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Art Versus Design: The Debate 1760–1860

Introduction

Today's discussions on the divide between 'art' and 'design' are not new. Contemporary artists and writers have always disagreed on the relationship of the two from the early days of the Industrial Revolution in the mid-eighteenth century. One line of argument has firmly denied there is any bond between fine art and design, believing they should be kept apart. Another line, however, has persistently made the case for varying degrees of rapport or interrelationship between art and design. The debate has involved many key figures. Hogarth and Ingres, at either end of the chronological span of this article, argued for total separation; Diderot and Dyce argued the opposite.

The hundred years between 1760 and 1860 have been chosen because discussions on industrial design usually start in the middle of the nineteenth century, paying scant attention to the previous period. Yet the first century of the Industrial Revolution in Britain and France laid the foundations of much that was to follow, not least in discussions on the interrelationship of art and design. Morris, Gropius and other protagonists after 1860 had their precursors. This article is about some of those precursors.

Books and articles devoted exclusively to what is now identified as industrial design did not start appearing until the mid-nineteenth century, with one notable exception. For the early debate one therefore has to look mainly at a range of publications on the wider fields of fine art and architecture, in which discussions on design are often merely passing references or asides in the broader context of some other argument.

The scatttered nature of the material reflects the imprecise meaning of a modern term such as 'industrial design' when used in the period under discussion here. There is, unfortunately, no satisfactory alternative term for use in a period when not only old traditions and working methods overlapped with new ones, but also some industries were responding to advancing technology more rapidly than others. There are, admittedly, some alternative words to 'industrial design', but they are more restrictive or narrow in meaning: decorative, applied, craft, domestic, useful, minor, necessary and mechanical. All these words were employed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for aspects of the arts other than 'fine'. As a substitute for this diversity of often overlapping meanings, 'industrial design' will be used here in an all-embracing sense, wider in its implications than would be customary when writing on twentieth-century artefacts.

Early Hostility

Before the Industrial Revolution had scarcely got under way, William Hogarth was already expressing concern at the possible dangers industrial development might hold for the fine arts. Hogarth's attack remained private, however, since his comments are to be found in the manuscript of his 'Apology for Painters', which he never revised for publication.[1] Written between 1760 and 1761, Hogarth was by then at an embittered and isolated stage in his career, and this is reflected in the stark and exaggerated terms he used in the rough notes for his 'Apology'.

Hogarth's hostility focused on the recently established Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, which had been founded in 1754 (and is still in existence, having acquired in the meantime the prefix 'Royal'). The Society's prime aim was to promote the nation's industries. It was not concerned with the fine arts in their own right, except in so far as they might indirectly help to raise the standard of industrial design. The establishment of the Royal Academy for the guarding and promotion of the interests of the fine arts was still a few years off (1768), and Hogarth obviously felt that the fine arts were in some danger from the new Society. He focused his attack on the Society's premiums for drawing, which included such subjects as antique casts and studies from nature: 'a silly attempt at

[establishing a] Public Academy the premium Society'. Hogarth challenged the view that a good standard in such fine art subjects could lead to an improved standard of industrial design. Such a debate was to continue well into the next century. The sculptor John Bell was to start a drawing manual in 1852 by asking 'Whether it is essential for the art-workman to study from the human figure?' His question was crucial at a time when an important debate was being focused in the mid-nineteenth century on the Schools of Design.[2]

The ultimate aim of such training, according to Hogarth a century before, was the ability to manufacture products 'as good as those of France', the one country against which the rest of Europe always measured its standards of excellence. Hogarth's fundamental objection, still keeping the Society of Arts in mind, was the concept of his native country as a trading nation, believing as he did that art in the past had only flourished when performing religious or political functions. His underlying assumption in his attack on the new Society is that fine art has not, and should not, have any role to play in the fields of trade and industry.

