Beneath the Surface
The Aesthetic and Ideological Appropriation of Native American Artwork

BY

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THESIS

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This thesis is dedicated to my best friend and partner, Greg Nosan, without whom it would not have been possible.
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ABSTRACT

Beneath the Surface
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by

Brandon Ruud

Advisor: Professor Ellen Taylor Baird

During the last decades of the nineteenth century and into the first two of the twentieth, progressive reformers concerned themselves with a variety of social issues that seemed to be altering the very fabric of American society and its spirit, among them immigration, industrialization, and urbanization. Ideologues harnessed the Arts and Crafts movement’s message of dignity in labor and a return to handcrafting to advance an agenda of reform that encompassed the fine and decorative arts and was designed to improve health, housing, and immigration. To their minds, art had the power to enact change through the social engineering of society as a whole and especially children, providing a method of redirecting attitudes during a period of seeming upheaval.

Expanding on previous scholarship, this study surveys the fine and decorative arts created during this period through the lens of postcolonial theory and examines how artists and critics depicted both Anglo-American and Native American labor in images and words. More to the point, however, the project provides the first thorough analysis of how reform crusaders employed Native American art and lifeways as a guiding force to enact change and control society: Perceived as instinctual and spiritual,
indigenous art and craft provided an improving antidote to the perceived degradation of American culture and society.

During this period, as the middle class expanded and interior design gained traction as a professional pursuit, domestic shelter magazines rose in popularity. This study provides a careful investigation of both the images and prose in the pages of these journals, considering how they furthered the movement’s reform agenda by co-opting Native American art and culture for an Anglo-American audience. In addition, the project focuses on how artists and architects during this period—from painters such as Thomas Eakins and George de Forest Brush to architects and designers including Susan Frackelton, Gustav Stickley, and Frank Lloyd Wright—adopted the mantle of reformist theories regarding America’s indigenous population, and, as a result, wrestled with incorporating non-Western sources into their creations and justifying their presence.
Chapter 1

The Aesthetic and Ideological Appropriation of Native American Art during the Arts and Crafts Period

Introduction

At its root, this project addresses the aesthetic and ideological appropriation of Native American artwork and material culture by Anglo-American architects, artists, designers, ideologues, and tastemakers at the turn of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These individuals mined Native America not only for subjects and visual inspiration, but for methods of construction and techniques as well. More than this, however, these cultural critics employed a romantic ideal of Native American life and labor as a model for Anglo-American civilization and society during a period of unprecedented transformation that included increasing industrialization, modernization, and urbanization. For artists and reformers associated with the Arts and Crafts movement, Native American art served as a pedagogical tool with which to enforce strict gender norms at a time of changing family and labor structures: indigenous design at home could serve to instruct young boys in productive, wholesome manliness, while training girls and young women in Native American crafts guided them into appropriate, genteel forms of labor.

This dissertation explores these concepts through the recognized theme of modernism and antimodernism, showing how Native Americans functioned as
both an ideal and an admonishment to white culture. On the one hand, they served as a paradigm of perfect labor, as they were imagined to work in nature for pure pleasure and the love of creation, free from any of the shabby, dehumanizing aspects of modern factory life and the political agitation it produced. On the other hand, Native Americans themselves provided a source of constant, exploitable, and inexpensive artistic labor, creating wares that could decorate middle-class homes and provide the aesthetic nourishment needed to evade production but reinforce bourgeois capitalism.

The goal of this project is to explore and contextualize the aesthetic and ideological appropriation of Native American and Mesoamerican artwork within a postcolonial and transnational framework. In doing so, it examines not only the visual and technical influences that Native American art had on its Anglo-American counterpart, but also the terms in which Anglo-Americans idealized Native Americans and their artwork. Seminal postcolonial texts that have raised issues of hybridity in cultural production; the modernist/antimodernist dichotomy of cultural tourism; the sources and uses of Native American labor; and the typologies with which scholars have investigated and written on Native American architecture, art, and culture and their appropriation will be reviewed and examined.
Recent scholars of American Indian culture have made strides in contextualizing Native American art in terms of the late nineteenth-century Arts and Crafts movement, as well as in investigating the social constructs that encompassed Native American labor and Anglo-America’s search for authenticity during a period of industrialization and modernization. In addition, some recent studies have also explored issues of gender in Native American artistic production through visual analyses and documentation of American Indian craftspeople. Rarely, however, have scholars concerned themselves with how the issue of gender asserted itself in mainstream Anglo-American labor, and only recently have they begun to explore how Native American technical strategies influenced Anglo-American artwork as a source of method and practice. This dissertation will address some of these gaps in current scholarship, placing emphasis on the marketing and methods of gender construction as well as on the importance of American Indian design and artistic practice as a cultural, gender, and social issue, not just a formal one.

Native America, Postcolonialism, and Transculturation

Henry Farny’s painting Song of the Talking Wire from 1904 (fig. 1.1) neatly sums up the discourse, developed and codified at the end of the nineteenth century, that perpetuated a strict racial divide in which Native Americans existed entirely separate from white, hegemonic society. In this canvas, a Plains Indian warrior leans against a telephone pole, as a series of further wooden poles and wires
recede into the distant, snow-covered and scrubby grassland. The figure is draped in a painted bison robe and wears moccasins, and he cradles a rifle in the crook of his left arm, alternate symbols of Plains Indians crafts on the one hand and American industrial advancement on the other; the decayed and dried bison skull in the far left middle-ground further alludes to the destruction and decline of Native American culture and life. The figure’s slumped posture and furrowed brow register both bewilderment and anger at the telephone and its infrastructure dotting his land, suggesting that this Anglo-American technology will ultimately serve to displace him and interrupt his “traditional” way of life. White American society itself, however, was subject to the same cultural disruptions brought by industrialization and modernization at the end of the nineteenth century, including immigration, urbanization, and labor transitions. Critics and writers at the turn of the century constructed their dialogues about indigenous and Anglo-American cultural conflicts in much the same way: as American ingenuity crashing unannounced, full-force into Native American isolation and purity.

To set the stage for this dissertation, this initial chapter reviews both current and seminal scholarship on transculturation (as well as its philosophical progenitors) and places the writings on Native American artwork, experience, and history at the turn of the nineteenth century within this framework. The goal here is to apply some of the foundational theories of postcolonial literature to issues of
class, gender, and labor in the United States at the turn of the nineteenth century and place the established concepts of hybridity, mimicry, and regeneration within the context of the Anglo-American understanding of indigenous people and their participation in their crafts, both as commodity and practice. This dissertation resulted from several years of study of seminal texts on American art and foundational works on postcolonialism, as well as recent literature on American alterity and Native American studies. I started with one basic question: could classic postcolonial literature—and the more recent studies of Native American art and culture they’ve inspired—that have typically emphasized orientalism and south Asian communities be applied to indigenous American culture? Specifically, I researched and questioned the ways in which Anglo-Americans adapted Native American experience to their own art and design and how hegemonic culture developed a science-based ideology in which to create and promote it.

As a starting point, several texts were extremely influential on the development of my ideas and thinking and thus this dissertation: T. J. Jackson Lears’s *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880–1920* and Philip Deloria’s *Playing Indian*. Lears explores the resurgence of republican moralism, which held that humanity’s innate corruption was doomed by a cyclical process of overcivilization; this took on new meaning at the turn of the nineteenth century as a reaction against industrialization and modernization and
its negative consequences: an ailing and effete middle class. As a means of reform, artists and ideologues turned their attention toward the search for authentic experience as a remedy. Lears describes this search for a specifically “authentic” experience as a characteristically modern phenomenon, one that led to a variety of cultural excursions, from bourgeois hobbyism to the establishment of therapeutic handicraft guilds to a fascination with “primitive” art and cultures. The intended result of these efforts was not the actual reform of society but rather personal regeneration, a “psychic release,” as Lears terms it, that only legitimized modern industrial capitalism. This pursuit for authenticity in the primitive is what Lears has designated the “antimodern,” a corollary to the modern experience.

In his analysis of episodes in American history in which Anglo-Americans adopted Native American dress or practices for creative, political, or social reasons, Deloria argues that, at the turn of the nineteenth century, modernism and antimodernism were mutually dependent. To reaffirm modern identity, the author claims, Americans needed to experience the antimodern, and the “authentic” was culturally constructed as an antidote to the apparent state of modern inauthenticity. The “mutually constitutive nature of modern/antimodern practices” — that is, playing Indian in order to develop into a prosperous, middle-class professional — “typified the many touristic escapes
that defined modern life.”¹ Deloria argues that the quest for an authentic Other is a characteristically modern phenomenon: the search for authenticity is a culturally constructed antidote to the perceived state of modern society’s inauthenticity. Thus, “playing Indian” in order to develop into a successful professional typified the touristic escapes that defined modern life. In his study, Deloria identifies two types of “Indianess”: Interior and Exterior. Exterior Indians existed outside the societal boundaries of modernity and thus represented positive qualities of authenticity, while Interior Indians existed within American social boundaries and symbolized the negative qualities antithetical to the Exterior Indian—alcoholism and laziness—and were thus examples of the corrosive effects of modern society.²

Deloria’s assessment of the search for a primitive “other” to reinvigorate a degraded Western society recalls what Edward Said in his critique of Orientalist scholarship labeled “regeneration,” a faith in “the regeneration of Europe by Asia….It was Indian culture and religion that could defeat the materialism and mechanism of Occidental culture,” and thus “arise a new, revitalized Europe.”³

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² Deloria, Playing Indian.
While Said was speaking specifically of Middle Eastern and Asian cultures, his theory applies equally to America’s attitude toward and treatment of its colonized peoples. Indeed, historian Patricia Nelson Limerick specifically adapted this idea to the American West, writing that “these Indians were a lesson…to civilization.”

Deloria’s “touristic escapes” into playing Indian as a solution to the perceived ills of Western civilization not only recalls Said’s “regeneration,” but also owes a serious debt to Frantz Fanon, who more forcefully wrote, “The Blacks represent a kind of insurance for humanity in the eyes of the Whites. When the Whites feel they have become too mechanized, they turn to the Coloreds and request a little human sustenance.” It was not, however, Anglo-Americans alone that contributed to the phenomenon of Native American reenactments. According to Deloria, “Indian people participated in the making of Indian Others as never before.” Deloria argues that the inclusion of Native Americans in the process of “miming Indianess” was directed back at Anglo-Americans in an effort to redefine Native American identity. While Deloria relates these acts of “playing Indian” with Homi Bhabha’s concept of hybridity, it might more likely fall under

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6 Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 125
7 Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 125.
the scholar’s description of mimicry. Bhabha defines this term as a “desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite.”8 Thus, assimilated Native Americans with one foot in the hegemonic cultural, educational, and financial systems of the United States also held onto Native American identities and values, but ones that were exaggerated and stereotyped, creations of Anglo-American culture.9

Beginning in the 1990s and continuing into the 2000s, other scholars of Native American and western American culture have applied postcolonial critiques to their analyses of Anglo-America’s reimagining of its indigenous population. In her analysis of the portrayals of Pueblo women carrying ceramic ollas on their heads and their consequences to the Southwest’s tourist economy, Barbara Babcock acknowledges a specific debt to both Bhabha and Said. In her essay “Maids of Palestine,” Babcock argues that what is actually “being consumed (looked at exchanged, collected ) are cultural bodies, female cultural bodies, clay

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9 Bhabha describes the stereotype as “the primary point of subjectification in colonial discourse…the desire for an originality which is again threatened by the difference of race, colour and culture.” Acknowledging a debt to Fanon, Bhabha also declares that “the disavowal of difference turns the colonial subject into a misfit….The stereotype is not a simplification because it is a false representation of a given reality.” See Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 107.
bodies made and used by female bodies,” the camera that shot and then disseminated the images of these bodies itself “a weapon of colonialism.”

Finally, it is worth noting that these antimodern “touristic escapes” extended beyond the acts of collecting Native American art or “playing Indian” to include the act of artistic creation itself, particularly on “mimicking” indigenous techniques. As Elizabeth Hutchinson has successfully demonstrated, at the turn of the nineteenth century, indigenous American art also served as a valuable pedagogical tool for art teachers and ushered in a new visual language of formalism to a wider audience. Contrary to many scholars who interpret the Arts and Crafts movement as a reactionary backward glance, Hutchinson argues that the Arts and Crafts movement’s absorption of Native American art was in fact progressive and introduced to a wide audience non-narrative, abstract qualities of line, pattern, and shape. Moreover, Native American art became a “model for design” that many artists felt “must be tackled.” Indeed, art educators from potter Charles Fergus Binns to painter and printmaker Arthur Wesley Dow employed Native American demonstrations and techniques in their

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12 Hutchinson, *The Indian Craze*, 96.
classrooms to teach the principles of design and encourage their students to “master the relationship between materials and design.”

In her analysis of turn-of-the-century written and visual descriptions of Native American artistic production, Leah Dilworth has argued similarly that indigenous artists represented authenticity, handcrafting, and tradition, an antidote to the perceived artificiality and poverty wrought by industrialization and the modern world. According to then-popular assumptions, native craftspeople took their inspiration from nature; and it was then tradition—or guiding hands—that assisted them in production. Thus, according to Dilworth, “authenticity” exists in two places: nature was the inspiration, and Indian hands acted as the instinctual guide.

In their explorations of turn-of-the-century culture, Deloria, Dilworth, Hutchison, and Lears all touch on gender as a critical aspect of Anglo-America’s interaction with its indigenous population, contextualizing it within their individual studies: for Deloria, Native America represented a path toward masculinization and an entrée into the white middle class; Dilworth explores the

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13 Hutchinson, *The Indian Craze*, 103, 106, 108, and 111–12. Interestingly, Hutchinson describes the desire to employ indigenous techniques as the desire to create new consumables, whereas the discipline of ethnography is the desire to consume Native Americans; see p. 116. For Binns’s experience using Native American techniques, see Charles Fergus Binns, “Building in Clay,” *Craftsman* 4, 4 (July 1903): 303–05.
gendered structure of four principle types of Indian craft images reproduced in books and shelter magazines—basket and textile weavers, potters, and silversmiths—but often the picture were just of an artisan’s hands; Hutchison argues that collecting Native American art was a far more female-driven and metropolitan phenomenon than had previously been studied; and Lears contends that turn-of-the-century civilizing processes—the manual and rest cures for the troubled middle class—took on specific gendered dynamics. As a contribution to the established scholarship on both gender and indigenous studies, this project’s goal is to extend the conversation on those topics beyond just features of collecting and hobbyism, creation and consumption. Instead, I aim to examine it as a value that influenced the very core of American life: as a systematic process of socialization that began in childhood with a goal of integrating American workers into the labor force. It is the dual issues of gender and labor, and how artists, reformers, and writers co-opted Native American craft and design, customs and practices into a practical and visual agenda for workers that this dissertation addresses.

This project’s second significant line of inquiry is how middle-class Americans came into contact with Native American art and culture, and how postcolonial theory has been employed to interpret these forms of exchange. For many Westerners of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, contact came not from actual association with colonized people or their cultures but through the
lens of the imperial powers who collected, catalogued, exhibited, and invited the
general public to view the works in museum displays and especially at
international expositions. The most prevalent theme of world’s fairs during the
nineteenth century was “Progress” — “a willed national activity toward a
determined, Utopian goal” — and exhibition halls of the great fairs displayed the
material culture of non-Western peoples in an evolutionary manner that
legitimized colonial endeavors and imperial conquest for a metropolitan
audience.\footnote{For this interpretation, see Barbara Braun, \textit{Pre-Columbian Art and the Post-Columbian World: Ancient American Sources of Modern Art} (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1993), 23; Robert Rydell, \textit{All the World’s a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1870–1915} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 46–47; and Alan Trachtenberg, \textit{The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age} (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 212–13, 220, and 231. Although beyond the scope of this project, the designation of imperialism as a specifically metropolitan enterprise—a converse to the rural primitivism of colonized peoples—is suggested by Braun, as well as explored by Frantz Fanon and Mary Louise Pratt. See Fanon, \textit{Black Skin White Masks}, 2, and Mary Louise Pratt, \textit{Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation} (London: Routledge, 1992), 6–7.} The trajectory of the displays proclaimed the primacy of science and
technology and the victory of the West, and archaeologists and ethnographers
presented the ancient past along evolutionary lines. By the mid-nineteenth
century, Pre-Columbian artifacts, plaster casts, and models of ancient ruins
became staple exhibits of these expositions, and displays offered an orderly
progression of architectural styles. Pre-Columbian art was proclaimed as worthy
of study as the monuments of the Old World but nonetheless compared with and
presented on an evolutionary timeline with ancient Greece: exhibitors compared
Maya ruins to the Parthenon friezes, leading viewers to contemplate the glories
of Greece and thus the formation of Western civilization. Unlike classical ruins, however, the casts and models of ancient, Pre-Columbian architecture were still largely unstudied and their histories unknown, which allowed archaeologists and curators the opportunity to assemble the canon and create the context for these individual objects. Additionally, stripped of their original context, Westerners could project onto them their own societal values.

Scholarly interpretations of world’s fairs—and the exhibitions of non-Western material culture—over the last thirty years reveal a debt to the ideas and theories of Johannes Fabian, who explores the power structure of time. To Fabian, anthropology conceived of time as secularized, naturalized, and spatialized; natural history reintroduced a kind of specificity of time and place that replaced faith in salvation with faith in progress and industry, contributing to the intellectual justification of the colonial enterprise. Temporal knowledge became part of anthropology’s academic toolkit and was advanced as a higher, active knowledge that offered an opportunity to change events that might otherwise seem hopeless; colonized “Others” lacked temporal wisdom and were trapped in their own inadequate and eternal present. In addition, “knowledge of Time”

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17 Fane, “Reproducing the Pre-Columbian Past,” 148–52.
conceives of an “authentic” past that is “savage, tribal, peasant” and denounces an inauthentic present that, while civilized, is displaced and effeminate.\textsuperscript{19}

Encoded within these archaeological and anthropological displays at world’s fairs one can also detect the “Power-Knowledge” structure advanced by Michel Foucault. According to Foucault, power produces knowledge, and power and knowledge directly reinforce one another in a “circular process”: a reproduction and duplication of the effects of power through the formation and accumulation of new forms of knowledge.\textsuperscript{20} In other words, it is not actively seeking or being engaged in the production of knowledge that produces the subject; Power-Knowledge itself “determines the forms and possible domains of knowledge.”\textsuperscript{21}

In addition to their roles in categorizing and exhibiting Pre-Columbian cultures, world’s fairs also provided a dogmatic framework for America’s imperial policies. International expositions staged pageants of vanquished races, bogus battles between whites and Native Americans, and Indian congresses that reminded the Anglo-Americans in attendance that the United States’ Indian policy was applicable to aborigines abroad.\textsuperscript{22} In short, expositions staged on

\textsuperscript{19} Fabian, \textit{Time and the Other}, 11.


\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 28–29.

\textsuperscript{22} Rydell, \textit{All the World’s a Fair}, 111–12.
American soil stressed the benefits of the nation’s overseas territories and placed the national debate over annexation in racial terms with Native Americans as the metaphor for successful colonial expansion. The planning, site, and structure of expositions also reinforced the colonial experience, justified America’s imperial ambitions, and reinforced the themes of progress versus primitivism. At the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago, the spatial organization informed visitors of how life and society might be ordered, with the scientifically and technologically defined White City at the center and the scattered edges of the Midway Plaisance reserved for ethnographic displays and fantastic entertainments emblematic of the rest of the world’s subordinate relations to the United States.23

In Robert Rydell’s estimation, the plan of the World’s Columbian Exposition was on a “sliding scale of humanity.” Organizers placed the Caucasian exhibitions nearest the epicenter, the fair’s normalized and healthy core; adjacent to these exhibitions were the “Mohammeden” or Middle Eastern and east and west Asian cultures, thus emphasizing their status as the second or middle phase of civilization; at the periphery and thus on the lowest level were the “savage” races, the Africans and Native Americans.24  Further relegation of African and Native American cultures to the Midway Plaisance, reinforced, to Rydell’s mind,

23 Trachtenberg, The Incorporation of America, 212–13, 224, 231.
24 Rydell, All the World’s a Fair, 65.
the prohibited desires that whites projected onto dark-skinned people, who were shown corrupted to maintain and reinforce white purity. In other words, white identity was constructed through the identification and representation of dark-skinned “others,” or, in Foucault’s words, identity is “marked and defined by the differences that remain.”

The scholarly interpretations of international expositions and world’s fairs provide the starting point for a focused exploration of how they shaped the attitudes that architects, artists, collectors, and designers took toward Native American art and culture. Indeed, as already partially discussed, the emerging sciences of ethnography and anthropology were among the main factors drawing attention to Native American artworks. Early anthropologists and ethnologists followed an evolutionary mode of thought, seeing the material culture of native peoples as “evidence of a prior phase of human history.”

Driven by a desire to “save” the culture for future audiences, these “salvage ethnologists” sought to pluck objects from their tribal environments and rescue them from the similar degraded fate facing the indigenous population. As a consequence, these early scholars and collectors focused on what they saw as

25 Rydell, All the World’s a Fair, 67.
26 Foucault, The Order of Things, 144–45.
27 Margaret Dubin, Native America Collected: The Culture of an Art World (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2001), 16.
“genuine” cultural artifacts, eschewing contemporary Native American-made goods, since they were, in the words of anthropologist Franz Boas, “contaminated by the pernicious effects of our civilization and our machine-made wares.” Boas’s statement succinctly points to two strands ultimately united in nineteenth-century thought: a belief in the detrimental effects of modernity, industrialization, and overcivilization; and implicitly, Native Americans and their art as the antidote to those problems. Boas regarded Native American craft as part of the “universal proclivity of human beings to create aesthetically pleasing objects” and paid particular attention to their artistic qualities. His methodology provided a crucial link in transforming Native American material culture from ethnographic to aesthetic object. Indeed, as rarified, aesthetic-minded collectors sought to add indigenous artworks to their home décor, the anthropological emphasis on utility and tribal context seemed inappropriate.

Early aesthetic explorations of Native American art and culture by Anglo-American artists and designers also owe their beginnings to these international expositions. Inspired by her experience developing art and pedagogy at the 1893

29 Quoted in Dubin, Native America Collected, 17.
30 Ibid. 3–4.
World’s Columbian Exposition, Candace Wheeler, for example, saw the motif of Indian corn as the antithesis of the particularly masculine themes of industrialism, technology, and war associated with American values and thus advanced at the world’s fairs. For Wheeler, Indian corn could represent the national ideals that, to her mind, were grounded in Native American culture: civilized order; self-discipline; self-sufficient food production; and female handicraft, which she perceived as an intuitive and instinctive process.\(^{32}\) Wheeler’s exploration of Indian corn as a new national symbol that could redefine the country’s imperatives through an agreeable aesthetic style also serves as a bridge to philosophies prevalent during the American Arts and Crafts movement: the belief in a Native American instinctual, artistic process; a conviction in Native American female culture as outside the realm of industrial capitalism and thus embodying the ideals of domesticity and stability; and the regenerative possibilities of Native American art and craft as a remedy to the perceived ills and detriments of industrialization, modernization, and urbanization.

Many Arts and Crafts ideologues parroted this paradigm. In a December 1904 article in the *Craftsman*, Irene Sargent, a magazine editor and frequent

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contributor, reinforced the emerging position of Native Americans as the world’s artistic progenitors that retains the language of evolutionary ethnography:

It has been proven by thorough research that the more backward the people, the less they borrow artistic *motifs*. Originality and independence are, then, two claims which can be made for barbarous art....These North American Indians, so long despised save by a few specialists, will be proven to be designers obedient to sure artistic principles, working spontaneously, creating for pleasure, rather than for display, as is too often the case with those who follow a similar calling in highly civilized communities. In pursuit of this study of North American Indian design, it might be urged that pottery as a more important expression of the useful arts, should be selected for examination; but while the clay vessels are most interesting, they form the second link in the chain of evolution; since the textile always precedes the fictile art, and because in the case of these Indians, the pottery at first served but as an adjunct to the basketry.33

These texts by Arts and Crafts critics and writers that appeared in the pages of turn-of-the-century domestic shelter magazines remains a yet unexplored aspect of postcolonial interpretation, but one that plays a critical role to this project and its thesis.

This is the main thrust of the dissertation: To explore the attitude and language of the articles and essays that appeared in shelter magazines through the lens of postcolonialism, studying the ways in which the authors situate Native Americans vis-à-vis turn-of-the-century Anglo-American culture and issues of immigration, modernization, and urbanization; how they used ethnographic

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language and classification as a form of expertise and thus subjugation; and how the aboriginal population became an ideal as an instructional guide for American laborers and youth on how to raise and train healthy minds fit for the workforce.

If Native Americans existed psychically and physically outside the boundaries of white American life and yet acted as cyphers for Anglo-American cultural desires, there were also actual, physical realities to social control. To be sure, while the imagined Indian served as an admonishment to the White population, actual, physical Indianess had to be subdued and then molded into hegemonic, white society. It is perhaps worth exploring in brief the status of the country’s indigenous population itself at the turn of the century and reformers’ efforts to create a gender-normative labor force.

Native Americans and Assimilation at the Turn of the Century

When historian Frederick Jackson Turner delivered his now famous “frontier thesis” at the 1893 conference of the American Historical Association during the run of the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, his hypothesis seemed unassailable: by most accounts, the country’s western borders were closed and the frontier finally secured. Turner argued that the frontier was the dividing line between “civilization” and “savagery.” This expanding western boundary—the breakdown of savagery and triumph of civilization—had shaped American character and identity from its origins, and Turner asserted in his conclusion that
by 1890 “the frontier has gone, and with its going has closed the first period of American history."

Indeed, while individual skirmishes between America’s indigenous population and the government and white settlers erupted into the early decades of the twentieth century, by 1890 the nation’s military had overpowered the last rebellious Native Americans, and the process of assimilation through education and Christianization had been underway for decades. In its territorial expansion and striving for empire, the United States could no longer tolerate intertribal warfare and what it perceived as Native Americans’ inefficient use of land through communal and subsistence farming.

Even as early as 1881, Commissioner of Indian Affairs Hiram Price commented that to “allow them [Native Americans] to drag along year after year...in their old superstitions, laziness, and filth...would be a lasting disgrace to our government.” The goal of bureaucrats, politicians, and reformers, then, was to transform Native Americans into autonomous, self-supporting citizens, their conversion to Anglo-American culture “a crown of glory to any nation.”

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34 Turner’s paper was subsequently published in late 1893 in a Wisconsin historical journal. It was reprinted in multiple books and volumes thereafter, thus reaching a broader audience throughout the decades; see Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” in John Mack Faragher, ed., Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner: “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” and Other Essays (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1998), 151.


Reformers advocated specific strategies to accomplish the parallel objectives of diminishing Native Americans’ land holdings and integrating them into Anglo-American society. They argued that Native American self-sufficiency would come through the end of communal ownership of land and the subsequent forced implementation of individual property rights with an economic focus on an agricultural economy; after this accomplishment came the formal education of children and ultimately the awarding of citizenship to those who ultimately abandoned conventional lifeways. To further the educational mission, the government created an academic structure and issued increasingly involved goals for indigenous children, especially those that reformers considered “as bright and teachable as average white children of the same ages.” By the close of the nineteenth century, it is estimated that more than 20,000 Native American youths attended the complex system of 148 boarding schools and 225 day schools located on or near the country’s reservations. Teachers conducted courses in English, and beyond aptitude in language and math, also taught girls domestic chores, while boys learned farming and other manual skills.

Arts and Crafts critics and writers helped establish and reinforce these gender norms in the pages of domestic shelter magazines but were likely guided in their early ideological development by government attitudes and policies, and by Native American social benefit organizations. The Friends of the Indians, a union of Native American benevolent societies that formed in the 1880s, for example, asserted a platform that called for direct action in converting the indigenous population to American values:

> The Indian as a savage member of a tribal organization cannot survive, ought not to survive, the aggressions of civilization, but his individual redemption from heathenism and ignorance, his transformation from the condition of a savage nomad to that of an industrious American citizen, is abundantly possible. This change can be fully accomplished only by means of legislation...These three foundation stones, [law, education, a protected individual title to land]...must be laid by the Congress of the United States.40

As a remedy, the Friends proposed building more on-reservation boarding schools where children could be assimilated faster into white society through familial separation, as well as a deeper immersion in academic subjects and preparation for industrial or mechanized jobs. This included instruction in agriculture and stock raising for boys, as well as in increasingly antiquated manual trades such as blacksmithing, carpentry, and masonry; in addition to domestic skills, girls learned sewing and weaving, genteel yet productive forms

40 Francis Paul Prucha, ed., *Americanizing the American Indians*, 43–44.
of artistic labor. To the minds of late-nineteenth-century Progressive-era reformers, effective education remained the solution to the positive assimilation of native children and their successful integration into Anglo-American culture. As a result, education involved more than literature, math, and manual arts, but a complete indoctrination in the country’s capitalistic and patriotic values.

Thus at the close of the nineteenth century, Native Americans for the first time in the nation’s history posed little danger to American expansion and settlement, and, despite some stiff resistance, acculturation was well under way. The United States’ Office of Vital Statistics reported that of the nearly quarter million Native Americans polled, 13 percent resided in permanent homes, 28 percent spoke English for everyday purposes, 23 percent were literate, and student enrollment came close to 25,000 boys and girls. Consequently, the nation’s nearly 275,000 registered Native Americans had made their initial if tenuous adjustments to life on widely scattered reservations. As a result, native peoples had established a new set of associations and bonds with whites on and off the reservations, one often based on a commodity relationship that will be explored further in chapter 3.

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If American capitalism catalyzed the need for the idealized, imagined figure of the Native American to inspire the white labor force on the one hand, then government policy alternately and contradictorily adopted a policy of assimilation to encourage indigenous youths’ participation in the nation’s economy. Since economy and labor served as the springboard for much of the discourse on Native Americans, as well as the stimulus for artists, the next chapter of this dissertation begins with a review of labor in Anglo-American society and in the artistic and popular imagination.

Chapter 2
Hoydens and Hooligans: The Perils and Spectacle of Labor

Much of the written conversation on indigenous aesthetics and Native American culture positioned itself as the antidote to turn-of-the-century industrial and labor problems: for workers, the monotony and repetition associated with mechanization; for consumers, the cheapness and shoddiness of mass-production. In addition, ideologues and reformers presented Native American lifeways as remedies to the perceived societal problems associated with rapid industrialization and its attendant issues of immigration and urbanization, such as the disaffection of the middle-class and the dissolution of the family.
If in articles and essays, writers positioned Native American labor as a positive alternative to that of the factory system, in their canvases and sculptures, artists presented an anodyne, sanitized version of labor in the United States: laborers relaxing out-of-doors; chatting in sun-filled work rooms; American industry as the wave of the future; child labor as the road to fortune and upward mobility. Popular city guidebooks and novels on the other hand presented a far seamier side to American urban labor: one that was a slippery slope to criminality and sexual deviance, and one in which women in particular needed to guard themselves (and where good men could be led astray by fallen women).

Chapter 3
The American Arts and Crafts Movement, Middle-Class Taste, and Native American Art

The second chapter examines the proliferation of domestic-shelter magazines and books on household decorating and taste at the turn of the century. Through these periodicals, artists, ideologues, and tastemakers encouraged the production, marketing, and collection of Native American art and material culture for Anglo-American consumption. One of the leaders in this endeavor was Gustav Stickley, founder of the Craftsman Workshops, who complicated the project through his promotion of the spirit of non-Western labor combined with a reliance on an endorsement of factories and machines. This amalgamation of technology represented on the hand by the machine and nature on the other
symbolized by Native Americans, further confuses the American Arts and Crafts movement.

By placing these ideas within the context of the Arts and Crafts movement, which sought to redefine and reshape society through architecture and hand crafted art that amounted to a certain lifestyle, this chapter will tease out the major goals these artists and ideologues established through their promotion of indigenous design. It will also propose a new narrative for the movement, arguing that it offered an aesthetic and intellectual endeavor for the middle and upper classes and a rigidly structured labor paradigm for the lower classes that at the same time reinforced accepted gender norms.

Chapter 4
As Manly as the Greeks! Constructing Gender through Indigenous Design

Chapter four examines how the depiction of Native American artistic labor in paintings, photographs, and written testimonials was itself gendered, emphasizing the accomplishments and work of female artisans on the one hand, yet privileged active male connoisseurship and pedagogy on the other. It goes on to show how this paradigm mirrored and then sought to influence the gendered division of Anglo-American artistic labor and extend itself to nonartistic labor as well. By examining paintings and prints of Anglo-American collectors and connoisseurs, as well as photographs of their homes, we will show
how they used Native American art, design, and material culture to promote the active, intellectual, martial pursuits of men, while equally encouraging the supposedly passive virtues of instinctive creativity and love of nature equated with female artistry. In addition, shelter magazines and books on home decoration forwarded an agenda that encouraged the social engineering of children, one based on conventional gender norms that satisfied demand for a hearty workforce in the face of the perceived degeneration of the family and the middle class.

Chapter 5
Beneath the Surface: Indigenous Art and the Construction of Anglo-American Art

The fifth chapter explores how the interest in Native American art and design at the turn of the nineteenth century influenced the technical construction of Anglo-American artworks, particularly those that did not owe their outward aesthetic inspiration to indigenous precedents. Training manuals, art schools, and instructors from Charles Fergus Binns and Arthur Wesley Dow to George De Forest Brush and Adelaide Alsop Robineau encouraged their students to observe and practice Native American techniques as a formal structure of their art, a trend that continued well into the twentieth century with artists such as Jackson Pollock and David Alfaro Siqueiros. By obscuring the appearance of Native American art in their work, these artists embraced an established system that
celebrated indigenous creativity but also limited its students’ exposure to traditional crafts.

