

Father of Industrial Design

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Publisher's Introduction

Welcome

Welcome to the newest addition to our series on the great *Master Designers*: Christopher Dresser, *Father of Industrial Design*. Dresser was one of the most important designers to follow Owen Jones, whose *Grammar of Ornament* sits as the first work in the *Master Designers*. Dresser (1834-1904) differed from his predecessors by being among the first to originate new designs for the modern industrial age. Unlike his contemporaries who were still firmly rooted in the ornamentation of the classical ages, Dresser originated new designs from sources as diverse as the ripples on a cup of hot tea and the patterns seen in electrical discharge tubes. He also developed the prototype of the modern design studio, bringing contract work home to a staff of artists.

Although one of the most successful and highly paid designers of the 1880's, he died in near obscurity and was lost to history until he was rediscovered by Nikolaus Pevsner in the late 1930's. Dr. Dresser bridged the period between Victoriana and Art Nouveau. Unfortunately, the Victorian age was ending and his Victorian designs fell out

of vogue while his modern designs were 50 - 70 years too early.

We discovered Christopher Dresser almost by accident. We had originally planned to bring out a volume of Art Nouveau next, but were having trouble locating good copies of the portfolios we wanted to reproduce. In the course of our researches, we discovered the book *Christopher Dresser* by Stuart Durant in the UCLA Art library. The designs illustrated in that book were a total knockout and convinced us that they deserved exposure to a wider audience. His publisher was kind enough to put us in contact with Durant, who was enthusiastic about the prospect of reproducing Dr. Dresser on CD-ROM and generously offered us access to his extensive collection of Dresser manuscripts and photographs.

These two CD-ROMs are the first part of a definitive work on Christopher Dresser, with succeeding volumes to cover his other books, writings, and product designs. The latter include furniture, ceramics, wallpaper, glass, and metal. We are especially pleased to be able to feature a new introduction to the work of Dr. Dresser by Stuart Durant, who is a Reader at the prestigious *School of His-*



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tory of Art and Design at Kingston University. Stuart Durant is one of the world's foremost experts on the history of Ornamental Design.

On the Reproduction

As one could expect, the size and aspect ratio of a chromolithographic portfolio and a computer screen do not match, causing us to take minor liberties with the original layout. The *Art of Decorative Design* is a smaller book (6.125" x 9.375") and almost makes it to a 17" screen. *Studies in Design*, by contrast, is 11.125" x 16.5" and comes nowhere close to fitting. We have chosen to bring both of these to the screen in a similar format, seen on the right. The layout of the text and typography is very close to the original manuscript; the border and buttons are our own additions. Original scans of each manuscript are shown on the next page.

The major alteration is to the page numbering, which has changed, an unavoidable side-effect of reformatting the text flow to screen-sized pages. *Studies* came out in parts, with 2-page essays accompanying small groups of plates. Each plate had a cover sheet, which now shows the plate faintly due to the bleeding of the ink over the course of time. This effect has been simulated in our



reproduction. By contrast, *Decorative Design* was much plainer with its small plates sprinkled throughout the book. Most are captionless, being marked simply by plate numbers.

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STUDIES IN DESIGN.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

A WEALTHY community always erects decorated buildings. In the progressive advancement of a civilized nation, first come industries, and then the fine arts. Cain was a tiller of the ground, and Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Jubal was the father of all such as handle the harp and the organ; and Tubal-cain was an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron. The fine arts flourish when necessities are supplied. The wealthy decorate their houses; but if the necessities of existence are not satisfied, decorations are not called for. Decoration is a luxury; it is something superadded to what is necessary. Yet the desire for decoration is natural to the human mind. Savages tattoo or ornament their bodies, and array themselves in what they regard as decorative objects; and even the instruments with which they surround themselves—their spears and their bows—are ornamented; but savage communities devote no time to husbandry—they live simply by the chase,—hence the innate desire for ornament manifests itself even when man is in a barbaric condition. Princes and merchants decorate their houses, and, even as savages, have their surroundings of decorative character.

That England has become a rich country no one doubts. As a result, houses are being decorated in every part of the kingdom; but knowledge of the immutable laws of ornamentation are necessary to those who would decorate wisely and well. I have seen many decorated houses, so called, that are less satisfactory than if each room had been simply whitewashed, for they are offensive, while white walls would at least look wholesome.

Decorations, to be satisfying to the educated, must manifest knowledge. The caprices of the decorator can only afford pleasure when they reveal knowledge, and the decorator should have wisdom as well as knowledge; for unless the decoration is

THE

ART OF DECORATIVE DESIGN.

CHAPTER I.

PRIMARILY, ON THE NATURE AND CHARACTER OF ORNAMENT.

