

## THE LEGACY OF WILLIAM MORRIS

‘HAVE NOTHING IN YOUR HOUSE THAT YOU DO NOT KNOW  
TO BE USEFUL OR BELIEVE TO BE BEAUTIFUL.’

William Morris believed that people should be surrounded by beautiful and functional objects, which one can enjoy every day. This simple yet powerful philosophy runs through the DNA of Ansell Studio. A revolutionary force in 19th century Britain, Morris's work as a writer, artist, textile designer, and social activist had a profound impact on the beliefs and ideologies of the time. His influence can still be seen today; his textiles and prints have undoubtedly stood the test of time, not only by virtue of their aesthetic quality, but also due to the ethos that they have come to encapsulate. We want to pay homage to a designer whose work, more than a century after his death, continues to inspire.



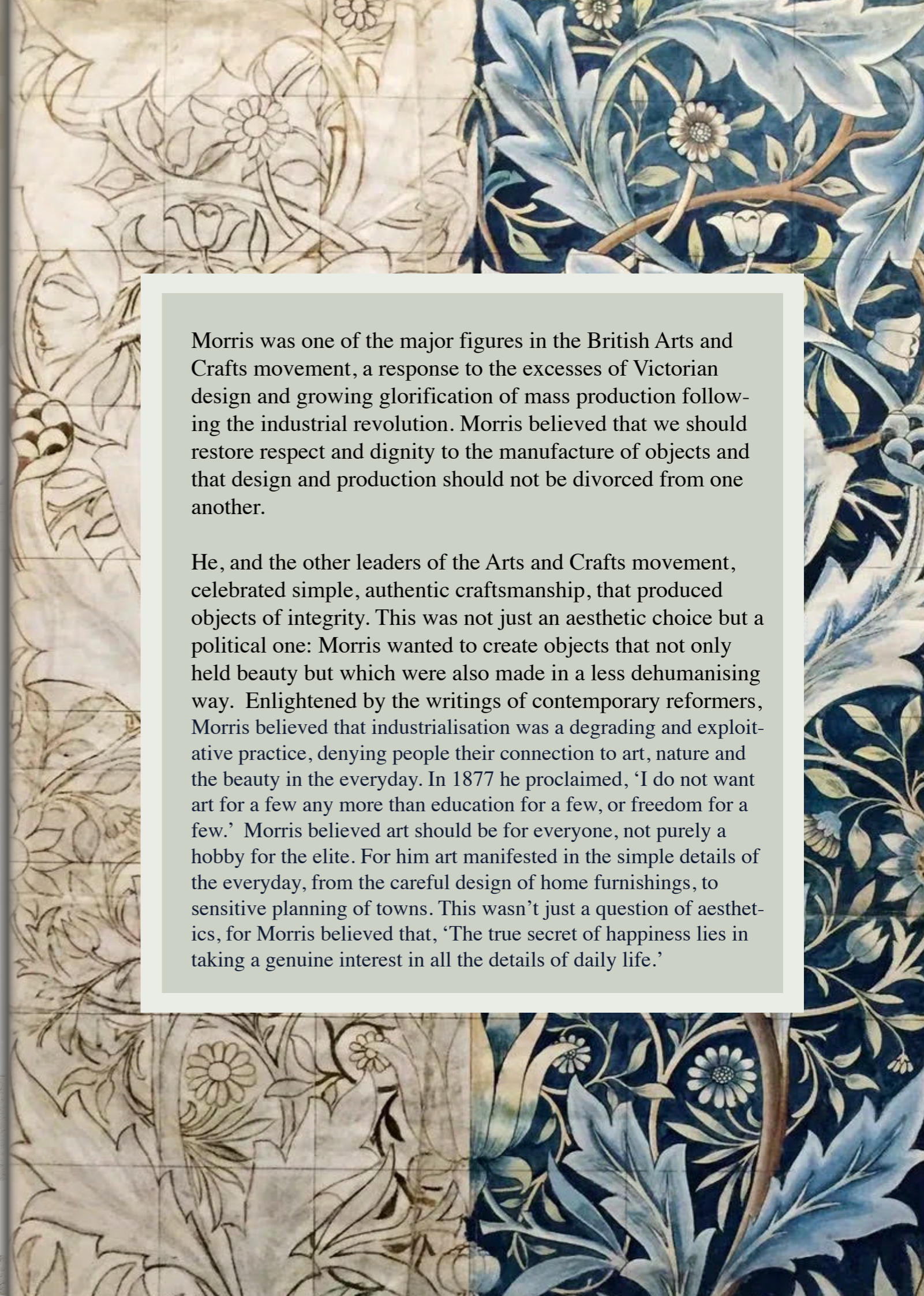
MARIGOLD WALLPAPER | BEN PENTREATH X MORRIS & CO