This final segment also investigates and identifies as a precedent the uses of non-Western art and architecture as an inspiration for Western architects and designers, reviewing the influence of mid-nineteenth-century polemical treatises by Owen Jones, Gottfried Semper, and Eugène Viollet-le-Duc as channeled through the Chicago School of Architects. The increased interest in non-Western architecture and design at World’s Fairs influenced both the artistic and popular imaginations. Inspired by these displays, architects turned their attention to Mesoamerican building design both in surface ornament and as an underlying structure for their plans. A main feature of this chapter is an analysis of Frank Lloyd Wright’s early introduction to these texts, his formative experience with Mesoamerican and Native American artworks, and the importance of these influences to the design and structure of his buildings, particularly during the 1910s and 1920s. Wright incorporated many ideas appropriated from Pre-Columbian and Native American culture into his domestic architecture, from subjects for murals in his own Oak Park home to the outward constitution and surface decoration of both commercial and domestic buildings to efficient open floorplans and a structural system based on ancient non-western prototypes.
Chapter 2  
Hoydens and Hooligans:  
The Perils and Spectacle of Labor

Introduction

Official United States policy toward Native Americans embodied numerous contradictions but was predominantly devised ultimately to achieve first containment and then assimilation. In theory, however, the nation’s indigenous population embodied the values of industry and production that Progressive-era reformers wished for many Anglo-Americans to emulate, and they held up Native Americans as a potential model for labor: as a rural rather than urban endeavor; free of the grueling hazards of factories and sweatshops; instinctual and spiritual rather than mechanical and repetitive; and unburdened by the economic taint of consumer culture and its gaudy commercial displays. Although American critics had championed indigenous peoples as ideal artistic subjects for decades (for more on this, see chapter 4), at the height of industrialization at the end of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth, Native American art and craft were imagined as the products of a regenerative brand of labor that served as a powerful alternative to the fissures of mechanization and modernization. Spurred by the Arts and Crafts movement, whose advocates called for handcrafted design and dignity in work as antidotes to machine manufacturing, ideologues frequently invoked the example of the non-Western artisan. Nonetheless, as an example to industrialized and
As articulated in the first chapter, by the end of the nineteenth century, the United States had developed a rigorous policy of assimilation toward its native population, even as the reservation system escalated. Nevertheless, even in its early history, the nation attempted the forceful integration of indigenous American commerce and manufacture into coordinated trade through the Native American Factory System. This system, an organized series of trading posts throughout the nation and its territorial boundaries, had roots in the country’s colonial past, and was intended to encourage competition and appropriate sums of money to supply Native Americans with products on the one hand, while controlling the Indian population by instituting sanctions and arming the trading posts at Native Americans’ expense on the other. Many of these trading posts (or factories or more commonly, forts) had blacksmiths and mills, businesses and positions similar to the nation’s traditional and emerging industries, as well as encouraged agriculture and education among the indigenous population: individuals and tribes were taught (Anglo-European) gender specific jobs, such as animal husbandry, carpentry, and farming for men and sewing, spinning, and weaving for women. Nonetheless, as white settlement encroached further westward and under pressure from private traders—and with the program urbanized Anglo-America, images of indigenous labor abounded during this period, as a form of spectacle itself, but one that should be emulated and followed rather than admonished, critiqued, and condemned.
increasingly difficult to monitor and regulate—the Native American Factory System was abandoned by 1822.43

With the demise of the Factory System, and with the seeming inability to integrate Native Americans into the nation’s economic and mercantile structure, there occurred, according to historian Alan Trachtenberg, a different process of incorporation into the national unification and its economic priorities, one in which Indian policy became one of “government-sponsored clearance of an obstruction to investment and economic growth.”44 With the passage of the Dawes Severalty Act in 1887, a further effort by American politicians was undertaken to erode Native American tribal culture and communal property, establishing a system that identified American citizenship with ownership, productivity, and private property and forcing the issue of either assimilating and integrating or remaining outside the boundaries of American culture and life. As such, by the late-nineteenth century, according to Trachtenberg, a different process of inculcation occurred, one in which Native Americans had been “incorporated” into the national culture not as quixotic “savage,” but as “outcast and pariah” and thus the antithesis of the American ideals of efficiency,

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income, and private ownership. This outsider status evolved throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, offering different meanings and malleable suggestions to different generations, as well as the evolution and reinterpretation in academic literature, concepts that will be explored further and in detail in the following chapters.

In an effort to unpack the potential ideology that Native American industry and labor could represent for a middle- and working-class white audience, visual artists across media employed various strategies, often relying on a number of visual tropes that became repeated and standardized. That industrialization and modernity on the one hand and Native American art and culture on the other served as powerful binaries in the popular imagination is evidenced by the campaign of designer and reformer, Candace Wheeler (1827–1923). Wheeler was one of America's first women interior and textile designers, an early partner along with Lockwood De Forest and Louis Comfort Tiffany in the Associated Artists, and a founder the Society of Decorative Art. In 1893, Wheeler was charged with designing the interior of the Women's Building at Chicago's World's Columbian Exposition. While Wheeler advocated the integration of male and female designs, her program for the Women's building—as well as her broader agenda—promoted a distinctly male/female binary. Although she had

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had experimented with Native American motifs while with Associated Artists (as we will see further in Chapter 4), Wheeler’s experience at the Columbian Exposition, inspired her to promote the motif of Indian corn as the antithesis of the particularly masculine, American values expressed at the world’s fairs.

While Wheeler was one of the few female decorative and visual artists to address and advance preindustrial Native American labor as a leitmotif (other women art historians and critics also promoted this ideal, as the proceeding chapters will show), the emphasis was largely male and frequently featured male examples of labor. As the popular belief that Native Americans were in danger of vanishing, and along with them their traditional culture, took hold by the end of the nineteenth century, a number of painters, photographers, and writers rushed to document and collect artifacts of these races before their seemingly eminent demise, most of them males, who enjoyed the freedom of movement and ability to make the arduous journey through the nation’s westward territories. Painters such as George de Forest Brush (1855-1941), for example, traveled widely throughout North America, from Mexico and Canada to the Great Plains, where he collected Native American art and artifacts that he reused as props in the compositions he executed back on the East Coast. The same Navajo blanket and silver-studded leather belt, for example, appear in several of the artist’s canvases, including *The Weaver* (fig. 2.1). Like his Arts and Crafts counterparts, Brush viewed subjects such as this as a remedy to industrialization and a means to
encourage handcrafting in the American workforce. “The reason why men do not know how to carve,” he explained, “is because they have been taught to work by machinery and measurements. Their ideal is to make a thing look like machine work, and that is why it is odious, hideous. Not only is the artisan ceasing to know beauty, but he is ceasing to work with his hands at all. He is becoming a ‘hand.’”46

Similarly, painter Eanger Irving Couse (1886–1936) also made a specialty of depicting indigenous labor. The Santa Fe Railway reproduced several of his compositions as calendars, and they were thus widely disseminated and viewed by a large audience. Many of Couse’s canvases follow a similar format both within his own oeuvre, but also one embraced by numerous visual artists (see fig. 2.2): a partially clothed Native American sits in a rustic or natural environment—whether a grassy field, outside or in the interior of a pueblo, or in front of a rocky outcropping—engaged in traditional handcrafting and surrounded by the (presumed) products of his labor, including bows and arrows, ceramic vessels, and painted hides (fig 2.3). While artists such as Couse may have intended their images to serve as catalysts for handcrafting, they unintentionally, in the words of one scholar, constructed the Native American “as a living relic of

an earlier stage of cultural evolution, naturalizing—and thus perpetuating—the mechanizing impulses of American industrialism.”

Perhaps unwittingly, Walter Ufer’s (1876–1936) painting *Builders of the Desert* of 1923 (fig. 2.4), provides a corrective to this idea of instinctive and isolated, spiritually inspired labor, as well as the impetus to depict and convey a sociopolitical ideology to indigenous labor well into the twentieth century. An active member of the Taos Society of Artists after he was elected a member in 1917—he served as secretary-treasurer and president of the organization—Ufer often painted such scenes directly from nature in order to capture the unique atmosphere and light of the New Mexico desert. In this canvas, he portrayed the strenuous labor needed to create massive adobe buildings such as the church in the background, attested to by the stooped postures of the workers. Perhaps most interestingly, the painter shows the communal, systematized nature of indigenous building practices; even at this time, his artist colleagues still often depicted native labor as an innate, solitary pursuit. The type of construction being undertaken is an example of the remarkable architecture that, along with the advent of the railroad, turned the Southwest into a popular tourist destination during the time Ufer was working, one that provided pre-conquest,

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pre-imperial antecedents to a region where the tourists were seeking a form of preindustrial spectacle.48

Beyond cautionary tale and spectacle for Anglo-American audiences, depictions of indigenous labor could also serve as a stimulus for nationalist projects. Diego Rivera and his contemporaries in the Mexican Muralist movement, for example, eschewed American and European artistic precedents to forge a new national identity that, as one scholar put it, celebrated “Mexico’s past through the often highly visible remnants of Pre-Columbian civilizations, combined with the rich ethnic diversity of the present population.”49 In his version of The Weaver (see fig. 2.5), Rivera depicted prominent Mexican author and artist Luz Jiménez—a frequent model for the painter and for others in his group—at work on her loom. With Jiménez seated at the right, the textile, the result of her labor, becomes the central focus—and thus the emphasis—of the composition. By concentrating on the textile and featuring a distinguished Indian weaver, Rivera stressed the importance of craft to Mexico’s history and future, commending the potential such artisanal acts and their practitioners held for the nation.50 If these pictorial

48 For more on Couse, Ufer and the Taos Society of Artists, as well as multiple examples of their paintings, see Dean A Porter et al., Taos Artists and their Patrons: 1898–1950, exhibition catalog (Notre Dame: Snite Museum of Art; Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999).
examples communicated and even promoted the values of instinctual love of labor, joy in solitary work, a sense of nationalism, and even symbiosis in communal projects, the visual counterpart for Anglo-American women and children seemingly portrayed similar values. Beneath the surface, however, critics and reformers presented labor for these groups as perilous, a danger and hazard to the subjects themselves, but chiefly one that concerned the entire nation and its standards.

This initial chapter concerns itself with the visual depiction of labor by late-nineteenth- and early twentieth-century illustrators, painters, and sculptors and how critics and viewers reacted to those images. The concerns raised by Progressive-era reformers, as well as artists and authors, about labor illuminate broader concerns about societal dissolution and with them, the perceived failures of modern society. To many critics, cultural connoisseurs, and writers, the proposed remedy was a return to a preindustrial state, and, more specifically, to the art, culture, and lifeways of America’s indigenous population. The perceived hazards of industrialization and, with it, immigration and urbanization, and the prescription for labor’s travails—intuitive creation and love of work outside the urban environment based on principles established by Arts and Crafts ideologues—will be explored in the two subsequent chapters. First, it’s worth surveying how artists represented labor for the middle classes during the second half of the nineteenth century—as well as the attendant critical reaction to those
portrayals, especially of children and women, the seemingly two most
vulnerable labor populations—and what those images not only reveal about the
period in which they were created, but their aspirations and goals for society and
the different genders as well.

The Pride and Spectacle of (Male) Labor

As we have seen, the visual depiction of laboring Native Americans served as the
antithesis of the pitfalls and problems associated with developing mechanization.
Similarly, by the end of the nineteenth century and well into the first decades of
the twentieth, the male body became a positive byproduct of the factory system,
evidence of physical labor, as well as its tangible consequence, a veritable symbol
of the results of American industry and the ideals that made the country
exceptional. Thomas Pollock Anshutz’s (1851—1912) *The Ironworkers’ Noontime*
(1880; fig. 2.6) stands as a corporeal metaphor for this interpretation: The artist’s
muscled and sinewy workers rest and stretch outside the factory, their bare arms
and toned limbs an extension of the machinery they operate tucked away inside
the industrial building. The urban industrial setting is unmistakable, even
without the straightforward title: the ruts in the well-worn road suggest the
constant movement of goods, natural resources and man-made materials
transformed into commodities and merchandise; the discarded detritus of those
products and the supplies from the factory floor littered in the foreground at left
and right; a worker, back turned toward the viewer (detail; fig. 2.7), stoking the
coals in a furnace to keep the operation running; and, perhaps most obviously, the smokestacks that line the factory roof and travel down the canvas from the middle to the left background, belching dusky clouds into the sky and continuing to function even as the hands take their noonday break.

Even a cursory examination of Anshutz’s output as an artist aptly demonstrates an interest in labor, especially as an American ideal: The painter’s *The Farmer and His Son at Harvesting* of 1879 (fig. 2.8), completed at nearly the same time as *Ironworkers*, is often mentioned as its pendant due to their shared themes and ideals. According to Randall C. Griffin, the two canvases act as counterpoints, “presenting two opposing sides of American life: the cherished rural past and the unsettling urban present.”51 In both canvases, however, labor is only implied and both subjects show the workers at rest: in the latter, while the farmer stops to sharpen his scythe, his son sits upon a tree stump and takes a large swallow from a pail of water. The evidence of any actual labor is implied only in the farmer’s tools on display, the cultivated landscape with tree stumps making room for crops and pasture land, and the modest farmhouse with its small, tended gardens. Because of *The Farmer and his Son’s* bucolic beauty and seemingly idyllic portrayal of agrarian life, Griffin initially singles out *Ironworkers* as an

51 For comments about *The Farmer’s* status as a pendant to *Ironworkers*, see Randall C. Griffin, *Homer, Eakins, and Anshutz: The Search for American Identity in the Gilded Age* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2004), 61.
“indictment of industrialization” due to its dreariness and the ostensible, implicit relentlessness of factory operations. In addition, upon its debut, the canvas startled many of Anshutz’s contemporaries, who labeled the painting “grim,” the workers “wasted by their slavery of iron and flame” and accused the artist of socialism. Yet the fact of the noontime break outdoors in abundant sunshine and the spirited atmosphere of hijinks, particularly the two men in the center middle ground, among the posing and preening laborers, also suggests a level of camaraderie and relaxation. In addition, like other artworks reviewed in this chapter, together the two paintings may be interpreted as valedictory, an homage to disappearing and waning forms of labor, a common theme in nineteenth-century art. Finally, in an era concerned with male fragility and weakness, the male bodies on display and their fitness and athletic vigor indicate that labor was a physical if not necessarily psychological ideal.

Anshutz’s paintings of men, in fact, are active and dynamic, even when the figures are purportedly at rest. By contrast to these celebratory depictions of male labor, those of the female worker tread a very fine line, a dangerous tightrope that suggested that for them, labor held perils beyond just monotony: on the one hand, women were an integrated part of the workforce and were indeed encouraged to undertake gender appropriate work. On the other hand,

52 Ibid.
53 Ibid.
their efforts and the products of their labor—as we shall see in the following sections—were not meant to appear on or mark their physicality in any way, lest it tarnish them as working class or worse. In other words, labor was part of a man’s identity, a badge of honor if you will, while for women, femininity was the ideal and visible signs of labor were to be eschewed. More alarmingly, critics subjected women laborers to sexualized descriptions, and urban labor became a slippery slope to vice, carnal activity, and possibly even prostitution, an evil that held the potential to affect and infect all of society and presented a danger to both middle- and working-class males. This contradiction was a symptom of greater perceived societal problems and issues, and the hyperbole that surrounded them escalated during the last quarter of the nineteenth century at the height of the industrial revolution.

**Hoydens and Hooligans: The Perils and Spectacle of Labor**

If indigenous Americans represented the aspirational labor ideal, then Anglo-American women and children represented its antithesis: the potential perils to and spectacle of labor in an industrializing, urban economy. Writing in the 1890 issue of *Mautura Ensign*, a New Zealand periodical founded in 1878 and focusing primarily on literature, a writer described the great tobacco factory in Seville as “one of the sights of Seville which no tourist misses.” After gaining permission to enter, the tourist is accompanied by a matron, “not in order to prevent girls from flirting with them (nothing could do that), but to see that no tobacco or
bundle of cigarettes may disappear." The anonymous author—presumably male—in fact, spends considerable time on the gender and the perceived blatant sexuality of the factories workers, nearly 5,000 women and girls:

These girls are more frank than subtle in their flirtations. There is not one in the crowd who will not be immediately conscious of a man’s gaze fixed upon her, nor will she be the first to turn her eyes away. Some will wink, and even throw a kiss from a distant corner at the rich Inglese (all foreigners are supposed to be wealthy Englishmen).

The writer further suggests that the results of these women’s aggressive sexuality are displayed on the factory walls, “passages are lined with cradles, and the poor young girl mothers to whom they belong implore us with eyes and hands for a penny for the Murillos of the future lying in them.” The writer’s reference to the great Baroque Spanish painter would certainly not have been lost on the cultivated audience, but the fact that he deliberately cites a painter famous for his canvases of beggars and street urchins in reference to the workers’ own panhandling certainly adds context and new dimension to the atmospheric scene.

As the Mautura Ensign article suggests, the sexuality of the female cigarette workers was a main feature of the travel writer’s concern and of the tourist’s gaze, of examination and voyeurism, one that needed constant reiteration.

54 “Seville’s Cigarette Girls,” Mautura Ensign 1, no. 977 (May 9, 1890): 2.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
Gendered, sexualized comparisons to the famous protagonist of Georges Bizet’s 1875 opera, *Carmen*, in fact, were a common and oft-repeated trope in written descriptions of Spain’s cigar and cigarette industry. In its September 1885 issue, the American journal *The Catholic World* published a travelogue on Seville—including several of its factories and industries—in which the anonymous author referred to the female employees as “Carmens.” While the *Catholic World*’s author referred to one laborer he encountered individually as a “tawny hussy” and to the group collectively as “spirited hoydens” and “saucy cigarreras,” he also took pains to inform his audience that “not one of these Carmens was conspicuously pretty.” Even before the debut of Bizet’s opera, the cigarrera was an object of fascination and sexualization: An 1860 article from *The Merchants’ Magazine and Commercial Review* described the female workers “bare arms and necks seem as of unbaked clay, moist and yellow,” describing the workroom and the costumes of its inhabitants in explicit terms, recounting and lamenting, in effect, the disappearance of the orientalist fantasy of womanhood, part and parcel of the touristic appeal of the Andalusian province:

> They form a pleasant gipsey [sic] encampment to look at as you take them in a coup d’oeil from one end of the hall, with their red and yellow headcloths, strange colored turbans and impromptu coquettish draperies twisted and bound round their coarse, full-blooded faces. We see no more the old mantilla that the ancient cigarrera wore, and which was an eastern sort of disguise, such as the Scripture women had, and as such you still see in the half Moorish town of “Tarifa.” It was crossed over the face and

bosom, and was a provoking, enticing, love-making sort of disguise, that left only the signal making eyes and candid forehead visible.”

While seemingly infinite periodicals included the Sevillian tobacco factory among the must-stops in their travelogues, not all were flattering in their reports of the workshop itself or its female inhabitants. One reporter portrayed the transition from the “fairy scene” of Granada’s Alcazar to the workfloor of the Andalusian city’s tobacco factory as akin to “like nothing on this planet. Put your hand into a pitcher of hot water and quickly plunge it into another of cold, and the change will not be a whit more strange than to pass from the beautiful Alcazar to the presence of five thousand young girls, all in one room, and Sevilleians, too, in the factory.” Similarly, diplomat and novelist Hobart Chatfield-Taylor, in an extensive eleven-page story on Seville that appeared in an 1896 edition of The Cosmopolitan, written when he was the Chicago consul to Spain, paid scant attention to the industry, mentioning only in passing and toward the end of the article, the “huge tobacco factory, where five-thousand ugly, dirty women, vaunted as beautiful, roll cigars and cigarettes, and nurse their sickly babies.”

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59 “Great Tobacco Factory of Spain,” Flag of Our Union 22, no. 22 (June 1, 1867): 340.
American painter Walter Gay’s 1895 atmospheric composition *Cigarette Girls, Seville* (fig. 2.9) is both the visual confirmation and refutation of these descriptions, equal parts invented fantasy and pictorial record. Here, the artist depicts the vast, arched and cavernous Sevilleian cigarette factory, where mostly young women work at row after row of tables—receding into the distance—rolling cigarettes. Gay endows the painting with both a picturesque quality and a sexual energy: light floods the right side of the canvas from an unseen window or door beyond the arch, and as several women work, others stop to chat, most noticeably the two right foreground females. Contemporary accounts of the factory match Gay’s painterly reportage: “The interior consists of long, whitewashed halls, divided into colonnades by rows of pillars, from which spring vaulted ceilings.”61 As has been noted by others, the vibrant reds and rosy pinks that dot the painting lend a striking touch, and the red rose behind the ear of the foreground figure encourages associations with the doomed, seductive heroine of Bizet’s opera, and thus all Spanish women generally.62 In addition, a group of women at far right disrobe (see fig. 2.10), an unlikely activity in the openness of the workroom, especially one open to (male) tourists, furthering the canvases aura of sexual suggestiveness and providing an antidote to the modestly covered, shawl-clad women in the foreground. Perhaps most

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61 “Delectable Seville”: 729.
importantly, the painting evokes a serene, preindustrial working environment, one in which employees are bathed in light and air, leisurely rolling cigarettes by hand and taking breaks or relaxing as their moods suited them.

Gay’s visual description—and the attention showered on the Sevillian cigarette factory by artists, diplomats, travel writers, and tourists—nearly defines the ways in which labor for non-whites, women, and children were addressed in the post-industrial era: as a spectacle of pre-industrial labor and a potential peril for the morally undeveloped or irresponsible. Indeed, as the above twenty-years’ worth of descriptions of the Sevillian tobacco factory demonstrate, women shop workers were almost always discussed in sexual terms, whether as flirtatious fortune hunters, sexually active “Carmens,” or even, in one instance, as “dirty” and “ugly.” The standard by which most labor was judged—the quality and/or quantity of a person’s efforts—were only ever obliquely referred to, and when their productivity was addressed, it was often in terms of the amount of cigars and cigarettes produced in proportion to what might be stolen. Such critical reactions to the *cigarerra* and the Sevillian tobacco factory underscores the perceived danger and peril that female labor—whether industrial or, as we shall see, domestic—represented: that moral character was always in jeopardy or questioned and could lead to improper behavior.
Indeed, art—whether visual or written—seemed to have played a particular role in setting this alarmist tone, and in addition to painting or sculpture, numerous nineteenth-century novels, plays, poems, and treatises cataloged the ills and eventual pitfalls labor presented for women, including greed, prostitution, vice, and, in some extreme cases, suicide. Nineteenth-century novels abound with tales of fallen factory women lured into vice by shady industrialists or by virtue of their own greed, often motivated by their naiveté. In the main, the female protagonists of these stories are openhearted and trusting girls who succumb to the advances of bosses or fellow workers or to the supposed creature comforts that factory work and its wages could offer. In one example, Jaspar Colfax’s 1869 novel, *Over the Brink*, the virtuous yet unsophisticated Dora Vernon dreams of “gorgeous ladies in silken garments, sweeping the pavement with their regal attire,” and the opportunities that work in industrial centers could afford to acquire such finery. Leaving her parents and farm for Lewiston, Maine’s textile mills, she is nearly raped, ultimately seduced and “despoiled” and “ruined,” and finally drowns herself in a river. Similarly, Lavinia (Vinnie) Roche, the heroine of Charles Wesley Alexander’s 1879 novella *Only a Mill Girl!,* a tale drawn from true events, details a young woman’s decline into poverty and prostitution after a similar seduction and then rape, and, like Dora, she commits suicide.

The indigenous population’s status both as outsiders generally and as labor paradigms more specifically eliminated them from this slew of advice literature
and fictional accounts that primarily addressed women and children factory workers during nineteenth-century industrialization. One singular yet notable example of this tendency, however, appeared in the 1875 issue of the *Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine*. Titled “In the Dark,” the short story tells the saga of textile factory worker Mary Wilson, who, as a result of an Indian captivity of an ancestor, has Native American blood, a trait that eventually raises her “Indian spirit” to the level of “demonic possession,” leading her to plot revenge on her romantic rival; realizing too late that her accusations were unfounded, she, like many of the other female factory workers in this type of literature, sacrifices herself by throwing herself into a canal.63

As the above example attests, many of these novels were more directly polemical than metaphorical, incorporating introductions that provided real world statistics or cases, the authors alerting their readers as to the goals of their fiction. In the 1844 novel, *Ellen Merton: The Belle of Lowell*—one of the few novels in this genre where dedication and hard work are rewarded with respectability and upward mobility—for example, the anonymous author makes her or his intentions explicit in the introduction: “Since nearly nine-tenths of ‘fallen and

degraded females’ were once ‘operatives in the Mills of Lowell,’ the author hopes to expose all the deceptions by which these women have been lured on to the ‘haunts of infamy’…and hopes to save other ‘fair barks’ from shipwreck and ruin.”  

Poetry and ballads also served as a means of voicing concerns about working women and the possible decline into prostitution and vice that industrialized labor presented for them. A sixteen-line ballad published by an anonymous Manchester, New Hampshire worker in the city’s Gleaner in 1845 titled “Manchester as It is [From Stark Corporation],” details the hellish conditions in the city’s sweatshops and textile mills. Hidden within the factory walls, “Females, incarnate upon its surface crawl, Steep’d in hell’s dyes and hardened by its laws,” and are subsequently seduced into vice by corrupt factory owners and lawmakers.65 As the poem illustrates, the fear that female laborers descended into corruption and venality was not just a societal concern, but one shared by the workers who manned the factories and machines themselves. In more direct ways, women socialist writers also voiced anxieties over the sexual servitude of female laborers in ballads and poems, equating factory labor with

slavery and citing poverty as the precursor to prostitution: “And woman barters self, from sheer / Necessity.”\textsuperscript{66} Finally, several advice books and guidebooks made the same case for factory work and prostitution—and with children and street trades as we will see in the following section—treating their subjects as factual, while often incorporating fanciful incidents to reinforce and illustrate their cases. One particularly notable example, Matthew Hale Smith’s \textit{Sunshine and Shadow in New York}, published just three years after the close of the Civil War, investigates life in the city from high society to its brothels and tenements. Smith devotes several chapters to prostitution, noting that female factory workers, often lured from New England towns, were generally well known for the habit, practicing it outside of their regular working hours, and embellishing his objective if inflammatory statistics with the fictional incident of two women who unwittingly solicit their boss on a city street one evening.\textsuperscript{67} Echoing the literature of the period, Smith also laments the fate of these streetwalkers, acknowledging the double standard society applied to the profession and its participants: “Hopeless indeed seems the condition of fallen women! Men can reform; society welcomes them back to the path of virtue; a veil is cast over their conduct, and their vows of amendment accepted, and their promises to reform

hailed with great delight. But alas for man’s victims! For them there are no calls to come home, no sheltering arm, no acceptance of confessions and promises to amend. We may call them the hopeless classes.”

Even novels by acclaimed authors whose works ascended to the literary canon ventured into the realm of the plight of the lower classes and the potential that factory and tenement life held for entering prostitution. Novelist and journalist Stephen Crane issued at his own expense his first novel, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, in 1893, which enjoyed reprinting and greater visibility in 1896 after the publication of the now-famous *The Red Badge of Courage* the previous year. Because of the seemingly unflinching view of New York street life, recent critics have described the book as "the first dark flower of American Naturalism." At the time of its reissue, higher-minded literary critics questioned the authenticity of this “new realism” and the descriptions of New York street life, where “no one adult person among all these thousands…is not actually or potentially a thief, or a prostitute, or a ‘fence,’ or a professional mendicant, or the female decoy of drunken libertines for the purpose of robbery with murderous violence.”

Despite the book’s observational precision, honed from Crane’s experience as a journalist, it is rife with literary allusions and flowery descriptions, ones that

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nonetheless link prostitution with industrial work. Unnamed in the original printing and with Maggie added in later editions, here the protagonist is forced into factory work to support her family, then seduced by both the unscrupulous people she meets and the idea of riches that employment could provide her. At the end of the novel, as the protagonist prepares to end her life by plunging herself into a river like many fictional heroines before her, Crane makes the connection between sex work and factory work explicit: “The girl went into the gloomy districts near the river, where the tall black factories shut in the street and only occasional broad beams of light fell across the pavements from saloons.” On the next page, as Maggie experiences her final view of the city, among the last thing she contemplates is the gleaming light from a distant factory: “At the feet of the tall buildings appeared the deathly black hue of the river. Some hidden factory sent up a yellow glare, that lit for a moment the waters lapping oilily [sic] against timbers.” In Crane’s rendition of the

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71 Again, the seduction of promised riches by even entering the factory or workforce was a common pattern among this type of literature and one Crane himself repeated. Early on in this slim novel, after Maggie gains employment at a factory, she begins to see her home and surroundings in a very different light: “Turning, Maggie contemplated the dark, dust-stained walls, and the scant and crude furniture of her home. A clock, in a splintered and battered oblong box of varnished wood, she suddenly regarded as an abomination. The almost vanished flowers in the carpet pattern, she conceived to be newly hideous. Some faint attempts which she had made with blue ribbon to freshen the appearance of a dingy curtain, she now saw to be piteous.” Stephen Crane, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1893; repr. Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1995), p. 34. The implication is that women spent their earnings on frippery, an assumption that their wages were inessential and not necessary for the support of themselves or the families, or, more charitably, that deserved earnings should be spent on the betterment of the home.
72 Ibid, pp. 82–83.
prostitute’s suicide, the factory serves as both the harbinger of doom—
foreboding, “tall,” and “black,” it’s the site of the young woman’s failure to
integrate into the American economy—as well as a beacon of hope, its “broad
beams” and “gleaming light” the source of possible salvation.

If the prominence of prostitution in these novels and literary travelogues borders
on the nearly hysterical, the emphasis had direct and explicit implications for
industry and labor. While moral character—both individual and societal—was
indeed a concern for many reformers and writers, Charles Loring Brace, an
influential philanthropist, social reformer, and founder of the present-day
Children’s Aid Society, perhaps best summed up what the real danger of women
slipping into vice and prostitution meant for the industrializing nation in his
1872 study of New York City’s “dangerous classes”:

This crime [prostitution], with the girl, seems to sap and rot the whole
nature. She loses self-respect, without which every human being soon
sinks to the lowest depths; she loses the habit of industry, and cannot be
taught to work. Having won her food at the table of Nature by unnatural
means, Nature seems to cast her out, and henceforth she cannot labor.
Living in a state of unnatural excitement, often worked up to a high pitch
of nervous tension by stimulants, becoming weak in body and mind, her
character loses fixedness of purpose and tenacity and true energy. If, in a
moment of remorse, she flee away and take honest work, her weakness
and bad habits follow her; she is inefficient, careless, unsteady, and lazy;
she craves the stimulus and hollow gayety of the wild life she has led.…73

73 Charles Loring Brace, The Dangerous Classes of New York and Twenty Years Working
Brace’s message is unequivocal: fallen women—as opposed to boys and men—were irredeemable and unable to rehabilitate themselves, and their inability to save themselves and integrate back into society made them unreliable workers, unable to participate in an increasingly industrializing society and in a consumer economy. In other words, they no longer represented exclusively a moral or public health problem, but a “threat to national stability.”74 And, as if Brace’s written description were not enough, an engraving that accompanied the 1872 edition of his book made explicit just what the end was for the factory worker turned prostitute (see fig. 2.11)

While representations of factory work perhaps symbolized the most pernicious form of female debauchery and ruin, even narrative genre scenes where labor is domestic and routine—and thus not part of the incorporated labor system—or where a chore is only implied, audiences and critics subjected female workers to sexual associations and comments. John Rogers’s The Town Pump (1862; fig. 2.12), part of a series of small-scale sculptures showing everyday episodes from the Civil War, for example, shows a meeting between a young woman collecting water in a pail from her village fountain and a soldier who has stopped for a drink of water. Critics and writers, both then and now, have described the scene in both romantic and sentimental, as well as ribald and vulgar, terms; one author

contemporary to Rogers was even inspired to pen a quixotic poem giving the figures names and a star-crossed background that explained their encounter as one of unhappy parting.  

Most, however, declared the scene a “flirtation” and a “saucy” story—one defining the central pump as “stiff” to drive the point home—and the artist himself pronounced that these sorts of diversionary, humorous genre scenes made him “feel just as one does after reading a trashey [sic] novel.”  

In these written accounts, perhaps not surprisingly, most writers emphasized the female’s aggressive sexuality over that of the male’s. Three separate critics writing on the sculpture’s 1862 debut described the female figure as a “coquettish lass,” the “village coquette…to the manner born,” who as an analogue to the warrior on her left, “touches off her light artillery with most effective assurance,” or a “coquettish-looking maiden,” while a fourth lamented the artist’s placement of a shawl over her shoulders “which gives less opportunity for critical analysis of her charms.”  

While essayists and journalists

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77 For “coquettish lass,” see *Boston Post* (May 24, 1862); for “village coquette…to the manner born,” and “light artillery,” see *Springfield Republican* (March 1862); for “coquettish-looking maiden,” see *New York Times* (April 1862); and for the comment

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acknowledged the soldier’s role in the liaison, most portrayed him in terms of lighthearted spiritedness, using terms like “jolly” or “mischievous-looking,” his participation in the incident a result more of the circumstances of war and the brief break in combat that the encounter at the fountain offered than his moral character. Based on their printed portrayals, the woman, on the other hand, is by birth and nature sexually debased, ever ready for a tryst—and perhaps the exclusive reason for her visit to the town’s pump. This reaction to the scene underscores the dangers and perils that labor—whether domestic or industrial—represented in the arts for women.