1. **ORNAMENT** is that which, superadded to utility, renders the object more acceptable through bestowing upon it an amount of beauty that it would not otherwise possess; it gives to that which it invests a new charm, as colour bestows upon the flower a new loveliness; and as the colour cannot be said to be essential to the existence of the flower, so the application of ornament to objects cannot be said to be absolutely necessary.

2. Yet this is a principle which is frequently manifest in nature, especially when we call to mind "the merely beautiful appearances of the external world;" for we cannot but think that the functions of the plant could as well be performed, and the works which plants accomplish in relation to the well-being of the kindred creation as fully perfected, were their



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In the appendices to the *First Report of Department of Practical Art*, the true page numbers are entered as right side heads in blue.

The colors were corrected on a Radius Pressview 17SR, using the 9300°+27mpcd color temperature at a gamma of 1.8. An ICC profile for this setting has been included in the Extras folder (MAC Only). This setting was intended to match a generic Trinitron more or less closely.



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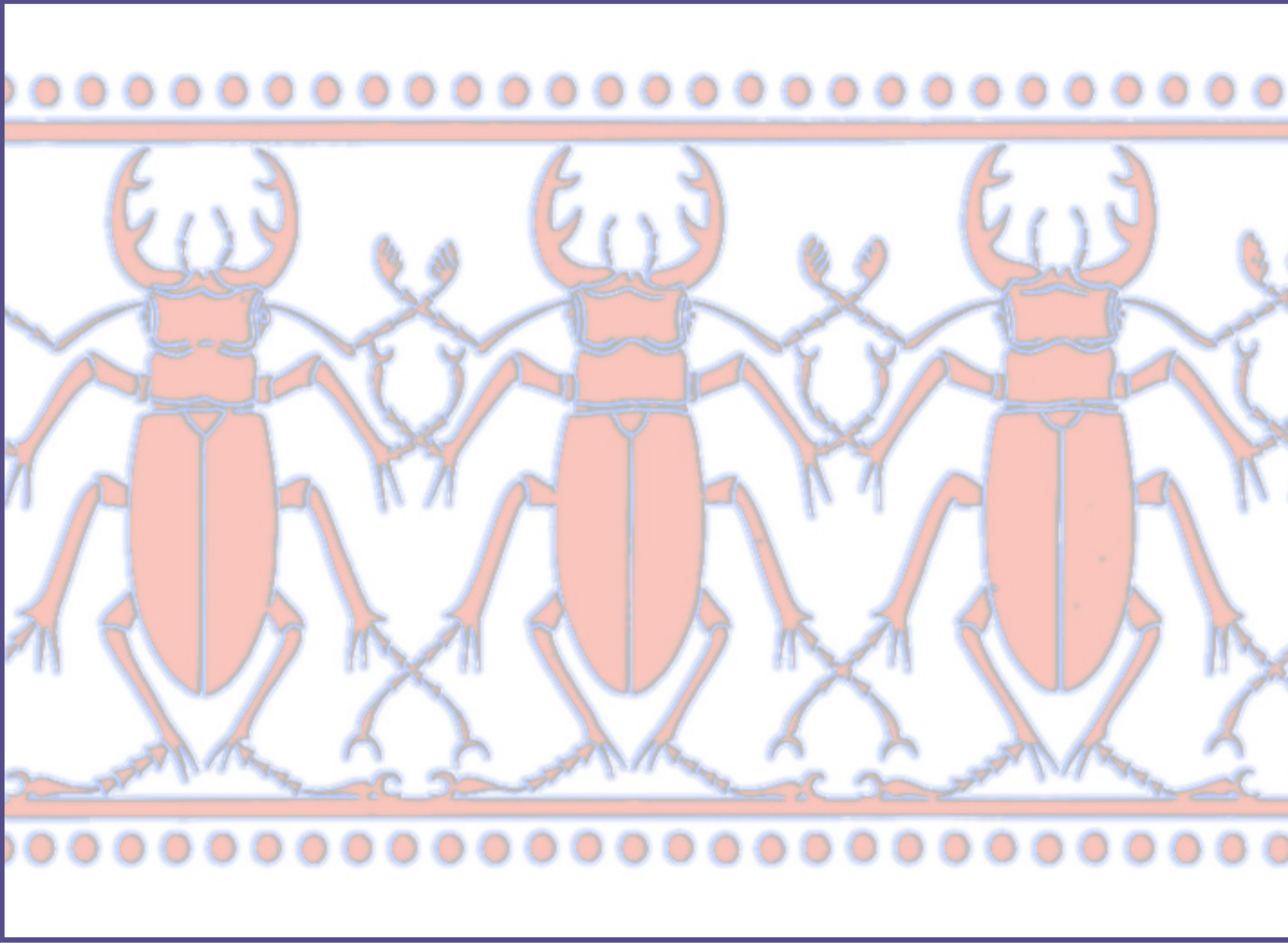


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