

Alan Crawford, *C.R. Ashbee: Architect, Designer and Romantic Socialist*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. 1985. 499 pages, 220 black and white illustrations; 20 color plates. \$45.00

For his imaginative and influential contributions to the literature, theory and design of the Arts and Crafts Movement in Great Britain and America, Charles Robert Ashbee (1863–1942) has figured prominently in the writings of architectural and cultural historians since Nikolaus Pevsner's 1936 book, *Pioneers of the Modern Movement: From William Morris to Walter Gropius*. Subsequently, and especially of late in the numerous books that survey the Arts and Crafts Movement or examine its significant designers such as Voysey, Morris, Baillie Scott, Mackintosh or Wright, scholars have recognized Ashbee's original or not-so-original ideas regarding the role of the individual craftsman, the architect, the applied arts, the machine and the small workshop in a modern industrialized society. While Ashbee's name appears in the indices of countless books which explore Arts and Crafts design and Victorian culture, it has remained the commendable occupation of Alan Crawford, design historian and Chairman of the Victorian Society, to write a highly informative biography examining Ashbee's complicated life and pioneering work as architect and designer. In the end, the reader learns that Ashbee's energy to pursue his idealistic goals, influenced by the writings and efforts of John Ruskin and William Morris, affected every one of his projects from London in the 1890s to Jerusalem in the early 1920s.

Considering all of Ashbee's pursuits and travels as educator, social reformer, preservationist, architect, author, and designer, Crawford arranges his text in three parts. First he documents Ashbee's entire biography, then examines his career as an architect and designer for the successful Guild of Handicraft, and concludes with an assessment of Ashbee's influential reputation which, in the years after 1900 and im-

mediately following the Guild's 1908 demise, had spread beyond the Arts and Crafts Movement to progressive architects in the United States, Germany, and Austria. By the time the book closes, Crawford has revealed the many facets of Ashbee's labyrinthine character, provided ample discussion of Ashbee's family, friends and professional contacts as well as relevant investigation of those multiple economic, political and social factors of Victorian culture which shaped Ashbee's life and career. For the architectural historian, among others interested in the Arts and Crafts movement, Crawford has profiled an extraordinary architect, one not only with a sense for beautiful and often original design in architecture and the applied arts, but also one with innovative and lasting theories and axioms for reform in industry and the arts.

Crawford maintains that for Ashbee—the “practical idealist” of the Arts and Crafts Movement—Ruskinian ideals such as the quality of life for the craftsman, the dignity of his labor and the individuality of beautiful design were crucial goals. They stimulated Ashbee's “Guild Idea” and contributed to the Guild of Handicraft's accomplishments in silverwork, jewelry, furniture, interior decoration, and book design. According to Crawford, Ashbee's “legacy from Ruskin was a long, patient, and professedly practical questioning of the value of modern industry.”

In the extensive first part of his book, Crawford skillfully portrays a prominent British architect, whose background is intimately tied to German and English mercantile families successful during the Industrial Revolution. After an early childhood in Hamburg, Ashbee was raised within the Victorian middle class setting of London during the 1870s and 1880s. In the 1880s, Ashbee sets off for King's College, Cambridge, where, intoxicated with the communal life of a recently reformed intellectual environment, he meets such influential personalities as Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson and Edward Carpenter. Through them and other Cam-