These episodes also suggest how the intersections of class, gender, and race influenced the depiction and reception of labor among non-whites. Because this dissertation concerns itself with these issues and in particular how they complemented and contradicted one another, especially in the words of arts and crafts ideologues and in the printed pages of shelter magazines, it is worth exploring the cultural, historical, and visual images of labor. In a capitalist, industrializing society at the turn of the nineteenth-century, when distinctions of class and gender were rigid or being codified, the way in which visual artists addressed the labor of women and children in particular, as compared to Native Americans, illustrates the point.

about the “critical analysis of her charms,” see Home Journal (June 1862), all from Scrapbook, vol. 3, Rogers Collection, New-York Historical Society.
Child Labor and the Dangers of the Sexual Underworld

At the outset of industrialization in the United States, reformers concerned themselves with child labor but expressed their outrage mainly over education and illiteracy rather than dismal sweatshop settings. Indeed, many crusaders viewed child labor as beneficial, reducing society’s charitable burden, building moral character, and preventing children from slipping into vice by keeping them off the streets.78 Early in the nineteenth century, commissions proposed a national public education system for children based on individual and property taxes to solve the problem of child illiteracy resulting from long hours spent in manufacturing.79 This trend continued into the late-nineteenth century, when more statistically-based legislative reports attempted to identify the number of children employed in factories and establish policies and set guidelines based on the ages of workers and the number of hours spent in mill vs. school.80

Reconstruction and rapid mechanization in the United States after the Civil War increased the number of children in factories, and hence their visibility; despite

the articulated concerns over universal education, the perceived personal and social advantages of laboring youth expressed themselves in metaphorical ways in art, painting a rosy future of American industry and its intended benefits.

Emma Stebbins’s pendant sculptures *Machinist* and *Machinist’s Apprentice* (figs. 2.13 and 2.14), perhaps best expresses the dichotomy and tension between rapid industrialization and the United States’ emergence from its idyllic agrarian past, as well as the role youth had in developing the new manufacturing economy. Created only a couple of years after the sculptor’s first major commission—an allegory of Industry and Commerce—this composition reflects the positive results of mechanization at a moment when industrialization was hotly debated and had likely already been embraced by Stebbins’s intended audience of businessmen. Using the neoclassical idiom typically reserved for elevated historical and mythological subjects, Stebbins featured an older machinist and his young apprentice. The sculptures affirmed not only America’s traditional use of labor through the machinist’s forging hammer and toothed gear, but also the nation’s ability to build upon that foundation through innovative technology, as seen in the apprentice’s more active stance and use of a compass and drawing stylus. Perhaps most notably, the younger man rests his leg on an ionic column in a gesture meant to associate his modern work with the great achievements of
the classical past.81 In their way, the sculptures also suggest the advantages youth held in developing and expanding American industry.

By the early years of the twentieth century, however, many reformers, as well as the general population, became increasingly troubled by actual sweatshop conditions and the mistreatment of children in factories. The work of Progressive-era reformers, including photographer Lewis Hine and the parallel Child Labor Committee founded in 1904, threw the horrible circumstances of child laborers into sharp relief, and policymakers sought to improve, if not necessarily eradicate, the institution. While these organizations and individuals played a significant role in directing the public’s attention to the issues and its inherent problems, another factor was the large number of children employed in street trades, a highly visible component of the labor force.82 The visual arts mirrored the general trend in and discussions about child labor, and painters and sculptors had little motivation to depict actual working-class children or factory life up until the late-nineteenth century. As Holly Pyne Connor has recently demonstrated, preadolescent children—girls in particular—appeared as a subject

81 For more on these sculptures, see Sarah Kelly, “Machinist and Machinist’s Apprentice,” in Notable Acquisitions at the Art Institute of Chicago, Museum Studies 30, no. 1 (2004): 10–11, 94.
82 Statistics at the turn-of-the-century, in fact, show that nearly 20 percent of children between the ages of ten and fifteen—an estimated 1,750,000 youth—were part of the paid workforce by the early years of the twentieth century, perhaps a quarter million of them under the age of ten. See Reef, 182; see also Marvin J. Levine, Children for Hire: The Perils of Child Labor in the United States (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 19–20.
in American art in the 1850s and enjoyed increasing popularity thereafter.83 Frequently, artworks and paintings in particular highlighted children at play, daydreaming, or performing light chores in pastoral settings. Samuel S. Carr’s Every Little Bit Helps (fig. 2.15), for example, shows a young girl gazing directly at the viewer; she carries a picnic basket and water jug that, the title suggests, she intends to offer the field workers in the background. Objects of charity, though, were seldom represented so directly.

In her groundbreaking work on nineteenth-century genre painting, Elizabeth Johns argues that in the first three-quarters of the century, American artists—unlike their European counterparts—had little incentive to portray the urban poor or the working classes, and while canvases with these subjects occasionally appeared, no one specialized in the subject.84 For American artists who did occasionally turn their attention to these compositions, they concentrated on children and reconstructed the narrative of urban poverty into one of potential: perhaps inspired by the character-building-as-financial-and-social-mobilization philosophies of Charles Loring Brace, artists recast the plight and perils of

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poverty into a storyline where entrepreneurship, moral character, and plucky spirit could save the lower classes.\textsuperscript{85}

Johns cites rapid increases in immigration in New York City and other American metropolises during the 1840s, 1850s, and 1860s, and with this escalation, the perceived attendant issues of crime and a permanent underclass unable to integrate into society, as reasons for the lack of interest in this subject: a group who was both an imposition and threat to American-born citizens.\textsuperscript{86} Ironically, it is for these very reasons that other scholars cite for a rise in the subject in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The increased immigration, industrialization, and manufacturing associated with postbellum American society is one explanation for both the increase in and popularity of genre subjects featuring street children and youth workers in street trades. In addition, scholars have suggested that the actual rise in children on the street, both before and after the war, is also equated with a rise in the subject, one that was perceived as a threat and so also witnessed an intensification in reform movements addressing the topic.\textsuperscript{87}

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid, p. 184–87.  
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid, 182.  
Perhaps no painter capitalized on this subject more than John George (J. G.) Brown. Although he had depicted and experimented with subjects of labor and street youth in the 1860s and 1870s by the 1880s, Brown, an English immigrant himself, began to focus almost exclusively on paintings of urchins, particularly bootblacks (see fig. 2.16), which he occasionally supplemented with scenes of rural pastimes and agrarian laborers. In the main, however, these paintings, whether urban or bucolic, rarely show any actual work being done; instead, viewers see figures in moments of contemplation, play, or repose, sometimes in a group but more frequently in solitude, work only suggested by the shoeshine box tucked under an arm or an apple being proffered for sale. When depicted in groups, Brown’s urchins reinforce the moral virtues of chivalry and community-mindedness, and when they are alone, they display the intrepid independence that are associated with the capitalist self-help gospel rather than the brutal realities of labor at the time. These moral characteristics reinforced by Brown’s paintings were wholly in line with the popular, mass-produced, youth-oriented novels of Horatio Alger (1832–1899). Both art forms, it has been argued, in fact, worked in tandem to provide the child labor reformers with both pitiful victims and with imaginary protagonists that the movement could profess to have helped and saved.88

A less immediately apparent association of such images and tales, however, was with the subculture of male youth sex work. Indeed, Alger himself was defrocked and run out of his Brewster, Massachusetts, Unitarian church for “gross immorality and a most heinous crime, a crime of no less magnitude than the abominable and revolting crime of unnatural familiarity with boys, which is too revolting to think of in the most brutal of our race.”  

Alger avoided official punishment for the charges and moved to New York in an effort to “expiate his own sin” through the moral uplift of young boys via juvenile fiction—his first book, *Ragged Dick*, about a poor but happy-go-lucky bootblack who ascends to the middle class, appeared in novel form in 1868. The episode, however, continued to haunt him: former parishioners, horrified by Alger’s literary rise, continued to fan the flames of the scandal for years afterward, and the novelist himself unloaded his guilty conscience on noted psychologist William James, brother of expatriate American author, Henry James.  

That street trades, particularly bootblacks and newsboys, represented a possible slippery slope to crime and prostitution is evident from the middle to the end of the nineteenth century. In an 1868 article on the subject for Chicago’s *Daily*  

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90 For the quote, along with the aftermath and effects of the episode on Alger’s life and early literary career, see Gary Scharnhorst and Jack Bales, *The Lost Life of Horatio Alger, Jr.* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 70, 68–102.
Evening Leader, the anonymous writer alluded to the “precarious calling” of these street trades, mentioning their practitioners’ corrupt parentage several times.\textsuperscript{91} By the first half of the nineteenth century—attendant with the concerns about immigration and children on the street whether loitering or for work—there also existed an abundance of advice and travel literature detailing the descent of many of these youths into “smoking, drinking, gambling, and, ultimately, prostitution.”\textsuperscript{92} Like the novels, poems, and advice literature about working women during the nineteenth century, and the concern about their morality and the possibility of slipping into vice, there also existed at the same time a surfeit of similar tracts and treatises about and aimed at young men for whom there existed similar perils. In a series of lectures aimed at boys first published in 1852 that enjoyed multiple editions throughout the nineteenth century, the Congregationalist minister and social reformer, Henry Ward Beecher reserved respect for street trades including bootblacks, noting that though “their callings are very humble, they are founded on the real wants of society”; Beecher, however, also warned his audience of young boys engaged in such enterprises or coming to the city of the dangers that it posed:

\begin{quote}
It is at such times that the young are in extreme danger; for they are particularly anxious, at such times, to appear at their full age…the young
\end{quote}

are left to come in contact chiefly with a very flash class of men who swarm about city—swollen clerks, crack sportsmen, epicures, and rich, green youth, seasoning. These are the most numerous class which engage the attention of the young. It is their business to make your acquaintance, to fish out the probable condition of your funds, to sweeten your temper with delicate tit-bits of pleasure; to take you to the Theatre, and a little further on, if need be; to draw you in to a generous supper, and initiate you to the high life of men whose whole life is only the varied phases of lust, gastronomical or amorous.93

In his lectures, Ward, like Brace after him, was unambiguous in his reasons for young men to steer clear of the pleasures of the city: “Your day will next be confused and crowded: your duties poorly executed or deferred; habits of arrant shiftlessness will ensue; and day by day, industry will grow tiresome, and leisure sweeter, until you are a waster of time—an idle man.”94 As with women, young boys who experimented with pleasure or fell into vice became addicted to luxury and were incorrigible, unable to recuperate themselves, and thus a loss to a productive, industrialized society.

Like its attention to female workers and prostitution, Matthew Smith’s popular Sunlight and Shadow also references bootblacks and newsboys, in these sections immediately following the author’s chapter on blackmailing, noting that rural men who travel to New York to “see the elephant,” a popular euphemism in the city for prostitution, were especially vulnerable to such acts. Smith alternated

94 Ibid, 245.
this description of iniquity and wickedness with the Sunday appearance of these youths: “Children of the lowest dens, the foulest cellars, the darkest alleys, come on to the sidewalk with an attempt at cleanliness, with their best robes, or an effort to mend their dilapidated appearance by little bit of ribbon or rude ornament. In a quiet voice the bootblacks ask, ‘Black your boots?’ and exhibit their own shoes polished out of respect to the day.”

City streets thus represented a precarious place for youth in particular, but were also the site of their adventures and even misconducts. As several scholars have pointed out, city streets, particularly in poor and underrepresented areas of a metropolis, were well-established parts of the commercialized sex and vice underworlds. In most instances, these subcultures and districts catered to men, who enjoyed more freedom of movement on city streets. These societal and urban transformations were also intrinsically connected with industrialization and thus labor. As pioneering scholar of emerging gay communities in the United States, John D’Emilio, has argued, the decline of the family unit as a source of interdependent work during a period of increased industrialization emancipated sex from procreative imperative: “By the second half of the nineteenth century, this situation was noticeably changing as the capitalist

95 Smith, Sunshine and Shadow in New York, see pages 128–39 for blackmailing (page 128 for the quote) and page 141 for Smith’s description of the bootblacks.
96 For a brief overview of this, see Leila J. Rupp, A Desired Past: A Short History of Same-Sex Love in America (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 77–79.
system of free labor took hold. Only when individuals began to make their living through wage labor...was it possible for homosexual desire to coalesce into a personal identity."97 The emergence of these individual and later collective identities as a result of capitalism, industrialization, and urbanization in turn led to a rise in their visibility and thus the formation of city districts where interaction—and assignations—occurred.

While the urban underworld of commercialized sex and vice—and even youth prostitution—may have seemed invisible to many Americans of the time, it was, in fact, understood if not openly discussed by the mainstream population during the later years of the nineteenth century. As historian Don Romesburg has demonstrated, middle-class, Progressive-era reformers at the turn of the nineteenth-century concerned themselves with red-light districts and other areas of commercialized vice, but when it came to child prostitution, intervened and concentrated their efforts on newsboys who might sideline in sex work.98 In addition, high-profile cases that were played out in the press, like that of the trials of Oscar Wilde in England, featured lurid excursions into Victorian London’s sexual underworld, showcasing testimonies and confessions from

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blackmailers, cross-dressers, and male prostitutes. As Jeffrey Weeks has noted, this subculture and the trials themselves often involved working-class males—“stable lads, newspaper sellers, and bookmakers’ clerks”—part of the upper-middle-class fascination with crossing the class divide.\textsuperscript{99} Even Stephen Crane was theoretically involved in writing a novel about male youth prostitution in New York City, perhaps as a pendant and follow up to \textit{Maggie: Girl of the Streets}, according to a tantalizing document supposedly penned by his close friend and companion, critic James Gibbons Huneker.\textsuperscript{100}


\textsuperscript{100} The document, in the Thomas Beer Papers at Yale University’s Beinecke Library, has been the object of great speculation, including, most recently, a 2007 reimagining of the lost Crane novel by Edmund White. According to the document, Crane and Huneker encountered a young male prostitute outside New York’s Everett Hotel in the spring of 1894, and despite his initial revulsion, the author became fascinated by the youth, interviewed him, and began a novel based on his circumstances and life; titled \textit{Flowers of Asphalt}, Crane supposedly shared the novel with a horrified Hamlin Garland, who encouraged him to abandon it, and Crane complied. Notwithstanding the obvious problems with the document—the dating and Crane’s seeming innocence with prostitution despite his earlier novelization of and personal experience with it, Thomas Beer’s now well-recognized fabulism, and, of course, the absence of any such novel or evidence of it—the paper provides another interesting glimpse into street work at the time, demonstrating that it had its own vibrant culture and customs, ultimately recognizable to ordinary, if highly cultivated, individuals. For more on this document and episode, see, foremost, Edmund White, \textit{Hotel de Dream: A New York Novel} (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), particularly the postface on pages 223–26, which reproduces and discusses the problematic document. For a brief discussion of Crane and these events, see Sophie Gee, “The Red Badge of Scandal,” \textit{New York Times} (September 16, 2007): G29; for a concise analysis of Thomas Beer’s fabrications in his early biographies of the author, see Stanley Wertheim and Paul Sorrentino, “Thomas Beer: The Clay Feet of Stephen Crane Biography Author(s),” \textit{American Literary Realism, 1870-1910} 22, no. 3 (Spring 1990): 2–16.
As early as the 1840s, The Whip, a magazine devoted to “sporting life,” began an anti-sodomy crusade that described the “swarm” of “generally young men” who were “daily allured” into prostitution, making clear that the rise in the visibility of youths on the street was synonymous with the conspicuousness (and possible reason for) male prostitution in the city, a phenomenon that has been equated with the economic collapse and depression of the 1830s and 1840s. Indeed, nineteenth-century literature reinforced the idea that the poor and disenfranchised were most susceptible to sexual trafficking: “There was formerly a house of prostitution for that very purpose, kept by a foreigner, and splendidly furnished; here lads were taken as apprentices, and regularly trained for the business; they were mostly boys who had been taken from the lowest classes of society,” acknowledged George Thompson his 1849 book, City Crimes, a sensational travelogue into the metropolitan underworld that catered to prebellum, middle-class tastes. Decades later, Ralph Werther, writing of his six-year experience as a female impersonator in New York under the pseudonym Earl Lind, echoed this statement, claiming that two-thirds of “unmarried toughs of the slums…would accommodate an invert ‘if their needs were not fully met

102 Greenhorn [George Thompson], City Crimes or Life in New York and Boston (1849); repr. online (http://www.gutenberg.org/files/27732/27732-h/27732-h.htm).
through normal intercourse.’” 103 The Whip’s 1842 anti-sodomy campaign, as well as the slew of advice literature, also made quite clear that while male prostitution and youth male sex work may have existed, it was foreign to American soil, the result of European debauchery, whose participants corrupted young boys. Acts of sodomy, the Whip insisted, were “horrible offenses…foreign to our shores—to our natures they certainly are—yet they are growing apace in New York,” specifically citing Englishmen and Frenchmen as the main culprits of this practice, along with the “Hebrew race.” 104

That male prostitution and sodomy would be associated with foreign elements—the antithesis of American national values—was a familiar and recurring theme during the nineteenth century, and one that also affected the discussion of other youth street trades as well. In the 1910s, at the height of the reform movement against child labor, the book Children in Bondage paid particular attention to bootblacks and newsboys in a chapter titled “The Child in the Perils of the Streets,” alleging many involved in these trades of being “wise to all the weaknesses of human nature…trad[ing] upon these vices and follies,” and accusing them of using their unnecessary earnings “for shows and sweetmeats.” “They are a most improvident class,” the authors noted, “spending in an hour for

103 Earl Lind [Ralph Werther], The Female-Impersonators, quoted in Graham Robb, Strangers: Homosexual Love in the Nineteenth Century (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003), 163.
treats or in a gambling game the earnings of days.”¹⁰⁵ Like child sexual trafficking and sodomy earlier in the nineteenth century, the authors also alleged that these street trades were equal to slavery, one controlled by foreign syndicates: “The Greeks have now the monopoly of this shoe-blackening business, their systematic exploitation of children having driven out most of the Italian and Negro competition. The padrone, the ubiquitous foreign-born boss, imports these boys from Greece, contracting for them as if they were machines, and treating them like herds of animals. Here is an army of little wage slaves.”¹⁰⁶

Child slavery, whether sexual or wage-based, was a very real concern for Americans during the nineteenth century in particular, and Brown himself may have even played with these ideas in his paintings. During a brief period in the mid-1870s, the painter produced a series of canvases of young street musicians (see figs. 2.17 and 2.18), an unusually topical theme for the artist, when indentured adolescent street performers, mostly Italian immigrants under the padrone system, were the frequent topic of news items and reports. Starting in the late-1860s and then again in the early 1870s, New York newspapers devoted several lengthy articles to the padrone system, one in which unscrupulous agents

kidnapped children or bought them from desperate parents, under salacious headlines such as “Abuse of Boys,” “Little Italian Slaves,” and “The Italian Slave Trade.” As Martha Hoppin has suggested in her detailed analysis of Brown’s painting in this series, many of these accounts emphasized the fantastic and sensational narratives of “white slavery” over the harsh, real environments in which the children worked, frequently as bootblacks and other street trades to supplement their incomes, industries that put them directly in the path of burgeoning commercialized sexual underworld. The already mentioned reformer who directed much of his energy to issues of immigration and street trades, Charles Loring Brace, devoted considerable attention to both the practice and its practitioners in his articles and books. In his Dangerous Classes of New York, for example, Brace used the firsthand account of an “Italian gentleman of education” to illustrate the districts where many of these youths lived and were housed, describing them as “synonymous with whatever is degraded and degrading, loathsome and criminal…inhabited by the lowest and most disreputable characters,” repeating the sordid characterization of the residents and their morals witnessed in newspaper reports. Brace himself portrayed the children of these districts as “grow[ing] up inevitably as sharpers, beggars,

thieves, burglars, and prostitutes,” unless extreme intervention—beyond church and school—could be introduced.110

These paintings of itinerant child musicians also had connections to Horatio Alger, who published his third novel, *Phil the Fiddler* in 1872, at the height of the barrage of newspaper articles on the subject and two years before Brown devoted his first composition to it. About an abused and indentured Italian street musician Phil the Fiddler, like Ragged Dick before him, and following the established conventions of the protagonists of the author’s other adolescent novels, overcomes adversity and achieves middle-class respectability. While much of the lurid nonfiction travelogues of New York City emphasized the perils and pitfalls of the metropolis and the street trades found there, some did occasionally cultivate the romantic vision of upwardly mobile youth involved in street trades. *New York Tribune* reporter George G. Foster published *New York by Gas-Light* in 1850, a book remarkable for its nearly hysterical preoccupation with prostitution even within a genre markedly obsessed with it. Despite this fixation, Foster devotes a chapter to former newsboys turned speculators then bosses due to their patience, shrewdness, and tenacity. In his account, the newsboys congregate in the early morning hours at Butter-Cake Dick’s, a cheap, 24-hour cellar restaurant frequented by newsboys and Tammany Hall politicians alike.

which specialized in oversized rolls and inexpensive coffee; its location
nonetheless had seedy antecedents, including an upstairs gambling parlor and
downstairs beer saloon.111

Amid these numerous screeds about crime, prostitution, vice, and the dangers of
the city street (not to mention immigrants and the poor), Brown’s anodyne
paintings, however unstably, served as both a comfort to the middle class and as
an example to the working class. While Hoppin specifically argues that middle-
class Americans “understandably saw the Italian child musicians as comparable
to African slaves...because the issue of slavery was uppermost in their minds just
after the Civil War,” I would contend that they detracted attention from post-
Civil War racial issues, real immigration or urban concerns, or even the difficult
topic of child prostitution or the traffic in sexual slavery.112 In his study of
nineteenth-century genre paintings of young girls, David Lubin draws similar
conclusions about such scenes, arguing that they in effect not only diminished
awareness and warded off discussion of weighty social issues, but perpetuated
the nation’s systemic social hierarchy; Americans, it seems, had no appetite for
the Civil War and its aftermath and required escape from emerging social

Similarly, as noted, Brown’s paintings diverted viewers’ attention from not only the topics of immigration and urbanization, but also concerns about child labor and the embryonic movement to abolish it, pacifying viewers through rosy-cheeked urchins whose smiling countenances comforted observers in the galleries and assured them that social order was indeed secure. In her reading of Brown’s paintings, Jennifer Greenhill employs the formative theories of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer on the culture industry: “To be entertained means to be in agreement,” she notes, and Brown’s ever-smiling urchins are “controlled chaos,” stimulating momentary sensations of fear and dread before order and the status quo are restored.

Nonetheless, during the artist’s lifetime, critics and viewers debated their veracity. In his 1882 chronicle of his life as a longtime New York art critic, George W. Sheldon wrote that Brown “paints the roughly-clad, adventuresome, happy, poverty-compassed boyhood of the American metropolis,” shrewdly acknowledging that it was an actual slice of street life that the artist was painting. At the same time, Brown’s canvases were deeply enmeshed in late-

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113 In Lubin’s case, feminists and other agitators for postbellum societal change are the focus of his analysis and among the reasons he cites for this type of genre scene’s popularity; see Lubin, *Picturing a Nation*, chapter 5 in particular and especially pages 205–12.


nineteenth-century discussions about high and low art, technique and sentimentality. “Of what world are they?” a critic for the Nation asked sardonically, characterizing Brown’s “eternal street boys, clean-washed and carefully ragged” as “street Arabs made out of Sunday-school children.” “Once, twice, or even now and then,” he continued, “art can tolerate such stage drollery, but toujours perdrix is bad enough.”116 The artist himself articulated ambivalent feelings and attitudes about the very subjects that made him rich and famous. As early as 1898, in an article for the New York Times, Brown lamented, “I can’t find anymore ragged boys to paint,” adding that “the typical street arab of years gone by has vanished. The urchins of dirt and tatters, who used to be so plentiful, are hard to find nowadays.”117

The frequent moniker commonly applied by cultural dignitaries and writers to youths involved in street trades—“arabs” to denote and reinforce their seemingly nomadic lives and the nature of their work—magnifies the exotic, and thereby sexualized character of their existence, one closely identified with the same eroticization of women in orientalist discourse. In addition, an article on the artist and his search for ideal models for his canvases reads like a procurer

searching for fresh novices: “All east side and west side boys of the chronically poor class know J. G. Brown. He is a sort of artistic Santa Claus to the ragged little chaps who live by their wits in a world entirely their own. So when all other sources of revenue seem closed some urchin sings out to the gang: ‘Come on, fellers! Let’s go see if old man Brown wants a poser.’"  

As the author’s atmospheric description and attempted reproduction of street patois makes clear, the youths viewed a visit to Brown’s studio as a last resort, when no other opportunities for cash or succor existed, the same attitude many held—historians of urban American history have noted—for sex work. In an interview with the *Art Amateur*, Brown reiterated this system of delicacy and servitude: “I procure models through other models. The older boys bring their acquaintances, and I have a constant succession of new types, served up to me, fresh every morning, like buckwheat cakes.”

Given these accounts and the associations street trades had with youth sex work and the criminal underworld, it is tempting to reevaluate one of Brown’s

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119 Don Romesburg, for example, argues that while motives for male youths entering prostitution varied from economic to emerging gay identity, among other reasons, he also notes that some youths viewed it as the road to heteronormativity, a way to earn extra cash and thus treat their girlfriends to an enjoyable Saturday night. See Romesburg, “‘Wouldn’t a Boy Do?,’”: 369–70, 378, and 382.
paintings in this light: *The Apple Boy* of 1885 (fig. 2.19). While the young, seated fruit seller proffering an apple to an unseen individual as he simultaneously positions a second at crotch level might hold obvious sexual suggestions, the painting also offers additional readings. Apple sellers, called costermongers in England after a common variety of apple they sold (the costard), were considered some of the earliest street vendors, as well as among the loudest and unruly, famed for their hatred of regulators and the police and for their complicated street slang. Like bootblacks and newsboys in the United States, both male and female costermongers were also popularly linked with crime and vice, which included sideling in prostitution when necessary. In the words of one youth active in London costermongering, “The greatest drawback to struggling boys is their sleeping in low-lodging houses, where they are frequently robbed, or trepanned to part with their money, or else they get corrupted.”

Given Brown’s English origins, not to mention his artistic study in Newcastle-on-Tyne, costermongers would have been a familiar site and subject and their history perhaps well known to him. Aside from the above allusions, *The Apple Boy* also has obvious Biblical references, one that also had associations with Ward Beecher’s lectures. In his chapter titled “The Strange Woman” from

121 Henry Mayhew, *London Labor and the London Poor: A Cyclopædia of the Condition and Earnings of Those that Will Work, Those that Can Not Work, and Those that Will Not Work*, vol. 1 (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1851); for a general overview of the lives and habits of costermongers, see, pages 4–61; for potential sideling in prostitution, see pages 20–21; and for the quote, see page 34.
his *Lectures to a Young Man*, Ward Beecher fashioned a theological attack on adulterous women, with a thinly veiled reference to prostitution, invoking the biblical Eve in his religious polemic:

> Or, if the Bible will not cheat thee, how will she plead thine own nature; how will she whisper, *God hath made thee so.* How, like her father, will she lure thee to pluck the apple, saying, Thou shalt not surely die. And she will hiss at virtuous men, and spit on modest women, and shake her serpent-tongue at any purity which shall keep thee from her ways.122

The young boy offering the apple in Brown’s painting certainly calls to mind the biblical Eve, tempting passersby with the fruit in his right (and left!) hand. Under this scenario, the pleading and rosy-cheeked boy becomes the seducer, responsible for corruption rather than “corrupted,” a link in the chain of forced child labor and enslavement.

**Conclusion**

Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century depictions of labor, which were created before the advent of the Great Depression and social realism, embodied aims that were multiple, complex, and sometimes contradictory. Even as artists, critics, and reformers imagined labor as a potential peril to working-class women and children, they presented it as a visible, narrative spectacle to the middle and upper classes. On the one hand, paintings and sculptures conveyed and encouraged the patriotic values of entrepreneurship, hard work, and innovation,

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122 Ward Beecher, *Lectures to a Young Man*, 211.
and also united constituencies through the nationalistic celebration of native craft and design. On the other hand, they provided cautionary lessons and parables about the possible moral dangers of working-class labor—if not the very real mental or physical risks posed by most factory work at the turn of the century. As we have seen, critics and ideologues also promoted non-Western and Native American labor as an aspirational ideal, the solution to then-current labor disputes and grievances. Perceived as intuitive and spiritual, without cheapness or degradation, indigenous craft functioned as the ideal and reminded privileged viewers of what labor could be, anaesthetizing them to the brutal realities of work in the factory or on the street.
Chapter 3
The American Arts and Crafts Movement, Middle-Class Taste, and Native American Art

Introduction

The Arts and Crafts movement began at the epicenter of the industrial revolution: mid-nineteenth-century England, the cradle of imperialist ambitions, mechanization, and the epitome of capitalist ownership of the means of production. Thus, at its core, the movement was reactionary, an expression of uneasiness with, and a moral critique of, the values of Victorian society. Far more a philosophy than a style, the movement nonetheless permeated many artistic forms—decorative arts, furniture, painting, and textiles. To find models for such a utopian society, British Arts and Crafts designers and philosophers frequently returned to historical—particularly medieval and ancient Celtic—antecedents. At its inception, the movement centered on the redefinition of work: the authority of the craftsman-artist over the capitalist factory owner; the preference for handmade rather than machine-produced objects; and the theory that beauty unifies by providing moral uplift for all people, but directed the majority of its reform agenda toward the lower and working classes.123

123 The goal of this chapter is not to thoroughly review or rewrite the history of the Arts and Crafts movement—either in Britain or America—but to explore its middle-class involvement and reception, primarily in its American manifestation, and the role American reformers and tastemakers had in marketing both the aesthetic and ideological forms of Native American art and craft and the motivations for their marketing agendas. Indeed, the Arts and Crafts movement has garnered considerable attention over the past three decades, and many devotees, experts, and scholars credit...
Most scholars acknowledge the contradictions in the Arts and Crafts movement’s primary philosophies: its socialist agenda and its aspirations to elevate and return dignity to the working-classes while creating art and objects out of the financial reach of the very people whose lives they were attempting to remodel and, to their minds, improve. In his study of regional variations in British Arts and Crafts design, for example, Alan Crawford mentions in passing that the movement “depended on [London], on its wealth, its industry and culture, and its primacy within the nation.”¹²⁴ For his part, Nikolaus Pevsner acknowledged William Morris’s role in breaking down the barriers between “fine” and “domestic” art, but also recognized that Morris’s maxim of art “by the people and for the people” was, in practice, “accessible to a few connoisseurs only” and

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¹²⁴ Alan Crawford, “The Importance of the City,” in Livingstone and Parry, International Arts and Crafts, 70.
led only to, in Morris’s own words, “art for the swinish luxury of the rich.” 125

Charles Robert Ashbee also lamented the failure of the movement and its descent into an upper-class endeavor toward the end of his life in 1938 with the statement that “We have made of a great movement, a narrow and tiresome little aristocracy working with great skill for the very rich.” 126 This class division is perhaps best expressed early on in Englishman Charles Eastlake’s popular 1868 book Hints on Household Taste. Eastlake blamed the “vulgarities of design” on “people of humble means” who “insist on assuming the semblance of luxuries they cannot really afford.” 127

The role of the middle class in shaping Arts and Crafts design in Britain—or its reform agenda—remains contradictory, merely hinted at, or even entirely unexplored. In their respective studies of the movement, both Crawford and Peter Stansky offer different interpretations of the founding in the early 1880s of London’s Toynbee Hall, a settlement house whose educational and occupational agenda would become a staple of the Arts and Crafts movement. While Stansky obliquely explains it as part of England’s “middle class and religious movements,” Crawford implies an entirely different genesis. 128 Indeed, he

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128 Stansky, Redesigning the World, 18.
suggests that Toynbee Hall’s creation was the direct result of the philosophical ideas of upper-class Oxford undergraduates with the “philanthropic money to support the settlement,”; Ashbee’s own initial fears of the house’s “top-hatty philanthropy,” further implies the foundational support of a moneyed class.\textsuperscript{129} Even scholar Eileen Boris, before turning the bulk of her critical attention to the American movement, only tantalizingly hints at the participation of the British middle class, suggesting that mass-produced products in the Arts and Crafts style may have been available to such consumers:

\begin{quote}
It was \textit{commercial} competition that killed them rather than the disappearance of a market for beautiful things. As early as the 1880s and ’90s, a few manufacturers—primarily glass, wallpaper, and pottery—had responded to the artistic challenge of Morris and his contemporaries by creating a decorative art line or hiring artists to design for them.\textsuperscript{130}
\end{quote}

Boris admits, however, that in Britain, critical emphasis was placed on \textit{production} rather than \textit{consumption} and, as a result, most artists, architects, and designers associated with the movement thus found most of their customers among the upper-middle class.\textsuperscript{131}

Indeed, while scholars have often privileged the British version of the movement for its emphasis on radical socialist politics—led by William Morris’s critique of

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\textsuperscript{129} Crawford, C. R. Ashbee, Architect, Designer, and Romantic Socialist, 24–26. \\
\textsuperscript{130} Boris, Art and Labor (1986), 19. Emphasis mine. \\
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid.
\end{flushright}
contemporary working conditions and his own involvement in English politics and social activism—others have called the British movement a “revolution without revolutionaries.” Edward Palmer (E. P.) Thompson points out that the movement’s leaders in Britain were cultured and educated individuals who themselves belonged to the moneyed classes; their attempts to liberate the working class on the one hand, and their hobbyist excursions as laborers on the other, often put them at odds with both classes. These academically trained architects and designers employed others to do their craft work, making themselves the exact agents against whom they were rebelling. Thus while middle-class participation in the Arts and Crafts movement in Britain—either as consumers or participants in the design process—remains controversial or elusive, in America, it is acknowledged as an inevitable component of it.

The American Arts and Crafts Movement

After it crossed the Atlantic, the Arts and Crafts movement took on several outwardly paradoxical characteristics, selectively adopted from English artists and reformers that perhaps best fit the American economic and mercantile system: the use of machines and industrial tools to satisfy market demand while simultaneously promoting the look and spirit of handcrafting; lucrative artist’s

133 Ibid.
cooperatives and guilds; and an emphasis on the rehabilitative possibilities of art and craft that at the same time enforced a gendered, factory-like division of labor. American art, lacking the seemingly unqualified socialist vision that pervaded the English movement, became the goal of reform rather than society itself. Crafts organizations “celebrated the objects they made and the commodities they produced,” and Arts and Crafts societies organized themselves along “business principles,” perhaps the biggest contribution of the American movement. In other words, as Michael Kimmel has suggested, “the movement became an aesthetic protest without an overarching political vision.” Or, as one expert on the movement accurately and succinctly pointed out, the American Arts and Crafts movement was most concerned with “product accessibility” and was the “least ambivalent about marketing.” One of the Arts and Crafts movement’s main tenets, of course, was a return to handcrafting, which was imagined to restore the worker’s pride and self-worth. In America, the capitalist apparatus associated with handcrafting served only to buttress the system being criticized. According to cultural historian, Jackson Lears, “American crafts publicists, by treating craftsmanship as an agent of socialization, abandoned [William] Morris’s effort to revive pleasurable labor.