Hogarth's general hostility can be paralleled by some of the more particularized criticisms made by contemporary architects, some of whom singled out the increasing popularity of wallpaper as their object of attack. Architects grumbled that wallpaper was displacing the traditional roles of the mural painter and decorator, as well as the ornamental sculptor. Even the architect was finding himself on increasingly unsure ground about what contribution he could or should make to the design of an interior. The architect and writer Isaac Ware leaves one in no doubt as to his views on this incursion of wallpaper, since it had in his view, by the middle of the eighteenth century, already 'in a great measure taken the place of sculpture, and the hand of art is banished from a part of the house in which it used to display itself very happily'.[3]

Ware tried to make a case for the restitution of the sculptor to his traditional role, but he was fighting a losing battle. By the time Ware was writing, in the mid-1750s, the wallpaper industry in England had been rapidly expanding for several decades, and was to continue to do so for most of the rest of the century. A similarly hostile comment on wallpaper was made by another English architect at the time. John Gwynn in his *London and Westminster Improved*, which includes an interesting section on the useful and decorative arts, lamented that the history-painter was 'less attended to'.[4] 'His part', he continues, 'is usually supplied by a paperhanging maker and two or three workers in stucco'.

These mid-eighteenth century comments by Hogarth, Ware and Gwynn pre-date the establishment of the Royal Academy in London. More than any other institution, it was to represent—from the days of its first president onwards—the established concept in Britain of the fine arts as a separable and higher area of creative activity, unconnected with design. Unlike some continental academies in the eighteenth century which were sympathetic towards the useful arts, recognizing that academics might influence the quality of design, the Royal Academy was not interested in the useful arts, and was indeed even hostile towards them. As Reynolds himself said very near the beginning of his first Discourse to the Royal Academy in 1769:

> An institution like this has often been recommended upon considerations merely mercantile; but an academy, founded upon such principles, can never effect even its own narrow purposes. If it has an origin no higher, no taste can ever be formed in manufactures; but if the higher arts of design flourish, these inferior ends will be answered of course.

The Royal Academy's opposition to the useful arts is implicit throughout Reynolds's Discourses. Only by inference do the useful arts appear when he used the adjective 'mechanical' as a term of abuse. Within an English context, Reynolds was making a case for the intellectual superiority of the fine artist. He was fighting for a cause over which Continental artists had already struggled, and won, several centuries before, primarily in Renaissance Italy. Reynolds was even worried about accepting architecture into the hallowed circle of the Liberal Arts, since it was tainted with utility. In his thirteenth Discourse delivered in 1786, he made a special plea, telling his audience: 'Architecture does not acquire the name of a polite and liberal art from its usefulness, or administering to our wants and necessities, but from some higher principles', when 'in the hands of a man of genius it is capable of inspiring sentiment, and of filling the mind with great and sublime ideas'. And so entrenched was the Royal Academy's position,

that when John Flaxman came to deliver his series of lectures as its first Professor of Sculpture after 1810, even he makes no reference to the useful arts, in which small scale sculpture played an important part in many media.

