in New South Wales and Queensland does the membership of the societies appear to have consisted almost exclusively of women. The societies also had a high social profile, some having vice-regal patronage; and they also had support and membership from major institutions in each centre.

The opportunity to exhibit and sell work was attractive for skilled amateurs, usually women, who could gain some recognition and income from their work. Through the Arts and Crafts movement, and 'the early ideals of the Modern Movement', said Isabelle Anscombe:

...women gained access to workshops, schools and professional training and, most importantly, were gradually allowed by the social conventions of the day to put their "traditional" skills - a woman's touch about the home - to commercial use.

At the same time the movement offered involvement in complex organisational events such as the First Australian Exhibition of Women's

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103 T J Jackson Lears ibid (1981) 61
104 Peter Timms *Australian Studio Pottery and China Painting* (1986) 4
105 Architects, influential as designers in the Arts and Crafts Movement, formed their associations: 1851 in Australia, 1857 in America, 1905 in New Zealand, 1929 in Australia
106 For example, Lucien Dechaineaux in Tasmania, Lucien Henry in Sydney, Harry P. Gill in South Australia, James W. R. Linton in Western Australia and Lewis J. Harvey in Queensland
Work in Melbourne in 1907. Many amateurs were talented and highly skilled, having either studied overseas themselves, or received private tuition from others who had. Most were also versatile, working competently in a wide range of media. As it turned out, from 1914 World War I provided an unexpected focus for employment, teaching and production in the crafts, which not only changed crafts practice, but also contributed to the emancipation of women.

Most of the work that was made in Australia maintained the characteristics of the English Arts and Crafts movement in its robust design and faithfulness to the materials used and with conscious evidence of being handmade, though Australians tended to look to their own flora and fauna for design motifs, rather than English and European symbols. The movement thus supported the desire to find some symbolic expression of national identity, in a similar manner to what was happening elsewhere.

After the formation of the Tasmanian Arts and Crafts Society in 1903, others followed - Northern Tasmania and New South Wales in 1906, Victoria in 1908 and Brisbane in about 1912. Before World War I, most societies were at their height of success and public interest, with clubrooms, libraries and classes. When the societies became active again after 1919, Caroline Miley observed that 'a change in the character of the work displayed began to appear. The technical and industrial classes disappeared, to be replaced by an increased emphasis on home furnishings and the kinds of crafts that came to be considered typically feminine.'

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109 Societies were not formed in South Australia and Western Australia, but these states were well-served by teachers in art schools who espoused Arts and Crafts ideals and practices. Members frequently exhibited their work interstate, and some furthered connections by travelling interstate and overseas. For an extended summary of the Arts and Crafts movement in Australia, see Grace Cochrane The Crafts Movement in Australia: a History (1992) Chapter 1

110 Members became engaged in other activities during the war: Peter Timms points out that the societies provided not only an outlet for craftwork but also an audience: 'their Red Cross handicraft work provided a modern realization of Ruskin's ideal of Art's moral crusade while, at the same time, the "high society" aspects of their exhibitions lent status and social acceptance to craftwork in middle-class Australian eyes'. Peter Timms op cit (1986) 23

111 These included 'crochet, raffia and needlework...the large impressive portières and hangings embroidered or stencilled by prewar members gave way to tray-cloths and doyleys. There was less interest in wood and metal work, [and]...the evidence suggests that the Societies were degenerating into hobby groups...the movement, if defined by an adherence of some sort to the principles enunciated by the leaders of the English movement, had ceased by about 1925.' Caroline Miley op cit (1986) 26
In the United States, T. J. Jackson Lears argued that by World War I, American crafts leaders had lost sight of religious or communal frameworks of meaning outside the self. The American experience of these changes was to later influence the Australian contemporary crafts movement considerably. ‘The ideal of joyful labor, when it was not submerged by aestheticism,’ said Lears, ‘became a means of personal revitalization rather than a path to renewed community. In part a reaction against therapeutic self-absorption, the revival of handcraft ultimately became another form of therapy for an overcivilized bourgeoisie.’

He acknowledged that this movement, and the ideals it espoused, were also part of a continuing tradition that anticipated the agrarian communities of both the New Deal era of the 1930s and the rural communes of the 1960s, and ‘also served as intellectual ancestors of decentralist intellectuals in our own time’.

The influence of the Arts and Crafts movement was also evident in the development of Australian art schools. Most had been set up initially to provide a moral rather than a material education, and many of the earliest, such as the Tasmanian School of Art, the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and East Sydney Technical College had their beginnings as art departments in technical colleges, which started to appear in the 1880s, some of which in turn had grown out of mechanics institutes or schools of art from the 1820s. The technical colleges were established to train local tradesmen such as plumbers, plasterers, carpenters, joiners, metalworkers and stonemasons, and in some areas people with specific skills and knowledge associated with mining industries.

Art education in such schools, as Lindsay Broughton points out in his history of the Tasmanian School of Art, was both an agent for civilisation and a means of ensuring that artisans were able to properly and skilfully decorate or ornament their work. ‘Art’ in this sense was ‘applied art’, the application of
ornament to an object in order to add beauty to it, and this ornamentation was
drawn from historical styles, often through the use of natural forms or motifs. 
These schools or art departments drew on the example set by the National Art 
Training School in South Kensington, London, which integrated such cultural 
objectives with a need to improve British manufacturing industry. For many 
years the work of Australian art students was even sent there for examination 
assessment.117

The enthusiasm for the Arts and Crafts movement in Australia from the late 
1890s, and the formation of societies for promoting its ideals in the first 
decade of the new century, very much influenced the courses that were offered 
in these schools.118 And from the early 1900s the increasing availability of 
secondary education and the already existing primary education system, meant 
that a number of teachers colleges were established to provide the necessary 
teachers.119

While some of the Arts and Crafts societies continued between the wars, their 
influence as a nation-wide movement waned as they became more distant 
from the movement’s original ideals and as other economic and philosophical 
issues emerged. However, they nonetheless provided a practical and 
ideological foundation for the development of the postwar crafts movement.

The influence of Modernism
By the 1930s the influence of Modernism in art and architecture, as a contrast 
to Arts and Crafts and Art Nouveau ideals, had reached Australia from Britain, 
Europe and the United States. For craftspeople, Modernism offered a fresh, 
new way of considering their roles as makers; of experiencing new ideas in 
both art and design; and the opportunity to use new technologies and materials 
in design and production. At the same time, it was to become so associated 
with consumerist production that for some it prompted a retreat to previous 
perceived ‘traditional’ values of life and work.

Modernism: a new approach
From the late nineteenth century, through a series of ‘avant-garde’ art 
movements, Modernism had brought a new approach to making art: its content

117 The art departments in technical colleges taught design, drawing, and sculpture 
(modelling), and later, china painting, woodcarving and metalwork. ‘Art’ or ‘drawing’ 
could sometimes mean trade drawing. Art courses were basic training for mechanical or 
sanitary engineers, plumbers, metalworkers, joiners, carpenters and masons.

118 A great deal was learnt from private tutors. Some art schools, such as those in Adelaide and 
Melbourne, were attached to galleries, museums and libraries, usually sharing trustees. 
Others, such as the Julian Ashton School of Art in Sydney, were set up as private schools.

119 The first were the Fort Street Model School in Sydney in 1850 and the Melbourne Model 
School in 1854, with others following, such as Claremont Teachers College in WA in 
1905, Sydney Teachers College in 1906 and Queensland Teachers College in 1914.
and form were defined by people who were not constrained by social or religious concerns, and who were reacting against both rapid changes in society and what they saw as the moribund art of the academies. Artists broke away from historical and romantic themes and styles, and focused instead on subjects of the present and the everyday. They drew on a wide range of new sources for their ideas (such as primitive art and Asian art, and the aesthetic of industry), used new ways of applying their materials and were interested in breaking accepted ‘rules’, of, for example, perspective and the use of colour. The new idea of the symbols of the ‘unconscious’, discussed by Sigmund Freud and others from the 1880s, further promoted the perception of the artist as an expressive individual.

In relation to the crafts, it is now claimed that, at this point, ‘decorative art and decorative art impulses’ played a crucial role ‘in the formation and emergence of some of the major modernist styles of the early twentieth century’: a tradition to which Norma Broude suggested in 1980, many of our most important feminist artists were heir. The abstracted curvilinear forms, allover patterns and decorative shapes of ‘Art Nouveau and the Jugendstil arts and crafts movement,’ she said, ‘with their basis in late nineteenth-century Symbolist thought, acted as important liberating catalysts for major artists like Henri Matisse and Wassily Kandinsky, as well as for that entire segment of twentieth-century art which seeks to convey content and meaning through abstract and non-objective forms’.120

The Modern Movement generally refers to an attitude to modern architecture and design that advocated elimination of unnecessary decoration. The desire for a ‘functionalist’ aesthetic grew in Europe through the various offshoots of the Arts and Crafts movement, including the Bauhaus design school in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s which was influential in defining new relationships between art, craft and industry, and which developed a new attitude towards the design and production of buildings, furniture and utensils. It had roots in the machine ideology of the Futurist art movement of the 1910s and 1920s; in the beliefs of the Russian and Dutch Constructivist artists that meaning could be found in revealing the structural materials and processes of a work.