134 Boris, Art and Labor, 40–41.
Manual training meant specialized assembly line preparation for the lower classes and educational or recreational experiences for the bourgeoisie; in neither case did it challenge the separation of productive labor from joyful labor, nor protest the modern organization of work.”

Indeed, writers have devoted considerable attention to the consumerist aspect of the American Arts and Crafts movement, focusing on its commercial facets while endowing the British version with the rarified prestige of socialism. The factory-like division of labor established even at craft guilds, art training centers, and settlement houses seemed to reinforce the implication that the American movement, rather than refuting the corporate structure, instead mimicked it. In addition, the consumerism associated with American Arts and Crafts is perhaps concomitant with the modern, industrial situation and the nation’s capitalist ascendancy. It was, nonetheless for many, a disconcerting aspect of the movement that, rather than elevate domestic objects to the level of art, only degraded the art itself.

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138 For more on this, see Sarah Burns, *Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 59–62. Pursuant to the topic under consideration here, it is interesting that English philosopher, Frederic Harrison signaled one of the alarms on this issue. Several other scholars have addressed the role of consumerism particular to the Arts and Crafts movement or in the arena of art and design from this period. See in particular, Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 77–83; and idem, “From Salvation to Self-Realization: Advertising and the Therapeutic Roots of Consumer Culture, 1880–1930,” in Richard Wightman Fox and T. J. Jackson eds., *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American Art History* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983),
The seemingly contradictory pull of art and commerce—or social reform and profit—may be best exemplified by the rise of American settlement houses, and with them, the conviction in artistry as a form of physical and mental therapy and manual training for immigrants and the unemployed. In 1904, for example, Herbert J. Hall established handcraft shops at his sanatorium in Marblehead, Massachusetts, for the express purpose of treating “nervously worn out patients for the blessing and privilege of quiet manual work, where as apprentices they could learn again gradually and without haste to use their hand and brain in a normal, wholesome way.” In 1905 Hall hired Arthur E. Baggs, a student of ceramicist Charles Fergus Binns at New York’s Alfred University—the center of the American Studio Ceramics movement—to manage the pottery shop. Baggs, however, did not share Hall’s enthusiasm for clay’s therapeutic possibilities and within a few years, he had turned the pottery into a commercial and critical success, employing a small, professional staff of designers and decorators.

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3–38; and Jeffrey L. Meikle, Design in the USA (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 51–52 and 77.
139 Herbert J. Hall, “Marblehead Pottery,” Keramic Studio 10 (June 1908): 31. For more on the formation of Marblehead, and a reproduction of another version of this vase, see Kaplan, “The Art that Is Life,” 256–57, fig. 115.
Thereafter, Marblehead specialized in vessels decorated with stylized animals, floral patterns, and landscapes that contemporary critics praised for their “simplicity of form and design” and their “soft richness of color” (see fig. 3.1).141

With equally reform-minded gusto, Ellsworth Woodard founded a ceramics program at New Orleans’s H. Sophie Newcomb Memorial College—the women’s adjunct of Tulane University—in the winter of 1894/95 for “training women for industrial art” (see fig. 3.2).142 By the early years of the twentieth century, Newcomb expanded its output to include metalwork and textiles (see fig. 3.3) and turned to southern flora for inspiration: moss-draped cypress, oak, and pine trees in flat, conventionalized patterns became popular and recurring motifs, demonstrating the regional variations in turn-of-the-century craft production. While Newcomb provided some economic freedom for students through sales of their art, they were nonetheless forced to pay for materials and did not recoup money until their pieces sold; it also held conventional attitudes toward women’s roles and adopted an industrial labor model that assigned men

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141 “Exhibition of Society of Keramic Arts,” Keramic Studio 11 (June 1909): 41. This article features an example of the vase, although it is inconclusive as to whether it is the Art Institute’s version. See also Gertrude Emerson, “Marblehead Pottery,” Craftsman 29, 6 (March 1916): 673.

142 Ellen Paul Denker and Bert Randall Denker, in Kaplan, “The Art that is Life,” 324–26, fig. 178.
to throwing the vessels while women acted as the decorators or participated in the traditionally feminine art of needlework.\footnote{In contrast, the male potters were given their equipment and paid for their work. For more on Newcomb’s history, see Jessie Poesch and Sally Mann, \textit{Newcomb Pottery and Crafts: An Educational Enterprise for Women, 1895–1940} (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing, 2003), 29 in particular.}

Because of this level of participation—between health professionals and patients; educators and immigrants; reformers and the unemployed; and even men and women, albeit in unequal power relationships—as well as the availability of resulting craft objects scholars have projected onto the American movement—or have more thoroughly studied—the democratic institutions and middle-class influence on aesthetic and social reform. Gwendolyn Wright, for example, has acknowledged that the American Arts and Crafts movement emphasized the “final product rather than the process of making it,” thus “the vast majority of American objects in the arts and crafts style, as well as the houses that bore this label, tended to be for the middle class rather than for the workers,” acknowledging at once the exclusion of the working class and the participation of the middle.\footnote{Gwendolyn Wright, \textit{Moralism and the Model Home: Domestic Architecture and Cultural Conflict in Chicago, 1873-1913} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 127.} Boris has echoed this sentiment and specifically linked the history of the American Arts and Crafts movement with the history of the American middle class: the social tensions, redefinition of family and self, and creation of autonomous identities that have come to practically define the
modern, industrial era and the Arts and Crafts movement are linked, to her mind, to the history of the middle class during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In addition, the unskilled quality of many of the objects produced during this period—from metalwork to textiles, from pottery to furniture—was, in her words, a democratic endeavor: “In its own way, the handicraft revival was a democratic movement: every man, woman, and child could be creative.”

Other scholars have argued that the lack of alignment of the Arts and Crafts movement in the United States with any radical political collective led specifically to its “embourgeoisement” and specifically linked it to middle-class aspirations and goals. Indeed, Kimmel has argued that in the United States, “Americans were ambivalent about linking craft work with a political critique of the social organization of labor, and their uncritical embrace of the work ethic let them see the most degrading manual labor as morally beneficial character building.” According to Lears, because American Arts and Crafts ideologues did not criticize the structure of industrial capitalism, but only the “individual performance within capitalism,” they actually “helped to legitimize the emerging cultural style of conspicuous consumption.”

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146 Ibid, 209. Interestingly, Boris does acknowledge the participation of the “amateur craftsman” in the British movement who belonged to both the “middle and upper classes.” See Boris, Art and Labor, 18.
147 Kimmel, “The Arts and Crafts Movement, Contemporary Sociology, 390.
148 Lears, No Place of Grace, 55, 84, and 78 respectively.
Another possible reason for the emphasis on the democratic, middle-class character of American Arts and Crafts is the attitudes toward industrialization and machinery several of its most outspoken proponents held. Many scholars have acknowledged that, unlike the complicated relationship to mechanization possessed by many British ideologues, American Arts and Crafts artists and philosophers never attempted to completely abandon industrial methods, but rather tried to find a way to wed machinery to the service of man rather than make him a slave to it. While Morris’s company eventually turned to machinery for some of its designs, Ashbee’s attitude toward industrialization was complicated—he saw mechanization as a “starting point for reconstruction” — and Christopher Dresser “consulted with British firms manufacturing everything from glassware to cast-iron furniture.” In the United States, however, art, craft, and industry worked in tandem almost from the beginning. To be sure, while many American Arts and Crafts ideologues acknowledged the detriments wrought by industrialization and machinery, many believed that “it was still possible to use industrial techniques in a positive way.”

One of the leading proponents of the use—and reform—of industry in the

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149 For Ashbee’s attitudes toward industrialization and machinery, see Crawford, *Ashbee*, 12–13 and 96–98; for Dresser, see Meikle, *Design in the USA*, 66.
service of artistic production was University of Chicago English professor and Walt Whitman scholar Oscar Lovell Triggs. Triggs pragmatically recognized the permanence of industrial technology; in 1899, he founded the Industrial Art League, which equipped its shop with “the best modern appliances,” and later wrote, “art in democracy is naturally industrial.” Writing for the *Craftsman* magazine in 1902, Oscar Lovell Triggs outlined what for many was the major problem of industrialization and machinery: the worker, responsible for only one component of his product, was alienated from his work and thus dehumanized. The solution, according to Triggs, was to unite art, education, and labor, and instead of abandoning machinery, control it through “rational will,” improving it to such a degree that “its action becomes completely automatic.” Perhaps most famously, the previous year, in a lecture titled “The Art and Craft of the Machine” delivered at Chicago’s Hull House—the epicenter of the city’s Arts and Crafts movement—Frank Lloyd Wright acknowledged the machine’s role in enhancing creative design. He elaborated on this premise a few years later in the pages of *Architectural Digest*, stating, “The machine is the normal tool of our civilization, give it the work it can do well.”

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Another possible interpretation for Americans’ more democratic participation in the American Arts and Crafts movement is the role played by middle-class reformers. In her study of American domestic architecture at the turn of the nineteenth century, Gwendolyn Wright, for example, has claimed that middle-class Progressive-era reformers—often led by women—“placed their confidence in the power of modern domestic settings to transform society” more than architects and artists, and, as a result, had a great impact on establishing the principles of the Arts and Crafts homes and interior design, influencing architects and ideologues associated with the movement, including both Gustav Stickley and Frank Lloyd Wright.\(^\text{154}\) In particular, Wright credits the cost-effective and well-organized spaces and open plans, efficient and space-saving built-in fixtures, wide stretches of windows, organic materials, and introduction of cutting-edge technical equipment in these homes to the influence of a general public concerned with family life, health, and hygiene, and with the empowerment of women in the domestic sphere.\(^\text{155}\) Popular journalism, Wright argues, both “endorsed and encouraged” these transformations in middle-class housing, but, like her colleagues in the field, she is skeptical of the movement’s


accomplishments, arguing that these periodicals and their readers did nothing to “really question the availability or desirability of such houses or housing reform.”

Given the American Arts and Crafts movement’s emphasis on the use of machinery and a reliance on the mechanisms of capitalism, it is no wonder, then, that Native American art and craft served as a powerful antidote to the fissures of industrialization and modernization, a regenerative process that served as a powerful rebuke to those themes. Thus in their treatises and writings, Arts and Crafts ideologues frequently invoked the example of the non-Western artisan, contrasting him with the contemporary ill-humored labor agitator, calling attention to his enthusiasm for his work and “satisfaction with his position, [he] accepts it as a matter of course, and makes the most of it.”

Perhaps one of the American Arts and Crafts movement’s most prominent entrepreneurs, ideologues, and publicists was Gustav Stickley (1858–1942), whose United Crafts and Craftsman empire spanned furniture production, home design and construction, showrooms and exhibitions, a restaurant, and, most notably, a highly influential national magazine called the Craftsman.

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156 Ibid, 148.
advocating the marriage of handcrafting and machinery, Stickley routinely turned his attention to premodern societies as role models: “The modern trouble lies not with the use of machinery, but with the abuse of it, and the hope of reform would seem to be in the direction of return to the spirit which animated the workers of a more primitive age, and not merely to an imitation of their working method.”158 Thus, by shifting their attention from “conditions of labor to the laborer’s frame of mind, crafts ideologues could claim the value of any work, however monotonous. Uncritical devotion to the work ethic blurred the figure of the artisan in American Arts and Crafts ideology.”159

Emphasizing the American Indian’s pleasure in creation specifically and linking and contrasting it to the work of lower-class immigrants more generally, reminded middle-and-upper-class consumers that Native American art was the product of love, paving over any vulgar discussions about dehumanizing factory conditions or unfair labor practices. Stickley and other Arts and Crafts ideologues’ accent on handcrafting and worker’s contentment was at odds with the modern, metropolitan methods with which the majority of people encountered Native American art: through the urban spectacles of department stores and World’s Fairs and the mechanism that brought them into contact with

158 Gustav Stickley, “The Use and Abuse of Machinery and its Relation to the Arts and Crafts,”  
Craftsman 11, 2 (November 1906): 204.
159 Lears, No Place of Grace, 76.
these leisure destinations—along with the means by which Native American art was transported—the railroad. Thus, a naturalized, pre-industrial context for these goods that pitted modern mechanization against anti-modern—and handcrafted—primitivism had to be created and constantly reiterated and reinforced.

Native American Art, the Arts and Crafts movement, and the Railroad

While the railroad speeded indigenous curios to city markets and individual patrons, it was itself problematic to the marketing and promotion of Native American culture: railroads represented innovation and industrialization, the advanced technology and unapologetic force of American capitalism, exactly the antithesis of the qualities that consumers wanted to attach to Native America. As a result, curio traders and dealers developed strategies that mimicked Arts and Crafts principles, advancing the concepts of authenticity and handcrafting, while framing their promotional literature as a “race against progress and extinction.” To establish their legitimacy, many traders, curio dealers, and retailers in the Southwest gave themselves pre-contact antecedents, advertising themselves in their flyers and brochures as established in 1855, or 1862, or in one

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extreme example, 1603, years, decades, or even centuries before their founding, but most importantly before the coming of the railroad.161

The arrival of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway to the desert Southwest in 1880—and their mutually beneficial relationship with the catering giant, the Fred Harvey Company, and its eventual extensive system of hotels, lunchrooms, and sales depots—has been the recent focus of research into the American West. Many scholars have credited the Santa Fe Railway and the Harvey Company for the development of white markets for Native American art, as well as changing indigenous economic and social conditions through increased contact with Anglo-Americans.162 Barbara Babcock, for example, has argued that for the Pueblo Indians the “transition from an agrarian to a cash economy…was accelerated by the coming of the railroads to New Mexico in the 1880s and Fred Harvey’s marketing campaigns in the early decades of [the twentieth] century.”163 In a similar essay investigating the two companies’ complicity in constructing “a version of Indian life that reflected and spoke to American middle-class desires and anxieties,” another scholar has maintained

161 Batkin “Tourism is Overrated,” in Unpacking Culture, 293.
that Fred Harvey and the Santa Fe Railway caused “profound disruptions and changes among Native American communities.”  

In the words of one scholar of southwestern material culture, however, “Tourism is overrated…dealers were instrumental in developing an enormous market that did not rely on tourism,” so even before 1880, Native American artisans had “been adapting their wares to meet the needs and tastes of Europeans for nearly three hundred years.”  

Furthermore, by the early twentieth century, the curio trade involved dozens of brokers and merchants throughout the country.  

Traders and curio dealers were not merely an important source of dissemination and promotion of Native American art predating the introduction of the railroad; they were largely responsible for aesthetic and stylistic changes to native craft and the attendant cultural shifts in indigenous life. Focusing the spotlight on Navajo textiles, one scholar of southwestern weaving, Nancy Blomberg, has successfully argued how dealers and traders enacted such change:

> Whatever the situation, the weaver has primarily responded to the needs and wants of the consumer. In order to reach this new market, the weaver often had to go through one or two levels of middlemen: the local reservation trader and the more distant, big-city merchant or dealer…the consumer expressed his wants and needs to the merchant, who in turn

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166 Ibid.
passed them on to the trader, who interpreted these preferences to the weaver. As a consequence of working through a middleman, the weaver generally produced for a consumer she rarely if ever saw and whose world was vastly different.167

Blomberg is not alone in her findings. Another expert on Navajo and Pueblo textiles, Kate Peck Kent, has similarly concluded that for the Navajo of northeastern Arizona and northwestern New Mexico, “Reservation traders were the chief link between Navajos and the alien world of the Anglo-Americans.”168 Curio traders began affecting the style and design of Navajo weaving in earnest by 1870, at the beginning of Navajo containment, and ten years before the final railroad track was laid at Las Vegas, New Mexico, in 1880. By 1889, in fact, there were nineteen trading posts established outside the perimeter of the Navajo reservation. In return for the wool the Navajos produced from sheepherding, the traders supplied, among other goods, commercial cloth and clothing, yarns and chemical dyes. As a result, these traders began to affect the look and style, as well as the uses, of Navajo weavings by emphasizing Anglo consumers’ interests in “color, design, size, and quality.”169 Mesilla Park, New Mexico emporium owner and trader, Francis E. Lester made this point manifest in his advertisements, insisting that he “control[led] manufacture, making it possible to

168 Kate Peck Kent, Navajo Weaving: Three Centuries of Change (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1985), 15.
169 Ibid, 17.
weave exclusive designs,” and that [every rug] “is woven under my personal supervision.” An excellent example of the advanced state of trading and collecting Navajo textiles by the end of the nineteenth century is Edward Everett Ayer and his vast Native American collection, which formed the foundation of Chicago’s Field Columbian Museum when it opened in 1894. Despite his reputation as a connoisseur of “traditional” (read pre-historic) Native American culture, Carolyn Kastner suggests that the majority of the ethnographic objects he owned, including Navajo textiles—purchased by Ayer during a buying excursion to the west in 1887—were mostly “created for trade.”

Scholars generally refer to this period when Navajo weavers began using commercially available, factory-manufactured aniline-dyed wool and cotton yarns, as well as the emerging yet influential authority of traders, as the “Transitional” phase, lasting until approximately 1895. Largely as a result of the mediation of reservation and curio traders, several distinct transformations in Navajo weavings began to occur. First, and perhaps the most obvious, is the development of the Navajo Germantown “Eye Dazzler,” so named for the area in Pennsylvania where the chemically dyed industrial yarns were made (see figs.

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170 For examples of these, see “Indian Rugs,” and “This Beautiful Hand-Woven Indian Rug,” Advertisements, *Craftsman* 5, no. 3 (February 1903): n.p. and *Craftsman* 13, no. 3 (December 1907): xiv, respectively.


The Germantown yarn, more regular in diameter than most handspun examples, allowed for greater exactitude and thus lent itself to experimentation by the artisan, a reason, Peck Kent notes, that “traders saved the expensive commercial wools for their more skillful weavers.”\textsuperscript{173} This resulted in an array of dizzying designs in bright, vivid colors. A second development, also witnessed in the Germantown textiles was an increase in serrated edges—perhaps adapted from Mexican serapes—and diamond shapes in opposition to “Classic” period straight lines and bands. Navajo weavers also began to incorporate the diamond designs into their “Classic” period, banded textiles (fig. 3.6).

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, between 1870 and 1895, the Navajos transitioned from producing largely practical textiles for themselves, such as blanket-dresses, chief blankets, and serapes, or items for trade with other Native American polities, such as saddle blankets, to making rugs specifically for hanging in Anglo-American homes. This latter development was the outcome of economic and societal changes stemming from a period of forced Navajo containment and the United States government’s assimilation policies. The United States gained the present-day Southwest from Mexico in 1848. After fifteen years of conflict, the government imprisoned the Navajo on the temporary

\textsuperscript{173} Kent \textit{Navajo Weaving}, 77.
reservation of Bosque Redondo near Fort Sumner, New Mexico. During their five-year internment, Navajos were encouraged to become agriculturalists, and both this initial detention and their subsequent removal to a permanent reservation in the late 1860s had dramatic effects on their lives. The forced transition from a hunting-and-gathering, semi-nomadic society to a sedentary, agriculturalist one depleted Navajos of the flocks that provided the wool for their textiles, which in turn compelled them into trading relationships.174 Over the following three decades, the Navajos reestablished themselves as herders, and by the 1890s, sheep were at record highs. With their lands seriously overgrazed and the price of wool at new lows after the financial panic of 1893, traders convinced the Navajo to produce almost exclusively rugs for eastern collectors as a solution to their economic problems. Once curio dealers and traders controlled both the design and intention of Navajo textiles, they promoted southwestern weaving as an appropriate home decoration based on their rarity, their hand-crafting, and their ability to evoke a “primitive” stage of design: the same language of the American Arts and Crafts movement.

Native American Art and Salvage Anthropology

In addition to the complex network of dealers, reservation agents, and traders, along with the interconnection of the nation’s railway system, by the end of the

nineteenth century, several other factors coalesced to make Native American art and craft a popular form of domestic decoration. By the end of the 1890s, with the end of open warfare between native peoples and Anglo-Americans—and with most Native Americans relocated and securely contained on reservations—America’s indigenous culture represented a safe terrain to mine for aesthetic inspiration, as well as home decoration. An attendant aspect to the end of these hostilities and subsequent containment were the increase in settlement and tourism, along with advertisements and department stores, International Expositions and museums, and literature and popular entertainments, all of which increased contact between whites and Native Americans both physically and imaginatively (see chapter 3). In addition, the therapeutic “culture of consumption” that department stores and World’s Fairs encouraged, engendered similarities in the display and uses of Native American craft and design, where


176 For settlement, see Limerick, The Legacy of Conquest, 55–77; for the effects of the railroad, see Howard and Pardue, Inventing the Southwest; for advertising, see Jeffrey Steele, “Reduced to Images: American Indians in Nineteenth-Century Advertising,” in Jennifer Scanlon, ed., The Gender and Consumer Culture Reader (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 109–28; and finally, for popular culture, including International Expositions, ethnographic displays, and Wild West shows, as well as one of the more unique decorative objects they spawned, see Anita J. Ellis and Susan Labry Meyn, Rookwood and the American Indian: Masterpieces of American Art Pottery from the James J. Gardner Collection, exh. cat. (Cincinnati: Cincinnati Art Museum; Columbus: Ohio University Press, 2007), 13–19, 24–26, 29–45, and 67–87.
Anglo-Americans collected and recreated “Indian Corners” in their homes similar to displays in department store windows and at International Expositions. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, was the popular belief that Native Americans were in danger of vanishing, and along with them their traditional culture. As a result, a number of archaeologists, ethnographers, painters, photographers, and writers rushed to document and collect artifacts of these vanishing races before a seemingly eminent demise.\textsuperscript{177}

One of the main factors drawing attention to Native American artworks was the emerging science of anthropology, and Arts and Crafts reformers who in turn marketed Native American art and design adopted the ideas and language employed by these scholars and specialists. Early anthropologists and ethnographers of America’s indigenous population followed an evolutionary mode of thought, seeing the material culture of native peoples as “evidence of a prior phase of human history.”\textsuperscript{178} Driven by a desire to “save” the culture for future audiences— if not necessarily the people themselves—these “salvage ethnologists” sought to pluck objects from their tribal environments and rescue them from the similar degraded fate facing the indigenous population itself.\textsuperscript{179}

\textsuperscript{177} For this theory, as well as a survey of the artworks that resulted from it, see Schimmel, “Inventing ‘The Indian,’” in The West as America, 149–89.

\textsuperscript{178} Margaret Dubin, Native America Collected: The Culture of an Art World (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2001), 16.

As a consequence, these early scholars and collectors focused on what they saw as “genuine” cultural artifacts, eschewing contemporary Native American made goods, since they were, in the words of anthropologist Franz Boas, “contaminated by the pernicious effects of our civilization and our machine-made wares.” Boas’s statement succinctly points to two strands ultimately united in nineteenth-century thought: a belief in the detrimental effects of modernity, industrialization, and overcivilization; and implicitly, Native Americans and their art as the antidote to those problems. Or, in the words of historian Patricia Nelson Limerick, “these Indians were a lesson and reproach to civilization.”

Boas was one of the first anthropologists to demonstrate an interest in cultural relativism. He rejected the comparative method, conjectural history, and the hierarchy of the races, that his scholarly contemporaries employed, and he saw cultures as “autonomous and operating according to their own internal logic.” Boas regarded Native American craft as part of the “universal proclivity of human beings to create aesthetically pleasing objects,” and paid particular attention to their artistic qualities. His methodology provided a crucial link in transforming Native American material culture from ethnographic to aesthetic

180 Quoted in Dubin, Native America Collected, 17.
181 Limerick, The Legacy of Conquest, 186.
183 Ibid, 3–4; see also Dubin, Native America Collected, 17.
object. Indeed, as rarified, aesthetic-minded collectors sought to add indigenous artworks to their home décor, the anthropological emphasis on utility and tribal context seemed inappropriate.184 As such, there occurred, as Margaret Dubin has noted, a shift in scholarly emphasis on these objects from ethnology to aesthetics: “Consumers wanted confirmation of an object’s worth outside of its context of production, along with professional explanations of aesthetic continuity and change.”185 Numerous turn-of-the-century magazines and tastemakers happily supplied this decontextualization.

Native America and Domestic Shelter Magazines

By the turn of the nineteenth century, domestic shelter magazines aimed at a middle-class audience played a significant role in disseminating and popularizing Arts and Crafts aesthetics and ideals, including the role and uses of Native American craft and design. Encouraged by a burgeoning faction of tastemakers and an attendant market for magazines focusing on domestic interiors, members of the middle class sought to distinguish and identify themselves through their homes and furnishings.186 Indeed, both general and specialized periodicals catering to middle-class tastes in architecture, art, and

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185 Ibid.
interior decoration flourished in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. *Ladies Home Journal*—in which Frank Lloyd Wright featured his architectural designs in the early years of the twentieth century—was among the first, arriving on doorsteps and newsstands in 1883. *Inland Architect* and *Architectural Record* debuted in 1887 and 1891, respectively; *Brickbuilder*, launched in 1892, focused on architecture and earthenware and became a popular advertiser for ceramics studios by the early twentieth century; *House Beautiful* began publication in 1896; and the *Craftsman* rolled off the presses in 1901. Niche magazines focused on a particular subject or medium—*Keramic Studio* or the *Basket*, for example—while European magazines such as *Studio* created editions specifically for American readers.

These titles, each in its own way, helped democratize the American Arts and Crafts movement, bringing its aesthetic and social philosophies, designers and producers, and products and styles into closer contact with a larger audience. At the same time, these publications played a significant role in turning the American Arts and Crafts movement into a capitalist venture, advertising and promoting specific artists, manufacturers, and even stylistic trends under the dubious guise of journalism. Perhaps most importantly, while considerable attention recently has been paid to the display of Native American art and craft in metropolitan, urban venues such as department stores and at international expositions as an introduction to many of Native American design—as well as
the tactics of merchandising and display and the main catalyst for changes to
Native American culture and design—the role of domestic shelter magazines in
these phenomenon is, to my mind, of critical importance.187

Many Americans may have encountered the tangible results of Native American
labor—baskets, pottery, and textiles among them—through window displays
and specialty shops, but the site of cultural, imperialist authority resided in the
advertisements, images, and language of domestic shelter magazines, and in
writing about Native American art and craft, authors employed a variety of
literary and written strategies in these journals’ pages. In the main, however,
they relied on an established colonial cultural discourse that reinforced the
economics of imperialism, adhered to the convention of “authenticity,” and
helped codify the idiom of alterity. Commentators attempted to reconcile the
conflicting desires to resolve cultural difference on the one hand, while
simultaneously reducing the “other” to exotic stereotype on the other, confining
Native Americans, in the words of one expert, “within both ennobling and
degrading stereotypes.”188

187 For a recent treatment on the role of urban markets, particularly department stores,
see Elizabeth Hutchinson, The Indian Craze: Primitivism, Modernism, and Transculturation
in American Art, 1890–1915 (Duke University Press, 2009), pp. 11–50; for the idea of
transculturation as a metropolitan phenomenon, as well as the concept of “contact zone”
as the space of “intercultural negotiation,” see Mary Louise Pratt, Imperial Eyes: Travel
Writing and Transculturation (Routledge, 1992).
188 Marvin Cohodas, “Louis Keyser and the Cohns: Mythmaking and Basketmaking in
the American West,” in Janet Catherine Berlo, ed., The Politics of Scholarship and
Collecting: The Early Years of Native American Art History (Seattle: University of
Part of this stereotyping often included the mass categorization of America’s indigenous population into one grouping, a sort of pan-Indianess. Indeed, two-decades of scholarship on the commoditization of indigenous American art at the turn of the nineteenth-century has demonstrated that multiple categories of collecting existed throughout regions of the United States, from Northwest Coast masks and totem poles and Plains Lakota tourist art to the embroidery of Woodlands Indians of Niagara Falls and Canadian borderlands. With this passion for collecting art from diverse indigenous American cultures came similar concerns about attribution and authenticity, as well as the related issues of gender and labor. For Arts and Crafts ambassadors and collectors, however, the desert Southwest did equal Native America: the collectible staples for the movement were, almost nearly without exception, Navajo blankets and rugs from northern Arizona and New Mexico, Pueblo pottery, and California

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Washington Press, 1992), 88; see also Dubin, “Sanctioned Scribes,” in Rushing, Native American Art, 159. Limerick has labeled this act “Remodeling,” accepting the “best” qualities, and then remaking Native Americans according to one’s own standards of improvement. See Limerick, The Legacy of Conquest, 186.

basketry, primarily Paiute, Pomo, Washoe, and Yokuts. As this chapter in particular has suggested, these precise cultural works appealed not only for their portability, but for their relevance to the decorative elements prized by Arts and Crafts aficionados.

American Arts and Crafts designers and promoters, however, did not invent the paradigm of using Native Americans as marketing instruments nor generalizing them. In his study of nineteenth-century advertising images featuring Native Americans, Jeffrey Steele notes that while Native Americans as a corporate symbol for advertising continued well into the twentieth century, the majority of these logos date from the period of 1870–1910. As Steele and other scholars have noted, this period coincided with increased containment of Native Americans, including the settling of many Indian conflicts—particularly the Plains Wars in 1890—and the passage of the Dawes Act in 1887, which simultaneously buttressed the reservation system while attempting to destroy Native American collectivity. The majority of these advertisements—whether for corn starch, clothing houses, coffee, fertilizers, or perfume—mimicked the themes of Indian containment that white Americans witnessed in popular Wild West shows, as well as reinforced the popular ideas of “scientific racism” and cultural evolution and codified the idea of identity construction, which both

strengthened the idea of civilized whiteness and provided an antidote to overcivilization through the presence of a subordinate and racialized other in harmony with nature.

Among the first national, mainstream magazines to focus attention on Native American enterprises was *House Beautiful*. In an early article from 1897, the author served up a powerful cocktail of adulation and racist stereotype, compressing into a few sentences the themes of salvage archaeology, aesthetic genesis, and noble savagery, and setting the tone for future commentators:

> Yet the most skilled weavers were in the great Apache nation, the wildest and most bloodthirsty of them all. The baskets of the southwestern squaw now have an artistic value as well as an archaeological one, for rescued from oblivion, they find conspicuous places in the collections of the art lover.¹⁹¹

From then on, *House Beautiful* regularly published articles on Native American design, including Navajo blankets in 1900; Indian pottery in 1901; and Native American dwellings in 1903.¹⁹² In many instances, advertisements by white retailers of Native American craft accompanied these pieces—*House Beautiful* carried some of the first—or explicit pleas by columnists to purchase American

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Indian-inspired products (fig. 3.7). For example, Madeline Yale Wynne, herself an Arts and Crafts metalworker, encouraged shoppers in *House Beautiful’s* 1901 holiday issue to give themselves “a Christmas present, in or out of season...and buy a basket,” drawing particular attention to those done in “Navajo” and “Indian” styles.

For many domestic shelter magazines, the popular myth of the “vanishing Indian” frequently acted as a handy marketing device and catalyst that urged their readers to acquire examples before full-scale degradation or worse—disappearance—occurred. An article from *House Beautiful’s* February 1900 issue, illustrates the point. While assuring its white readership that “primitive peoples live close to nature,” it also high-handedly rebuked Native American craftswomen for both employing non-Indian production methods and for operating within the “cash economy of the Euro-American population”:

> Fine baskets are now being rapidly made to satisfy the demands of trade, but they are no longer the expression of aboriginal ingenuity...the younger generation of women vastly preferring the commonplace utensils of trade to the painful labor of their hands. One by one, the older women are going out, and with them taking their secrets. There seems to the collector no way to preserve this beautiful art, for only so long as the

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matriarchs live and the tribes cling to their ancient customs will basketry be an epitome of their poetry, history, and religion.196

Reactions against industrialization, and the speed of modernity prompted promoters and retailers of Native American arts and culture to portray indigenous creation within the conventional language of alterity and stasis. Caught in the middle, Navajo weavers and Native American craftsmen were simultaneously encouraged to produce for the white market, and then forcefully censured when they did. Similar to Claudia Stuart Coles’s article on Native American basketry, writing for House Beautiful that same year, Edith L. Cooley throws this contradictory principle into sharp relief. On the one hand, she admonished the trader or middleman who participated in the degradation of native craft and subtly suggested the differences between contemporary and historic Navajo textiles, associating the latter with true art and the former with utility:

When the Indian buys his dyes from a trader, he is able to obtain a greater variety of effect than when he relies upon his own efforts for his colors. Of course, the trader will insist that blankets colored with his dyes are better than those colored from juices of plants. But the eye of the artist quickly selects the old blanket, with its deep tints melting from one into the other, where the color comes straight from the heart of a flower that has been nodding in the prairie breeze, or from a root that has absorbed its richness from the prairie loam, in preference to the new blanket, whose mineral coloring is apt to give a hard effect and carry the stamp of a machine-made article.197

196 Claudia Stuart Coles, “Aboriginal Basketry in the United States,” House Beautiful 7, no. 3 (February 1900): 151.
Kate Peck Kent, however, has shown that traders and retailers frequently discouraged Navajo weavers from producing “non-traditional” designs and from using manufactured yarns when the market would not support their new creations. The more elaborate “Eye-Dazzler” patterns did not fit collectors’ or consumers’ ideas of historic Navajo weaving, for example. In a further touch of irony, while the Indian trader or middleman was blamed for the degradation of Indian craft—and the Native American craftsman portrayed as the lazy dupe eager to embrace factory-like methods and procedures to increase output—Cooley makes clear that the savior of “authentic” native culture was the white man:

…it is only just to the Indian to state that he has recently been reawakened with regard to his art. In this he has been stimulated by Mr. E. A. Burbank, who not long ago collected and reproduced forty of the old designs that have since been copied in the new work.