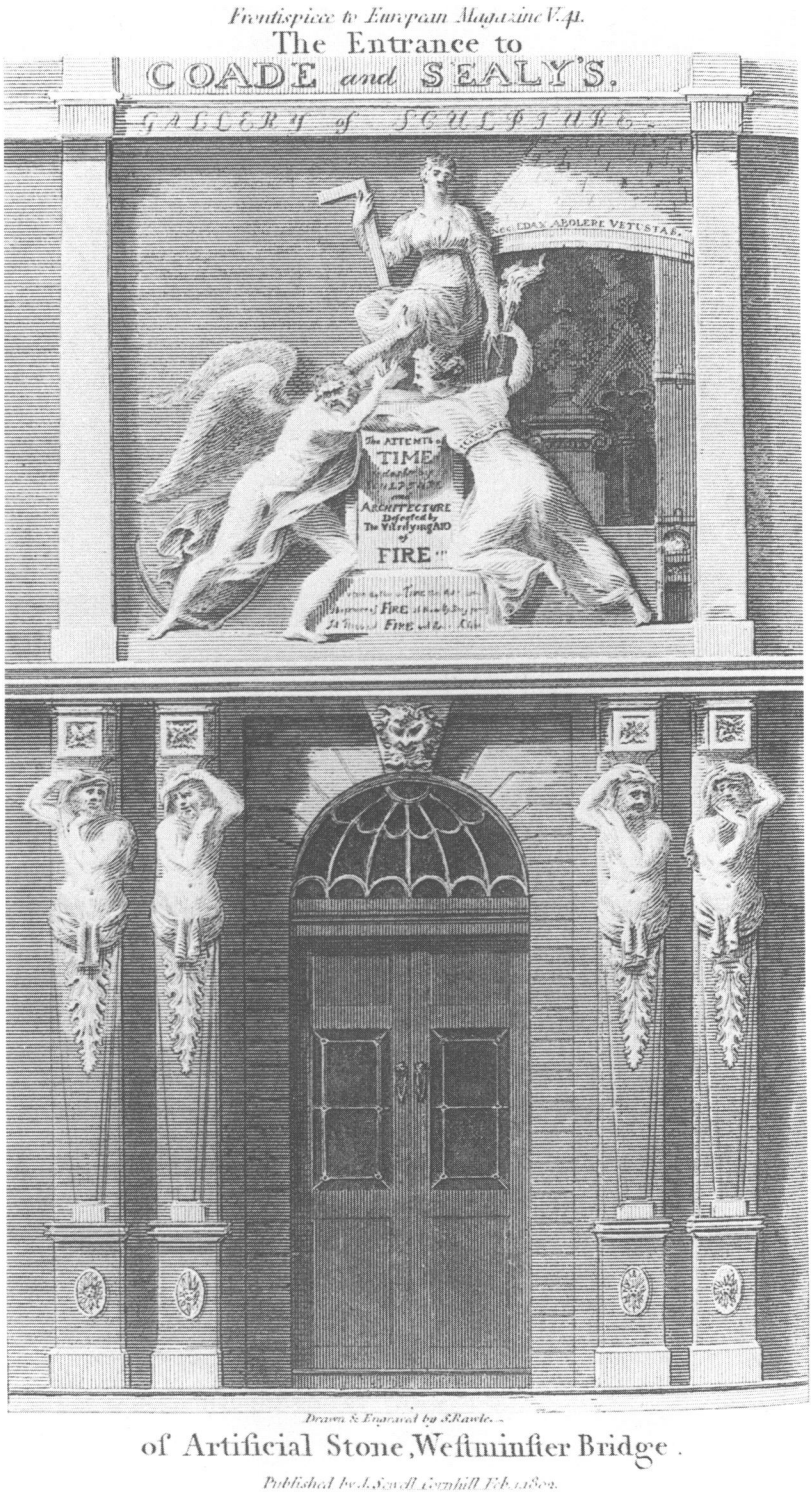
However, pronouncements within the walls of the Royal Academy did not accurately reflect activities outside it. Flaxman was not alone in being two-faced, having worked for Wedgwood **[1]** and currently working for Rundell and Bridge, the leading London jewellers and goldsmiths. During the presidency of Reynolds himself, the architect William Chambers produced designs for the Birmingham metalwork firm of Matthew Boulton; and the sculptor John Bacon designed for both the Derby and the Wedgwood ceramic factories as well as for Mrs Coade's artificial stone **[2]**. Amongst Flaxman's closer contemporaries, the painter Thomas Stothard found time in his prolific and varied output for both ceramic and metalwork designs.