For most, the Modern Movement meant developing new, modern styles based on the ideas of ‘form following function’ or ‘fitness for purpose’. The superficial application of decoration and ornament was strongly rejected, as were historical decorative references. Modernist designers preferred simple, rational, geometric forms, and rejected national, regional and vernacular styles, claiming that Modernism was international. Modernists retained humanitarian ideals: they were frequently ‘inspired by socialist ideals and

wished to sweep away the old order to create a brave new world which would in itself improve human behaviour'.

**Developments abroad**

For most Australians, Modernism was first experienced through publications. It was not until the 1930s that Australians would actually see English and European contemporary painting, for example, in the *Herald* exhibition in Melbourne in 1939.

For others, travel was the only way to experience new forms and ideas. As a young interior 'decorator' visiting England from Australia in the 1930s, Margaret Lord was typically responsive to modernist ideas:

> Functionalism sums up the ideals of these modern designers. Their principal idea was that form - three-dimensional shape - should be governed by use, the function of the thing, the material used, and the method of manufacture. The Functionalists believed that if these requirements were perfectly understood, the resulting building, chair or cooking utensil should be pleasing to look at, even beautiful.

In Britain, with the legacy of the Arts and Crafts movement, the liaison between crafts and industry was never so innovatively established: the crafts came to be practised not so much in relationship to industry, or even as part of an idealised village economy, but as part of an independent way of life. This may have been as much by necessity as choice, and the economic depression of the 1930s made alternative forms of income essential for many. However, Australia's strong economic, social and educational ties with Britain in the post-war period meant that Britain's design influence remained considerable. The British policies and their promotions, through, for example, the Britain Can Make It exhibition in 1946, led to the establishment of vocationally oriented design courses in education, which were in turn to influence Australian education.

But by the Festival of Britain in 1951 (organised to establish confidence in Britain's future), popular opinion had rejected the prescriptive 'good taste' of the British Board of Trade's Utility Furniture Committee and the Utility

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121John A Walker *Art in the Age of Mass Media* (1983) 80

122See Bernard Smith *Place Taste and Tradition* (1979) 186. The beginnings of Modernism in the visual arts in Australia are traced by Bernard Smith to the study of newspaper photographs, postcards and prints of Impressionist works brought to Australia in about 1913, while the magazine *Art in Australia* (established in 1916), was also publishing modernist work at that time.

123Lord cited as the key influences for designers like herself, the architects Le Corbusier in Switzerland and Walter Gropius, who established the Bauhaus School in 1919; the 'Paris exhibition' of 1925; and the work of architects Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright in the United States. Margaret Lord *An Interior Decorator's World* (1969) 35
Design Panel, set up in 1942.124 The British ‘Festival’, or later, ‘Contemporary’, style was decorative, whimsical and novel, using abstract shapes, thin lines and molecular structures in graphic, textile and furniture design, and in ceramic decoration. In 1955 Reyner Banham expressed the new mood: ‘we live in a throwaway economy, a culture in which the most fundamental classification of our ideas and worldly possessions is in terms of their relative expendability’.125

Isabelle Anscombe considers that the 1956 design awards in Britain marked the start of the sexual division between decorative and functional design, a concept that was reminiscent of Parker and Pollock’s observations of nineteenth century social changes and their effect of perceptions between art and the crafts. It also anticipated later discussions between the relative values of art and craft, when the women’s art movement became active in the 1970s.126

The United States, like Australia, had a strong pioneering background and was renowned for its early skilled resourcefulness in the making of, for example, tools, quilts and furniture. Similarly, Americans had adopted the Arts and Crafts movement, and focused their attention, through the British Studio magazine and through travel, on what was happening in Britain and, later, in Europe. Leslie Green Bowman suggests that ‘the success of the movement in the United States rested on compromises that adapted it to American capitalism’; they were not elevated (at that stage) ‘out of industry into the fine arts, but instead were adapted to industry’.127 The workshops of the Roycroft community, and Gustav Stickley’s furniture workshop, were successful because of highly effective marketing strategies.128 Meanwhile, the geometric Art Deco design style of the 1930s in Europe129 developed as a ‘streamlined’ Art Moderne design style in the United States. Modernism became quickly absorbed into the vast industrial empires in the 1930s and was used as a means of designing in industry to attract a consumer, for profit. New technologies

124 Rationing and shortage of supplies in Britain led to the establishment in 1942 of the Utility Furniture Committee and the Utility Design Panel. These were set up both to improve the ‘good taste’ of the public and to promote design through producing low-cost utilitarian furniture, textiles and tableware for industry.


126 Anscombe noted that advertising and office design were identified with culture (men), while, for example, interior decoration and independent craft workshops were associated with nature (women). She concluded that women were never able to develop the design influence they had gained in the interwar years. To compensate, their role in the home was glamorised, so that housework was promoted not just as a skill but a joy. Isabelle Anscombe A Woman’s Touch, Women in Design from 1860 to the Present Day (1984) 187-8


128 Leslie Green Bowman ibid (1992) 34

129 The term Art Deco emerged from the Exposition International des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes, Paris, in 1925
were embraced here because of labour shortages, whereas in Britain machines were seen to threaten employment.

International functionalism, as it had developed through furniture design and architecture from the Bauhaus, moved to the United States of America through the migration of modernist designers and architects like, for example, Marcel Breuer, Walter Gropius and Mies Van der Rohe. Their concerns for the relationships between form and function were supported by the design department at the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York. Here, design competitions and Good Design exhibitions attempted to change mass design taste from the commercial styling extravagances of the 1930s.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s new consumer objects were made using the new moulding technology, providing low-cost, portable, mass-produced items in what became known as the Contemporary style. After the war, new economic and social links were developed between Australia and the United States. The United States was keen to establish markets in Australia, and Australia was interested in looking towards American design and industry, both to import products and to reproduce them, in order to be 'modern'.

Simultaneously, Scandinavian furniture, metal, glass, and textiles industries continued to make the simple, elegant products from their natural resources for which they had become known in the 1930s, and from the 1950s embarked on well-focused marketing programs in countries outside Europe like Australia and New Zealand. The relationship of the crafts to industry through design, observed Gillian Naylor, was achieved more successfully in Scandinavia than elsewhere:

> Of all the countries in Europe, the Scandinavians were, of course, in a unique position to exploit this essentially humanistic tradition. Their industries were craft-based, the Industrial Revolution did not scar them, so that they were able, when necessary, to absorb the advantages of technical change, and their work needed no proselytizing to establish its validity.

The Scandinavian industrial practice of employing artists and craftspeople as designers, allowing them freedom to experiment with their own work as well as designing for production, became an ideal for many people in other countries, and Australians aspired to setting up similar models in later years.

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130 The 1940 Organic Design in Home Furnishings exhibition was the first of these exhibitions; designers Charles and Ray Eames and Eero Saarinen introduced furniture designed in free organic forms, using moulding techniques and synthetic materials often developed for the aeronautics industry. See Philippe Garner Contemporary Decorative Arts, 1940 to the Present Day (1980) 29-33

131 New technology also affected other areas of crafts production. The use, for example, of space-age technology in the production of glass by Dominick Labino and Harvey Littleton at Toledo in the United States in 1962 was to make it possible for glassworkers to work alone or in small group studio-workshops.

132 Gillian Naylor op cit (1971) 194
The Italian design model was also of interest: small, often family industries oriented their products towards a small wealthy market.133

Australians began to travel to these centres, saw illustrations of modernist art and design in journals and magazines and increasingly, especially from the 1960s, also saw imported items in the emerging design stores in Australia.134 The establishment of exhibition centres overseas, like Den Permanente in Denmark in 1936, and organisations, like the Design Association of Japan in 1954, were also to provide later links for Australians.

Australia imported both modernist and crafts revivalist attitudes along with the post-war migration program, the import of influential books and magazines and the early employment many of its young designers trained overseas.

The beginnings of the contemporary crafts movement in Australia
The contemporary crafts movement in Australia in the 1940s and early 1950s was not yet an organised movement, nor did craftspeople share a common philosophy. Some were encouraged by Modernism; others rejected it.

However, a number of factors contributed to a climate that encouraged what eventually did become a ‘movement’: one that was to find greater political and economic force for promoting beliefs through combining interests and energies. Two of these factors were changes in education and the effects of mass-production.

Post-war education: ideals and opportunities
Changing ideals and opportunities in education clearly affected the developing idea of studio crafts practice as a professional, personally rewarding way of life. Post-war education emphasised the development of the individual as a ‘whole self’ through creative experience.