In another advertising approach, curio dealers publicized Native American textiles generally, and Navajo weavings specifically, as key to the successful decoration of homes, an alternative to commercialization and mass-production (fig. 3.8). Indeed, it is not without reason that reservation trader J. B. Moore referred to Navajo weavers as “Indian-Roycrofters,” referencing the Arts and Crafts utopian community established at the end of the nineteenth century in

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198 Kent, Navajo Weaving, 78.
East Aurora, New York by Elbert Hubbard. To be sure, Hubbard’s wife, Alice, explained in a letter to Edgar Miller, director of the Indian Industrial Training School in Chilocco, Oklahoma that “Navajo rugs purchased from them sold well...” as “ideal accents in a room with Mission-style furnishings.” In a 1907 catalogue, *Book of the Roycrofters*, Hubbard featured Native American carpets in a room decorated with Roycroft furniture, and he adorned the Roycroft Inn with similar example (see figs. 3.9 and 3.10). Mesilla Park, New Mexico-based mail-order dealer, Francis Lester in particular emphasized the concept of interior decoration in his brochures and magazine advertisements, utilizing slogans like “To Make Homes More Beautiful” or “To Beautify Homes,” writing on the “Decorative Value of Indian Handicraft”:

First in usefulness...comes the Indian blanket. Anyone who has seen a mission style interior furnished in a Navajo blanket...and with Indian blankets for portieres, hung flat and drawn tightly back, much as the old Flemish door tapestries were used, cannot fail to have been impressed with the harmony of the scheme...”

Lester’s comments demonstrate the adaptive use of Native American art within white culture and the primacy of aesthetics over context.

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199 Quoted in Ibid, 297.
201 Quoted in Ibid, 294.
In addition, astute collectors and aficionados would not have failed to recognize the connections between Lester’s description of the primacy of “Indian” blankets and the primacy of “Indian” art in general. To their minds, Native American craft was the earliest and thus the most primitive and instinctual. In this regard, they borrowed the language of “salvage anthropologists” that established Navajo weaving as the original and most ancient art form. George Wharton James, a much ballyhooed turn-of-the-century authority on Native American art, reinforced this notion of the antiquity and authenticity of Navajo weaving in an early article for Stickley’s *Craftsman* magazine:

> How did the primitive spinner work? Watch him to-day. He is a Navajo—he, or his wife, sometimes one, sometimes the other. The process followed is the primitive one invented in the dawn of history. The Navajo and his neighbor, the Hopi, grew and spun cotton long before a white man’s dreams saw passage to India by way of the North West.202

Contrary to conventional wisdom—and Wharton’s assertion—that weaving was an ancient Navajo craft, the Navajo did not take up the practice until the mid-1600s, when they had greater contact with Pueblo refugees from Spanish rule.203 Navajo weaving eventually flourished under the Spanish, and the opening of the Santa Fe Trail in the 1820s further increased connections between the group and outside traders. In addition, as previously noted, the Navajos were not farmers

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and did not grow their own cotton but traded it with reservation agents beginning in the 1870s or used the wool from their own herds.

Textiles, however, did become a particularly marketable form of native craft, and numerous magazines extolled their decorative virtues with several suppliers emerging that either sold indigenous-made blankets and rugs, or “’Indian design’ bed blankets, robes, steamer rugs, bathrobes, couch covers, tapestries and shawls.” The *Craftsman* magazine celebrated the virtues of Indian weaving, claiming that “it may confidently be said that there is not a single stitch or weave known to modern art, made with loom however complicated, that the Indian woman did not invent, and has not had in actual use for centuries.” Even prior to this late fall 1903 article, the *Craftsman* advertised “handmade” Indian rugs through one of the same distributors that sold Southwestern baskets. That same year, Stickley debuted his first textiles based on Native American designs, embroidered motifs inspired by and taken from Pueblo pottery and basketry (fig. 3.11). Stickley first turned his attention to the subject of Native American art in a 1903 *Craftsman* article on Indian design in wall coverings. Here, following the paradigm of historicism established by Morris, as well as

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204 For examples of the supplier and manufacturers, as well as lists of items and dates of catalogues, see Thurman, “Textiles as Documented by the *Craftsman*,” in Kardon, *The Ideal Home*, 104–105.

205 James, “Primitive Inventions”: 129.

English critic and theorist John Ruskin, he attempted to replace the ethnographic context of Native American art with an artistic and aesthetic one, connecting indigenous designs to ancient British and Irish ones: “North American Indian decorative motifs...known and valued by ethnologists, have been neglected by artists. But they are worthy to be ranked with the Briton and Celtic systems, which are now in active enthusiastic revival in England, furthered alike by the guilds and by individual artists and craftsmen.”207

American Indian baskets also developed into highly collectible decorative objects in many Arts and Crafts homes.208 As Melanie Herzog described it, Stickley’s investigation of American art’s origins led him, as well as other Arts and Crafts proponents, to recognize “American Indian art as the earliest American art, baskets as the original American art, and basket makers as the original American artists.”209 Aside from a number of articles promoting the art form, Stickley also advertised Native American basketry retailers that offered readers a wide variety

207 “Nursery Wall Coverings in Indian Designs,” Craftsman 5, no. 1 (October 1903): 95.
of styles from a number of regions. As a result of increased demand, Indian weavers responded by both increasing their output and by developing new art forms. In particular, the Pomo people of north central California enjoyed popular success in the basketry market, and their designs—such as the “lightning-bolt” pattern on a basket by Sally Buris—were hugely popular due to the play of positive and negative space (fig. 3.12). Equally, a Yokuts basket is a perfect example of work made for Anglo-American collectors and trade. The form, while of early design, found its greatest fulfillment in the latter half of the nineteenth century in response to white demand for Indian trade baskets. The series of concentric diamond bands around the body—the characteristic rattlesnake pattern—and a corona of topknot quail feathers, may well have fascinated Arts and Crafts consumers who appreciated decorative inlays and ornamental metalwork (fig. 3.13).

Indeed, part of the decontextualization of Native American art generally and baskets specifically was to stress their repetitive, abstract patterns. One Craftsman article on basketry pointed to such an appeal for Arts and Crafts enthusiasts, emphasizing a basket’s “linear combinations, mosaic-like in

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character,” that “show their designers to have been space decorators...who appreciated the effects obtainable from the proper assemblage and alteration of ‘lights and darks.’”212 Another caption from the same article likened one basket to an oriental rug, and in a different example pictured just beneath it, the author scoffs at a basket contaminated by commercialism (fig. 3.14). *Keramic Studio*—a magazine published between 1899 and 1924 and edited by noted ceramist Adelaide Alsop Robineau—deviated from its typical emphasis on studio pottery by offering an article on the design and structure of Indian basketry. In a series of pattern plates, the article advised clever do-it-yourselfers suggestions for designs, all of which featured opposing contrasts of lights and darks in strictly linear, diagonal, rectangular, or triangular patterns.213

In his efforts to establish American Indian art as a legitimate, collectible, and thus marketable art form, Stickley employed the commanding assertions of Irene Sargent (1852–1932). A professor of art at Syracuse University, close by Stickley’s Craftsman headquarters, Sargent served as the founding editor of the *Craftsman* magazine from 1901 to 1905 and contributed several notable articles. Recent scholarship on the contributions of women to the Arts and Crafts movement has shown that Sargent acted as an influential shaper of Stickley’s empire; she

penned many of the anonymous articles in the *Craftsman*, as well as several of those signed by Stickley himself, and she was instrumental in molding the Arts and Crafts entrepreneur’s aesthetic philosophies. In a December 1904 article, Sargent employed a Hegelian model that served to reinforce the emerging position of Native Americans as the world’s artistic progenitors that retains the language of evolutionary ethnography:

> It has been proven by thorough research that the more backward the people, the less they borrow artistic *motifs*. Originality and independence are, then, two claims which can be made for barbarous art….These North American Indians, so long despised save by a few specialists, will be proven to be designers obedient to sure artistic principles, working spontaneously, creating for pleasure, rather than for display, as is too often the case with those who follow a similar calling in highly civilized communities. In pursuit of this study of North American Indian design, it might be urged that pottery as a more important expression of the useful arts, should be selected for examination; but while the clay vessels are most interesting, they form the second link in the chain of evolution; since the textile always precedes the fictile art, and because in the case of these Indians, the pottery at first served but as an adjunct to the basketry.

Aside from affirming the evolutionary trajectory of Native American basketry, the extended passage from Sargent’s article also raises two equally interesting issues that deserve further exploration: first, her use of an authoritative voice; and second, the popular belief that Native American artwork and industry

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214 For the most recent investigation of Sargent and her role in Stickley’s conversion to the Arts and Crafts cause, as well as Sargent’s contributions to the *Craftsman*, see Catherine W. Zipf, *Professional Pursuits: Women and the American Arts and Crafts Movement* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2007), 154–60.

existed outside the American capitalist economy and are thus themselves antidotes to the industrialization and labor unrest that characterized it.

The second feature to which Sargent’s article clearly points is the location of authority in the cultural discourse on Native American art and economy. Sargent peppers her article with terms such as “research” and “study,” giving it the veneer of scholarly reliability; moreover, her credentials as an art historian with a university chair further lends her statements about Native American basketry an air of legitimacy. Recent postcolonial critics have devoted considerable space to the idea of the Western authority in regard to the exotic Other. Edward Said, for example, argues that “empirical data about the Orient…count[s] for very little; what matters and is decisive is…the Orientalist vision, a vision by no means confined to the professional scholar, but rather the common possessor of all who have thought about the Orient in the West.” In other words, and in this case, the writer confirms the American Indian to the Anglo-American, it is the Native American “made known.”216 Or, in the words of Homi Bhabha, it is the “triumph of the writ of colonialist power.”217 While both men write about the West’s attitude toward the East, the ideas are clearly relevant to Anglo-America’s relation to its indigenous population, and Arts and

217 Homi K. Bhabha, The Location of Culture (London: Routledge Classics, 1994), 152.
Crafts theorists applied equal authority when writing about America’s original inhabitants.218

One acutely notable additional example of this use of an authoritative voice in writing about Native American art and culture is that of George Wharton James (1858–1923), who, as mentioned previously, was one of the most prolific and respected turn-of-the-nineteenth-century authorities on Native American material culture. Neither an ethnographer nor scholar, but a popular lecturer, photographer, writer, as well as collector and defrocked Methodist minister, James acted as an editor for both Elbert Hubbard’s Arts and Crafts publication, The Philistine from 1901 to 1903, and as an associate editor for Stickley’s Craftsman from 1904 to 1905; during these years, he was also a frequent contributor to House Beautiful.219 James’s authority on the subject of Native American weaving, however, largely stemmed from his influential 1901 publication Indian Basketry, which sold more than 10,000 copies in its first year of publication, as well as his short-lived journal devoted to the medium, The Basket (1903–1904; fig. 3.15).220 In his articles on Native American design, James contrasted American modernity’s failings with the beneficial characteristics of indigenous primitivism,

218 For the power of the written word in the American anthropological context, see Limerick, The Legacy of Conquest, 35–36.
commanding expertise as a prominent author and Native American activist: “It is to the Indian that we owe the beginnings of the things we have carried to a greater or less [sic] degree of perfection. We, the highly cultured and civilized, are the followers; they the leaders...in copying Nature the Amerind has avoided our errors—there is not a single shape that is ugly or inappropriate to the works for which it is needed.” Domestic shelter magazines repeatedly confirmed the assertion that Native American artisans copied nature by accompanying articles showing them working in nature, out-of-doors and thus both truly savage, yet redeemed by the direct sophistication of their art, uncontaminated by oppressive, degrading factory conditions (fig. 3.16). Indeed, as Leah Dilworth has noted, a salient featuring of writing about Native American art and labor during this period was not only featuring the artist situated in nature, but also focusing almost exclusively on their hands, thus suggesting that their creative abilities and efforts were indeed automatic and genetic.

Like Sargent, James also employed an authoritative voice in his articles. In a typical example, he gave detailed analysis of the creation of a Yokuts basket, explaining to his readers that a weaver “will produce a coiled basket by wrapping several splints around with an outside splint, and making a wisp for commencing her basket. This she then coils around a common center, and keeps

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221 James, “Primitive Inventions”: 126, 128.
222 Dilworth, Imagining Indians in the Southwest.
on adding to the wisp and coiling it until the basket is the shape and size she 
requires.” James’s technical emphasis here did not mask his true motives, 
however: the commodification of native art and the encouragement of its 
consumption by a white audience. Indeed, earlier in the article, James makes this 
point manifest: “The house beautiful is to help in the furnishing of the minds and 
hearts of its dwellers; hence, a small curio corner, a museum room, a mineral 
cabinet…are an absolute essential to its complete equipment. I’d far rather have 
a house,” James goes on to write, filled with “Indian baskets in my dining room, 
and Indian pottery in the drawing-room and bedrooms.”

One of the most interesting cases to emerge that highlights the abuse of 
authority—and also confines Native Americans within a traditional, pure, and 
“authentic” past—is that of retailers Amy and Abram Cohn and their protégée, 
native artist Louisa Keyser (fig. 3.17). In short, the tale of the Cohns and 
Keyser involves the complete and systematic fabrication of the Washoe basket 
weaver’s biography on advertisements and pamphlets produced by the Nevada 
emporium owners, the exclusive retailers of her work. The Cohns manufactured 
an elaborate symbology for Keyser’s basket designs that suggested continuity

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223 James, “Indian Pottery”: 237.
224 Ibid: 236.
225 Marvin Cohodas first elaborated the case of Louisa Keyser and the Cohns. For his 
extensive treatment of the episode, see “Louis Keyser and the Cohns,” in Berlo, The 
Politics of Scholarship and Collecting: 88–133.
with the past, and implied that Keyser alone possessed knowledge of these ancient, mystical Washoe ciphers and patterns. Moreover, Keyser’s near blindness was romantically explained as a result of her diligence and passion for her craft, the result of the time-consuming hours she lovingly devoted to each one of her creations. For moneyed collectors, this account conveniently implied that each basket possibly could be Keyser’s last—and thus acquisition was urgent—and covered up the sordid reality of her health problems, which included both alcoholism and morbid obesity, among the more common and deleterious effects of conquest. Finally, the Cohns exaggerated Keyser’s age—making her older than she really was—and trumpeted her little-used Indian name, Dat-So-La-Lee. These touches, while on the surface perhaps the most innocuous, provided Keyser with antecedents that predated white settlement. The end result of this involved masquerade was to place Keyser and by extension her baskets, within a traditional, pre-contact context making them more appealing to an Anglo-American market obsessed with authenticity. While the Cohns may represent an extreme and uniquely contrived example of the misuse of authority, the case illustrates the ultimate dissemination and power of the written word: James repeated verbatim Keyser’s fabricated biography in revised editions of his immensely popular and respected book, *Indian Basketry.*
In this way, he perpetuated Keyser’s myth for thousands of collectors, connoisseurs, experts, and lay readers alike.\textsuperscript{226}

A final device that provided authority in marketing indigenous crafts was to employ a Native American voice itself. Stickley treated his readers to such an example as late as 1914, when in the November issue of the \textit{Craftsman} he published an article titled “My People” by the Dakota (Santee Sioux) Indian, Charles Eastman (1858–1939).\textsuperscript{227} Eastman was the mixed-race grandson of artist Seth Eastman, who achieved fame as a painter of American Indians and the western frontier. An Ivy-League educated physician and co-founder of the Boy Scouts of America, Eastman was also an active lobbyist for Native American rights and advocate for improved healthcare on reservations. As such, for a white audience he could symbolize the nation’s successful assimilation policies and wax eloquently on Native Americans’ contributions to art, even if his expertise lay elsewhere. In his treatment, Eastman repeated many of the same tropes as his non-Native contemporaries. For example, he echoed Sargent and Stickley’s attitude toward the “primitive” work ethic by asserting that Native

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\textsuperscript{226} George Wharton James, \textit{Indian Basketry} (1904 and 1909; repr. Dover Publications, 1972). In his essay, Cohodas cites a 1903 article by James in which he insists that his interpretations “derived from many years of close personal contact with the Indians.” Moreover, James was quite friendly with the Cohns and accepted gifts of Keyser’s baskets from them; see Cohodas, “Louis Keyser and the Cohns,” in Berlo, \textit{The Politics of Scholarship and Collecting}: 130, notes 27–28.

\textsuperscript{227} Charles Eastman, “‘My People’: The Indians’ Contributions to the Art of America,” \textit{Craftsman} 27, no. 2 (November 1914): 179–86.
Americans combined “love of the work” with “perfect sincerity,” contrasting their efforts with modern commercial society’s “cheap machine-made garments and utensils, without beauty or durability.”228 He attributed this skill to the American Indian’s love of nature, which amounted to “religious feeling...because it was sacred to him.”229 As a result, Eastman mourned the encroachment of civilization, and, like his white counterparts, scolded Native Americans who now created “for money, not for love,” lamenting that “genuine curios of antiques are already becoming rare, except in museums, and sometimes command fabulous prices. As the older generation passes, there is danger of losing altogether the secret of Indian art and craftsmanship.”230 Thus, in a few short pages, Eastman buoyed white America’s stereotype of Indian artistic creation—as instinctual and the product of love—which at once supported the imperialist economy and reproached Native Americans for participating in it.

In addition, in his role as Native American activist, educated professional, and, particularly his role in establishing the Boy Scouts—one of the era’s most prominent forms of bourgeois hobbyism—Eastman represents the slippery and difficult liminal space associated with racial identity at the turn of the century. While several postcolonial scholars have devoted themselves to complex issue of

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228 Ibid, 181.  
229 Ibid, 183.  
230 Ibid., 181
cultural and racial hybridity (see chapter one), Eastman’s function as—in the
words of scholar Philip Deloria—an “interior Indian,” are worth addressing, if
even briefly. Deloria describes “interior Indians” as those that functioned within
“American societal boundaries” and thus “represented the negative, savage
qualities of modernity”; conversely, “exterior Indians” existed outside those
margins and therefore symbolized “authenticity and natural purity,” a strict
reversal of the qualities prized only a generation earlier.231 Under Deloria’s
rubric, then, Eastman’s enfranchisement within hegemonic culture on the one
hand, and his admonition to Native American laborers on the other, places him
squarely within the parameters of “interior Indians” who embraced white society
and confined the Native American population in alterity and stasis. At the same
time, Eastman’s donning of a “traditional” Plains headdress for his photograph
accompanying the article clearly announces his association with “my people,”
introducing his indigenous credentials and his mystic knowledge of Native
American creativity placed him outside the realm of Anglo-American culture.
Perhaps most importantly, Eastman’s imitation of an Anglo-American
impersonation of Native Americaness for a white audience reflects the limited
cultural capital American Indians of the time had and the mimetic nature of

231 Philip J. Deloria, Playing Indian (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 73–74, 103; see also pages 104–06, in which Deloria explains the contradictions inherent in these
terms where even “laziness” or “tramping” could be positively explained as autonomy
from work or a happy-go-lucky disposition, free of the modern problems of
incorporation and industrialization.
Native American identity itself: he could promote Indian authenticity while his adoption of the Indian Other formed part of Native American identity around a series of attributes that Native Americans themselves were seeking (and were factually) changing. 232

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to review the language employed by turn-of-the-century domestic shelter magazines and situate it within both the context of the Arts and Crafts movement and its reliance on salvage anthropology’s evolutionary, hierarchical values, as well as the more recent analyses of postcolonial critics and theorists. The examination of the language of domestic shelter magazines when addressing Native American art and design raises the question of whether the modern/antimodern dynamic presented in their review is an artificial, culturally constructed binary. As scholars and academics have either developed this line of inquiry or employed this binary over the last few decades to explore turn-of-the-century art and culture, the question of its applicability, overuse, or artificiality has equally raised its validity as a scholarly paradigm. For their parts, both Jackson Lears and Philip Deloria

view antimodernism as an attendant effect of modernization—itself a slippery term—one inescapable without the other or “two sides of the same coin.”233

The means by which white Americans encountered Native American peoples and their culture was indeed complex: from the urban centers that involved staged reenactments at World’s Fairs to department stores and window displays to the homes of well-heeled cosmopolitan collectors. At the same time, the eventual connection of America’s railway system and the advent of railroad tourism—with its extensive system of cafés, hotels, and Indian craft demonstration centers—as well as advertising and domestic shelter magazines all denote modern forms of communication and transportation. Indeed, that collecting Native American art—or that the production of Native American design itself—was not part of or affected by these modern phenomena is not in question. Arts and Crafts ideologues and reformers, however, positioned Native American art and design as the antidote to industrial modernity’s failings deliberately as a result of its very modern connections and connotations: as handcrafted products of love resulting from instinctual creativity and thus absent the demeaning qualities connected with modern labor practices. This paradigm of authenticity as an antidote to modern America’s inauthenticity was indeed culturally constructed, but by the very ideologues who required a

233 See Deloria, Playing Indian, 102 and Lears, No Place of Grace, xv.
primitivist position vis-à-vis modern, industrialized America’s perceived ills. Indeed, the very domestic shelter magazine discussed above through which many middle-class collectors encountered Native American art and design were themselves the products of the very modern mechanisms against which they rebelled: cheaply printed and mass-produced, these subscriber-based magazines—direct-mail solicitations were themselves, after all, a modern advertising mechanism perfected by Arts and Crafts ideologue Elbert Hubbard—whisked to far-flung subscribers mailboxes via the railroad. Thus to counter the industrial taint that might otherwise curdle the journals’ pages, Arts and Crafts ideologues and writers constructed a primitivist narrative that positioned Native American art and craft—through both image and text, in pictures and words—as anathema to and outside the boundaries of middle-class, white existence.

As discussed above, image and text, pictures and words served as an admonishment and labor paradigm for both native and white America: Native Americans were expected to participate in the capitalist economy, yet encouraged to retain both “traditional” designs and working methods; white Americans were equally counted on to participate in this endeavor through

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consumption of these “traditional” designs, yet equally encouraged to adopt and adapt them for their own purposes. Similarly, Native American labor served as an idealistic model for white Americans that could possibly lead them from the servitude of industrialization. A second salient feature of these articles and pictures in domestic shelter magazines is their emphasis on specifically female art and craft. Thus, Native American labor acted as an ideal for a specific segment of the population who were an increasingly important demographic in the marketplace as both consumers and workers: women. At the same time, Native American art and design acted as a catalyst and lesson for young males that advanced a competitive, martial, and masculine ideal that would lead them into middle-class professionalism. The role of designers and ideologues in advancing this agenda through domestic shelter magazine and home decorating books is worth investigating and is the subject of chapter 4.
Chapter 4
As Manly as the Greeks!
Constructing Gender through Indigenous Design

Introduction

During the Arts and Crafts period of the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries art critics and reform ideologues—through a glut of domestic-shelter and interior decorating magazines aimed primarily at women—reinforced the gendered structure of Native American labor for a wider, middle-class audience. Gustav Stickley’s popular Craftsman magazine celebrated the virtues of Native American weaving by claiming that “it may confidently be said that there is not a single stitch or weave known to modern art, made with loom however complicated, that the Indian woman did not invent, and has not had in actual use for centuries.” Similarly, in a December 1904 article, the same publication positioned Native Americans as the world’s artistic progenitors and women as the labor source of that art:

The barbarian artist understands how to balance in her creations the two forces—the aesthetic and the utilitarian—which fight, so to speak, for the possession of every object produced in the leisure and for the gratification of its maker. She retains in her baskets the full measure of usefulness, while, at the same time, she inscribes upon them her personal translation of the world lying about her.236

235 See George Wharton James, “Primitive Inventions,” Craftsman 5, no. 2 (November 1903): 129.
A second, salient hallmark of the Arts and Crafts movement—manual training and moral uplift through art education and therapy—also demonstrates that the guiding forces behind collecting Native American art, explaining their aesthetic qualities and encouraging their educational uses, remained men. Arthur Wesley Dow, for example, who established a summer school for artists in his native Ipswich, Massachusetts in 1891, studied Pre-Columbian and Native American culture along with Japanese, and encouraged a system of “participant learning”—a method devised by anthropologist Frank Hamilton Cushing—by having his students master indigenous media and techniques. In his efforts, Cushing guided Dow, and ceramists such as Charles Fergus Binns and Marshall Fry also provided direction. The recipients of these lessons, as school rosters and photographs attest (see figs. 4.1 and 4.2), however, were largely women, who made baskets, pottery, and weavings according to indigenous techniques. The female pupils in an image from Dow’s Massachusetts summer school work out-of-doors at a rustic wooden table. In the scene, two women work on hand built pottery, while a third, back to the camera, weaves on a vertical loom in the manner of the Navajo. These genteel crafts increasingly associated with middle-class domesticity are here restored to a primitive state through the use of Native American techniques. The pre-industrial conditions of artistic creation are here reinforced by the Pueblo olla at the center of the table and the natural setting in which the women work.
Similarly, a photograph that accompanies George Wharton James’s popular 1908 educational tome, *What the White Race May Learn from the Indian* (fig. 4.3) illustrates the other end of this gendered spectrum. In this image, the author himself is seen describing the symbolism of Paiute basketry to his son and wife, and in his accompanying chapter, James attempts to buttress the idea that Native American design could act as a catalyst for healthy, masculine boyhood; perhaps unconsciously, it also reveals the gender divide that accompanied such explanations. In the homey middle-class parlor, the china cabinet, lace curtains, and overstuffed furniture all recall civilized, feminine domesticity, while the Native American baskets call to mind James’s emphasis on the life of vigorous, outdoorsy masculinity: The Indian baskets evoke nature while the parlor represents culture and restrained one indoors; baskets are supple yet strong; china, brittle and fragile. More to the point, James’s active explanation of the basket and its symbols, as well as his son’s erect posture and full attention to the lesson, imply first that this is a two-way conversation, and second that pedagogy generally—and the connoisseurship and explanation of Native American symbols specifically—is a male pursuit; James’s wife Marianne’s slumped head, resigned gesture of boredom, and removal from the diagonal axis that makes up the arrangement of the two men seems to say that her active concentration and participation are neither required nor desired. The two photographs from

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roughly the same time and of seemingly similar subjects—groups of people engaging with Native American art—aptly illustrate the different threads that will be explored here: When it came to Native American artwork, production was projected as a female endeavor, one situated outside the urban, industrial framework, while consumption of those artworks and their attendant educational value was male, dichotomies that positioned females with nature and males with culture.

**Independence or Subservience? Western Interpretations of Native American Labor**

To examine authoritative male connoisseurship and pedagogy as a counterpoint to female labor in this context, it is worth first briefly exploring two well-known paintings that highlight this message: Elbridge Ayer Burbank’s portrait of his uncle, Chicago industrialist, Edward Everett Ayer, and Thomas Eakins’s portrait of anthropologist, Frank Hamilton Cushing.

Born in Harvard, Illinois and trained at the Chicago Academy of Design, Burbank (1858–1949) practiced a painterly yet realist style popularized in Munich, Germany where the artist spent two periods of study. Chicago’s 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition, with its popular Wild West shows, anthropological and ethnographic displays, and numerous artistic depictions of Native Americans, likely informed Burbank’s future work. It was his
relationship with his uncle, Edward E. Ayer, a collector of Native American material culture and the first president of the city’s Field Museum of Natural History that served as the greatest inspiration on Burbank. In 1897, Ayer commissioned his nephew to travel west and paint a portrait of the imprisoned Apache chief Geronimo. Burbank’s four-month stay at Fort Sill, Oklahoma shaped the direction of the next thirteen years of his life, during which he produced hundreds of portraits of Native American individuals in nations across America, including multiple examples of Geronimo (see figs. 4.4 and 4.5). These portraits, which the artist continued to paint multiple examples of over the next several decades, gained both anthropological and artistic legitimacy through their appearances in both natural history museums and galleries; the decorative and scientific nature and use of these painting is suggested by an article that James published in the *Craftsman* in 1904.

Burbank’s portrait of his uncle, painted the year that Ayer funded his nephew’s travels to the West, shows the lumber baron seated in the “Indian Room” of his fashionable Romanesque mansion designed by Chicago architect Daniel

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238 It is no coincidence that the two phenomenon were intertwined, serving as interdependent motivators for the artist: Edward Ayer was the driving force behind the creation of the Field Museum, originally named the Columbian Museum of Chicago, the only permanent museum to evolve out of the 1893 Columbian Exposition. The institution’s name was officially changed to the Field Museum of Natural History in 1905.

239 George Wharton James, “A Noted Painter of Indian Types,” *Craftsman* 7, no. 3 (December 1904): 280–81.
Burnham (fig. 4.6). Decorated with Plains Indian breastplates and dresses; Northwest Coast tunics; Pueblo (Acoma, Laguna, Santa Clara, and Santa Domingo) pottery; Apache, Hopi, Havasupai, and Pima basketry; and a Navajo blanket and dress, Ayer sits amid his possessions—including a small fraction of his nearly 50,000 manuscripts and volumes on North and South American history and the continent’s indigenous populations that he ultimately donated to Chicago's Newberry Library—staring confidently at the viewer. The message is unequivocal: taking a break for a moment from his reading, a book from his extensive library resting on his right leg and a finger placed to mark its interruption, Ayer is the sole owner, possessor, and, perhaps most importantly, as a natural result of the first two, the interpreter of Native American culture. These qualities are evidenced by the collector’s indiscriminate use of Navajo and Plains dresses as wall decorations beneath the windows and the ornamental arrangement of arrows like a bouquet in a pot. Ayer’s reinterpretation of these objects for his own purposes re-envisions the arrows, a male warrior’s tools, for domestic use, uniting them with homey feminization and thus implying his power over vanquished cultures.

Thomas Eakins’s full-length portrait of well-known yet controversial ethnologist Frank Hamilton Cushing (1857–1900) perhaps more explicitly shows the active intellectual, physical, and scientific backdrop of the consumption of Native American material culture, and, like Burbank’s portrait of his uncle, renders
plain that white males revealed the mysteries of Native American culture and life (fig. 4.7). For his part, Cushing helped shape both the popular conception of Native Americans, as well as the field of anthropology, through both his celebrity and his establishment of participatory observation as a legitimate method of ethnologic practice and study. Cushing’s theories also helped solidify the popular notion that Native American creativity and labor was instinctual by proposing that artistic development had three distinct stages: biotic, manual, and mental. According to the ethnologist, Native Americans were at a biotic stage and their hands were their mind; creativity was instinctual. Native craftspeople took their inspiration from nature, and it was tradition that assisted them in production.

Cushing gained national attention during the 1880s when, as a young Smithsonian anthropologist, he lived for five years at Zuni Pueblo as an initiate of the community and eventually as a member of the tribe’s most important and powerful martial organization. Cushing carefully crafted his public image through paintings and photographs that often showed him dressed in an amalgamation of native garb and through a series of popular articles on his adventures. Cushing also disseminated his participatory methods through these channels, which often featured him working on indigenous crafts or showed him set against a backdrop of Navajo textiles (see fig. 4.8). His participation in and

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240 Dilworth *Imagining Indians in the Southwest*, 140. According to Dilworth, authenticity thus exists in two places: nature was the inspiration and Indian hands acted as the instinctual guide.
responsibility for ethnographic displays at commercial expositions and at museum solidified both his popular persona and his academic credentials; Cushing’s demonstrations in the official scholarly garb of suit and tie further implies that the instructional value was disseminated through male professionals.

It was to assist with displays at the University Museum that took Cushing back to Philadelphia in 1895 where Eakins painted his portrait in the late-summer of that year. Although separated by the seemingly independent fields of art and science—the first supposedly illusory, the second ostensibly empirical—Eakins and Cushing were kindred spirits: Eakins himself embraced the energizing, transformative image of the American West and its material culture, producing paintings and photographs of cowboys and collecting indigenous material culture, many of them gifts from University Museum curator, Stewart Cullin. Like many Americans of the time, however, Eakins’s image of Indians and the West were mediated through popular culture, including Wild West shows and fashionable literature. Nonetheless, in many of the artist’s paintings, including his portrait of Cushing, Eakins attempted to merge artifice and observation, goals that led Cushing to describe him as “my friend, Thomas Eakins, the scientist-artist of Philadelphia” in an 1895 American Anthropologist article.241

For the portrait, the two men transformed a corner of the Eakins’s Chestnut Street studio into an ersatz Zuni kiva (a sacred, excavated chamber) complete with altar, artifacts, and weapons. Cushing posed in inventive fantasy of half-Native American, half-Mexican vaquero costume, one he wore while living among the Zuni. In addition, Cushing’s stance—erect and mobile more in line with a swashbuckling pirate than an anthropologist—suggests martial qualities more than ceremonial ones. Indeed, Cushing himself emphasized these qualities in the self-same *American Anthropologist* article on the arrow, a possible reason they are featured so prominently in Eakins’s portrait:

> Again, there is no weapon and no single thing that for ages held sway so potent over the minds or the destinies of men, or wrought more varied influence over their institutions and customs than did the arrow; for I think I can also make clear the fact that as it was the chief reliance and resource of primitive man in the two main activities of his life, war and the chase....

Eakins’s recollection of painting Cushing’s portrait confirms the active, intellectual participation required by (white) men: “An altar was built by Cushing in my studio,” Eakins wrote, “and all the proper details were assembled by him. He is represented as in Zuniland performing an incantation.” The painting’s active, masculine qualities are not manifested simply in the subject or

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242 Ibid, p. 308.
his posture, however, but in Eakins’s realist style as well and are also implicated by and present in his reputation among nineteenth-century audiences and critics. Unencumbered by European birth or permanent expatriate status, Eakins came to embody the virile, masculine ideals of American painting during a period when issues of nationality and nativism were at the forefront of artistic discussions. Writing during the period, one critic pointedly lamented the “foreign looking paintings” that had invaded American exhibitions, referring specifically to the cosmopolitan approach personified by John Singer Sargent and his artistic allies, while another referred to them as “French, Frenchy.” 244 In contrast, because of his emphasis on scientific objectivity and the intense realism of his paintings, Eakins represented the antithesis to the effete, expatriate artist exemplified by Sargent and his counterparts, or, at the extreme end of this debate, the real threat to middle-class masculinity, the decadent, effete sickly artist more fully realized in the Aesthetic Movement paragon, Oscar Wilde. At the same time, Eakins’s more quiet and standoffish masculinity signified a healthy retort to the image of depraved manhood embodied by the excesses of architect Stanford White.