1 John Flaxman, Wedgwood jasper vase, 1786, *Apotheposis of Homer* (Wedgwood Museum, Barlaston)

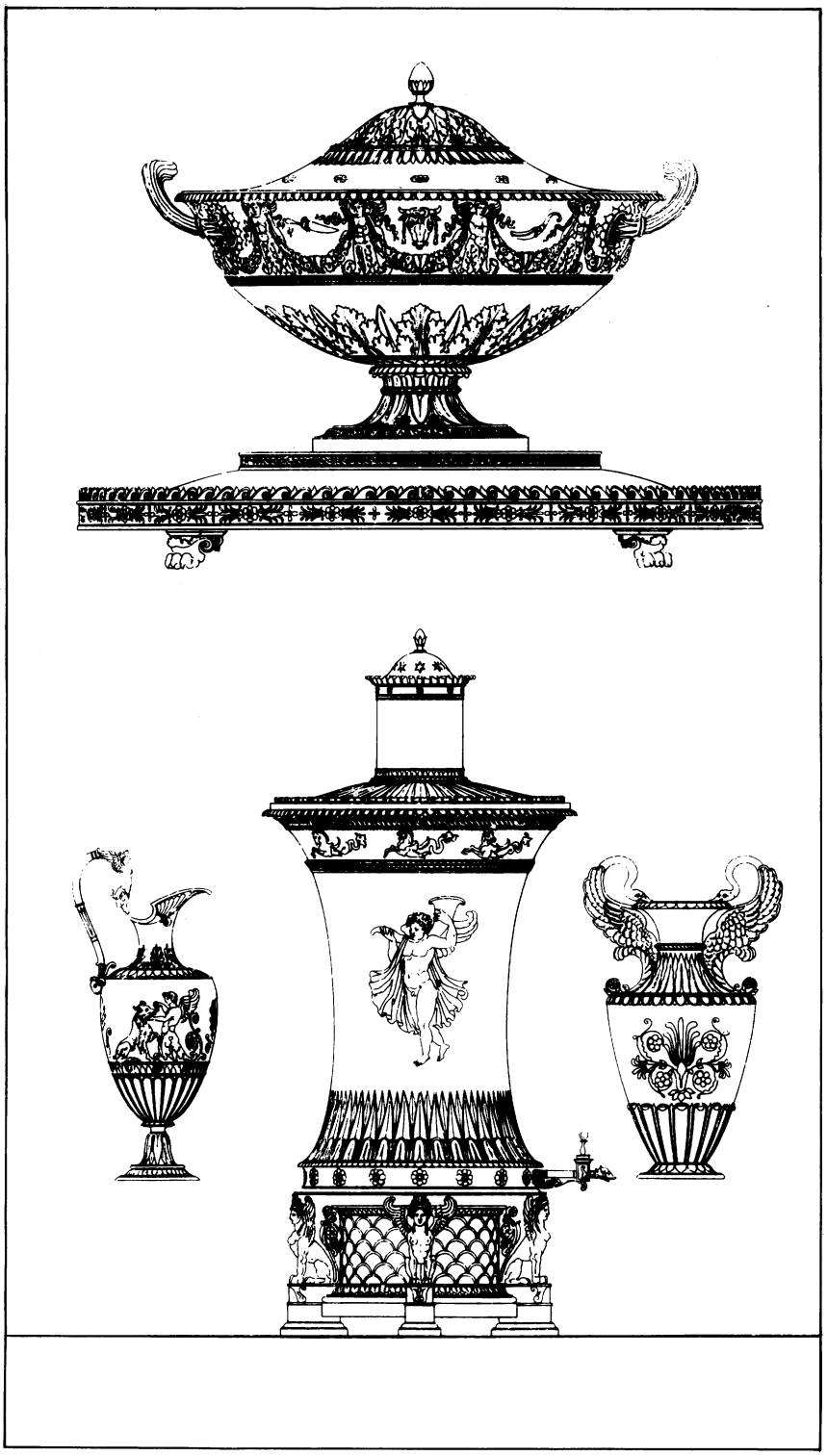
Across the Channel in France, at the turn of the century, two architectural publications, in 1804 and 1812, showed a similar hostility towards the decorative arts. Wallpaper is yet again a victim of abuse in the text of C. N. Ledoux's *L'Architecture*, in which he turned aside from his ideal visions to consider ancillary problems. In one such passage he lamented the passing of earlier forms of interior decoration. He regretted that frescos, bronzes and Lyons silk drapes had all gone: a somewhat sweeping claim, since silks had not been eliminated. The general drift of his argument, however, carries conviction. The essential ingredients of interior decoration for Ledoux had been replaced by what he called, paradoxically, 'expensively economical wallpaper'. Such papers, he claimed, 'a breath effaces, the sun fades, the wind blows off'. As if their impermanence were not enough to condemn them, Ledoux dismissed them aesthetically as well, since they 'foul our salons, our boudoirs, with colours blackened under the lava of Herculaneum. The dignity of our theatres is afflicted by it: everywhere one weeps for the absence of taste'.[5] His main objection, as he refers to blackened lava, would seem to be the fashionable use of grisaille papers, many of which produced a modified *trompe l'oeil* illusionism of classical white marble sculptures in niches and on reliefs. In the very year that Ledoux's volumes were published in 1804 Jean Zuber manufactured the first of his great colouristic paroramic wallpapers, the *Swiss Views* designed by the painter Mongin. Ledoux would presumably have taken strong exception to such a paper since it undoubtedly supplanted the role of the mural decorator.

Charles Percier and P. F. L. Fontaine go further in their condemnation of manufactured decorative arts, in the introduction which they added to the 1812 edition of their widely influential *Recueil de Décorations* (which had first appeared in 1801). The context of their attack is unexpected since they had themselves designed for a large number of the decorative arts, and elsewhere in their introduction they argue the case for architects' involvement in the decorative arts **[3]**.