Some of the important changes in thinking about education started in the United States in the late nineteenth century. Here, psychologist William James and philosopher Charles Sanders Pierce had developed ideas in response to current questions such as: ‘given the advance of science, where then do values reside? How can truth and knowledge be identified in a universe if it is in ever-changing, impermanent, unknowable flux?’135 The core of James’s philosophy, summarised James Bowen, ‘was in the notion of experience as the central knowable reality’. While ‘challenging both unthinking, conservative,

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133 The Milan Triennale exhibitions were particularly important events, not only for the promotion of Italian work, but also for the exhibition of work of other countries, notably of Finland in the early 1950s.

134 Examples include David Foulkes-Taylor’s Design Centre in Perth; DDC (Danish Design Centre) in Sydney; Artes in Sydney.

religious interpretations, as well as the nihilistic, mechanist explanations of scientific positivism’, William James also offered a new idea of education, where schools should be concerned with ‘helping the child to develop a wide receptivity to the experiences around him’. In Britain, whose education system most directly influenced Australia, some of the progressive ideas were adopted and provisions were also made to ensure secondary school education for all.

Brian Crittenden’s account of the characteristics of Australian education between 1945-1960 shows a marked increase in the provision of education, especially an increase in secondary education, but a slow move away from the pre-war centralised system with uniform curricula that gave a low status to the social sciences and the arts in secondary education. However, leaning on the writings of Herbert Read and Viktor Lowenfeld, as well as the examples of ‘progressive educationists’ such as Rudolf Steiner and Maria Montessori in Europe, and John Dewey in the United States, there was a move in some quarters in the late 1940s towards a primary school education that emphasised the development of the whole person through creative activity.

Following James and Pierce, philosopher and psychologist John Dewey had argued that ‘education at the beginning of the twentieth century was almost totally meaningless: it was the training of slaves.’ He saw the school as a laboratory of ‘activity’ learning, and was opposed to the ‘dualism of traditional metaphysics (mind-body, subject-object, being-becoming, and so on).’ His important book *Democracy in Education*, published in 1916, led to the development of the Progressive Education Association in America in 1919, and his views on experience-centred education were taken up in other countries like Australia during the next two decades.

**Education and the arts**

For many, like Winifred West, who in 1941 established the Sturt community craft and cultural workshops in Mittagong, New South Wales, following her retirement as headmistress of Frensham School, art was seen from the 1940s to the 1960s as a way of returning ‘humanist’ qualities to education - meeting

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136 James Bowen ibid (1986) 413-4
137 Brian Crittenden ‘Theoretical Assumptions in the Recent Development of Australian Education’ in Peter Karmel (ed) *Education, Change and Society* (1980) 3-4
138 See for example, James Bowen op cit (1986) Chapters 11 and 12
139 Dewey disagreed with the separation of the curriculum into bodies of knowledge that were devoid of real content, imposed in an authoritarian fashion and removed from an experiential context, because such education made it impossible for people to develop their own path ‘in the light of continued social experience’. James Bowen ibid (1986) 424-5
140 As were the views of Austrian educator Maria Montessori, and in art, the work of British writer Herbert Read, in his *Education through Art* (1943).
personal, emotional and spiritual needs rather than material ones. The values of 'learning-by-doing' or 'learning-by-experience' provided those who were to become artists and craftspeople in the post-war period, an education that was intended to involve both 'mind and body'.

Writing in a collection of essays on education through art in Australia, compiled by Bernard Smith in 1958, Joseph Burke proposed three aims of art education: to teach art as a creative activity; to teach that all great art bears the hall-mark of truth to its own age; and to teach art as a whole environment. 'It embraces almost everything man-made in this environment, from industrial products to handicrafts,' he said, 'for what is there made by man in which the element of design does not play a part?' The point of view that the arts should be integrated into education, and that education could be through the arts, was implicit not only in the ideals of emerging crafts organisations but also in the professional organisations of art teachers. In Victoria, for example, crafts development by the 1960s was strongly tied to teacher education. Metalsmith and lecturer Ray Stebbins, who was training to be an art teacher at that time, recalled:

In the 1960s there was an enormous push towards creativity and defusing prescriptive courses, through establishing a Primary Art-Craft Branch, a special curriculum, primary specialist teachers and two to three hundred specialist classrooms. All this was very 'progressive'.

Commitment to the teaching of the arts in the 1940s as a necessary aspect of creative development for children, had also extended to the wider population. The Central Cultural Council and the New South Wales Public Schools Teachers Federation, for example, organised a People's Conference to discuss how a permanent, mass cultural movement could be created through educational, industrial and community groups. One artist, Hayward Veal,
Chapter 2: Between ‘beautiful and useful’ and ‘form follows function’

‘initiated a workers art exhibition in his factory, and was the force in founding the Encouragement of Art Movement (EAM) in 1944,’ that had aimed to encourage workers to produce their own art and craft products.146

Numerous other groups had developed during the war, and it was believed that, as the war ended, these achievements should not be allowed to disappear. The Arts Council, for example, was founded in 1946 following the example of the Arts Council of Great Britain, and the belief that the arts needed to be taken to people living outside the Australian metropolitan areas.147

Many of those associated with the Arts and Crafts societies of the previous forty years remained active after the war (and two societies continued to operate in the 1990s), though by now much of the Ruskin-Morris philosophy appeared to have been superseded by the societies’ practical involvement with occupational therapy through teaching crafts skills to wounded and disabled servicemen in Australian hospitals.148 For many, teaching itself provided employment and an opportunity to extend skills.149

Rehabilitation opportunities for returned servicemen included training in art schools and technical colleges. A number of these people, like potter Peter Rushforth, who was to teach at the important ceramics course at East Sydney Technical College from 1953 to 1978, became teachers for the next wave of interest as the schools increased and developed. Other models of professional practice were provided by the Sturt workshops, established in 1941, and by teachers like refugee Ludwig Hirschfeld Mack who had trained at the Bauhaus and taught at Geelong Grammar School in the 1940s and early 1950s. A design course had been run by Phyllis Shillito at East Sydney Technical College from the late 1930s (followed by her own design school from 1960), and the first industrial design course was established at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology in 1953.

146 Many exhibitions were held throughout the country. Workers received no formal tuition, but it was generally believed that they would enjoy creative work, and that it would give them greater cultural awareness and appreciation and lay a solid foundation for a vigorous and popular Australian culture. See Ian Burn and Sandy Kirby Working Art (1985) 57, 95
147 Branches were gradually formed in each state, fulfilling slightly different roles according to how they were funded, and a national body was formed in 1966. For an extended summary see Grace Cochrane op cit (1992) 83
148 Apart from the many General Repatriation hospitals, in August 1943, for example, there were also twenty-six Red Cross convalescent homes operating in Australia, many of which provided rehabilitation through craft activities, later to be carried out by occupational therapists. Interview with Moira Kerr (1986)
149 Crafts in these places included weaving, spinning, rugmaking, tapestry, wool embroidery, basketry and rushwork, leatherwork, soft-toy-making, bookbinding, cord-knotting and netting, and linocut printing on fabric. Interview with Moira Kerr (1986). Kerr worked for the Red Cross in its Sydney centre from 1954 to 1966, and later was a key figure in the Crafts Councils and the Crafts Board of the Australia Council. See also Crafts Council of the ACT Crafts of War catalogue (1985)
Chapter 2: Between ‘beautiful and useful’ and ‘form follows function’

Not only was there a great increase in the building of schools and teachers colleges, but there was also an increase in the number of universities, starting with the opening of the Australian National University in 1946. At the same time, technical colleges were funded for what was seen as their very different training role. It was largely through the technical and teachers colleges that crafts (and art) courses developed in Australia. By comparison, the crafts developed in universities in the United States, in schools of art and design in Britain, and in teachers colleges in New Zealand.

Thus, in Australia, the early stages of ‘the binary system’ were established, where training was identified with one type of institution, and research with another: a separation into education for either ‘hands’ or ‘heads’. This system was to further separate the intellectual from the practical, and the idea of ‘art’ from ‘trades’ and eventually the ‘crafts’.

Modernism as consumerism

By the 1950s, once the recovery from war was over, interest in the creative development of the individual shifted to focus on the reinforcement of the independence of the nuclear family, and on personal material development.

The suburban dream was characterised by a consumerism for material goods that were ‘modern’, popular, labour-saving and entertaining, and this usually meant what was produced elsewhere and advertised in magazines. Mass-produced objects and appliances, made in new materials and designs, were cheap, standardised, popular and accessible for everyone.