Eakins successfully walked this tightrope through both his art and his personality. In 1881 critic Mariana Griswold van Rensselaer captured these qualities when she described Eakins as a “big ungainly man,” perhaps best mistaken for an “eccentric looking mechanic,” adding that “he did not know foreign artists, outside of Paris where he studied, even by name” and comparing his craft to that of an “inventor.”\(^\text{245}\) In a letter to his sister Frances, Eakins himself expressed his admiration for “living, thinking, active men,” and several of his portraits of Philadelphia’s leading male scientists and intellectuals—as well as his genre scenes of musicians and western types—allude to or deliberately feature these dynamic pursuits.\(^\text{246}\)

Indeed, as Alan Braddock has rightly pointed out, while Eakins viewed his portrait of Cushing specifically as possessing both artistic and ethnographic merit, he thought it more relevant to anthropology and history than to art.\(^\text{247}\) Eakins, for example, depicted the Native American materials with


\(\text{\textsuperscript{246}}\) Thomas Eakins to Fanny, April 1, 1869, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; quoted in Elizabeth Johns, Thomas Eakins: The Heroism of Modern Life (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 12. Perhaps ironically, Eakins wrote this letter while a student in Paris about his master, Jean-Léon Gérôme, a French—foreign—artist with whom Eakins would later be disassociated on the one hand, but one whose reputation rested on his detail and exactitude on the other.

\(\text{\textsuperscript{247}}\) Alan Braddock, Thomas Eakins and the Cultures of Modernity (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 196–98.
anthropological exactitude: the layout of the makeshift kiva with the descending ladder constructed of timber; the buckskin bandolier bag hanging on a single antler at right and a leather war shield illustrated with Zuni pictograms hanging from a series of second antlers at left; and a square fire pit surrounded by wood on which sits a ceramic, ornamented and ridged cornmeal prayer bowl. This anthropological accent is further stressed by the fact that Eakins attempted to secure a home for the painting at a government agency or the University of Pennsylvania Museum, an institution best known for its ethnographic and natural history collections. Either would have been more in line with Cushing’s experience as an ethnographer with the Smithsonian Institution or his work for the Bureau of American ethnology. That the painting was partly invented fantasy, one in which Cushing—and by association, Eakins—felt free to reinterpret Native American culture was apparently inconsequential and further suggestive as to the site of authority in translating indigenous practices.

Portraits by Eakins of late-nineteenth-century luminaries surrounded by the instruments of their accomplishments and rendered with scientific precision were not limited by gender, but there are notable distinctions between those of men and those of women. The artist’s portrait of Sarah Sagehorn Frishmuth titled Antiquated Music (1900; Philadelphia Museum of Art; see fig. 4.9), for example, features the subject seated among an array of the historical musical instruments that she collected. The selection of instruments and their depiction
themselves are an anthropological study of sorts, affirming an evolutionary
cultural trajectory, from “savage”—the Asian, African, Oceanic, and Native
American objects—to the Anglo-European ones of “civilized” society; Frishmuth
herself is associated with these latter: her right arm relaxes languidly on an
eighteenth-century English piano with her left on a \textit{viola d’amore} resting in her
lap. As Marc Simpson has suggested, her gaze is “impassive, uninvolved,”
addressing neither the artist, the viewer, nor her surroundings; her hands make
no determined effort to actually play the instruments on which they rest, her left
index finger depressing a single white key on the piano, producing an imagined,
dreary monotone, a metaphor for the sitter and her emotional state.\textsuperscript{248} The
instruments in Frishmuth’s drawing room thus become objects of possession
rather than action, part of the consumerism that was a function of the female
sphere of influence within an increasingly consumer-driven economy, a sphere
that provided opportunities for independence and authority over the American
home.\textsuperscript{249} In its own way, the canvas suggests that economic autonomy and
aesthetic discrimination were important ingredients of a woman’s consumerist
activities, even if the objects were the result of the husband’s successful
investment activities.\textsuperscript{250}

\textsuperscript{249} Gwendolyn Wright, \textit{Moralism and the Model Home: Domestic Architecture and Cultural
\textsuperscript{250} William J. Clark, “The Iconography of Gender in Thomas Eakins’s Portraiture,”
\textit{American Studies} 32, no. 2 (Fall 1991): 24.
A comparison of the half-length portrait Eakins painted of Cushing’s wife—Emily Magill Cushing—during the same summer of 1895 provides an interesting antidote to that of her husband’s and further suggests the dichotomy between the artist’s depictions of men and women involved in scientific and intellectual activities (fig. 4.10). The subject and format of the painting also subtly introduces the issue of female labor, and the accounts that both contemporaries of the Cushings and current scholars have used to describe Emily herself and the work that she performed points to the gendered treatment of labor. Contemporaries contradictorily labeled Cushing as both “cantankerous” and a “baby doll,” implying that she was headstrong on the one hand but docile and feminine on the other.\textsuperscript{251} More recent scholars have emphasized Cushing’s “solid build,” describing her “powerful…bare arm[s],” the “strength implied by the circular link of the arms,” her “physical power,” the antithesis of the frilly sleeves of the black chiffon dress she wears in Eakins’s portrait.\textsuperscript{252} In addition to these clashing versions, contemporary news reports explained Emily Cushing’s role in her husband’s ethnographic pursuits as that of a “curator,” “charged with the care and classification of specimens.” But, other accounts suggest that her role in her husband’s expeditions was that of “the restoration of antique Indian pottery

\textsuperscript{251} It is perhaps interesting to note that in this context, “cantankerous” — or argumentative or difficult — itself could also be seen as a gendered word.

from shards,” describing her condescendingly as a “persevering little woman.”

Women as adjuncts to their husband’s success or work were part-and-parcel of Eakins’s output, as well as that of his world, yet here her involvement in those activities is completely absent, and her equally distant and aloof gaze revealing nothing of her character or contributions to science.

Emily Magill Cushing’s restoration of pottery from shards also invokes additional images associated with labor and with female craft in particular. Nampeyo, a Hopi-Tewa potter popular for her Sikyatki-revival vessels at the beginning of the twentieth century, was known to base her ceramic decorations and designs on shards found near her home. The mental image of Nampeyo—and perhaps even Cushing herself—scouring the grounds of abandoned Hopi villages for shards of pottery recalls the paintings by nineteenth-century European artists such as Jules Breton, Jean-Francois Millet, and even Vincent van Gogh of gleaners and weeders in open fields, picking the missed, stray strands of wheat, the castoffs themselves of someone’s previous labor. While these shared and widespread depictions by both Breton and Millet in particular are frequently described today as heroicized and sentimentalized, they were controversial in their day. Critics considered them revolutionary statements about the plight of

253 Quoted in Ibid.
workers and socialist commentaries, often describing them as “savage” and vulgar”; Millet often cloaked these subjects in old master, biblical guises (see fig. 4.11) to create art historical continuity and dismiss any seditious suggestions.255

Similar subjects by Breton, Millet, and Van Gogh feature women seen from the posterior, bent over in the act of their work (see figs. 4.12 and 4.13). In her essay, “The Ambivalence of the Material Body,” Griselda Pollock has bluntly described this not uncommon positioning in artwork as *more ferrarum*—“in the fashion of animals”—equating the women’s posture with a specific sexual position and thus part of a gendered sexual dynamic and power structure.256 In addition, and perhaps far importantly, Pollock has correctly observed that these poses—as applied specifically to the drawings and paintings by Van Gogh—had precise class connotations and were ones that no proper bourgeois woman would have assumed for a stranger. That Emily Magill Cushing was spared this type of depiction, but instead portrayed—however powerfully built—in her lacy formal gown, seen only from the bust upward and maternally cradling her metaphorical “child,” speaks equally to her class and social status. While Cushing’s activity as


“curator,” or restorer responsible for the “care and classification of specimens,” in support of her husband’s interests may also be interpreted as a cerebral occupation involving both precision and thought, the absence of either consideration is striking. The only direct reference to Cushing’s involvement in her husband’s archaeological studies and field activities is, in fact, the black-on-black vessel that she cradles in her lap. The pot is barely perceptible in the portrait: its dark, monochrome glaze is nearly indistinguishable from Cushing’s black gown, and is perhaps recognizable only by the tapering lip that emerges at the bend at the sitter’s right elbow. This lack of distinction between Cushing’s gown and the vessel she holds makes the object appear as part of her stomach, a fact emphasized by her gently clasped hands that rest in her lap. Cushing’s cradling of the pot in a loving, maternal gesture further accentuates the association with pregnancy and thus a feminized, nurturing nature. While the subject’s bared, supposedly muscular arms may have been more an issue for contemporary commentators, the association between creativity (the vessel) and procreativity (the position of the vessel vis-à-vis Cushing’s stomach and her gesture) may have been more obvious. In either case, Eakins elided Cushing’s involvement in an intellectual and scientific pursuit, and reduced it to one of maternal and nurturing concern.

In this context, we might assume that Emily Cushing’s “solid build” and “powerful arms” are the result of her own labor—fixing broken pottery—
pursuit of her husband’s academic, intellectual, and scientific goals. Indeed, as Melissa Dabakis has pointed out in her study of turn-of-the-century labor monuments and their visual programs, exposed, muscular arms—particularly on female figures—served as a “signifying system” that marked the figure as working-class, here obliquely referencing Cushing’s manual labor.257 Other turn-of-the-century visual artists embraced the trope of the bare forearmed female as an emblem of the working-class. The Boston painter William McGregor Paxton, for example, made this a routine feature of the subjects in his canvases of domestic interiors. As Jessica Todd Smith has rightly pointed out in her study of the artist, Paxton routinely depicted upper-class women engaged in genteel social rituals such as the consumption of tea, but also made household work a salient feature of his paintings, whether depicting the lady of the house or her domestic servants.258 In several of his paintings that show domestic servants at their household chores, Paxton depicted these females with rolled up sleeves, whether their chores involved dusting, sweeping, or whisking eggs for the morning breakfast (see figs. 4.14 and 4.15).259 In one provocative example, a

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young maid, a feather duster under her left arm, interrupts her household task to read a book found on the nearby table, perhaps snooping into her employer’s diary or personal records. It also reveals the strict hierarchy within domestic service itself: Her status as a parlor maid, charged with the more gentile tasks of dusting precious objects or reading household inventories, is reinforced in the painting by the young woman’s fully closed sleeves. In either case, that her forearms are completely covered supports the idea that her activity is contemplative, her meditative if secretive pose more in line with the idle duties of her mistress and not laborious.

This distinction between Eakins’s portrait of Frank Hamilton Cushing and Emily Magill Cushing is not surprising. As William J. Clark has suggested, Eakins’s portraits from 1875 onward reveal larger themes of “male activity” and “female passivity,” contrasts between male possibility and female “isolation and emptiness” in an urban-industrial world. Eakins’s portrait of Emily Magill Cushing—lacking any active, physical markers or indicators of either labor or a profession—seemingly falls into this latter category; yet the oblique allusions to

that Paxton’s artistic inspiration, along with his contemporaries in the Boston School, was seventeenth-century Dutch painter, Johannes Vermeer, whose intimate canvases of similar subjects contain parallel class distinctions. Vermeer’s paintings of ladies and their maids in domestic interiors frequently show bare forearms on both, but while they are part of the fashionable dress on the former—ending in frilly sleeves, they are rolled up on the latter, suggesting active work. See, for example, The Milkmaid (c. 1658; Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam) and The Love Letter (1669–70; Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam).

260 Clark, “The Iconography of Gender”: 12.
Cushing’s capacity for labor—channeled into useful work for her husband’s career and interests—along with the description by her contemporaries and the common art historical analysis, possess overtones common to indigenous labor.

Magill Cushing’s association with Native American work—whether intellectual or physically strenuous—largely colored even contemporary descriptions of her occupation. Nineteenth-century commentators associated female bodily overdevelopment with Native American culture and work. In a famous mid-nineteenth-century example of capture and return, Californian Olive Oatman was reunited with her white family after being abducted by the Mohave, but not after being irreversibly marked with tattoos. Upon her homecoming, newspapers noted with revulsion Oatman’s “largely developed” arms, hands, and wrists, alluding to a corporeal muscularity associated with indigenous females, as well as with white working-class American women.261

The sexual power structure evidenced in these descriptions and images were not reserved exclusively for females, however, and the feminized, supplicating indigenous male served as a visual counterpart to the masculinized, female

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Native American. In 1856, the same year that newspapers reported the return of Olive Oatman to her family—coarsely altered by tattoos and a working-class physique—a journal devoted to graphic arts and related literature, The Crayon, announced that a crouching, supplicating pose was the perfect position in which to depict the American Indian male:

Picture the group of Aborigines, who, hiding in the forest, wonderingly watched the landing of the Pilgrims. What attitudes for the sculptor. One of them perhaps crawling on his hands and knees in the snow, holding one hand over his eyes to hide the light, and the other by his side, clutching his bow, peering cautiously through a vista at the approaching strangers. Here is an original action, unknown in antique sculpture—picturesque, composing agreeably, wholly American, full of lively incident, and telling its story perfectly.

The “wholly American” picture that the writer’s description conjures, of course, is an appropriate one for Native Americans, “crawling on his hands and knees,” “hiding” from the new arrivals. Any association with conflict or warfare raised by the addition of the bow and arrow is certainly offset by the advantage of history: the writer makes clear in the introduction that subject is perfect for American sculptors because “that he [the indigenous male] is fast passing away from the face of the earth. Soon the last red man will have faded for ever from his native land.”

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262 It could be possible to trace this pose back centuries to its antecedents. One sees it, for example, in Benjamin West’s famous history canvas, The Death of General Wolfe (1770; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa), in which the crouching Native American is the only seated figure of the flanking left and right groups and not among the kneeling leaders rushing to Wolfe’s assistance at the composition’s center.


264 Ibid.
Responding to the *Crayon* critic’s call, a few years later, sculptor John Quincy Adams Ward developed his piece *Indian Hunter* (fig. 4.16), a statue that shows a crouching Native American accompanied by his dog. Both figures strike the same pose, their backs stooped through their similarly thrust right legs and their backward stretched left ones, and the alert, rightward tilt of their heads, their proximity and corresponding attitudes and postures reinforcing the animalistic association between dog and titular possessor, as well as the supplicant pose addressed earlier. The bow and arrow in the hunter’s hand—absent in this version, although the curled left-hand fingers suggest its presence—is again rendered futile by the un-warrior-like stance and his unreadiness for battle as addressed from a Euro-centric perspective. Like the description provided by the critic for the *Crayon*, the triumph of American imperialism—and with it the subjugation and vanquishing of the American Indian implied in the text—has rendered any threat by the Native American hunter inconsequential and thus his hunter-like stance here has been replaced and reinterpreted as a compliant and subservient one.

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Indeed, as Richard C. Trexler has argued in his groundbreaking book, *Sex and Conquest*, “the primary and preordaining social fact regarding male homosexual behaviors...was the threat of punitive gendering of foreign and domestic enemies to show them as akin to women.”266 Although his study focuses on the Iberian conquest of Mexico and Latin America, Trexler nonetheless suggests that military and political conquest—the inspiration for domestic arrangements—had a history of feminizing the defeated, either through “penetrative penalty” or through dressing their victims in female clothing, or both.267 In addition, sexual subordination represented the method by which rulers could demonstrate their power to their competitors, both interior and exterior and across polities, and the act of prostration demonstrated the subject’s abasement to both inside and outside parties.268

By the end of the nineteenth century, this “wholly American” attitude of the Native American prostrating by “crawling on his hands and knees,” provided textually by the *Crayon* and visually by artists such as Ward, served as both a public warning to the country’s indigenous population, as well as a comfort to its Anglo-American citizens concerned with westward settlement and Indian

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267 Ibid, 37, 80.
268 Ibid, 116–17, 146.
hostilities that such subjects were—and could be—easily subdued. A salient and easily distributed example is an image commissioned by South Dakota entrepreneurs Joshua Bradford Bailey, George P. Dix, and John L. Mead and taken in 1882 by the photographer William R. Cross (fig. 4.17). One of twenty-four stereoscopic cards issued by Bailey, Dix, and Mead of Sitting Bull and his Lakota Sioux followers taken during their imprisonment at Fort Randall on the present-day Nebraska-South Dakota border, the jarring yet poignant image of a Nez Perce Indian nicknamed “Steps” by his captors, was part of a series that was meant to demonstrate American military superiority, offering assurance that the Plains Indian Wars were coming to a close and the frontier was safe for white settlement.269 To highlight Steps’s and Sitting Bull’s defeat and surrender, the photographer intentionally captured Steps kneeling in a subservient pose, forced to show his missing limbs to Cross’s camera. At the same time, an inscription on the back of the card makes it clear that Steps’s situation was his own fault and not the army’s responsibility, his injuries the result of his own poor decision to disobey the government and ally himself with Sitting Bull: “STEPS. A Nes [sic] Perce Indian, who escaped from his band, while surrounded in the bad lands of Nebraska, by Gen’l Miles in 1878. He then joined Sitting Bull’s band of

Uncapapa Souix [sic] Indians in the British possessions and has followed their fortunes ever since. He lost his feet above the ankles, also his right hand by being frozen, having been caught in one of the sever snow storms, 21 years ago.”

That this admonition should migrate from the public sphere to the private one, as a moralizing example for the domestic power structure, is no surprise. A salient example, as well as a quixotic mixture of classical and indigenous, can be seen in the mural paintings created in the 1890s by Orlando Giannini for the south and north walls of the master bedroom of Frank Lloyd Wright’s home in Oak Park, Illinois (figs. 4.18–4.21). Some years after they were completed, Wright’s son John recalled that “Skinny’ Giannini from Italy painted American Indians in brilliant colors on the walls of papa’s bedroom. On one wall was a full length Indian chief peering out over the plains, one hand shading his eyes. On the opposite wall, his squaw stood holding a water jug. Papa liked Indians!”

But the paintings themselves suggest that the antecedents were perhaps more classical than indigenous American. Both figures wear fanciful amalgamations of Native American accessories over Grecian togas; the pose of the female in particular recalls the hieratic stance of Greek caryatids. The male’s posture in this mural is subservient and suggestive, and Giannini feminized the depiction of indigenous manhood, a stark contrast to the rigid alertness of Eakins’s depiction.

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of Cushing or the assertive and confident stare of Edward Everett Ayer. Nonetheless, the images reinforce gendered associations when it comes to both labor and social and political hierarchies. While the male figure bends down and gathers food, a rifle under his left arm informs us that he is also a manly hunter, and thus reinforcing his role as an active provider for his family. From across the room, “his squaw” looks on passively, cradling a water jug in her left arm, a symbol of her domestic chores and, most likely, a product of her own labor. That such artworks and designs were thought suitable for homes suggests that these gendered constructions were encouraged between husband and wife in the family structure generally and perhaps in the bedroom specifically.

By the late-nineteenth and into the early years of the twentieth century, Progressive-era reformers and Arts and Crafts advocates and tastemakers both widely embraced and reinforced this division, constructing a gendered ideal of childhood education and upbringing as well as domestic arrangements through home decoration. What’s astonishing about this adoption of Native American culture and subjects as a pedagogical tool in educating and engineering children, however, is that in many cases, these divisions were encouraged through the commodification and use of aboriginal abstract designs and patterns, as opposed to figurative or narrative art that would presumably been more easily digestible and understandable to small children. In addition, while the prostrating native male functioned as visual model of the subjugated indigenous population,
designers employed abstract aboriginal designs to engineer healthy, masculine boys whose inner visions would turn to warfare and ancient Greece, the Anglo-American template for effective and manly combat.

**Constructing Gender through Indigenous Design**

By the latter decades of the nineteenth century, tastemakers encouraged people to view their home not simply as a reflection of their character, but as a way to *build* it, too, frequently stressing its value in forming taste and rectitude in children. In a chapter titled “The Philosophy of Beauty Applied to House Interiors,” from her 1893 compendium, *Household Art*, artist, designer, and reformer, Candace Wheeler, outlined the proper decoration of a home—emphasizing color and light—and its importance in developing children’s moral fiber:

> A perfectly furnished house is a crystallization of the culture, the habits, and the tastes of the family, and not only expresses but *makes* character. Children living in such a home grow up with the knowledge of form and color, a sense of beauty and fitness—in short, with a standard of taste which in maturity stamps them with that unconscious superiority which distinguishes men or women whose cultivation has been gradual and unlessoned.271

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A few years later in 1897, novelist Edith Wharton and architect Ogden Codman debuted their book *The Decoration of Houses*, a manual of proper interior design. In its pages, the authors repeated and—given the magnitude their book ultimately attained, endlessly reprinted and credited with initiating interior decoration as a profession—reinforced the idea that homes were shapers of taste, especially for youth. In their chapter on “The School-room and Nurseries,” Wharton and Ogden argued that “the habit of regarding ‘art’ as a thing apart from life is fatal to the development of taste,” stressing that “the room where the child’s lessons are studied is, in more senses than one, that in which he receives his education. His whole view on what he is set to learn, and of the necessity and advantage of learning anything at all, is tinged, more often than people think, by the appearance of the room in which his studying is done.”272 Directly accepting the weakening of moral fiber occasioned by modern, industrial culture, the authors sternly warned parents and readers against “the deleterious effects of namby-pamby prettiness,” in decorating the nursery or the selection of art, citing as a unique concern the susceptibility of children to either bad or good taste.273

This perception of home decoration as both a reflection and shaper of character was part of the larger movement of conspicuous consumption at the end of the

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272 Edith Wharton and Ogden Codman, Jr., *The Decoration of Houses* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1897), 174–75, 173.
273 Ibid, 179.
nineteenth century that viewed commodities and possessions as determining and revealing personal identity, rather than as an adjunct to or replacement for activities, achievements, or individuality. As Jackson Lears has suggested in his discussion of ascending consumer culture as a form of ‘therapeutic leisure’ at the time, “more and more Americans were being encouraged to ‘express themselves’…not through independent accomplishment but through the ownership of things.”274 In the language of decorating handbooks and shelter magazines, however, this type of consumption of Native American culture had a specifically gendered objective and pattern, one in which consumption was often the purview of women, while possession and actualization through these objects were reserved for men.

Shelter magazines that catered to middle-class, largely female audiences—the Chautauquan, the Craftsman, Ladies Home Journal, and House Beautiful among them—urged their readers to embrace Native American craft and design as an effective means of child rearing, constructing specifically gendered domestic arrangements through home decoration. Arts and Crafts ideologues promoted

274 T. J. Jackson Lears, No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880–1920 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 37. Other scholars who have addressed this phenomenon in terms of the consumption of Native American culture and collecting are Hutchinson in The Indian Craze, page 23 and Sarah Stewart in On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), who writes that under these circumstances at this time “consumer culture replaces its generating subject as the interior milieu substitutes for, and takes the place of, an interior self”; see page xi.
the adoption of Native American culture and subjects as a pedagogical tool in educating children through the consumption and use of aboriginal abstract patterns. In the pages of these journals, writers extolled the purity of Native American design, articulating in particular a program of masculinization through artwork and detailing the benefits of adopting indigenous customs and practices as a means of producing competitive, martial, vigorous boys. Indeed, by the early years of the twentieth century, such geometric motifs became a popular focus of instruction and were promoted as appropriate decorations for bedrooms and playrooms, where they served as both mementos of a supposedly vanquished community and as antidotes to the perceived feminization and passivity of the Anglo-American man. In this contradictory way, indigenous design was thus co-opted to construct a virile, masculine idea of male gender, while, as we have seen, representative images of pacified and vanquished Native Americans themselves prevailed.

An associated attribute of this conviction that the home was the site of character building and a means of personal expression, was the concept of creating an individual space within the home that satisfied personal identity through the display of seemingly exotic bric-a-brac and non-Western materials. Whether Asian, Middle Eastern, or Native American, the artful display of such foreign objects not only inspired the type of private contemplation that Progressive-era reformers and tastemakers advocated, they also advertised an individual’s
aesthetic refinement, education, and worldliness. By the end of the nineteenth century, this concept of creating an area in the house devoted to the display of foreign objects was considered so commodious and routine that they became known as “cozy corners.” So popular and ubiquitous were they, that writer Florence Morse, in her essay on home furnishings from Wheeler’s 1893 *Household Art* was able to simply refer to them as “Corners.”

Perhaps the most notable and vigorous advocate of the use of Native American culture in the home, was George Wharton James, one of the most prolific and respected authorities on indigenous material culture at the turn of the century. Through much of his writings, James advocated a healthy exposure to and education in Native American design, one that reinforced the gendered binary between art collecting and art production. Neither an ethnographer nor scholar, but a popular lecturer, photographer, writer, and collector, James acted as a contributor and editor to numerous turn-of-the-century interior decorating and lifestyle publications, including the *Craftsman, House Beautiful*, and Elbert Hubbard’s *Philistine*. James’s authority, however, largely stemmed from his influential publications on Native American art and culture, which sold copies in the tens-of-thousands. James also extolled the purity of Native American design: “It is to the Indian that we owe the beginnings of the things we have carried to a

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greater or less [sic] degree of perfection. We, the highly cultured and civilized, are the followers; they the leaders...in copying Nature the Amerind has avoided our errors—there is not a single shape that is ugly or inappropriate to the works for which it is needed.”276 At the same time, he also acknowledged and reiterated the gendered act of creation, explaining to his readers that in Yokuts basketry, “she produce[s] a coiled basket by wrapping several splints around with an outside splint, and making a wisp for commencing her basket. This she then coils around a common center, and keeps on adding to the wisp and coiling it until the basket is the shape and size she requires.”277 James’s technical emphasis here did not mask his true motives, however: the commodification of native art and the encouragement of its consumption by a white, male audience. Indeed, earlier in the article, James makes this point manifest: “The house beautiful is to help in the furnishing of the minds and hearts of its dwellers; hence, a small curio corner” is “an absolute essential to its complete equipment. I’d far rather have a house,” James goes on to write, filled with “Indian baskets in my dining room, and Indian pottery in the drawing-room and bedrooms....”278

James’s authoritative voice suggests that contrary to the idea of the woman as the shaper of domestic taste and chief consumer for the home, men dictated the

276 James, “Primitive Inventions”: 126, 128.
277 George Wharton James, “Indian Pottery,” House Beautiful 9, no. 5 (April 1901): 237.
278 Ibid: 236.
specifically masculine pursuit of Native American collecting and decoration. James made this association explicit in a 1901 article in the Chautauquan titled “Indian Basketry in House Decoration”: The “man of wide sympathies, broad culture, and refined mind, unconsciously reveals himself in the chaste, appropriate, and yet widely differing articles of decoration and art with which he surrounds himself in his home.” In addition, James articulated a program of masculinization through Native American artwork and lifeways. In a chapter from his 1908 book, What the White Race May Learn from the Indian, James detailed the benefits of adopting indigenous customs and practices as a means of producing healthy, vigorous boys:

The white race has much to learn from the Indian in its treatment of boys....My blood is made to boil almost every day when I am in our cities and see [the] young coming home from school, anaemic [sic.], pale, nervous, irritable, almost victims of St. Vitus’s dance, often dyspeptic or with a cough fastening its hold upon them, because their parents are so blind and foolish as to prefer book and school education to health.

As a remedy, James prescribed an active education in Native American culture, where boys were “instructed fully into the mystery of sex just as soon and as simply as he is in every other question that arises, and at puberty he is made the subject of specific ceremonies that teach him the meaning of the change that is

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coming over him. He is treated with a new dignity, is formally recognized as having entered man’s estate.”

Another turn-of-the-century writer on southwestern culture, journalist Charles Fletcher Lummis (1859–1928), echoed James’s assessment about Native American culture as an appropriate avenue for early sexual initiation. Lummis, an editor for *The Los Angeles Times*, moved to New Mexico in 1888 to recover from paralysis, eventually settling in the Pueblo Indian village of Isleta, where he lived for several years compiling notes, collecting materials, and taking photographs that later served as source material for a series of popular articles and books on the Southwest. According to Lummis, the American Southwest inspired masculinity in men by encouraging physical activity, an enthusiasm for battle, and a “display of robust sexuality.” Indeed, Indian children introduced to American education were turned “consumptive.” To Lummis’s mind, however, the Southwest—a term he coined—as embodied by Native Americans was suitable to inspire boyish impulses, but true manliness belonged to the Spanish conquerors and settlers. While Lummis championed certain Native Americans, the Pueblo peoples in particular, who he saw as settled and thus participants in the capitalist economy, to Americans, he wrote: “We love manhood, and the

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Spanish pioneering of the Americas was the largest and longest and most marvelous feat of all manhood in history.”282 James’s and Lummis’s declarations about childhood sexual education might seem contradictory, yet their attitudes toward it are mediated by history and an example of the Darwinian approach to cultural anthropology: indigenous sexuality was suitable to indoctrinate children, because Native Americans themselves were equivalent to children, as Lummis’s own statement suggests; in addition, the containment and subjugation of Native American by the end of the nineteenth century is exactly what made their sexuality unthreatening and thus suitable as a societal example.

But by the early years of the twentieth century, written examples and figurative images were not the only means of reaching children: proving that George Wharton James’s theories could be absorbed through the mere attention to indigenous patterns, abstract, geometric indigenous designs became a popular area of instruction and were promoted as appropriate decorations for children’s bed and playrooms. An article from the October 1903 issue of the Craftsman titled “Nursery Wall Coverings in Indian Designs,” reveals this intent (see figs. 4.22–4.25). Featuring five suggestions for wall-coverings in both nonrepresentational and semi-representational formats, the article’s author—making clear that such playroom designs were for exclusively male use—

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282 Quoted in Ibid, 132.
explains that such motifs will effectively and unconsciously “[attract] the restless fancy of the child and [open] to him vistas of thought which will educate his most valuable faculties.” Moreover, while the article claims the artwork will inspire an “interest and love” in antiquities, it is not necessarily to American ancient artifacts that the author is concerned with:

He will learn unconsciously to see the meaning of more important things, and to make the most of his powers of observation. He will also receive preparation for the historical and literary studies which await him. Caesar among the Gauls will be for him like the white man among the Indians, the grind of Latin construction be lessened by the impetus of the tale of adventure. 

The call to study Native American design as a prelude or analog to classical civilization—a longstanding, Eurocentric device that gave “primitive” cultures value was echoed in a *Craftsman* article of the following year, which made similar associations: “basketry long-filled the place of pottery...as vases among the Greeks,” and directed its (male) audience to “…begin his examination of North American Indian art, strong in the critical methods and in the judgment which he has acquired by tracing the life-histories of designs, from their origin early in the history of ancient peoples, who were destined to attain high civilization.” This ideology was also a prevalent theme that was established during the nineteenth century at World’s Fairs. At these international expositions, archaeologists, curators, and ethnographers presented the ancient, Pre-Columbian past along

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284 Ibid: 96.
evolutionary lines. The objects and plaster casts and models on display offered an orderly progression of architectural styles with comparisons to ancient Athens, and contemplation of these works led viewers to the glories of classical Greece and thus the formation of Western civilization. Thus, Pre-Columbian art was proclaimed as worthy of study as the monuments of the Old World, but always staged within that context. Maya reliefs were compared with the Parthenon friezes, and fair organizers created romantic pastiches that featured Maya and Egyptian monuments with figures in classical costumes and poses.

The gendered uses by Anglo-Americans of Native American culture for house decoration also extended beyond articles in domestic shelter magazines. In her popular decorating manual, Home Furnishings: Practical and Artistic, author and critic Alice Maud Kellogg encouraged readers to incorporate Indian motifs and objects into the decoration of a young male’s room to advance his boyish spiritedness:

286 Diana Fane, “Reproducing the Pre-Columbian Past: Casts and Models in Exhibitions of Ancient America, 1824-1935,” in Elizabeth Hill Boone, ed., Collecting the Pre-Columbian Past: A Symposium at Dumbarton Oaks (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1998). While not the main thrust of this dissertation, it is worth mentioning that in addition to their roles in categorizing and exhibiting Pre-Columbian cultures, world’s fairs also provided dogmatic framework for America’s imperial policies: expositions staged on American soil stressed the benefits of the nation’s overseas territories, and placed the national debate over annexation in racial terms with Native Americans as the metaphor for successful colonial expansion. This structure reinforced the prohibited desires that whites projected onto dark-skinned people, who were shown corrupted to maintain and reinforce white purity and white identity was constructed through the identification and representation of dark-skinned “others.” See Rydell, All the World’s a Fair, especially pages 46-47
In a room used by a boy or girl for playing, studying and sleeping there is a triple opportunity for interesting furnishing. A young lad who was fond of Indian life and history collected some different trophies which were made a wall decoration in one corner of his room. A Navajo blanket was tacked to another side of the wall, and a floor rug made with a second Indian blanket.287

For a young girl, Kellogg advises stimulating her musical interests through the placement of a piano in one of the far off rooms, so as not to interrupt “the family occupations.”288 Kellogg’s agenda is clear: the reference to a boy’s collection and to his “trophies” explicitly suggests that little to no knowledge of Native American art and life is required for collecting—for what connoisseurship and expertise could a child truly claim—and that these objects were considered prizes, mementos of a vanquished community and aids in inspiring a boy’s competitiveness, an antidote to modernity’s perceived passivity and feminization. At the same time, the young girl is convinced to quietly sequester her interests so as not to disturb her family.