THE SUSSEX BENCH BY WILLIAM MORRIS,  
INTERIOR DESIGN BY BEN PENTREATH

Morris was one of the major figures in the British Arts and Crafts movement, a response to the excesses of Victorian design and growing glorification of mass production following the industrial revolution. Morris believed that we should restore respect and dignity to the manufacture of objects and that design and production should not be divorced from one another.

He, and the other leaders of the Arts and Crafts movement, celebrated simple, authentic craftsmanship, that produced objects of integrity. This was not just an aesthetic choice but a political one: Morris wanted to create objects that not only held beauty but which were also made in a less dehumanising way. Enlightened by the writings of contemporary reformers, Morris believed that industrialisation was a degrading and exploitative practice, denying people their connection to art, nature and the beauty in the everyday. In 1877 he proclaimed, 'I do not want art for a few any more than education for a few, or freedom for a few.' Morris believed art should be for everyone, not purely a hobby for the elite. For him art manifested in the simple details of the everyday, from the careful design of home furnishings, to sensitive planning of towns. This wasn't just a question of aesthetics, for Morris believed that, 'The true secret of happiness lies in taking a genuine interest in all the details of daily life.'





In 1861 Morris founded a design business with friends, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Edward Burne-Jones and Philip Webb. Strong believers in the value of handcrafted items, the firm became highly fashionable and had an immense influence on interior decoration trends throughout the Victorian period. Over the years, Morris took increasing control of the business and in 1875 he became sole director of the reformed and renamed Morris & Company. Here Morris established himself as a designer of new and inventive patterns for embroidery, textiles, wallpaper and stained glass.



AN EARLY MORRIS CHAIR | c. 1886

He was invested in reviving a number of traditional craft techniques, including woodblock printing and hand-knotting: a technique used for the production of handmade carpets and rugs. Morris remained determined to use the highest quality raw materials, as well as re-establishing the use of natural dyes.

Though originally a reaction to the industrial revolution, the philosophy of the Arts and Crafts movement remains relevant to us in the 21st century. Perhaps as a response to growth in digital technology and the pace of the modern