Many artists and intellectuals tried to sever some of Australia’s traditional cultural dependence from Britain; others in turn feared being swamped by American culture. A.A. Phillips complained in the 1950s about what he termed the ‘cultural cringe’, where anything overseas was seen to be better than that made in Australia. Robin Boyd criticised post-war suburban architecture, where the standardised monotony was relieved by the addition of ‘features’ or what he called ‘nervous architectural chattering’ to give some individuality. ‘Features’ were also added to appliances and vehicles, to distinguish them from others and make them more appealing:

...so every year the radiator of the car grins wider, the handle of the refrigerator grows a bigger chrome escutcheon, the control panel of the stove gets more Martian, the sets of saucepans and bowls gleam with more jewel anodizing, the concrete grilles get more complicatedly geometric, the colours more vivid, the tiles more random, and the light shades...get more frantically pointed, holed, ringed, striated, twisted, and miserable.

150 Refer Stephen Murray-Smith, John Dare *The Tech*, a Centenary History of RMIT (1987) 452-459 for a discussion of this division.
152 Robin Boyd *The Australian Ugliness* (1963) 21, 111
Other commentators, like Donald Horne and Craig McGregor, writing in the 1960s, were similarly critical of what they saw as Australian mediocrity and happy complacency. And by 1967, although Australians were confident in their ability to do things 'such as building skyscrapers and turning rivers back through mountains', Robin Boyd was still saying: 'The broad picture of the nation is still one of a simple-minded leisurely hive of activity without a strong or challenging idea or policy of its own...Almost all the things we make here - cars, household appliances, many of the houses themselves - are copies of designs from overseas', sometimes plagiarised, but more often made legally under licence.

Cultural commentators were not the only ones to be critical of what was seen as the ugliness, complacency and materialist consumerism of much of Australian life. Social, political and economic changes in Australia during and after World War II motivated in many people a desire to find a different way of living. There were many people who did not share an affection for the perceived inhumanity of increasingly available industrially-made objects.

From their various positions, craftspeople and designers worked towards organising themselves into activities and livelihoods that were more personally fulfilling, giving them more control of their own lives and a means of changing their lived environment in a more personal way.

Developing a crafts philosophy
Craftspeople in Australia at this time had come from many different starting points, and while some rejected Modernism others sought to be part of what it represented.

Some were skilled artisans in ceramics, glass, metalworking and textile industries. A few craftspeople, like jeweller Rhoda Wager (trained in the Arts and Crafts style in Glasgow, and working in Sydney from about 1914), and her niece Dorothy Wager from the late 1930s, were committed to running small businesses, often working to commission. Many continued to work within the Arts and Crafts societies, sometimes now linking their work with occupational therapy for soldier rehabilitation. Many of the people concerned practised their craft in their spare time from other occupations, often in associated craft

153 See Donald Horne The Australian People; Robin Boyd The Australian Ugliness; Craig McGregor Profile of Australia.
155 Increasing numbers of women had become competent practitioners, not only because of the influence of the Arts and Crafts movement but also because of the need for many to earn a living. The Country Women's Association, set up in 1922, was one organisation that had exerted considerable efforts to involve isolated women in learning domestic and creative skills. A state handicraft committee, for example, was set up in New South Wales in 1935, working for the Use More Wool campaigns; it organised a Fashion from Fleece display at the Royal Agricultural Show in 1938.
industries, while others used their work to finance another interest such as painting. Some craftspeople were part of families that had always been involved in art practice and debate.  

Some craftspeople were directly influenced by European artists such as Picasso, Miro and Dali who had been involved in the design and making of jewellery and furniture and stage or fashion design. Picasso's painterly decorations on earthenware pottery, produced at Vallauris in France from the late 1940s, were of particular influence to Australian potters who were also painters (such as David and Hermia Boyd). Others were aware of European ceramic artists Lucie Rie and Hans Coper, working in England from the 1940s, making refreshingly contemporary, stylish, modernist forms which were illustrated in magazines that were available in Australia, and who taught a generation of British potters with whom Australians were later to make connections.

Many, like weaver Erika Gretschel (later Semler) and jewelers and metalsmiths Niina Ots, Victor Vodicka and Wolf Wennrich, were migrants from Europe, bringing their apprenticeship training and experience in those countries with them. As well, there were designers associated with the new modernist architecture and the developing fields of industrial and interior design. Some of these had already established practices, like fabric designer Frances Burke (who set up the first registered screenprintery in Australia in 1937), the screenprinting business Annan, in Sydney, (see Plate 6: following page) and the weaving business éclarté in Melbourne, while others were the products of postwar training courses.  

Many people who ultimately became designers had trained as architects, partly perhaps because there were very few opportunities to study design elsewhere. Others were professionals in other areas, such as Harold Hughan, who was an engineer and became interested in pottery through the involvement of his wife and son.

**Studio crafts ideals**

Most craftspeople at this time worked in relative isolation, with little contact or communication between main centres, and at first they had little feeling of shared identity. Most identified themselves by their specific occupation, for example, as jeweller, potter, artist-potter or weaver, and the term 'studio crafts' only later came to be used as a common philosophy developed.

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156 For example, the Boyd family at Murrumbeena; Victoria; the Lewers family at Emu Plains, NSW; the Skipper family at Montsalvat, Eltham, Victoria.

157 Annan was set up by Anne Outlaw and Alexandra (Nance) Mackenzie in Mosman, Sydney in 1941, and éclarté as established by Edith (Mollie) Grove and Catherine Hardress in Melbourne in 1940.

158 Ideals generally held in common, however, placed an emphasis on the revival of traditions that valued the idea of working as an individual within society or a community, towards a lifestyle of self-sufficiency, and making utilitarian objects by hand from natural materials in an independent studio or workshop.
Mackenzie’s designs drew on Australian flora and Aboriginal designs, and they learnt printing and dyeing skills by trial and error. To counteract competition from American imports, Annan focused on exclusive work printed to order and its fabrics were used extensively by architects and interior designers in Australia and overseas, especially those trying to say ‘something Australian’. The fabrics were used in airport lounges in Melbourne, Sydney and Hawaii, and in the Australia Room on the ship Himalaya.
Many of the 'traditional' ideals followed by craftspeople after the Second World War, had themselves been recent revivals in the nineteenth century. Edward Lucie-Smith observed that after the war the traditional crafts were 'thought of in Britain as things to be fostered and protected against contemporary conditions... with a government-sponsored Rural Industries Bureau plus a network of craft guilds and societies.' He saw this as 'proof of the way in which handicraft had been pushed to the margin in little more than a century.'

However, the intentions of the movement came not so much from a desire to revive tradition as an unchanging continuation of practices and values, as the invention of new traditions based on an idealised perception of the old, but in different circumstances.

Peter Rushforth's explanation of his interest in Oriental ceramics from 1947 reflects one common feeling:

There was only a handful of potters in the whole of Australia that you could call studio potters and they were mainly people who used the pots as a background for decoration. And there was a handful of commercial potteries and they had certain tricks up their sleeves, such as slip casting and so on, but this was all the antithesis of what I really wanted... I think my background was such that having had a diet of Eric Gill and Morris and Ruskin and Huxley and the Fabians I felt that I wanted something that had some meaning in life as far as work was concerned. In other words a fulfilment in a lifestyle.

In Australia the most important eventual influence on the crafts in the postwar years was that of British potter, Bernard Leach, who published *A Potter's Book* in 1940. Leach had worked in Japan and had come in contact with the Japanese scholar Soetsu Yanagi, who founded the *mingei* movement in the 1920s to revive Japanese folk crafts, then had returned to England with potter Shoji Hamada in 1920 and set up a studio at St Ives.

The 'aesthetic theory of the [*mingei*] movement', said Yuko Kikuchi, 'emphasized the supreme beauty of hand-made folk crafts for ordinary use, made by unknown craftsmen working in groups, free of ego and free of desire to be famous or rich, merely working to earn their daily bread.' Yanagi, whose writings were translated by Leach, categorised the beauty of folk crafts as: in naturalness (natural materials, handmade), in tradition in method and design, in simplicity in form and design, in plurality (repetition), in

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159 Edward Lucie-Smith op cit (1981)
160 See Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds *The Invention of Tradition* (1983) for a range of other examples on this
161 Peter Rushforth unpublished draft script from seminar 'Shaping History' Powerhouse Museum (1989)
inexpensiveness, in selflessness (unknown), and in health (not fragile). In ceramics, these ideals embraced a stoneware, rather than an earthenware technology, producing forms in which the decoration was made from the effect of the firing process on the natural surfaces of clays and glazes.