While numerous ideologues and tastemakers trod this particular well-worn path of gendered design in home decoration, Candace Wheeler used Native American design and symbols as a tool to subvert Victorian conventions about gender and nationality. Associated with the Aesthetic movement through her textile designs

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288 Ibid.
and interior decorating partnership with Lockwood DeForest and Louis Comfort Tiffany, Wheeler followed Wilde’s admonition that nature equaled sublime artistic powers and was thus an inspiration for subjects; she also sought to incorporate the intellectual legacy of English Arts and Crafts reformers by adopting craft as fine art and linking artistic production with moral vigor and strength. As such, she chose an agrarian culture linked to the Aztecs, Maya and Native Americans as the ideal, and thus devised a new symbol that linked aesthetics, not masculinity, to nationalism: Indian Corn. Wheeler formally introduced the motif during the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition, where she acted as designer of the fair’s Women’s Building, via a small book featuring parables and poems by Frank Hamilton Cushing, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and Celia Thaxter, among others. To Wheeler, the corn motif contested the martial, masculine, scientific, and technological themes of the Fair by representing Native American female culture and thus promoting peace and anti-industrialization. “Indian Corn” to her symbolized Native American women’s innate “feeling for beauty” and intuitive “artistic prowess,” and could thus represent the strong values of the nation, including civilized order; self-discipline; food production; and female handicraft:

No other plant is so typical of our greatness and prosperity as a nation; no other has such artistic meanings and possibilities; no other is so wholly and nobly and historically American.289

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A textile example designed by Rosina Emmet for Wheeler’s firm of Associated Artists—a toga-clad Zuni woman emerging from her work in the fields shouldering the product of both her artistic creativity and her labor (see fig. 4.26) — provides a rare but pertinent example of the consumable image of labor that visitors at the Fair were encouraged to adopt as a national ideal. The anonymous, factory-like conditions of the Associated Artists workshops where women created such examples (see fig. 4.27), however, belies Wheeler’s insistence on nature generally and Indian corn specifically as a necessary precursor to creativity and artistic vision. Wheeler’s example, however, buttresses the gendered dynamic under which Native American art, craft, and design were positioned: Native American artistic creation and labor were female endeavors, ones associated directly with nature and unencumbered by urban industry and thus a safe arena for the female working classes. Unwittingly, it thus associated males with metropolitan factories, themselves a symbol of activity and modernity, as well as the dynamic pursuits of collecting and the study of those artworks, characteristics allied with culture. In addition, Wheeler’s textile design repeats the familiar motif of the toga-clad, Grecian female; the classical allusions are further reinforced in the textile despite the Native American patterns that border the subject by the lunette above the figure and the towering corn stalks that appear almost as Hellenistic columns.
The comparisons between Native American art and craft and classical civilization, as well as the gendered spheres that ideologues encouraged collectors and consumers to employ such art in the home also manifested itself in literary texts. Willa Cather’s 1925 novel, *The Professor’s House*, for example, suggests just how well entrenched such ideas about the differentiation in domestic spaces iterated by tastemakers such as Kellogg and presented in photographs such as the one accompanying James’s book, had become by the early decades of the twentieth century. Already a decade before the publication of *The Professor’s House*, Cather had made a visit to Mesa Verde in present-day Colorado; she published an extended article on her musings and opinions in a 1916 edition of the *Denver Times*, one that, in the language discussed above, contrasted modern America’s disorder with the straightforwardness of Native American design, as well as in the burgeoning lexicon of abstraction in design. Describing Mesa Verde as “the highest achievement of stone-age man,” Cather in her article compared the ruins to ancient examples “of most southern countries—of Palestine, northern Africa, southern Spain—absolutely harmonious with its site and setting.”290 Cather’s description in the newspaper of her journey to the site also confirms the importance of the railroad and tourism to the dissemination of Native American culture—the title, of course, reminded readers that travel to the area was simple—and reads like a migratory spectacle of the

transition between industrialized, urbanized America and its ancient, pre-modern counterpart:

On the way from New York to the Montezuma Valley one goes through hundreds of ugly little American towns, but when you once reach the mesa, all that is behind you. The stone villages in the cliff arches are a successful evasion of ugliness—perhaps an indolent evasion. Color, simplicity, space, an absence of clutter, the houses of the Pueblo Indians today and of their ancestors on the Mesa Verde are a reproach to the messiness in which we live.291

It is also worth noting that Cather embraces the vernacular of Arts and Crafts ideologues, praising the ancestral Puebloans for their uncomplicated homes with an “absence of clutter,” implicitly disparaging the Aesthetic movement and Victorian homes that the program reacted against.

In her novel, Cather also absorbed and repeated the gendered structure ideologues suggested for the domestic sphere, acknowledging the masculine qualities that Native American art endowed an otherwise feminine space: the professor’s study is a transformed sewing room—itself an area of the home dominated by females—and Cather describes it as cramped and suffocating, a room where a “deeply absorbed man”—read an active intellectual—“might be asphyxiated before he knew it.”292 Nonetheless, the professor’s study is also an “insulation from the engaging drama of domestic life,” transformed into a

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291 Ibid.
292 Willa Cather, The Professor’s House, James Woodress and Frederick M. Link, eds. (1925; repr. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 27.
“centre of operations” by the academic through “the notes and the record and the ideas,” of his years-long masterwork on Spanish “adventurers” in the New World, reinforced by his visits to New Mexico and the Southwest.293 Cather herself acknowledged these qualities about the house in a 1949 essay on The Professor’s House: “In my book I tried to make Professor St. Peter’s house rather overcrowded and stuffy with new things; American properties, clothes, furs, petty ambitions, quivering jealousies—until one gets rather stifled.”294 At the same time, the open window the professor uses to keep the overenthusiastic stove at bay represents the “fresh air that blew off the Blue Mesa, and the fine disregard of trivialities.”295 Like the photograph in James’s, What the White Race May Learn, Cather’s narrative buttresses the popular thought that the domestic realm, as engineered and governed by women, could be repressive and restraining, the antithesis of outdoorsy masculinity, while the antidote was indigenous culture, literally here a breath of fresh air.

Conclusion

By the end of the nineteenth century, industrialization, immigration, and urbanization were perceived as launching a whole flotilla of negative

293 Ibid, 26–27.
consequences against middle-class youths—effeminacy and sickness and nervous disorders—and with them, the dissolution of the family. As many scholars of turn-of-the-century art and culture have noted, this period and these concerns signified a crisis of masculinity. Despite different intentions, turn-of-the-century architects, artists, designers, and reformers addressed these issues in remarkably similar ways, focusing their efforts on Native American lifeways as a remedy to societal ills. Specifically, many addressed social issues and utilized Native American art and culture as a way to structure family life and reinforce gender norms.

For both men and women, indigenous art served as an aesthetic ideal, one based on psychological intuition and visual simplicity, a means by which to perfect artistic composition and production through both perception and minimalist design. While ideologues promoted indigenous creation as a labor ideal for both genders, for women specifically, however, it was one that really only advanced the artificial possibilities of artistic professionalism: Interior designers and tastemakers recommended the sequestration of young girls and those that perhaps later trained in art, found themselves in segregated environments, ones that often mirrored the gendered division of labor more generally. In contrast, for men, ideologues reinsured and reinforced gendered norms through collecting and education, vigorous and martial activities. Even when designers attempted to subvert gender and societal expectations, such as Candace Wheeler’s creations
and writings, they nonetheless evoked established patterns of behavior,
associating women with nature outside the realm of the actual working world.
Chapter 5
Beneath the Surface:
Indigenous Art and the Construction of Anglo-American Art

Introduction

One of the most influential Arts and Crafts ideologues, Irene Sargent, frequently worked behind the scenes, editing and ghostwriting essays for Gustav Stickley’s magazine and setting the agenda for his Craftsman kingdom. Some of the anonymous, unsigned and credited articles that Sargent penned have already been touched on in chapters two and three, but her lengthiest and most detailed contribution to the magazine, “Indian Basketry: Its Structure and Decoration,” is worth re-examining again: it succinctly demonstrates another way that ideologues and tastemakers attempted to direct not just the creation of art, but, obliquely, society as well. As part of this extensive essay on Native American basketry, its origins and styles, Sargent expanded her discussion to the alleged over-emphasis by modern artists, collectors, and connoisseurs about an object’s superficial qualities such as decoration and external ornamentation: “To study decorative art from the surface: that is, to imitate the designs of authoritative contemporary artists, is not only to remain unenlightened, but it is also to produce poor work.” “Ornament,” Sargent went on to write, paraphrasing an idea initially espoused by Arts and Crafts progenitor Thomas Carlyle in one of
his novels, “is the first spiritual need of barbarous man.”\textsuperscript{296} As clearly elucidated in her text, Sargent’s emphasis here is on the dangers of concentrating on surface decoration at the expense of what she described as the “spirit of the original composition,” resulting in a designer who is “the slave of his art” rather than the “master.”\textsuperscript{297} Sargent’s exegesis and statement was not uncommon, but one employed by numerous Arts and Crafts ideologues in the pages of shelter magazines: a return to the spirit of Native American art if not necessarily its appearance. Indeed, many artists, critics, reformers, and writers appealed to Americans to emulate indigenous techniques as a means of not only creating beautiful art, but, as we’ve seen in previous chapters, countering mechanization and mass-production, and with it, a form of social control to counter civilization’s greater ills.

To be sure, surface as a synonym for art’s artificiality and materialism had been a subject of debate beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, especially as the American art market expanded. With the rise in wealthy families and collectors, the American art market accelerated during the Gilded Age, and artists

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\item[Irene Sargent, “Indian Basketry: Its Structure and Decoration,” \textit{Craftsman} 7, no. 3 (December 1904): 321, 322. The quote Sargent employs is from Carlyle’s 1836 satirical novel (first serialized in 1833–34), \textit{Sartor Resartus: The Life and Opinions of Herr Teufelsdrockh in Three Books}, a book highly influential on the American transcendentalists; the line is from a discussion on clothing, and the exact phrasing is: “The first spiritual want of a barbarous man is Decoration, as indeed we still see among the barbarous classes in civilized societies.” \end{itemize}
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\item[Ibid: 321.]
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established themselves as players within that market or as anathema to its concerns and thus outside it: join the fray or whither seemed to be the two alternatives.\textsuperscript{298} Artists and exhibitors instituted elaborate spectacles around the display of art and around paintings in particular that became accepted and even anticipated parts of exhibition strategies; sumptuous frames adorned monumental, dramatically lit canvases; artists stuffed their studios with exotic curios and bric-a-brac to enhance the mysterious aura of both art and artist.\textsuperscript{299} The taint of the art market’s commercialism and superficiality also infected the paintings themselves and critics voiced concerns that the objects and subjects themselves were merely surface, impenetrable. On the one hand, critics derided artists like Blakelock and Ryder for their “indigestion of rich pulpy colors, a series of forms that might be anything…poetic shapelessness…supposed to be worthy of a frame.”\textsuperscript{300} Realism in particular became associated with artifice and commercial culture, one critic decried that “a picture so realistic that we take it for the reality pictured is no more fine art than a mirror so clear we crash into it by mistake.”\textsuperscript{301} For Tonalist painters like Thomas Wilmer Dewing (see fig. 5.1)

\textsuperscript{298} For an example of this paradigm from the nineteenth century, see “Commerce in Art,” \textit{New York Times} (February 26, 1882) and “Rewards of Painters,” \textit{New York Times} (October 1, 1882), in Sarah Burns and John Davis, eds., \textit{American Art to 1900: A Documentary History} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 652–55.

\textsuperscript{299} For more on this episode in American culture, see Sarah Burns, \textit{Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 59–73.

\textsuperscript{300} “National Academy Exhibition: Second Notice,” \textit{Art Amateur} 1 (June 1880): 2.

\textsuperscript{301} William M. Mallock, “The Relation of Art to Truth,” \textit{The Forum} 9 (March 1890): 41.
and James McNeill Whistler, their minimalist symphonies of color were meant to appeal to the senses and attract sympathetic, sensitized viewers, to reach beyond just surface pleasures and stimulate less base emotions. The seeming simplicity of their compositions and approach, much like Winslow Homer’s rugged seascapes, Native American basketry, and handcrafted pottery, as examples, acted as the antidotes to art market commodities, providing connoisseurs and collectors with authentic, natural, and simple alternatives.

As the fear of surfaces entered and then dominated art critiques, critics and theorists proposed a variety of indigenous justifications or techniques that endowed art with authentic, essential, or natural antecedents, ones perhaps invisible to the casual viewer but known to the maker and the perceptive connoisseur. This section explores how the interest in indigenous art and culture of the Americas at the turn of the nineteenth century influenced the technical construction of Anglo-American artworks, particularly those that did not owe their outward aesthetic inspiration to indigenous precedents. Art schools and their instructors from Charles Fergus Binns and Adelaide Alsop Robineau to Marshall Fry encouraged variations of Frank Hamilton Cushing and Arthur Wesley Dow’s system of “participant learning” having their students master indigenous media and techniques; domestic shelter magazines and training manuals encouraged their students to observe and practice indigenous American techniques as a formal structure of their art. The practice of intuitive and
spiritual creation based on indigenous mysticism continued well into the twentieth century with artists such as Jackson Pollock and David Alfaro Siqueiros. By obscuring the appearance of Native American art in their work, whether through a technical practice or through as a purely spiritual act of creation, or even for commercial purposes, these artists embraced an established system that celebrated indigenous creativity but one that limited actual exposure to the history and reality of indigenous art and craft.

This final chapter explores the uses of non-Western art and architecture as an inspiration for Western architects and designers, reviewing early mid-nineteenth-century polemical treatises by Owen Jones, Gottfried Semper, and Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc. This chapter then reviews the increased interest in non-Western and Pre-Columbian architecture and design through examples shown at World’s Fairs and how they influenced both the artistic and popular imaginations. Inspired by these displays, architects turned their attention to Mesoamerican and Native American building design both in surface ornament and, again, as an underlying structure for their plans.

**Beneath the Surface**

Keramic Studio, a journal co-founded in 1899 and edited by ceramist Adelaide Alsop Robineau, billed itself initially as a “monthly magazine for the china painter and potter.” Later it expanded its mission to cover all phases of ceramic
creation, publicizing itself as “the monthly magazine for the decorator, designer, potter, firer,” largely a reaction to the studio crafts movement and a way to encourage handcrafting as a reaction against mechanization and mass-produced goods. Although the magazine devoted itself early on to the genteel, middle-class art of china painting, during its twenty-five-year run, as the magazine’s subsequent subtitle implies, it shifted focus to the more active and hands-on approach to ceramics specifically and craft generally advocated by studio potters like Robineau and her husband, Samuel. The early emphasis on pottery also expanded to articles and essays on other art forms and techniques. In a 1907 issue, Mertice McCrea Buck authored an article on Indian basketry that introduced readers to Native American techniques. While it introduced some basic styles and featured samples of designs, its main purpose was to train readers on indigenous methods and practice: “As this paper aims to give a brief, but definite, description of a few ways of applying Indian basket-makers’ methods to our own materials.”

In other words, Native American techniques could be applied to Anglo-America’s own art, as well as translated to other art forms.

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302 Mertice MacCrea Buck, “Indian Basketry,” Keramic Studio 11, no. 7 (November 1907): 169; for a history of Keramic Studio, see also Zipf, Professional Pursuits, chapter 4, pages 109–37.
More generally, as we have seen, authors and ideologues encouraged encounters with Native American art and its methods as a spiritual guide, a way to control and direct society through indigenous beliefs systems and practices. Constance Goddard DuBois chided her readership of middle- and upper-middle-class females that “the woman whose every need or whim is satisfied by the products of elaborate machinery set in motion the world over to do her bidding, can not conceive of the condition of the first Indian woman who, to meet the needs of her family, invented baskets and pottery, twine, and woven fabrics.” DuBois went on to write that the inspiration and methods “invented” by Native American women could be applied to non-native art forms, domestic crafts such as lacemaking and needlework, “as an instance of what may be done in singleness of purpose, with innate intelligence, an no workshop but the wilderness.” Like other writers in this vein, DuBois’s message explicitly counsels readers to seek inspiration from Native American art, but the implied one is for women to channel their energies into household arts, abandoning the power that domestic consumerism gave them—or, heaven forefend, even a career outside the home—with a return to housebound arts. These ideals between the commercial and industrial, the domestic and the household were also constantly reinforced and reiterated visually. As we have seen in previous chapters in the paintings of

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304 Ibid: 392.
George DeForest Brush and Eanger Irving Couse or the earlier sculptures of John Quincy Adams Ward, the half-naked male potter or warrior served as a reminder of the preindustrial state of Native Americans generally, but also of their “savage” natures. In contrast, the female counterpart of these images, that of the young Indian carrying pottery on her head or under her arm—seen in the textiles of the Associated Artists, the murals of Orlando Giannini, and in countless photographs well into the twentieth century (see figs. 5.2 and 5.3)—reinforced the ideals of civility and domestic stability, but nonetheless representing the women “outside history, outside industrial capitalism.”

DuBois’s line “no workshop but the wilderness” also designates another way that Native American instinct and spirituality were used in creating and describing art, one that went beyond the aesthetics and materials of indigenous art to instinct and spirituality. In writing about Illinois’s Gates Potteries—creator and seller of the popular Teco Ware—Susan Stuart Frackelton devoted most of her piece to the “clay paintings” of Hardesty Gillmore Maratta and the sculpture of his colleague, Fritz Albert. Chiefly landscape in subject, Maratta’s ceramic friezes were of a type popular during the Arts and Crafts period that found great favor as wall and fireplace hangings (see fig. 5.4). Although indebted more to

atmospheric nineteenth-century Barbizon and Dutch pastoral landscapes dotted with windmills and farmers in the fields, in her assessment of the artist and his work, Frackelton credited their inspiration less to Maratta’s training at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago or his study in Europe and much of it to his experience in the Southwest:

After Europe had given him much of her best, he came back to America, and wandered into the Southwest out among the Indians—the Zunis and the Hopis—learning the charm of the desert and the still pure loveliness of the great mountain ranges—the vastness of the plains—the music of the pines. The thought of the burned clays became inspiration as piece after piece of old Indian pottery picked up in the pueblos tormented him with untold tales of a great past.306

In Frackelton’s rendition, Maratta’s European training was negligible, and it was his experience wandering among the Zunis and Hopis and the mystical tales that pottery fragments possessed that eventually provided him with the “psychic moment” that led him to Gates Potteries and working with ceramics.307 Maratta’s subjects hold no trace of his encounters in the southwest, but it was his experience generally that allowed for his deep understanding of landscape generally and ceramics specifically.

Frackelton’s assessment is particularly ironic given her own background and experience. A celebrated ceramist herself, Frackelton co-founded the National

307 Ibid.
League of Mineral Painters, which included potters Adelaide Alsop Robineau and Mary Chase Perry, and she served as the president of the Wisconsin School of Design, as well as various professional artists’ organizations and schools in her home state. As an artist, Frackelton was also highly accomplished and experimental: she received several prestigious medals at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago, and in 1899, she and George Ohr collaborated on a pottery series. She eventually became both professionally and financially successful for a particular style of art pottery that she called the Frackelton Blue and Grey, a glazed earthenware with naturally-based yet intricate designs painted in blue (fig. 5.5). Even during her divorce proceedings, court documents and contemporary accounts acknowledged Frackelton’s reputation for independence, citing her husband’s abusive nature, and a specific example of his "cursing and swearing at the new woman," a reference to independent career-oriented females who began to emerge in the second half of the nineteenth century.308 Frackelton also encouraged female art education for women and participation in the arts professions, but her greatest contribution to this endeavor, however, was the Frackelton China Decorating Works in Milwaukee, a factory that in its heyday had what has been described as an “enormous” output; the artist also authored one of the earliest books on china painting to inspire

308 “Frackelton Divorce Suit: Ceramic Artist Testifies Against her Husband in Milwaukee,” New York Times (April 1, 1897).
women to participate in the field.\textsuperscript{309} Thus Frackelton fostered female participation in both artistic and commercial professions, but via a path that stressed its business aspects in a factory-like atmosphere and through repetitive action. Her dual sensibilities repeat the drawbacks of and contradictions inherent to the Arts and Crafts movement: the expansion of the discipline and the medium’s possibilities on the one hand and its confinement of women and the lower classes to gender specific, monotonous activities.

Potters such as Charles Fergus Binns also acknowledged a debt to Native American techniques in the pages of the \textit{Craftsman}, although in his case, the inspiration was method and construction rather than visible aesthetics. Considered the “father” of modern American studio ceramics, Binns advocated an artist’s direct contact with the vessel from firing to glazing, repudiating the division of work and assembly line nature of both commercial and art potteries. In the main, Binns’s vessels (fig. 5.6) reflect the Arts and Crafts fascination with Asian aesthetics rather than Native American ones; his simple, graceful, luminously glazed vases are a direct result of his belief that form should precede

decoration, and that “the glazes of the early Chinese dynasties are beautiful by intent and therefore they may claim to rank as works of art.” Nonetheless, in 1903 Binns extolled the Native American practice of building wares with clay coils as “opening to the modern world of a new avenue of expressive handicraft.”

Painter and theoretician George de Forest Brush neatly encapsulates nearly all of the ideological components we have reviewed. As we have seen in chapter 2, Brush specialized in sophisticated and technically-skilled paintings of Native Americans, a command of the academic principles that he had mastered at the National Academy of Design in New York between 1870 and 1873 and at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, where he worked, principally under Jean-Léon Gérôme from 1874 to 1879. Returning to the United States in 1880, Brush sought his subjects in the American Indian tribes he lived among in the early 1880s, and in the Canadian tribes he observed between 1886 and 1888. Native Americans offered Brush an opportunity to engage in the fundamental Beaux-Arts exercise to paint the exotic nude, as well as transform the Orientalist practice of his teacher Gérôme to the American frontier. In paintings such as The Picture Writer’s Story (fig. 5.7), the artist portrayed the interior of a Mandan lodge, where

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a painter describes a battle he has documented on a buffalo hide to two younger tribesmen. Brush based such compositions on the sketches he made during his travels, as well as collected artifacts and possibly photographs for reference when he returned to complete the finished work in his studio, thus giving them the patina of legitimacy. As we have seen in chapter 2, in canvases such as The Weaver, Brush also depicted the actual practice of indigenous creation. In these paintings, however, Brush’s agenda went beyond just the opportunity to merge a popular, indigenous American subject with classical precedents and European artistic style. As a theoretician, Brush was interested in harnessing Native American art and culture and using it as a model for middle-class Anglo-Americans during a period of extreme transition, a guide for successful modes of living. The artist acknowledged this himself, claiming that the Native American narrative subjects of his paintings held “allusions to our own experience,” and could thus act as model for contemporary Anglo-Americans.312 More to the point, Brush also advocated and practiced his own form of “participant learning,” equating his own emulative, “hands-on” approach as similar to current archaeological research.313

Brush’s activities, however, extended beyond just a critique of industry and an impassioned argument for handcrafting via his academically-based, beaux-arts canvases. Brush also had an active interest in American art pottery, inspired largely by the American Pueblo artisans that he encountered during his travels. As a result of his efforts, a group of New York ceramists formed an association that they named the Brush Guild Pottery Foundation in the artist’s honor, an organization established to continue and expand the traditions of indigenous American potters and the techniques that Brush had studied during his time among Native American groups. In the main, however, the Brush Guild also followed the traditional pattern of several Arts and Crafts societies at this time: Members and students were mostly females who created decorative household works, including jars with lids and ornamental urns, many of them with stylized fauna and flora. Like Binns, Cushing, Dow, and others, Brush advocated the essence and spirit of indigenous handicraft rather than its appearance, as a turn-of-the-century article devoted to the Brush Guild and its teacher suggests:

George DeForest [sic] Brush has taken a class in pottery giving his time to it without compensation. His idea is to restore handiwork. He does not allow any machinery, not even the potter’s wheel, but bilges each pupil to mold his own jars and vases. This is going back to first principles, and there is need of that. The personal touch is all that makes an art object of any interest or value.315

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314 Although more extensive research remains to be done on the Brush Guild, notices and articles about their activities and exhibitions do appear in major periodicals of the time; the most comprehensive write up on the group to this date can be found in Elizabeth Hutchinson, The Indian Craze: Primitivism, Modernism, and Transculturation in American Art, 1890–1915 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 106–07.
The goal, as the passage suggests, was to emulate the standard of Native American methods if not necessarily the physical look of their pottery. In addition, it is worth noting that the section also subtly reaffirms the common trope of indigenous love of creation: the author’s statement that Brush was “giving his time to it without compensation,” indicates the artist’s level of commitment to the revival of handiwork, an implied dedication that all artists and workers should emulate, monetary rewards aside.

The spirit if not the appearance of indigenous pottery were goals of the Brush Guild is attested to not only by Brush’s pedagogy and practice, but by the wares that the group produced. The most active and prominent members of the Guild were the mother-daughter team of Annie and Lucy Perkins. The younger of the two was principally a sculptor who also had trained with Augustus Saint-Gaudens and eventually transmitted Brush’s artistic principles and ceramic theories through her courses at Chautauqua, New York. By 1904, the two were the last remaining members of the organization, producing a line of domestic wares christened Perkins Pottery (see fig. 5.8). A 1904 Congressional Report on the revival of handicrafts aptly described the Brush Guild and its operations:

Their product, now known as “Perkins pottery,” is all in monochrome, either black or very deep brown, and is built up by hand without the aid of wheel or mold; the decorations, whether merely lines or sculpted figures, are carved out of the substance of the clay of which the pottery is
made. The pottery is made on Etruscan lines, but the decoration, as a rule, is entirely original, and there are no duplicates.\textsuperscript{316}

As the passage attests, the organization’s goals were to work in the methods and techniques of Native American pottery as related through Brush’s teachings, by building through coils rather than throwing on the wheel or using a standard mold. At the same time, the end result was not the look of indigenous pottery, but its spirit, the monochromatic glaze of black or deep brown perhaps more a result of the Etruscan style. Critics and commentators who viewed and wrote on the Brush Guild’s creations furthered the association with ancient Etruscan pottery. A 1903 overview of the ceramics field from \textit{Scribner’s Magazine} described the Brush Guild’s Perkins Pottery as “all in black ware with a certain look of being suggested by the black Etruscan pottery which the museums show us, that of which a single vase or jar is called \textit{bucchero nero}, even in English” (see fig. 5.9).\textsuperscript{317} The deliberate reference to Etruscan pottery and \textit{bucchero nero} in particular, the name given to central Italian ceramics of the period, furthers the association of Native American art with ancient or classical precedents.\textsuperscript{318}

\textsuperscript{316} Carroll D. Wright, ed., \textit{Department of Commerce and Labor: Bulletin of the Bureau of Labor}, 53 (July 1904), 1606.


\textsuperscript{318} That Brush’s paintings of Native Americans bear classical hallmarks is obvious, but perhaps worth mentioning in passing, if only as part of the ongoing association and categorization of indigenous culture with ancient Greek and Roman civilizations. As Emily Shapiro has noted in regards to Brush—although applicable to other western artists working at the time—“Brush’s idealized images of Native American artisanry visually inked contemporary Native American culture to the pinnacles of early Western civilization, ancient Greece and Renaissance Italy”; see Emily Dana Shapiro, “Machine Crafted: The Image of the Artisan in American Genre Painting, 1877–1908,” (Ph.D. diss.,
Like the work of Binns or Fry or the students at Dow’s summer school, Brush’s and the Brush Guild’s overall aesthetic may have been Asian, Etruscan, classically inspired, or taken directly from the natural world. The creative and labor objectives, however, were purely indigenous, endowing the Brush Guild’s pottery with a spiritual purpose, a reason and motivation behind it beyond mere copying of ancient or foreign cultures. Architects, like painters and potters, also struggled with ideas about outward appearances versus aesthetic philosophy, surface decoration versus internal sensitivities, and perhaps no architect better embodies these conflicts than Frank Lloyd Wright.

Frank Lloyd Wright, the Arts and Crafts Movement, and Surfaces

Midway through his career, as he developed and delivered what became known as the Kahn Lectures, Wright expressed his boyish admiration for Pre-Columbian art and culture: “I remember how, as a boy, primitive American architecture, Toltec, Aztec, Mayan, Inca, stirred my wonder, excited my wishful

Stanford University, 2003), 108. Contemporary critics of Brush frequently linked his figures to classical antecedents, one describing the subject of his Indian Hunter having “as much character as a Greek sculpture,” while another admiringly compared his Aztec Sculptor to “classical subjects,” reminding viewers that he “treated the American Aztec in a poetic manner, not unlike the subjects of Alma-Tadema taken from scenes in the ancient days of Greece and Rome.” For the first quotation, see “The Evans Pictures,” Boston Daily Evening Transcript (January 27, 1900): n.p.; for the second, see “Art and Artists,” Boston Daily Evening Transcript (July 7, 1887), section 6: 5.
admiration.”319 Wright’s declaration is provocative on several levels: first, it reiterates and reinforces the common trope that has been explored more fully here in chapter three: That foreign cultures and in particular indigenous art and design could stir the active imagination of young boys, inspiring them to achieve greatness in life. Second, it points to Wright’s complicated relationship with Pre-Columbian art and its influences on his architecture and designs; the impact of Mesoamerican art, unlike the influence of Japanese, was not always acknowledged readily and honestly by the architect. While the physical evidence of Mesoamerican art’s influence on the architect is manifested in a series of buildings that Wright created early in his career and then again with a succession of homes executed between 1910 and 1930, the architect had a lifelong if complex relationship with the indigenous cultures of North, Middle and South America. His interests extended from actual, physical depictions of Native American subjects (as we’ve seen in chapter four with Orlando Giannini’s murals for the bedroom of Wright’s Oak Park home) to colors and motifs on both the exterior of his buildings to his interior designs. More recent discoveries and scholarship reveal that Wright’s interest in Native American and Mesoamerican art and culture extended beyond just subjects or motifs in his architecture, but

319 Frank Lloyd Wright, Modern Architecture: Being the Kahn Lectures for 1930 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1931), 4. Wright often used these terms interchangeably in his writings, citing the same aesthetic and architectural sources repeatedly: Toltec, Aztec, Maya, and Inca. Most scholars have focused on the Mesoamerican sources, seeing little Incan inspiration on Wright’s architecture. In using these terms, I have attempted to distinguish between the actual Mesoamerican influences on Wright and the more general Pre-Columbian references.
was also an ideology and practical system of modular geometry that lie beneath the surface of his structure and extended beyond just obvious decorative motifs. Like many of the artists and theorists discussed in this dissertation, he was also propelled by romantic, mystical notions about Native American spirituality.

His assertion about his boyhood exposure to “primitive architecture” aside, Wright likely came across Mesoamerican and Native American sources in a variety of ways common to turn-of-the-century audiences and progressive reformers. First is the rise in interest in Pre-Columbian art, a development imbedded in the rise of national museums and world’s fairs, along with the rise in cities and the re-contextualization of imperialism: the amassing of collections of art and artifacts by European and American powers of world cultures coincided with the global European enterprise and with it, the rise of urban centers and the creation of new contexts for both raw materials and natural resources as well as the monuments to showcase them: museums and world’s fairs. These settings not only helped legitimize colonial ventures through the guide of education and knowledge, but re-contextualized for Western audiences, reiterating the backwardness of foreign cultures by highlighting Western progress.\footnote{Barbara Braun, \textit{Pre-Columbian Art and the Post-Columbian World: Ancient American Sources of Modern Art} (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1993): 23.}
A second although no less important factor in Wright’s exposure to indigenous art and architecture was through the Arts and Crafts movement more generally. Wright’s architectural philosophy and his designs, along with his own rationale for and promotion of them, were fully enmeshed in the movement, as well as the Progressive-era ideologies and reforms expressed at the turn of the nineteenth century. In his article, “An Architect in Search of Democracy” Lionel March confirmed the architect’s association with the Arts and Crafts movement and cited a long list of “social reformers, progressives, and liberals” whom Wright “read and respected,” or whom he knew as friends through Chicago architectural circles, including Jane Addams, John Dewey, William James, Oscar Lovell Triggs, and Thorstein Veblen, among others. Wright’s well-known embrace of mechanization as a “higher artistic expression” in his 1901 lecture, “The Art and Craft of the Machine,” might initially on the surface be seen as anathema to the traditional anti-industrialization of the Arts and Crafts movement. However, the majority of Wright’s Arts and Crafts contemporaries—most notably, Elbert Hubbard and Gustav Stickley—utilized machinery and mass-production techniques in the creation of their objects. While they espoused Morris’s socialist vision and touted the spirit and look of

handcrafting, Wright not only adopted the machine, but also publicly supported its use. At the same time, he frequently added “handcrafted” features such as rivets or decorative finials to his furniture in particular to give them the look and feel of “handcrafting,” demonstrating his own ambivalence to standardization and mass-production. In addition, “Art and Craft of the Machine” also frequently reveals Wright’s knowledge of and admiration for William Morris; the fact that the paper was initially delivered in front of the Chicago Arts and Crafts Society at Jane Addams’ settlement organization, Hull House, the epicenter of the city’s movement, further attests to the architect’s familiarity with the movement’s members and philosophies.323 Thus, Wright’s theoretical background, his manipulation of materials and the utilization of machinery—all

323 In a typewritten note signed by the architect in the Wright Archives at the Taliesin West Foundation in Scottsdale, Arizona, Wright suggests that the published 1901 version was “read at a meeting of an incipient Art and Craft Society (the second) at Hull House, 1893–94.” Wright went on to say: “The previous meeting had been dominated by Professor Zeublin and Triggs of Chicago University. Mine was of course a minority report and had been requested by Jane Addams herself. I read my plea at the desk of the then new Hull House Auditorium. Immediately I had finished my reading, Triggs and Zeublin (both distinguished disciples of Ruskin and Morris) jumped to their feet to demolish my argument. Their eloquence must have been convincing because the incipient society voted to go traditional handicraft. The only one I had wholly convinced was Jane Addams.” See Frank Lloyd Wright, “Note,” Frank Lloyd Wright Archives, Correspondence, 1900–1959 [Microform from the Archives of the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, Taliesin West, Scottsdale, Arizona], Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, California, MSS 7 and 8, pp. 1–2. Although the accompanying revised draft of Wright’s “Art and Craft of the Machine” is hand dated 1950, half a century after the original, it is interesting to note that the architect wanted to place himself and his reputation at the beginning, the forefront of the movement, even if he positioned himself as its main antagonist. A separate, three-page typed inventory of the library of the architect’s mother, Anna Lloyd Wright, lists the poems of Morris, although it is unclear when the inventory was made, and whether the book was originally purchased by Anna or given to her by her son. See “Books of Anna Lloyd Wright,” Frank Lloyd Wright Archives [Microform], Getty Research Institute, p. 1.
repackaged in various guises—reflect aspects of the American Arts and Crafts movement, if they do not meet instantly recognizable correlations.