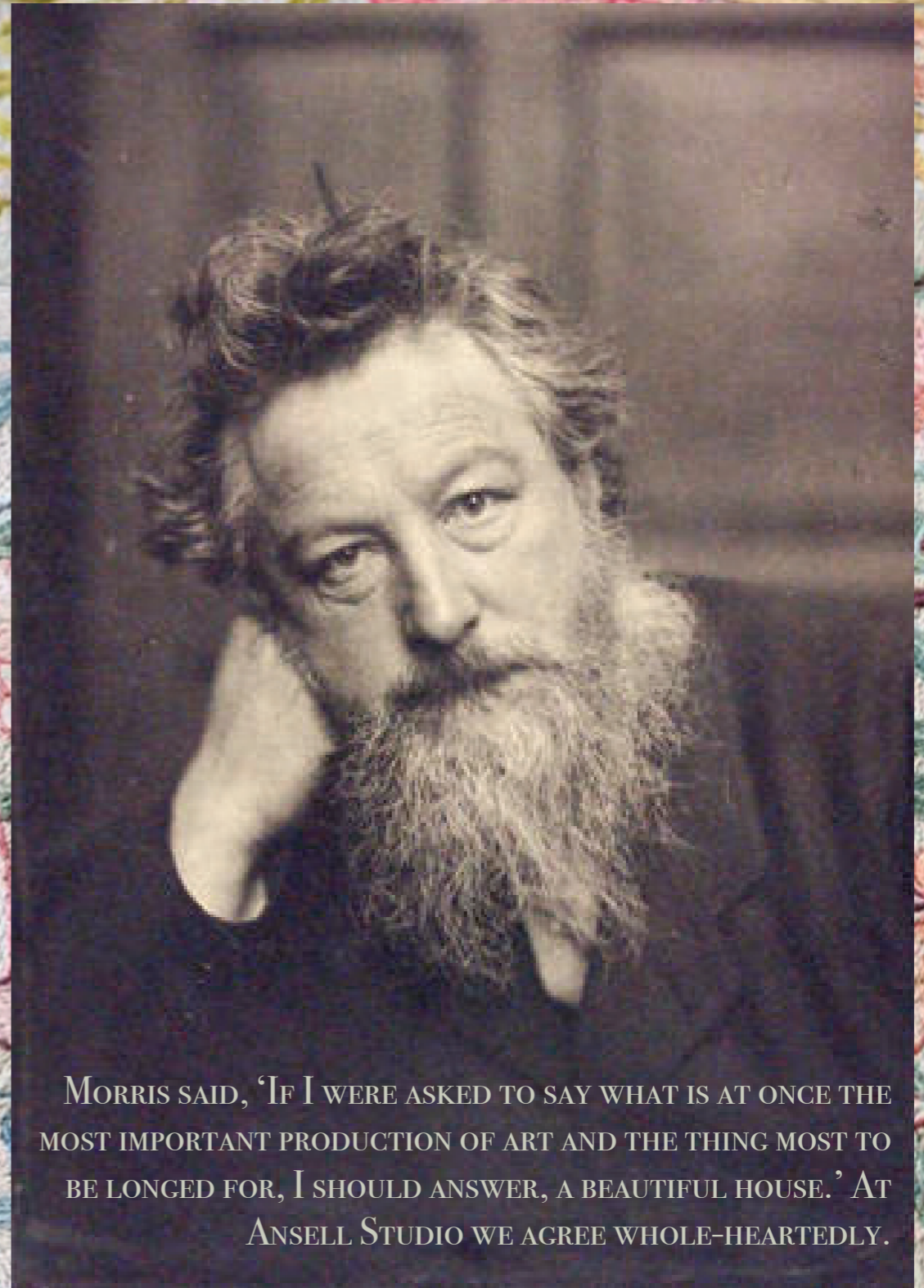


STANDEN HOUSE | FEATURING A SUSSEX CHAIR & TRELIS WALLPAPER BY MORRIS

world, there is a renewed curiosity in the way furniture and other objects are made. We are witnessing a resurgence in the appreciation of craftsmanship; value is being placed on knowing where a piece comes from and the story and heritage it holds, perhaps due to an increasing awareness of climate change and thus a growing alertness to the products that we are buying and their impact on the planet. Similarly, Morris's unwavering commitment to the Arts and Crafts movement was partly due to his desire to protect the natural world from the damages of industrialism and pollution. Historians of the green movement consider Morris as a key forerunner of contemporary environmentalism. Morris' passion and love for nature comes alive in many of his designs. He sought to bring the beauty of the natural world indoors, designing lush and vibrant furnishings and decorations full of flowers, foliage and wildlife.

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Craft is inextricably linked to tradition. At Ansell Studio we aim to respect the rich craft heritage found throughout the British Isles whilst embracing imaginative reinvention. This means developing interiors that push the boundaries of tradition, combining the new with the old, the traditional with the contemporary. Over the years, we have nurtured relationships with a wide range of committed and passionate artisans, dedicated to principles very similar to Morris's. As with any long-lasting tradition of art or design, reinvention is crucial. Morris's design has proven itself capable of adapting to new times and contemporary interiors. His beautiful patterns and prints have demonstrated how innovation, passion and good design can bring joy for generations.



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