Yuko Kikuchi argues, in fact, that, despite Yanagi’s claims of originality and independence of precedents, he was in fact directly influenced by the work of William Morris; and that Leach played a contributing part in the development of the mingei theory. Kikuchi notes, for example, that from the late 1880s the Japanese government sent students abroad both to market Japanese crafts as exports, and to learn British scientific and industrial skills in order to combine ‘Japanese mind with Western knowledge (wakon yosai)’, and points out that the writings of Morris were well-known in Japan from that time.¹⁶³

Leach combined the Japanese philosophies of a spiritual ordering of the domestic and working environment based on simplicity, harmony and beauty, with study and experience of ancient Chinese and Korean ceramics and many of the traditional forms of English ceramic wares - and an acknowledgement that in the West the studio potter cannot remain anonymous:

‘Accepting the Sung⁶⁴ standard’ is a very different thing from imitating particular Sung pieces. It means the use so far as possible of natural materials in the endeavour to obtain the best quality of body and glaze; in...a striving towards unity, spontaneity and a simplicity of form, and...the subordination of all attempts at technical cleverness to straightforward, un-selfconscious workmanship...We are not the Chinese of a thousand years ago, and the underlying racial and social and economic conditions which produced the Sung traditions in art will never be repeated; but that is no reason why we should not draw all the inspiration we can from the Sung potters.¹⁶⁵

Many, like Peter Rushforth, found their philosophical model in these ideas (see Plate 7: following page). ‘The thing that I tried to get greater and greater knowledge of,’ he said, ‘was inner development’:

You see, in the West before the industrial revolution you had handcraft [and workshop] potters. And then the factory system took over [with] the subdivision of labour; the aristocracy promoted porcelain and they liked a lot of gold and silver because it made them very important...Later on...the Bauhaus concept of a designer...was a sort of a god behind a curtain who was planning these objects for mass production. Now this is a different concept from the East and it is the Eastern concept as I see it that is the seed of what has interested so many people in the West. People wanted a creative, expressive, personalised, not dehumanised, activity... [There] was an attitude [in the classical period in the East] in which the personal, the individual, was an illusion. He was but part of the whole of an infinity that spread through the

¹⁶³Yuko Kikuchi ibid (1994) 251
¹⁶⁴The term Sung, used at this time, is now more generally replaced by the term Song, following the Pinyin system of Romanisation of Mandarin Chinese.
¹⁶⁵Bernard Leach A Potters Book (1940) 6
Plate 7: Peter Rushforth
(see page 62) Blossom jars, *Landscape* and *Form and Spirit*, stoneware with jun glaze (left) and tenmoku and iron glaze (right), made and woodfired at Shipley, Blue Mountains, NSW 1990. (27 x 14 and 42 x 18cm).

Peter Rushforth’s (b.1920) explanation of his interest in Oriental ceramics from 1947 reflects one common feeling: ‘The thing that I tried to get greater and greater knowledge of,’ he said, ‘was inner development...it is the Eastern concept as I see it that is the seed of what has interested so many people in the West. People wanted a creative, expressive, personalised, not dehumanised, activity... [there] was an attitude [in the classical period in the East] in which the personal, the individual, was an illusion. He was but part of the whole of an infinity that spread through the whole universe, the whole cosmos...it was this overall view that influenced the Zen masters to say...this must also permeate our living in everything we do and think ...so that objects that were used were beautiful and that beauty was to be used daily.’ Peter Rushforth unpublished draft script from seminar ‘Shaping History’ Powerhouse Museum (1989).
whole universe, the whole cosmos...it was this overall view that influenced the Zen masters to say that this must also permeate our living in everything we do and think...so that objects that were used were beautiful and that beauty was to be used daily.\textsuperscript{166}

Bernard Leach's views on the values of folk crafts were not only shared but developed further by a number of his English contemporaries, such as weaver Ethel Mairet, woodworker David Pye, and potter Michael Cardew, and their views eventually became widely considered by practitioners in other fields. The contemporary crafts movement, through their influence, certainly reflected an alternative to the perceived inhumanity of the development of Modernism in design and industry.

But at the same time Ethel Mairet, who was instrumental in the revival of handweaving and who wrote \textit{Handweaving Today} in 1939, also pointed out that while there were not more than half-a-dozen handweavers remaining in England at the turn of the century, the solution was not to 'develop a machine boycott' but to develop 'a machine mastery':

\ldots which can become a means for the better ordering of life, easing hard or laborious work, making for the appreciation of beauty in city, village, home...We do not ask for leisure now without beauty, speed, efficiency, nor for speed without leisure, nor for beauty without speed, efficiency and leisure.

She argued that handweaving had 'set itself up on a pedestal as an art, instead of recognising its immense and interesting responsibilities to present needs and to the machine.'\textsuperscript{167} In Australia, Winifred West similarly acknowledged that:

We live in an age of machinery, and we need machinery just as we need control, but it must be used to benefit man, not to cheat him, to relieve him of drudgery and hack work, to produce goods which are useful and beautiful...Only as we recognise our social responsibility can machinery be beneficial.\textsuperscript{168}

Thus, despite its avowed opposition to industry and the anonymity of its production systems and products, the crafts movement was inevitably shaped, not only by the views of such as Ethel Mairet, but also by the increasing influence of the forms and ideals of modernist European and Scandinavian design and architecture, the influence of the United States in new technologies and materials in design, and the related development of international individual reputations of high-profile designers and architects.

\textsuperscript{166}Peter Rushforth op cit (1989)
\textsuperscript{167}Ethel Mairet \textit{Handweaving Today: Traditions and Changes} Chapter 1, cited in John Houston op cit (1988) 9
\textsuperscript{168}Winifred West 'Life Means this to Me' in Priscilla Kennedy op cit (1973) 70
The development of specialist groups

One of the phenomena of this period was the development of specialist crafts groups. While many were local and regional in their scope, others provided the first national networks of shared interests and information. These groups formed primarily to support their specialisation. In the absence of formal education, books, journals, technical information and sources of supply for materials and equipment, they sought out and shared what they could learn and find themselves. Their ideals were conservative, or at least pragmatic: to fulfil a creative interest, to maintain traditions and skills and to find markets. But the ideals had grown out of a philosophy based on the complex background of Morris, Leach, and the values of progressive education.

The Handweavers and Spinners Guild of New South Wales,\(^\text{169}\) founded in 1947, was possibly the first of the specialist crafts groups to be formed after the war. Many of those who had been teaching in rehabilitation centres were ‘fascinated by the scope of the loom, [and] continued to weave for their own interest’, perhaps in response to others who ‘were more interested in pursuing the excitements of the promised age of Science and Technology than in perpetuating skills of hand and eye’.\(^\text{170}\) While members of Handweavers and Spinners Guilds were very skilled, they were generally, at first, not interested in making works for commercial gain, but saw themselves as amateurs. Mr Hall in Perth, for example, argued adamantly through the pages of the journal that work should not be sold. Nevertheless, members of the guilds were very enterprising in their efforts to promote their interests. Modernist architect Harry Seidler was invited to open the New South Wales guild’s eighth exhibition in 1956, and spoke of the ‘importance of individual creativeness in a world which is swamped with the products of industrialisation’.\(^\text{171}\)

The Potters Society of New South Wales was formed in 1956\(^\text{172}\) with four potters - Mollie Douglas, Peter Rushforth, Ivan McMeekin and Ivan Englund - who would meet and talk about pottery in their homes. The society was formed to ‘encourage and foster the development, appreciation and recognition of potters and pottery’.\(^\text{173}\) It was set up largely by people who were interested in pursuing the ‘Leach’ philosophy. Recalling the early years, Ivan Englund said ‘We wanted to make pottery our life work and career, and to be professional we wanted to select for membership.’\(^\text{174}\) Potential members were required to submit pots to a committee for approval.\(^\text{175}\) Dozens of potters

\(^{169}\) Changed to ‘of Australia’ in 1954, and ‘of New South Wales’ again in 1958.
\(^{170}\) Jean McMahon Opera House Exhibition catalogue Handweavers and Spinners Guild of NSW (1975)
\(^{171}\) Australian Handweaver and Spinner Nov 1956 19
\(^{172}\) This organisation became the Potters Society of Australia in 1967
\(^{173}\) Membership brochure. Potters Society of Australia (1987)
\(^{174}\) Interview with Ivan Englund (1986)
\(^{175}\) The magazine Pottery in Australia was first published by the society in 1962. During the early years of the Potters Society a biennial exhibition of members’ work was held in the Macquarie Galleries, but it became important to have permanent displays of potters’ work
societies were formed from the 1960s, with a key society in each state that was usually linked in some way to the national body, making a very effective specialist network.\textsuperscript{176}

Already in existence, but with completely different objectives, was the Ceramic Art and Fineeware Association of Australia. It represented the many small commercial potteries like Studio Anna, Pate’s Pottery and others in Sydney at that time producing handmade and slipcast earthenware, often decorated with hand painted motifs, and exhibited selected wares in Cannes, France in the 1950s.\textsuperscript{177}

The Embroiderers Guild of New South Wales was established in 1957 as a branch of the Embroiderers Guild in London.\textsuperscript{178} The standards were rigorously traditional: ‘Embroidery in the Country Women’s Association was organised to the nth degree in the fifties and sixties,’ recalled Meg Douglas in Adelaide in 1986, ‘with specific standards and very prescribed activities, not creative at all. On “table days” the first thing they would do would be to look at the back of a piece of work.’\textsuperscript{179}

Meanwhile, post-war reconstruction and industrialisation provided opportunities for a new relationship between designers and industry and architecture, and designers started to form their own organisations.\textsuperscript{180} A number of others followed,\textsuperscript{181} including the Industrial Design Council of Australia, set up in 1958 by a group of professional designers and industry leaders who sought to promote the use of design in Australian industry and improve the competitiveness of Australian products in overseas markets.\textsuperscript{182}

and the society established premises at an early stage. In 1978 the Potters Society was the first organisation to hold a major national specialist conference.