In other words, Wright’s designs, theories, and writings are not anathema to the American Arts and Crafts movement, but, on the contrary, they fit very neatly within it, as well as the Progressive-era reform agenda. Wright’s immersion in the Arts and Crafts movement was not limited to a small albeit cosmopolitan circle of reformers and thinkers in Chicago, however. In addition to his familiarity with Morris, Wright also had a long relationship with C.R. Ashbee, who visited the city in 1900; the two carried on a correspondence over several years, and Ashbee authored the preface to Wright’s portfolio of executed works when it was published in Germany in 1910.324

Wright debuted and discussed much of his early architecture and designs in the very pages of the shelter magazines that catered to Arts and Crafts aficionados and acted as the movement’s major marketing vehicles. In the first decade of the twentieth century, Wright participated in or authored multiple articles in professional albeit mainstream magazines such as Architectural Record, but more to the point here, The Ladies’ Home Journal and House Beautiful as well.325 In fact,

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324 See “C.R. Ashbee to Frank Lloyd Wright,” Frank Lloyd Wright Archives, Correspondence, 1900–1959 [Microform], Getty Research Institute.
many of these articles emphasize similar themes as other shelter magazines, such as the family structure, and in particular, the home’s ability to develop a child’s taste. An early, 1897 article in *House Beautiful* on the eve of Wright’s renovation to his Oak Park home and studio, for example, focuses most of its attention on the upstairs great playroom, describing it in glowing terms:

> It cannot be questioned but that children brought up in a room like this, with its simple beauty and strength as daily fact, will little by little feel its influence and come to regard it as only natural that all rooms should be as this one. It is to be expected then, that a beautiful taste and instinct will be firmly established by such surroundings, instead of others cheap and trivial.326

The images accompanying the article, as well as photographs taken immediately after the renovation, point to another factor shaping Wright’s designs and his continued interests in architectural surfaces as a pragmatic matter and theoretical concept: contagion and disease. As Gwendolyn Wright has shown in her study of Chicago architecture, the city became an epicenter of housing reform focused on both lower- and middle-class homes. While reformers concentrated their efforts on improved housing for the poor, they also became concerned that

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overly decorated interiors with their carefully curated clutter were havens for germs leading to disease.327

Early photographs of the Oak Park house in the archives of the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio are illuminating. They reveal the architect’s knowledge of such reforms and theories, as well as his own personal transition away from such overelaborate interiors (see figs. 5.10–5.12). They expose Wright’s early design as a conventional Victorian interior with heavy drapes and textiles, ornate, overstuffed furniture and artistic bric-a-brac such as palm leaves and sculpture, a far cry from the spare, unified interiors with which he would become so identified. The images also suggest Wright’s reliance on and use of exotic if not predictable interior embellishments such as Middle Eastern and Navajo blankets and rugs (see fig. 5.13).

Given his varied and numerous connections to the movement, Wright was well versed in the multidimensional enterprises and theories that surrounded Arts and Crafts. Nonetheless, Wright’s direct experience with and exposure to Pre-Columbian art and architecture specifically remains a bit more elusive, largely due to the architect’s own evasiveness about the influences beyond Japanese culture on his designs, but are the product of sorting through his own theories.

and writings, especially in regards to his working out the theories of his own architecture.

**Frank Lloyd Wright and Non-Western Influences**

Wright’s connection to and familiarity with Pre-Columbian art and architecture is dominated by and intricately linked to his lifelong search for and writings on “style” and “styles,” a debate that engaged numerous architects and artists at the turn-of-the-century. In 1908, Wright debuted a lavishly illustrated article “In the Cause of Architecture” in the pages of the *Architectural Record*. Featuring eighty-seven reproductions of his work, this essay through pictures and text first introduced the public at large to the breadth and scope of the architect’s work. Wright continued to expand his “In the Cause of Architecture” thesis in the pages of *Architectural Record* over a twenty year period, elucidating and fleshing out themes in the May of 1914 issue and then again through a series of articles in the spring and summer of 1927.  

Wright revisited “In the Cause of Architecture” in a sequence of nine articles the following year that returned to past topics, but also addressed more fully in six of them the use of materials, including concrete, glass, stone, and wood, among others. Although the multiplicity of subjects that Wright presented in these essays over the years

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328 For a complete facsimile of these articles and their accompanying reproductions, see Frank Lloyd Wright, *In the Cause of Architecture*, Frederick Guthem, ed. (New York: Architectural Record, 1975).
invites a rich investigation of his practice versus his theories, two themes in particular are worth considering here for their repeated inclusion and evolution, and their later obvious omission: the issues of style and exterior decoration and ornamentation. By considering in depth these two ideas and how they were formed and transformed over the years, we can better understand the evolution of Wright’s ideas, particularly in regards to his opinions on and his uses of indigenous American art.

In the 1908 version of “In the Cause of Architecture,” Wright wrote “from the beginning of my practice, the question uppermost in my mind has not been ‘what style?’ but ‘what is style?’” Wright’s own response to this query is vague, and the reproductions of his buildings “imbued with the quality of style,” offer testament to his possession of this characteristic. Wright fleetingly distinguished between “style” and styles,” arguing that under a democratic ideal, a return to the “so-called great styles” would be virtually impossible. Indeed, the architect argues, “there should be as many kinds (styles) of houses as there are kinds (styles) of people.” Wright nonetheless identified six specific criteria that elucidated his theory on acceptable style, devoting his most detailed explanation to “Simplicity and Repose.” Buildings, the architect argued, should contain as few rooms as possible; openings should be integrated into the structure;

excessive detail and ornamentation should be shunned; harmonize appliances
and fixtures with the interior; avoid excessive interior decoration such as
paintings; and, finally, to achieve an integral unit, built-in furniture is a must.
Wright also advocated appropriate and natural context or site; harmonious and
natural colors based on nature; an appreciation for natural materials; and, finally,
the house must be “sincere,” “true,” and possess “integrity.” Wright devoted
considerable space at the end of the essay to ornamentation. In particular, the
architect warned that “excessive love of detail” was inappropriate and over
decoration dangerous; he maintained that decoration should always be
conventionalized natural foliage and flowers, always “of the surface, never on it”
and that ornamentation should be “constitutional,” and part of the “warp and
woof of the structure.”330

In the 1928 version of “In the Cause of Architecture,” Wright titled the February
essay—the second in the series—“What ‘Styles’ Mean to the Architect,”
distinguishing more clearly here between “styles” and “style.” Wright called for
“certain standardization,” achieved through a proper sense of proportion and
scale. Through standardization, Wright posited, the architect can achieve
character, which results in “style.” “Style,” in short, “is a consequence of
character,” and to the architect’s mind, “inseparable from one another as are

330 Ibid: 35, 43.
Truth and Beauty.” Indiscriminately employed or blindly followed, however, standardization can lead to “styles,” a prison for the architect that traps him into the mindless repetition of historical modes.

As the separate essays produced over two decades suggests, the issue of style in particular remained a pressing issue for the architect over a twenty-year period. Wright’s definition and exploration of style is strongly beholden to French architect and theorist Éugène Emmanuel Viollet Le Duc (1814–1879), who in the nineteenth century, posed the same question, “What is Style?” to progress a theory of modern architecture free from historical fashions, and based on new proportions and materials. Wright’s debt to the French architect and theorist is well noted. He paraphrased Viollet-le-Duc’s Discourses on Architecture in the introduction to his 1910 Ausgeführte Bauten und Entwürfe (The Wasmuth Portfolio) when he similarly asked “What is Style?—Every flower has it, every animal too.” Around the time Wright reconsidered the issue of style in his 1928 “In the Cause of Architecture,” in fact, he attempted to establish in his hagiography that as an infant he had practically suckled at Viollet-le-Duc’s teat, claiming in his 1930 Kahn Lectures that while as a student at the University of

333 For this quote, and more on Wright’s relationship to Viollet-le-Duc, see Narciso G. Menocal, “Frank Lloyd Wright and the Question of Style,” Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts 2 (Summer/Autumn 1986): 4–19.
Wisconsin: “Viollet-le-Duc’s *Dictionnaire Raisonné de l’Architecture Française* fell into my hands by way of a beloved school-teacher aunt of mine and the work was finished, ready for the master to whom I came some four years later, Louis H. Sullivan—Beaux-Arts rebel.” A year after the publication of the Kahn Lectures, Wright reiterated this proposition in his 1932 autobiography, adding Viollet-le-Duc’s tome to a list of books he greedily devoured at home, but that woefully were absent from his university curriculum. Wright further established his appreciation for the French author in the subsequent pages of his autobiography: he insisted that books such as Owen Jones’s *The Grammar of Ornament* and Viollet-le-Duc’s *Habitations of Man in all Ages* were available at the library of his uncle’s All Souls Unitarian Church in Chicago, read while he worked for architect Lyman Silsbee, and that he had obtained the latter’s *Dictionnaire Raisonné*—“the only really sensible book on architecture in the world”—from the Madison, Wisconsin public library.

Books such as Viollet-le-Duc’s *Dictionnaire* and *Habitation of Man* and Owen Jones’s *The Grammar of Ornament* were highly influential among designers from the second half of the nineteenth century onward, and particularly on the circle

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336 Ibid, 75.
of architects involved in the Chicago School.\(^3^3^7\) Another important avenue for an introduction to both Viollet-le-Duc and the ancient ruins and temples of Mesoamerica was Claude-Joseph Désiré Charnay’s 1863 *Cités et ruines américaines*: *Mitla, Palenque, Izamal, Chichén-Itzá, Uxmal*, a photographic account of his expedition through Mexico and the Yucatan under the auspices of the French government in 1857–61, a reiteration of his *Le Mexique, souvenirs et impressions de voyage* of the same year. Charnay’s fieldwork is considered amateurish and insubstantial, and perhaps as a result of this reputation, the commentary and introduction for this tome was provided by Viollet-le-Duc.\(^3^3^8\) Although a respected architectural historian, Viollet-le-Duc was also not an archaeologist, and he applied his racial theories of architecture to the buildings of Yucatan as well.\(^3^3^9\) Despite the problematic nature of the text and the negative opinion of Charnay’s scholarship, he is highly regarded for pioneering the use of photography in the field of archaeology; both the clarity and novelty of the forty-seven images featured in the volume made it a popular—if dear and thus prohibitive for most—publication (see fig. 5.14). The precision of Charnay’s

\(^3^3^7\) Viollet-le-Duc’s multi-volume *Dictionary of French Architecture from 11th to 16th Century* first appeared in 1854–1868 and in English translation in 1875; the first English translation of *Habitation* debuted in 1876; and Jones’s *Grammar of Ornament* was first published in 1856.

\(^3^3^8\) For a history of Charnay’s *Cités et ruines américaines* and its reception, see R. Tripp Evans, *Romancing the Maya: Mexican Antiquity in the American Imagination, 1820-1915* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), 103-34.

\(^3^3^9\) Ibid: 111-12.
photographs also provided opportunities for architects such as Wright to study and then copy ancient Maya sources.

Finally, despite Wright’s conflicting stories about his knowledge of Viollet-le-Duc, another entirely possible introduction to the historian and his questions of style, his belief in nature as the foundation of architecture, and his regard for ancient, non-Western cultures as a source of inspiration may have come from William Le Baron Jenney. Often referred to as the father of the skyscraper, Jenney was also mentor to many of Chicago’s most notable architects, including Louis Sullivan and Daniel Burnham, and thus a major force in the city’s architecture profession. In 1883, Jenney presented a series of lectures at the University of Chicago that introduced the audience to the theories of Viollet-le-Duc and promoted his ideas on primitive architecture as a tactic for confronting the building problems of modern industrial city. While Jenney’s talks obviously predate Wright’s arrival in the city by a few years, the lectures were reprinted in a series of thirteen articles in the journal Inland Architect and Builder between March 1883 and April 1884. Inland Architect was certainly a staple trade journal of Chicago architectural firms, and Wright likely became familiar with the magazine, as well as the lectures and the ideas they espoused, through his contact with Jenney, and his subsequent stints working for Joseph Lyman Silsbee and afterward, his years with Denkmar Adler and Louis Sullivan.
In the four-part introduction to his lectures, Jenney, like Wright after him, distinguished between “style” and “styles,” equating the former with “harmony” and “taste,” and the latter with repetitive period modes, which were the result of religion, climate, and cultural habits. Jenney further defined style in the words of Viollet-le-Duc as the “distinction of form: it is one of the essential elements of beauty, but does not in itself constitute beauty. Civilization dulls, but does not destroy those instincts in man which lead him to put style into his works.”

Typical of the linear, evolutionary reasoning that guided the thought of his day, Jenney contrasted the murderous cruelty of civilized societies—capable of producing barbarous and degraded art—with the authenticity and frankness of indigenous “primitivism,” claiming that all primitive architecture is good because of its simplicity and rationality, its direct manner, and its observation of the basic fundamentals of design. Apologizing for quoting and paraphrasing Viollet-le-Duc so frequently, Jenney claimed that the “simple ideas of truth” is what leads architects to give style to their designs,” adding that “nature in all her works has style, because, however varied her productions may be, they are always submitted to laws and invariable principles. Proceed like nature in her productions that you may be enabled to give style to all the conceptions of your

brain.” ³⁴³ To possess style, Jenney concluded that architecture must be governed by three basic principles, including a directness of manner for which the building is required; ornamental construction is one comprised of correct proportions and a pleasing composition; and finally, any further ornamental decoration should be simple and the best of its kind. ³⁴⁴ The concept of ornamentation in particular needed further clarification, and Jenney distinguished between “ornamental construction” and “ornamented construction.” In the former, the proportions are so pleasing and the composition so successfully arranged, that the design is beautiful in and of itself and requires no additional adornment. By contrast, ornamented construction is the addition of surface decoration of the constructive features. ³⁴⁵

When Wright revisited “In the Cause of Architecture” in 1928, he devoted equal attention to the issue of “What is style?,” but, interestingly, exerted little effort on refining his definition or theories on ornamentation, a major component of his 1908 essay. At the same time, the architect seemed preoccupied with the issue of surface as well as interior space as it may be read or perceived on the exterior surface. To consider why surface replaced ornamentation as a more relevant concern for the architect at this time, it is important to explore a number of

³⁴⁴ Ibid.
factors. First and foremost, it is worth understanding the buildings that occupied Wright during the 1920s, leading up to his revision of “In the Cause of Architecture.” Between 1917 and 1921, Wright designed a complex of buildings in Los Angeles for oil heiress, Aline Barnsdall, whose residence later became known as Hollyhock House because of the stylized flower motif Wright employed for the exterior and interior decoration (see figs. 5.15). A series of southern California commissions and residences ensued, including the Alice Millard house (“La Miniatura”) in Pasadena (1923; fig. 5.16), the Harriet and Samuel Freeman residence (1923; fig. 5.17), and the Mabel and Charles Ennis house (1923; fig. 5.18). Because of the exterior and/or interior appearances and decoration of all of these buildings, they have become identified as Wright’s engagement with Mesoamerican art and architecture specifically and part of the more general Mayan Revival Style of the 1920s more generally.

Like his experience with Viollet-le-Duc, Wright gave contradictory accounts of his introduction to and experience with Mesoamerican sources in his architecture and design. In his book, A Testament, published two years before his death in 1959, Wright reinforced the myth that his work was untouched by any outside influences, the result of an independent genius and the appearance of foreign sources validated his virtuosity:

There was never any exterior influence upon my work either foreign or native, other than that of lieber meister [Louis Sullivan], Denkmar Adler, John Roebling, Whitman and Emerson, and the great poets worldwide.
My work is original not only in fact but in spiritual fiber...as far as the Incas, the Mayans, even the Japanese—all to me were splendid confirmation.346

Earlier, in that same text, however, Wright reiterated and expanded upon his childhood experience with Pre-Columbian art that he first admitted in his 1931 Kahn lecture: “I remember how as a boy, primitive American architecture—Toltec, Aztec, Mayan, Inca—stirred my wonder, excited my wishful admiration. I wished I might someday have money enough to go to Mexico, Guatemala and Peru to join in excavating those long slumbering remains of lost cultures; mighty, primitive abstractions of man’s nature—ancient arts of the Mayan, the Inca, the Toltecs.”347

Several scholars have pinpointed the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition as a vital foundation of Wright’s absorption of Pre-Columbian sources. The Columbian Exposition was the first world’s fair in the United States to feature Pre-Columbian artifacts, a special event in itself. During its six-month run, the young architect made numerous visits to the exposition—he worked on Adler and Sullivan’s Transportation building at the fair—and had special access to the foreign cultures on display, including those from Japan as well as from Mexico and Central America. At the Columbian Exposition, Wright had entrée to

347 Ibid, 111.
multiple examples from Japanese culture, including a Nippon teahouse and a replica of a wooden temple known as the Ho-ho-den. The fair’s director of anthropology, Frederick Putnam of Harvard’s Peabody Museum, arranged full-size plaster casts of Mesoamerican ruins in the Anthropology Building, including major monuments of Puuc-style Maya architecture, such as three structures from Uxmal and several stelae from Petén sites. In addition, the exhibition contained numerous Mexican artifacts as well as hundreds of photographs by Teobert Maler and Alfred P. Maudslay from recent excavations in Mexico (fig. 19), not to mention numerous fantastical recreations of foreign cultures, including an ancient Aztec display, along the Midway Plaisance.\(^{348}\) Putnam, assisted by Franz Boas, grouped displays of Pre-Columbian, Native American, and Pacific Islands together, which “encourage[ed] visitors to draw comparisons between the various indigenous cultures of North, Central, and South America.”\(^{349}\)


Around the time of the 1893 Columbian Exposition and his full immersion in and engagement with the Arts and Crafts movement, Wright began to experiment with Mesoamerican design in his architecture. Both the Charnley House (1891; fig. 5.20) and the Winslow Residence (1893–94; fig. 5.21) of the late-nineteenth century demonstrate a compactness, frontality, and verticality typically associated with Maya architecture. The Winslow House in particular possesses a “masklike” configuration around the entrance, a division of a decorative upper frieze and plain lower band on the façade, and stepped column capitals in the hallway screen.350 After these initial experiments, however, Mesoamerican influences did not reappear in Wright’s work for another two decades.

Architectural historian Anthony Alofsin credits Wright’s reintroduction of non-Western sources into his work to the architect’s 1910 visit to Europe and his absorption of the simplified ornamentation of the Secessionists. Alofsin has labeled this decade of the 1910s as Wright’s “primitivist phase,” the period of his greatest experimentation with and involvement in non-Western sources, and one in which he surpassed his European colleagues.351

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1885–1899, vol. 2 (Los Angeles: Striking Editions, 2005), 439–49. Koppany’s book is problematic to say the least, but does provide a thorough, photographic overview of many Wright works and their possible sources in one compendium, particularly from the early phase of his career.

350 Braun, *Pre-Columbian Art and the Post-Columbian World*, 143–44.

351 Alofsin, *The Lost Years*, 222–23; Alofsin credits this to the European architects’ exploration and simplification of ancient architecture, and their decades-long professional exposure to theoreticians such as Jones and Viollet-le-Duc. According to
In 1915, Wright designed the Albert Dell Cold Storage German Warehouse in Richland Center, Wisconsin (see fig. 5.22), a flat-roofed structure with a geometricized surface treatment that has been compared to well-known Zapotec buildings in Mitla, as well as several Puuc-style Maya buildings in the Yucatan peninsula. A year later, the architect designed the Bogk House in Milwaukee (see figs. 5.23–5.24); this residence shares affinities with the German Warehouse in the conglomeration of surface motifs, and with Puuc-style Maya art and architecture in its hatching, the zigzagging stepped ornamentation, and its geometric details.\(^{352}\) The more obvious Mesoamerican influences of these earlier buildings and homes receded from Wright’s work, replaced by the economy and directness of his Prairie Style homes, those often more identified with Japanese influences. Wright, however, did not abandon Maya architecture or Mesoamerican sources for his designs: instead, they reappeared two decades later, on and beneath the surface of his architecture.

**Maya Style on and Beneath the Surface**

Shortly after meeting oil heiress Aline Barnsdall in Chicago, Wright, along with his longtime collaborator sculptor Alfonso Ianelli, visited the Panama-California Exposition in San Diego in 1915, and shortly thereafter, he obtained a set of photographs of Maya temples.\textsuperscript{353} Wright’s reintroduction to Mesoamerican art and architecture at the exact moment he was embarking on a series of important commissions where he was to co-opt and integrate these influences perhaps better explains the architect’s renewed interest, rather than the “spell power” of European Secessionists that Alofsin has credited this resurgence to. Indeed, many have compared the overall exterior silhouette of the Barnsdall House to that of a Maya temple (see fig. 5.25), citing the mansard-like roofs at sites such as Yaxchilán and Palenque, both represented in the World’s Columbian Exposition (fig. 5.26).\textsuperscript{354} In addition, the piers supporting the Barnsdall House’s roof have been compared with those on the Temple of the Sun at Palenque. Finally,

\textsuperscript{353} William Allin Storrer, \textit{The Frank Lloyd Wright Companion}, 2nd ed. (1993; repr. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 212. Storrer claims that the exhibition was on Maya architecture specifically and held in Los Angeles, but no such show has ever been identified. Wright himself acknowledged attending the Panama-California Exposition with Ianelli in 1915, which had displays of Andean and Mesoamerican art and architecture; see Wright, \textit{A Testament}, 111. Anthony Alofsin has suggested that the book of photographs on Maya architecture was a gift from California painter Alice Klauber, an active participant in the Panama-California Exposition’s pedagogy, which she worked on with her mentor, Robert Henri; see Alofsin, \textit{The Lost Years}, 225. This compendium of photographs has never surfaced, so the exact images and thus Wright’s exact references remain unknown. Adding to the hagiography, Wright’s son Lloyd even suggested that the architect had traveled to the Yucatan during the 1910s, but like the Los Angeles exhibition of Maya architecture, no documentation has ever been discovered confirming this assertion. See Alofsin, \textit{The Lost Years}, 223. The exposition itself was documented in the journal \textit{Art and Archaeology}; see Edgar L. Hewitt, Introduction by W.N. Holmes, “Ancient America at the Panama-California Exposition,” \textit{Art and Archaeology} 2, no. 3 (November 1915): 64–102.

\textsuperscript{354} Braun, \textit{Pre-Columbian Art and the Post-Columbian World}, 151.
Hollyhock House’s location along a terraced hill also compares with the context of many Maya sacred sites. The supporting piers, along with their complementary decorative band of conventionalized hollyhocks around the center of the building, have also led critics to describe Hollyhock House as “richly ornamented.” It is this description, I would argue, that forced Wright to re-address the issue of style in his 1928 “In the Cause of Architecture,” as well as elide the subject of ornamentation and decoration in favor of surface and exterior; it is no surprise, then, that Wright chose to illustrate his theories with three reproductions of the Barnsdall House (see fig. 5.27–29).

In a series of undated, partially handwritten and typed lectures on Barnsdall’s Hollyhock House, perhaps drafted in defense of real or anticipated criticism over the building’s ornamentation, Wright never mentions Mesoamerican art or architecture as an influence. Instead Wright repeatedly refers to the home as a “romanza,” equating it with poetry and symphonies and crediting its appearance for its Hollywood location, even concocting an embellished conversation between architect and patron about the design’s outcome:

“I am going to build a home in Hollywood,” she said. “Do you think you could build it for me and put into it some of the beauty of this romantic California region? A ‘romanza’ in brick and mortar, perhaps?” “Well...I

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would like to try. I can’t play it, more’s the pity,—I might ‘build’ it. Such a building seems wholly lacking in this beautiful region.”

In perhaps an uncharacteristic moment of humility, but one perhaps in line with his demurral on the Hollyhock House generally, Wright even credits Barnsdall with giving the house its name, even before construction started and before his famous motifs: “And Miss Barnsdall named the house “Hollyhock House” before it was born, for the flower she loved well for so many reasons, all of the reasons good ones.” The architect, in fact, only references Native Americans once in both the draft and more finished version of the eighteen-page lecture, describing Aline Barnsdall “as near American as any Indian,” indirectly citing her spirit for the character of the commission. Wittingly or not, Wright’s testament and his recognition of Barnsdall’s role in the creation of the home’s design, links its inspiration to the attitude and essence of indigenous America, its spirit, rather than to any real.

356 Frank Lloyd Wright, “Hollyhock House, Hollywood,” Frank Lloyd Wright Archives, Correspondence, 1900-1959 [Microform from the Archives of the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, Taliesin West, Scottsdale, Arizona], Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, California, MSS 35, p. 2. Wright refers to the house as a “romanza” throughout the manuscripts, and in one particular passage, declares “A romanza for this land of Romance!”; see also pages 1, 3, 7, and 16. I am grateful for a UIC Department of Art History dissertation travel grant that gave me the opportunity to review these documents and manuscripts, as well as immerse myself in much of the writings on and by Wright and experience his California homes. Maybe put this in acknowledgements rather than here?
358 Ibid, 2.
In 1928, the idea of standardization now served as “a guide in the architect’s plan...a kind of warp on which to weave the woof of his building,” and Wright warned against the abandonment of this guiding principle, which would lead to “decorating construction or sculpturing, from the outside, a mass of building material,” resulting in “constructing decoration.” For Wright, the Renaissance, in which architecture was supposedly reborn, “never got anywhere below the surface,” because of the development of the cornice, an “empty” gesture. With the absence of the cornice, however, artificialities disappeared, and in the new era “the building is no longer a block of building material dealt with, artistically from the outside:

The room within is the great fact about the building—the room to be expressed in the exterior as space enclosed. This sense of the room within, held as the great motif for enclosure, is the advanced thought of the era in architecture, and is now searching for exterior expression.

By shifting attention away from any discussion of surface ornament or exterior decoration, and by using the Barnsdall residence as the illustrative example of interior space dictating exterior expression, Wright could avoid criticism about Hollyhock House’s “rich ornamentation.”

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360 Ibid, 117.
361 Ibid, 118.
Perhaps most importantly, Hollyhock House specifically and this period within the architect’s career more generally, served as a laboratory, an opportunity for Wright to further develop his theories and put them into actual practice; specifically, it is the critical development of his concepts of textile tectonic and weaving. An interwoven method to architectonic space had long consumed Wright throughout his long and prolific career, one that architectural historian Kenneth Frampton links to the strong German culture in Chicago architectural circles at the end of the nineteenth century, and their connections to Teutonic theorist, Gottfried Semper. Semper insisted on the primacy of tectonic form, urging architects to “decorate construction rather than construct decoration,” and to apply and consider the four simpler arts of weaving, ceramics, carpentry, and masonry as guiding principles in the development of architecture. According to Semper, following “these oldest and simplest inventions” was an aesthetic necessity, because of their basis in instinct and because they preceded the development of “monumental art” and were adopted from and influenced by them; the classification of these four arts by critics as “minor” and their relegation as such in the current education system had to be resisted by architects

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363 For the former, see Frampton, p. 175, and for the latter, see Harry Francis Mallgrave, “Introduction,” in Gottfried Semper, Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts; Or, Practical Aesthetics: A Handbook for Technicians, Artists, and Friends of the Arts, trans. by Harry Francis Mallgrave and Michael Robinson (Los Angeles, CA: Getty Publications), 44.
“for the intended improvement of artistic taste in general.” Semper’s theories were further expanded on and disseminated in Jones’s *Grammar of Ornament*, particularly in his belief in the Occident’s cultural collapse, revived only through the implementation of non-Western forms. For Wright, as well as for his *lieber meister* Sullivan, this approach was one that also involved a “spiritual intensity,” a nearly “cosmological faith…that impregnates the entire surface of…structures like a magical tattoo,” an acknowledgement that non-Western art and culture could be mystically absorbed and translated to architecture.

Wright had to wrestle with the tectonic method and Semper’s theories at the time he was working on his California commissions. The advent of monolithic, reinforced concrete cast in situ earlier in the century presented a possible elimination of this technique. Wright did not construct Barnsdall’s Hollyhock House from concrete blocks; rather, it was erected from a combination of poured concrete and clay fired tiles with hollow cells, the common construction material prior to the advent of the less expensive concrete and cinder blocks. Only two years later, however, in the creation of Millard’s “La Miniatura,” Wright for the first time employed pre-cast “textile blocks” with relief patterns (see fig. 5.30).

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This system consisted of stacking the three-inch thick concrete blocks one on top of another without any visible mortar joints. In three subsequent southern California projects, Wright varied the relief patterns and “knitted” the blocks together with steel reinforcing rods that ran horizontally and vertically and were then filled with concrete grouting. In describing this method nearly a decade after “La Miniatura’s” completion, Wright described himself as a “weaver,” and elucidated the important advantages of textile block construction:

> We would take that despised outcast of the building industry—the concrete block—out from underfoot or from the gutter—find hitherto unsuspected soul in it—make it live as a thing of beauty—textured like trees. Yes, the building would be made of the “blocks” as a kind of tree itself standing among trees in its own native land. All we would have to do is to educate the concrete block, refine it and knit it together with steel in the joints and so construct the joints that they could be poured full of concrete after they were set up and a steel strand laid in them.

Wright’s three later structures completed after “La Miniatura”—including the John Storer (1923), Freeman, and Ennis residences—were heralded as a great innovation, described by one critic as a “mosaic shell.” For his part, Wright touted his textile-block achievements in his third 1928 essay “In the Cause of Architecture: The Meaning of Materials—Stone.” In this version, the architect

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367 For this description, see Storrer, *The Frank Lloyd Wright Companion*, 212; for an evaluation of textile block construction on Wright’s later career and homes, see John Sargeant, “Warp and Woof: A Spatial Analysis of Wright’s Usonian Houses,” in McCarter, *On and By Frank Lloyd Wright*, 190–203.


also equated the houses’ construction with “mosaics,” arguing that to “carve or break” the stone surface is “a pity, if no crime.” Here, Wright finally acknowledged the achievements of Mesoamerican culture in employing stone as part of the structure’s natural ornamentation: “The Mayas,” he wrote, “used stone most sympathetically with its nature and the character of their environment. Their decoration was mostly stone-built. And when they carved it the effect resembled naturally enriched stone surfaces such as are often seen in the landscape.” By associating Maya construction with landscape and nature, Wright buttressed in his own words Semper’s and Viollet-le-Duc’s assertion that the first goal of good architecture was environment, a product of necessity and thus free of the overthought of modern Western culture. Late in his life, only a few years before his 1959 death, Wright reiterated this environmental and cultural link as the essence of positive construction: “In Maya we see a grand simplicity of concept and form. Probably it is a greater elemental architecture than anything remaining on record anywhere else. In both Mayan and Chinese there was an assertion of form that could only have proceeded from the purest kinship to elemental nature and from nature forms of the materials used by both.”

The development of Wright’s lectures and writings, and in particular, the various versions of “In the Cause of Architecture,” present a complex evolution of the architect’s ideas as he experimented with both material and form, as he achieved success or experienced disappointment. Wright could reinforce his self-mythology that his genius was inherent or a staple of his precocious childhood, or the product of his single lieber meister rather than a complex yet widely circulated set of ideas current in the Chicago architectural and intellectual community. By establishing these antecedents, Wright could then finally acknowledge Pre-Columbian culture as a testament to his successful construction achievements rather than a direct inspiration. By acknowledging a fundamental art form along with intuition for the construction of his buildings, ones based on elemental art forms, nature, and instinct, Wright could further distance himself and his architecture from the contemporaneous Mayan Revival Styles espoused by Robert Stacy Judd and perhaps best exemplified in his 1925 Aztec Hotel (see fig. 5.31). By eschewing such comparisons, Wright could thus avoid the accusations of “kitsch” that the mainstream style both encouraged and endured.373

Conclusion

The example of Frank Lloyd Wright perhaps best illustrates the complex process by which many middle-class Americans encountered indigenous American culture: through the scientific display and spectacle of the world’s fairs, which reinforced the racialized philosophies that placed indigenous art and architecture within a Westernized ethnic and social hierarchy; at the same time, Americans endowed indigenous culture with purity and nearly sacred properties on the other; the threat that these cultures had disappeared or were vanishing, legitimized through salvage ethnography, further made Native American art marketable to middle-class consumers. Wright’s case also demonstrates how many artists wrestled with the complex and sometimes competing theories about indigenous art and architecture and how it influenced their own acts of creation: its spirit supplied convenient inspiration or validation for an artist’s own work or technique, while also providing ancient lineage that extended historically beyond the exhausted occident. At the same time, these works often betrayed no—or little—evidence of actual indigenous craftsmanship or design: recast within a western paradigm, these works afforded continuity and comfort to many middle-class consumers.

For many artists, indigenous America represented an opportunity to step outside the boundaries of the commercialized art world; for others, it acted as a guide to
creativity, a way for them to distance themselves from seemingly creatively barren and repetitive (even if the production was itself monotonous) and endow their work with psychic and technical significance. For others still, it served as manual training, a lesson in creation even if the final product bore no physical hallmarks or resemblance to Native American aesthetics: as we’ve seen in this chapter, some critics, ideologues, and tastemakers even encouraged this practice. Finally still, as we have seen throughout the various chapters, this ideology served to direct skilled and unskilled labor: Wright may have been a “weaver,” but his textile blocks were mass-produced and were actually woven together by artisans, builders, and laborers. Indigenous America, however, allowed Wright to emphasize both invention and fabrication as a singular act of creativity.
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