By 1812 Percier and Fontaine seem to have become disillusioned by the quality of design in many forms of mass production. They were hostile to the use of fake materials, and to the serial production of objects. For them 'the gravest abuse that is



2 John Bacon, sculptural decoration on the entrance of Coade's Artificial Stone Gallery of Sculpture, London. (Engraving in *European Magazine*, February 1802)



3 Charles Percier and P. F. L. Fontaine, *Recueil de décorations*, 1812, plate 34, designs for silver-gilt tableware

attached to the prostitution that is ceaselessly made of inventions of art and of taste, is their abduction by economy of labour, by the counterfeiting of materials, and by methodical or mechanical processes'.[6] The result of this lamentable trend, as they saw it, was a loss of both the 'perfection of execution' and the 'touch of any original feeling'. They go on to regret

> the practice of seeing a multitude of art objects made by a mechanical routine, products made by templates, by moulds, which immediately throws discredit on the very kind. One no longer takes the trouble to distinguish the original work of art from the servile work of routine. Before long a universal disfavour condemns the best inventions to oblivion.

1851 Exhibition: Catalyst for Debate

There was to be no extensive discussion of the apparent problems created by artists' involvement in industry—apart from the Napoleonic period essay to be discussed shortly—until the cumulative effect of the Industrial Revolution could more fully be assessed further into the nineteenth century. The great catalyst for any such discussion was to come in the form of the 1851 Exhibition, which generated—understandably—a great deal of literature on a wide range of topics associated with the present state of manufactures. In the context of this article one publication is particularly noteworthy: the Marquis de Laborde's *L'Union des arts et de l'industrie*. His two substantial volumes, issued in 1856, were the outcome of his visit to London to see the Crystal Palace exhibition. Laborde was an archaeologist and historian, currently Conservateur of the department of antiquities in the Louvre, and his interest in historical decorative arts had led to his appointment as the French government's official reporter on this aspect of the exhibition.

Laborde's volumes are the longest analysis of the fusion of art with industry to be published at any date in the course of the nineteenth century, anywhere in Europe. The whole of his first volume is devoted to the historical past, surveying the development of art from the time of ancient Egypt onwards. The second volume, sub-titled 'Le Futur', is devoted to methods of art-teaching and to the improvement of public taste. As his main argument is that there should be no barriers between the different types of art, they should all be fused together, Laborde is an important exponent of views to be discussed in the second part of this article. He appears here because he was an obvious target for attack by the art-for-art's-sake camp, which was gaining strength in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, generating ideas opposed to artists' involvement with industry. According to Laborde, French artists of his day refused to take part in industrial exhibitions, declaring: 'Art is not industry . . . What are we going to do in a bazaar?'[7]

That question, answered in the negative, was to be the substance of a long critique on Laborde's publication in the periodical *La Revue des deux mondes*, in whose pages the cause of art-for-art's-sake was regularly promoted. Its review of Laborde's work by one of its regular and prominent critics, Gustave Planche, was therefore understandably hostile.[8] His main contention was that Laborde 'wants art to be vulgarized by industry', and he had 'not calculated the dangers' of such an alliance. Planche made a distinction between two different kinds of union:

> I understand the union of art and industry quite otherwise. That art guides and governs industry, that it intervenes in goldsmith's work, in cabinet work, at an early stage; that sculptors furnish industrialists with models of a noble style, and that these models should be faithfully reproduced by skilful and submissive workmen, nothing more. It is not thus, it is true, that M. de Laborde means by the union of art and industry. He wants industry to vulgarize works of art, all without distinction, provided that they are beautiful. He takes no account of the estimation of a statue, a group or a bas-relief. As soon as he sees in a marble or in a bronze the expession of a clever idea, a harmonious set of lines, a graceful or energetic figure, he wants industry to lay hands on what he admires and vulgarize it. It is in my opinion the surest way of doing a disservice to art, and it is not the best way of serving industry.

Planche's main objects of attack were those industrialists who plundered the art of the past for motifs which were then applied to purposes for which they had never originally been intended. On this particular point he would find many other writers in agreement, whether they belonged to the art-for-art's-sake camp or not. The doors of a dining-room sideboard, said Planche, should not be ornamented with reductions of Ghiberti's *Gates of Paradise*.