\textsuperscript{176}For details of other potters societies see Grace Cochrane op cit (1992) Chapters 4, 6, 8

\textsuperscript{177}‘Pottery exhibit from Australia’ Sydney Morning Herald 18 April 1955

\textsuperscript{178}Suburban and country embroiderers groups were formed from the early 1960s, and by 1971, when membership had reached over 2000, the NSW guild was autonomous. A library was established from the beginning; from 1958 instructional portfolios were prepared; and the monthly journal the \textit{Record} was published from 1960. An extensive collection of historical and modern embroidery was begun. Guilds followed in other states,\textsuperscript{178} often also starting as affiliated branches of the formal group affiliated to the Embroiderers Guild of Great Britain.

\textsuperscript{179}Interview with Meg Douglas (1986)

\textsuperscript{180}The first professional organisation to appear in Australia was the Society of Designers for Industry (SDI), which was formed in Victoria in 1948, following a number of earlier specialist societies such as: the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (1929); the Women’s Industrial Arts Society (1935); the Australian Commercial and Industrial Artists Association (ACIAA 1937); the Design and Industries Association (DIA 1940). See Michael Bogle \textit{Design in Australia} (1997) 111-116

\textsuperscript{181}Interior Designers Association (IDA1951); Society of Industrial Designers Australia (SIDA 1958). The SDI joined the IDA to form the Industrial Design Institute of Australia (IDIA) in 1958. See Michael Bogle ibid (1997) 111-116 and \textit{Design in Australia} 25th anniversary issue Nov 1983

\textsuperscript{182}Geoffrey Caban \textit{Careers in Design} (1987) 46 and Michael Bogle ibid (1997) 116
These design organisations, with their later government-subsidised design centres and journals, were to provide a professional 'modern' model for craftspeople. Many designers also belonged to crafts organisations, or displayed craftworks in display interiors, design showrooms and publications. As professional crafts organisations developed in the 1960s, they were generally keen to identify, or adopt, designers using 'crafts' materials (like screenprinted and woven textiles, timber furniture and ceramics) to complement their own professional identity.

Crafts communities
For the most part, craftspeople wanted little to do with industry at this time, and were more preoccupied in establishing a way of working that suited a crafts ideology. Some found the most supportive environment in small groups or communities, where they could set up workshops or studios.

From the 1940s, a few groups of craftspeople developed, who worked together in communities, often as families, for mutual artistic and economic support. These centres became a focus for the crafts movement as it started to develop a national identity and voice in the 1960s, for the way they provided an example of a working way of life around the crafts. Some were undoubtedly modelled on earlier English and American communities. They were no doubt also aware of the artists camps, such as those associated with the painters of the 'Heidelberg School' in Australia in the late nineteenth century, and especially, more recently, the philosophies of the version of the Japanese folk-craft movement as it was publicised through Bernard Leach's writing from 1940.

Even the groups that were not crafts-based, were nonetheless perceived as a model of 'community'. Richard Haese describes the 'flight either to inner or outer Melbourne', for example, as the representation of a 'desire for a flexible, permissive and creative sense of community', and the recognition that suburbia contained the suburban mentality of petit-bourgeois values which were highly conservative, and a danger to freedom, creativity and progress.

During the 1930s the area round Eltham and Warrandyte on the outskirts of Melbourne, had become a place where artists - poets, writers and painters - came to live and work. Collectors and supporters of contemporary art, John and Sunday Reed, moved to Heide, the old weatherboard farmhouse in the orcharding and dairying area near Heidelberg in 1935, providing a focus for talk and work.

183 Models of crafts communities included C. R. Ashbee's Guild of Handicraft at Chipping Camden in England and the various co-operative groups like the Roycroft and Stickley workshops in the United States.
184 Richard Haese Rebels and Precursors, the Revolutionary Years of Australian Art (1981) 28
185 Penleigh Boyd, Connie Smith and artist Danila Vassilief, Clive and Janet Nield with their progressive school 'Koornong', playwright Adrian Lawlor and writer Alan Marshall all lived there.
In 1910 Merric Boyd had established himself as a potter, and later, with his wife Doris, set up a studio at Open Country Cottage at Murrumbeena in Victoria. The large Boyd household grew up with painting and potting around them, so when Arthur Boyd and his friend John Perceval were discharged from the army in 1944 it seemed natural to set up a pottery at Murrumbeena, near his parents, to make domestic wares for sale to help meet the postwar demand, and thus finance their painting. They set up what they called the Arthur Merric Boyd Pottery, and as well as making commercial pieces for sale through the Ministry of Labour and National Service, Boyd and Perceval also made individual functional and sculptural works, while a third partner, Peter Herbst, managed the books.

During the 1940s Open Country Cottage became a haven not just for the Boyd family, but also their friends, ‘becoming more and more a loose colony of artists and intellectuals - one of the very few enclaves that established themselves in the early forties to offer protection to radical modernists against the benumbing conservatism of Australian middle-class society’.

Boyd and Perceval decorated their work in the manner of painters, often using religious or mythological imagery or painting comic scenes, in brushed underglaze colours.

In 1935 Justus Jorgensen had moved his extended family to Eltham on the outskirts of Melbourne. Trained as an architect and an ex-student of painter Max Meldrum, he began to establish a community at Montsalvat, characteristically using pisé-de-terre and local stone to construct ‘pseudo-medieval buildings’. Jeweller and metalworker Matcham Skipper, who grew up and continued to live at Montsalvat, recalls Jorgensen as:

...a great talker and discoursor, interested in psychology and behaviour, and capable of firing people’s imaginations - the look of stone, the feel of wood - he used all that when he built up the dream of Montsalvat. He said that others shared money, whereas he believed in sharing labour so he could do things on a grander scale. It was the age when a lot of communities started; he said none of the American communities survived after the invention of the bicycle.

The ideals of skilled self-sufficiency were models for many outside the community, although Skipper observed that ‘the Reeds thought Jorgensen was dragging up a dead tradition, following up an ideal of skill as art. They were

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186 Peter Timms Australian Studio Pottery and China Painting 1900-1950 (1986) 62
187 Some artists worked a little in the Arthur Merric Boyd (AMB) pottery, while others stayed much longer, such as Neil Douglas, who introduced landscape painting to the pottery and eventually bought out Herbst’s partnership. Though painting came first, pottery was an important activity for Boyd and Perceval, and by the end of the 1940s they were working on their own projects, often using the pottery, though by then they lived elsewhere. See Peter Timms ibid (1986) 69. See also Geoffrey Serle, The Creative Spirit in Australia (1987)
188 Peter Timms op cit (1986) 27
into art as expression of social attitudes - human emotions, myths, expression of human spirit.' 189

Potters Cottage was established in 1958 when five Warrandyte potters pooled their resources to set up a co-operative venture for selling their work.190 Potters Cottage originated after the group decided to have a Christmas sale. Reg Preston recalls: ‘Gus put cartoon signs on the road for five miles...people poured in; when it was all over we had a huge dish of Phyl’s full of pound notes. This went on, with sale days once a year for a couple of years. Before that we put work in suitcases and took the bus or train to town - some to Edith McMillan at the Primrose Pottery Shop in Melbourne; cups and saucers to Margaret Jaye in Rowe Street in Sydney in the early 1950s. She was a demon; she wanted all production for eight shillings and sixpence a cup and saucer, in six colours.'191 The establishment of Potters Cottage, however, proved not only to be important as a sales outlet, but also as a focal point for others to gather, talk and share their interest and information - even those from interstate.

One of the most influential models for the crafts movement was Sturt, a group of workshops set up in 1941 in rural Mittagong, New South Wales, by Winifred West when she retired as headmistress from Frensham School, which she had established in 1913.192 This quite amazing woman was remarkably progressive in philosophical and educational issues.193 Her greatest concerns were the development of imaginative thinking and original work, and the relationship of the individual to the community. In 1966 she argued:

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189 The Skipper family had joined Jorgensen at an early stage of the development, helping build the first pisé house, when Matcham Skipper was 12 years old. Formal training was scoffed at: 'Why go to university when there was someone like Jorgensen?' In the ensuing years, writers, poets, artists and craftspeople came and went at Montsalvat, though the Skipper and Jorgensen families remained. Interview with Matcham Skipper (1986)

190 Reg Preston had been working in Warrandyte since 1947, while Phyl Dunn had gone up originally to study painting with Danila Vassilief, and stayed to work with Preston. With Arthur Halpern, Gus McLaren, Charles Wilton, and John Hipwell as president, they raised capital of £100 and established themselves in Moonlight Cottage, an old wattle and daub structure reputedly built at night by a goldminer in the 1890s. Interview with Reg Preston (1986)

191 Reg Preston ibid (1986)

192 From its small start in 1941, teaching spinning and weaving, woodwork, painting, writing and composing simple tunes, to a small number of children, adult classes were added and new crafts introduced. In 1946 the wood workshop was built and the production weaving workshop was first set up in 1951 by Erika Gretschel (later Semler), a young weaver brought by Miss West from Germany, and the first professional person to be employed.

