May Morris and Barbara Bodichon: Mining the MSL Collection for new scholarship on women in the Arts

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Annette Woolard-Provine Curator of the Bancroft Pre-Raphaelite Collection
Delaware Art Museum

Celebrating the Mark Samuels Lasner Collection:
Rare Books and Manuscripts, Victorian Literature and Art
March 17-18, 2017
May Morris (1862-1938), *Selection of untitled watercolor sketches*, undated, watercolor and pencil on paper. Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, University of Delaware Library.
May Morris (1862-1938), *Herbaceous Peonies*, undated, pencil on paper. Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, University of Delaware Library
May Morris (1862-1938), *Copy of Donatello’s St Cecilia*, 1880, pencil on paper. Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, University of Delaware Library
May Morris (1862-1938), *Design for an embroidery*, after 1890, ink on greaseproof paper. Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, University of Delaware Library
May Morris (1862-1938), *White Horse*, undated, pencil on paper. Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, University of Delaware Library
OUTLINES OF LECTURES

JEWEELS

- The mystery of precious stones. Their properties: myth, magic, and poetry. Clues from history—A Roman lady's jewel-box. 

- Late Greek and Roman work in the British Museum. Imperial Jewels: the Golden Crown at Vienna, the Silver CROWN, the Iron Crown. The Sword of Charlesmagne. 

- Alfred's Jewel. Medieval Jewels, French and English. St. Louis' Brooch; the Reliquary Harlot, etc. How the Jewels were worn. 

- Jewels of the 15th and 16th centuries, Italian and English. Renaisans D'oro; Mary of Lorraine, etc. 

- "Jewels for all time!": the relation of the beautiful ornament to the beautiful face.

MÉDIÉVAL EMBROIDERY

- The word-painting of the old Romance-writers. The Gothic Spirit. 

- Domestic Embroidery. Brilliant descriptions in tracts and inventories. Edward, the Black Prince; the Clothes of Richard II, etc. 

- Church vestments. World-renowned English Embroidery in the 14th Century: Opus Anglicanum. The different Italian styles. 

- Medieval workshops and curiosities; rules and taxes; names of the workers. A King's embroiderer and avarist. 

- Technique of the old work. Famous Cusps: The Acanthus Cope, the Sun Cope, the Flemish Cope, etc.

PAGEANTRY AND THE MASQUE

- Passion Plays. Description of the pageant-wagon and their gadgetry. The Coventry Plays. 

- Popular Pageants and Royal Progresses: the King's entry into his good city of London. A contrast: The Lord Mayor's show today and the entry of Richard II into London. 

- The Triumphs of Emperor Maximilian. 

- Coronation of Anne Boleyn. 

- Ham Hockin, The Jousts at Westminister. 

- The S.O. COURT MASQUE. 

- Ben Jonson's Masque of Queens. 

- Osgood Jones. 

- Conduct: Peter Paul's Triumphs.

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Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University
May Morris (1862-1938), *Design for an embroidery*, after 1890, ink on greaseproof paper. Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, University of Delaware Library

May Morris (1862-1938), *Herbaceous Peonies*, undated, pencil on paper. Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, University of Delaware Library.

May Morris (1862-1938), *Table Cover*, c.1895, colored silks on linen. Crab Tree Farm.

Mark Samuels Laser Collection, on loan to the University of Delaware Library L-2016-46

May Morris designed the spine decoration (not the cover) for this edition of Socialist essays edited by the playwright, George Bernard Shaw.
At Delaware Art Museum, an exhibition featuring Arts and Crafts interpreter May Morris.

Industrial-age beauty in watercolors, embroidery

By Victoria Donohue

May Morris (1862-1938) is the most recent example of an early-20th-century artist whose work is being reexamined in a postmodern context.

Although recognized as an innovative force in the Arts and Crafts Movement founded by her famous father, William Morris, in England, warmhearted May, a George Bernard Shaw sidekick, has been too long overlooked. Her individuality and her importance in helping to spread the Arts and Crafts aesthetic in an age overwhelmed by mechanization were largely forgotten until the current exhibition, “A Belief in the Power of Beauty,” at Delaware Art Museum.

This small show is a welcome one in a region that a century ago became a stronghold of Arts and Crafts in architecture, design, and landscape architecture during the first wave of the movement’s influence beyond Britain. May Morris stopped here on her 1906-10 U.S. lecture tour, just as she was publishing the 24-volume series of her father’s writings, which she edited. Thus began an interim period when fur-lung audiences digested William Morris’ ideas and philosophies. She interpreted them for a new generation, tempering some of his points.

By the 1950s, the Morris momentum picked up, and it continues still. Just weeks ago, the University of Delaware staged a well-attended three-day international symposium, “Useful & Beautiful: The Transatlantic Arts of William Morris and the Pre-Raphaelites,” which involved Delaware Art Museum, Winterthur Museum, and Delaware Center for the Contemporary Arts. It was headed by the university’s Mark Samuels Lasner.

So keep those high-spirited achievements in mind as you examine Morris’ own artwork — her translation of her pencil drawing of penises made as a close study from nature into a more decorative floral image in colored silk thread on linen (a handsome piece loaned from Chicago). As an expert designer of embroidery, she chose to portray humbler plant materials than her father did. And her fine watercolors of the English countryside are most relevant in the context of the current interest in natural landscape as a subject. This show distills beauty out of the ruggedness of the industrial age — no minor achievement.

Dear Mr. Bancroft,

I have answered a question of yours about my last year's card. It has been reproduced from a pink and ink drawing of mine for the picture called "The Bower Meadow." This present one is from a drawing in my present in done in the early days for the projected illustrations. Love is enough which was not done and finished up later.

I hope you and Mr. Bancroft are well. With kind regards and best wishes yours sincerely,

May Morris

Best wishes from May Morris
8 Hammersmith Terrace
London, W.
May Morris, binding, green silk embroidered with colored silks, gold braid and beads. Grolier Club, New York.
Samuel Laurence (1812-1884), *Portrait of Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon*, oil on canvas. Girtin College, University of Cambridge
Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon (1827-1891), *Elizabeth Siddal*, 1854, pencil on paper. Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, University of Delaware Library
Barbara Bodichon (1827-1891), *Ventnor, Isle of Wight*, 1856, Watercolor and bodycolour with scratching out. F.V. du Pont Acquisition Fund, DAM 2016-25
Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon (1827-1891), *A field near the sea with sheep*, undated, watercolor on paper with scratching out. Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, University of Delaware Library

Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon (1827-1891), *A view between the Trees*, ca. 1850, watercolor on paper. Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, University of Delaware Library
Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon (1827-1891), *Fishing at Sunset*, undated, ink and wash on paper. Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, University of Delaware Library
Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon (1827-1891), *Swamp in Louisiana*, 1858, wood engraving. Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, University of Delaware Library
Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon (1827-1891), *Hastings Beach with Fishing Boats*, c.1850, watercolor on paper. Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, University of Delaware Library
Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon (1827-1891), *A hooded Procession*, undated, watercolor on paper. Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, University of Delaware Library