193 Les Blakebrough, who was manager of Sturt for over a decade in the 1960s, remembered her saying, “'Miracles will happen if you let them.' Winifred enveloped anyone; she was tireless, it was amazing the way she could get people on side.” He adds that her colleague Ruth Ainsworth also 'had a connection with [Rudolf] Steiner, and got involved in England with, for example, weaver Ethel Mairet and Roger Fry as well as Bernard Leach'. Interview with Les Blakebrough (1986)
Too much emphasis has been placed on the accumulation of knowledge which is useful for passing examinations and too little on creative activities of mind and hand...Education should be concerned with experience and expression as well as with booklearning; it should be concerned with the development of the whole person, but we see the tragic waste of undeveloped talents and unexercised faculties. 194

Elisabeth Nagel, who had been brought to Sturt from Germany to run the weaving workshop in 1959, knew Miss West very well:

Sturt grew out of two things: it was heavily influenced by Morris in England, and by a whole philosophy of education tied up with that hand and mind, and the love of gardening. Ruth Ainsworth, who was the art mistress at Frensham, had gone back to England and worked with Bernard Leach, and returned in 1936 and brought back spinning wheels, and one of the looms. The whole idea of Sturt was an educative one. Girls left school at 14. Winifred West thought it a good idea that they have another year to provide a broader education, so Sturt was founded for the local community in that sense, with drama, English, spinning and weaving, but the war came and this influenced the direction. Local women suffered shortages, and needed to be more self-sufficient, so they learned to spin and weave. Sturt only crystallised after about 1950 when it started to employ professional craftspeople to run some of its affairs and classes. 195

The pottery workshop followed in 1954 becoming the first studio pottery in New South Wales to produce stoneware from local materials. In 1952 Miss West had persuaded Ivan McMeekin to return from England, where he had been working for three and a half years with potter Michael Cardew, himself a former student of Bernard Leach. At that stage only a few potters were working in stoneware, so not only did the buildings and equipment at Sturt have to be designed and built, but research had to be done into local clays and glazes as well. The introduction of professional craftspeople such as Erika Gretschel, the first weaver, and McMeekin, with very different motives, aims, needs and activities, radically changed the focus of Sturt’s activities. Ivan McMeekin recalled:

I think [Miss West] viewed my activities as too destructive to continue. And I suppose from her viewpoint, and given her values, she was right. As a philanthropic administrator she was primarily concerned with the people involved, their personal development, their welfare and happiness. I viewed them as members of a team which existed only to bring a particular sort of beauty into existence. In return for their hard work and long hours...they also

194 Winifred West ‘Sturt Summer School (1966)’ in Priscilla Kennedy op cit (1973) 89
195 Interview with Elisabeth Nagel (1986). Before she arrived in 1959, Nagel had been running a workshop in the Black Forest. Her training had been to enable her to train apprentices, to run a master workshop, or to design for industry, but she would have had to have worked another three years in order to teach in Germany. She had ‘never encountered amateurs’. In Australia, she thought that no one took weaving seriously because it had been used as occupational therapy.
received a training which I feel has stood them all in very good stead. So it was a profound change, which the Sturt Association did not like or accept.\textsuperscript{196}

In reviewing the twenty-first annual October exhibition in 1962, architect Tom Heath observed that ‘the great aim and achievement of Sturt has been in providing a working model of an institution which can serve the needs of the master craftsman, of education and of a rural community’.\textsuperscript{197} Until the early 1980s, when other centres had developed in art schools and government-supported crafts workshops, Sturt remained one of the strongest centres of professional crafts activity in Australia.\textsuperscript{198} It provided a most important model, where few others existed, for professional studio crafts practice and apprenticeship in clay, weaving and metalwork, and a practical example of an ideology that most people aspired to - and in an idyllic rural community. Everyone important in the international crafts world visited Sturt or gave workshops there, and it was a necessary pilgrimage for anyone travelling from interstate.

\textit{The crafts movement and social change}

The crafts movement, alongside developments in the visual arts and design, was to gain strength in the 1960s at a time of rapid social change and increasing dissatisfaction with the ‘Australian dream’ of postwar security. The sixties, in Australia as elsewhere, were characterised by a broad questioning of authority and conventions across social and political structures.\textsuperscript{199} Many of the protests came from youth, but artists, academics, intellectuals, business-people and the general public also took part. These sections of the community were not just protesting about specific issues; they were asking questions about inequalities of opportunity for a number of groups they believed to be disadvantaged. They recognised that their different views on issues such as gender, race and the protection of the environment had been suppressed through what were to be called the ‘colonising’ or ‘imperialist’ ideals of those in power or reflecting a mainstream or official view.\textsuperscript{200}

\textsuperscript{196}Letter to author from Ivan McMeekin (1986)
\textsuperscript{197}Tom Heath in \textit{Architecture Australia} 1962, reprinted in \textit{Pottery in Australia} May 1963
\textsuperscript{198}Sturtmetal, the jewellery and metal workshop, was added in 1969 with Ray Norman managing it until 1985, and in 1973 a screenprinting, dyeing and graphic design workshop was set up with Richard and Dilys Brecknock.
\textsuperscript{199}In Europe the key point of dissatisfaction was the eruption of student riots in Paris and other centres in 1968, as an expression of frustration at suppressive education systems. For the United States of America, and for Australia, questioning of authority was related to involvement in the Vietnam war.
\textsuperscript{200}For example: it was seen that social structures like a gender-based language affected the social, political and economic status of women; questioning social structures also gave strength to those seeking racial equality: anti-apartheid demonstrations against South Africa and the Black Rights movement in the United States reinforced the Aboriginal protest movement and its supporters in Australia; concerns for the protection of the environment
Changes in thinking towards broader social and ethical concerns were direct criticisms of the longstanding ideal that 'progress' was related to 'development'. A number of countercultural moves were associated with social protest; many individuals and groups - like those in crafts communities - opted to remove themselves from the offending social structures and seek a more satisfying life on the city fringes, or in the country: seeking an 'alternative lifestyle'.

Margaret Munro-Clark's analysis of the development of rural communes in Australia during the sixties and into the seventies provides some basis for understanding the swell of interest in the simultaneous crafts movement. She points out that previously, social (and therefore political and economic) constraints of class, religion and gender had given people an unquestioned sense of identity and place. However, the multiple options for choice provided by the modern world broke down many of these belief systems and left a need for people to pursue their own individuality, often with a new, reinforcing group.

The pursuit of 'counter-modernisation' by those in the developing rural communes was also an underlying motive for many of those in the crafts movement.201

**Public perception of the crafts**

The ways in which the crafts were perceived or valued was reflected in the ways in which their products were sold or seen.

Public galleries in the 1920s and 1930s had collected mostly 'fine' art, although some important collections and bequests of overseas decorative arts made at this time later proved very influential as study collections to later practitioners.202 From the 1930s the most important venues for prestigious travelling and local exhibitions were the galleries in the big city department stores like David Jones, Georges and Farmers.203

However, in each centre, small outlets had provided a marketplace that reflected both the taste of the time for an alternative to imported commercial wares, and the preferences of the makers. Locally made items not only

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201 Margaret Munro-Clark *Communes in Rural Australia, the Movement since 1970* (1986)

202 For example, in 1892 a collection of Doulton handpainted pottery was given to the Technological Museum in Sydney; followed by further gifts from Mr John Shorter in 1933 and 1942; in 1938 H.W. Kent gave a collection of Song Chinese ceramics to the National Gallery of Victoria.

203 For example, Georges in Melbourne and the David Jones Gallery and Farmers in Sydney; for details of exhibitions at this time, and for examples of shops and galleries in most capital cities, see Grace Cochrane *The Crafts Movement in Australia: a History* (1992) Chapter 2.
provided a 'personal' hand-made identity: they were also readily available: Australian markets remained far from the traditional sources of manufacture. Much work was made as gifts for family and friends, while a great deal of work had been sold through Arts and Crafts society exhibitions, as a way of providing economic independence for the makers. Some small independent shops were very influential: in Melbourne, for example, the most fondly remembered place was the Primrose Pottery Shop, opened by Edith and Betty MacMillan in 1929.204

As well as the still important British magazine Studio, influential Australian popular magazines were among the few publications to document tastes in art, crafts, design and architecture.205 A number of artists and craftspeople such as Margaret Preston, Marguerite Mahood and Eva Butchart contributed articles to magazines and to the Arts and Crafts Society newsletters, and Marguerite Mahood had also pioneered crafts information programs on the new ABC (Australian Broadcasting Commission) radio after 1932.206

Gradually some display rooms were set up in association with the development of interior design as a profession. In some cases these display rooms offered Australian fabrics, furniture and ceramics, and in others introduced imported 'designed' products, especially, later, from Scandinavia. These well-made, well-designed items were significant models not just for craftspeople, but also for the buying public. The early design showrooms included Margo Lewers's Notanda in Sydney in 1936,207 furniture designer Frederick Ward's outlet in Melbourne from 1932208 and textile designer Frances Burke's209 first outlet, Good Design, in Hardware Street, Melbourne, in 1948. As well as selling their own work they showed that of other designers and sought to have the works included in interior design commissions. Design was also promoted through the ABC's series of radio talks in 1941 'Design in Everyday Things', which was accompanied by a booklet of the same name.

Following the lead of the United States in particular, this period saw the emergence of dealer galleries in Australia, and while these were mostly

204 At various addresses, mostly in Little Collins Street, until its closure in 1973, the Primrose Pottery Shop offered imported prints, pots and other objects. The MacMillans were very selective in what they chose to sell: they provided encouragement and the possibility of an income for many, and were influential in developing public attitudes to locally made, as well as overseas work.
205 These magazines included New Idea (1902), Women's World (1921), The Home (1920), Australian Women's Mirror (1926), Art in Australia (1916), Australian Women's Weekly (1933) and Home Beautiful (c.1900)
206 As did the Misses Hirst, Allen and Booth on stations 2GB and 2UW for the Society of Arts and Crafts of New South Wales in 1931. Caroline Miley records members of the Arts and Crafts Society of Victoria being involved with radio programs in 1929.
207 Notanda was later run by Margo Lewers's brother Carl Plate in Rowe Street.
208 Later run in 1934-35 by Cynthia Reed as Cynthia Reed Modern Furnishings.
209 Frances Burke established the screenprinting business Burway Prints in 1937, becoming Frances Burke Fabrics in 1942.
interested in painting, some supported the crafts, particularly pottery, in their early years. Harold Hughan’s exhibition at Georges’ Gallery in Melbourne in 1950 was the first one-person stoneware pottery exhibition in Australia (see Plate 8: following page). Hughan was not to have another for many years; his practice, by contrast, was to have a ‘kiln-opening day’ at which his work was sold. By the 1960s Les Blakebrough remembers the queues for pots at some of the Macquarie Galleries exhibitions in Sydney, where visitors were given a numbered tag, so they would be sure of a fair turn in the purchasing order.

Locally made crafts were often seen as part of an exotic bohemia, as audiences and customers ‘acquired’ the lifestyle and philosophy of the makers along with their purchases. Until the redevelopment of central Sydney in the 1960s, the range of shops and galleries in Rowe Street in the 1950s was a focus for everyone interested in the arts and a bohemian way of life. A compilation of nostalgic memories from anyone who was in Sydney at the time, including satirist Barry Humphries who referred to it in one of his shows, describes it as the street of the beatniks, coffee and spaghetti, where the first coloured shirts and corduroy trousers were worn.

An example of dealer galleries and the importance they had in their communities was the Johnstone Gallery in Brisbane from 1952. Denis Pryor observes that when the gallery first opened there was no pottery of any quality being made in Brisbane, and it pioneered the importation of Scandinavian ware, still regarded as ‘excessively avant-garde’ in Brisbane.

After some unsuccessful shows of Australian pots, Johnstone tried again in 1959 with David and Hermia Boyd, and their exhibition of a thousand pieces of pottery was an ‘instant hit’. But it was still early days for professional displays. When potter Milton Moon exhibited his ceramics in the Rudy

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210 Kenneth Hood, who became a collector of Hughan’s work, would take a stool and sit by the front door. ‘The Hughans would be besieged in their little house in Glen Iris. People would begin to arrive around twelve o’clock for the opening at two, and would stand around until the doors opened, and surge in. ‘HRH’ would hide in the pottery or crouch in the house with the blinds down; people would be making excuses and try in all sorts of ways to get in early.’ Interview with Kenneth Hood (1986)

211 Other galleries in Sydney were the Clune, Rudy Komon, and the Hungry Horse galleries. The Barry Stern gallery started in 1959, and in 1963 Ann Von Bertouch opened the Bertouch Gallery in Newcastle.

212 Margaret Jaye sold work from local potters and from those as far afield as the Potters Cottage at Warrandyte; Anina offered ‘modern jewellery, quarryz, chunky and Scandinavian’; Rowe Street Records was ‘the best record shop in Sydney’; Carl Plate sold imported prints in his gallery, Notanda; and the Society of Arts and Crafts provided a wide range of work in their shop. Marion Hall Best and Dora Sweetapple, in their interior design showroom, ‘were like a honey-pot where we all went on Saturday mornings, and there were a couple of exciting milliner’s shops next door’. Interviews with Moira Kerr, Peter Travis, Darani Lewers, 1986-90

213 Brian Johnstone’s first gallery, opened in 1952 in the basement of the Brisbane Arcade, later moving to a suburban gallery in Bowen Hills. Casual openings on Sundays were held in the two cottages, a courtyard and garden. Denis Pryor Focus on Milton Moon (1967)
In 1969, when this photograph was taken, Harold Hughan’s work was ‘a revelation even to his most fervent admirers... For art is not a visit to an art gallery or an expensive picture hung on a wall as a status symbol. Neither is it a recreation for the idle or a luxury for the rich. Art either informs the whole of life or it is nothing.’ Professor Joseph Burke in Kenneth Hood Harold Hughan, catalogue for second retrospective exhibition, 1983.

Harold Hughan’s (1893-1987) remarkable career as a potter spanned from 1941 when he made this wheel using the drive-shaft of an abandoned truck, until the mid-1980s when he turned ninety. Influenced by the writings of Bernard Leach, and the Kent collection of Chinese ceramics in the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne, his first solo exhibition in 1950 was also the first solo exhibition of stoneware pottery in Australia. This photograph was taken for his first retrospective exhibition of 440 pots at the National Gallery of Victoria in 1969, the first potter given an exhibition of this scale, in this art gallery.
Komon Gallery in Sydney in 1962, Robert Hughes commented that: 'Visually Komon's is the least attractive gallery in Sydney. It is also one of the smallest. And so the pottery, jam-packed on rickety wooden shelves covered with ragged hessian and supported on battered bricks, gives the gallery the look of a rather cheerless jumble sale. To make it worse, the shelves are at knee-level, so that one has to choose between staring down the mouth of a pot, and circumnavigating the room on all fours.'\(^{214}\)

The fact that a young and aspiring art critic like Robert Hughes was reviewing an exhibition of ceramics at this time is significant. When *Craft Australia* editor April Hersey ran a series of nation-wide seminars to find ‘critical writers’ for the crafts in 1980, she found that in most centres art critics worked part-time, had dozens of galleries to cover with limited newspaper space and had little financial assistance towards expenses. By comparison, Peter Rushforth recalled that ‘when he had begun his life as a potter every newspaper had a critic and that he could expect comments from half a dozen sources in Sydney alone if an exhibition was important enough.’\(^{215}\)

It seems that by the 1950s the crafts were accepted as a parallel but different activity to the fine arts and design, and valued for being useful objects that also made symbolic connections that audiences at that time valued in relation to a ‘crafts’ way of life.

**Conclusion**

The contemporary crafts movement in Australia grew primarily out of the ideals and example of the earlier English Arts and Crafts movement, which had a close relationship with both architects and artists, but also had a strong social purpose.

However, although craftspeople were critical of Modernism, the crafts movement was inevitably influenced from the 1950s by the equally influential modern design developments from, for example, British contemporary design; the effects of the Bauhaus design school and its influential American offshoots and their experimentation with new materials; and in German, Italian and Scandinavian design industries.

By the 1950s there was an acceptance in Australia of the diverse values of practices across art, crafts, design and architecture, and on the valid role of the client or consumer in relation to the designer or maker. Sometimes the social aspects of the crafts bordered on the therapeutic, through both rehabilitation activities as part of war work; sometimes they were somewhat romantic in their invention of ‘new traditions’ as part of a community endeavour.

\(^{214}\)Robert Hughes *Sunday Mirror* 11 November 1962 52, cited in Pryor ibid (1967) 41
\(^{215}\)April Hersey editorial *Craft Australia* 1980/4 18
The developing movement was central to very serious postwar desires to be more closely involved with the environment and human, rather than industrial, values, through skilled professional practice and a sense of community.

The next chapter will discuss some of the different influences from the 1960s that were to encourage some in the crafts movement to pursue art ideals in their work.