The concept of art-for-art's-sake had been formulated earlier in the century, notably in Théophile Gautier's long preface to his novel *Mademoiselle de Maupin* in 1834. This famous manifesto, however, did not concern itself with the relationships of artists and industry. For that problem one has to turn to some of Gautier's journalism, in particular two articles he published in the columns of the weekly newspaper *La Presse* in 1836.[9] Under the title of 'De l'application de l'art à la vie usuelle', Gautier showed that an art-for-art's-sake writer could be very practical. Although he says he would prefer that 'art should like Narcissus admire its own image', he went on to say, very realistically, that 'no one can live without eating'.

Contemporary art, argued Gautier, was in a sorry state. Architecture was bad, painters exhibited large history-pieces which no one wanted to buy, and sculptors showed large nudes which were also unwanted since most parks and squares were already full. Gautier wanted to see all three fine arts more fruitfully employed. All three arts had some trade supporting them, and instead of allowing those trades to supplant the art itself, which was what had happened, artists ought to use those trades in order to make a living. For example, underneath the architect was the mason, and the architect should recover his role as designer of decorative sculpture on facades, fireplaces, and the like. The architect's fault had been that he only wanted to design 'fairy palaces'. Although Gautier did not go so far as to say that artists should design for industry or mass production, he saw that the artist had a positive role to perform in furnishing the modern interior:

> It is better to have made a beautiful clock, which is useful for something, than a bad statue which is useful for nothing; through fear of being taken for workmen, artists make nothing at all.

Instead of exhausting themselves 'in solitary jeremiads', wrote Gautier, artists could improve bourgeois bad taste, with its love of 'the neat, the raked, the washed and the glossy'. The bourgeoisie bought such items as gilded clocks ornamented with figures, including troubadours plucking guitars, preferring 'something ugly to something beautiful'. Artists could improve bourgeois taste if they changed their attitude, that is if 'artists agree to come down from the summit of their mountain and mix with the crowd'. He would like to see painters executing murals in order to replace the growing trend of using wallpaper and framed prints for wall decoration. He wanted architecture to be reformed, leaving behind the Gothic Revival which was too redolent of religion. Gautier was practical, in that he would prefer to see artists earning an income instead of starving. He was also an idealist.

Gautier's equivocal position in relation to the artist and industry looks timid when put beside the more outspoken attack on industry two decades later from the pens of the Goncourt brothers. Their short tract *La Révolution dans les moeurs* appeared in 1854, a few years before they started to publish their famous studies of eighteenth-century French painters. The tract was devoted to an attack on the impossible role of art in a modern democracy: 'Art has nothing to do with people'. Their denunciation of industry was equally uncompromising:

> Industry will kill art. Industry and art are two enemies which nothing will reconcile, no matter what one does, what one says. Industry and art start from different points; they end up at different goals. Industry sets out from the useful; it goes for the profitable for the greatest number; it is the bread of the people. Art started out from the useless; it aims at what is agreeable for the few. It is the egoistic ornament of aristocracies.[10]

Such an extreme view would make any contact between art and industry in both theoretical and practical terms an impossibility.

The impossibility of such a contact was to be put in equally vehement terms by Ingres, in a particular context in 1863: 'Now they want to mix industry with art', he expostulated that year. He was attacking the proposed introduction of industrial design into a reformed curriculum at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, a change which he regarded as a fundamental assault on an established position.[11] In the end the threatened incursion did not take place, but it prompted an unequivocal statement of a major fine artist's hostility to the useful arts, when he wrote:

> Industry: We do not want it! Let it remain in its place and not come to establish itself on the steps of our school, true temple of Apollo, dedicated to the sole arts of Greece and Rome! Besides, has not industry an Ecole des arts et métiers, and many others, to turn out pupils?[12]

The Union of Art and Design

Ingres and his predecessors, however, did not monopolize discussions on art and design. As far as their opponents were concerned they were arguing from an unacceptable, and sometimes too lofty, viewpoint. Ingres's 'temple of Apollo' was to have many intruders mounting its steps.

'The poet, the philosopher, the orator, the minister, the soldier, the hero, would be quite naked and hungry without the artisan, the object of his cruel contempt.'[13] These words are not extracted from some left-wing manifesto but occur in a pamphlet on education written in Paris in 1772 by the painter who was in charge of the artistic direction of the expanding and prosperous Sèvres royal porcelain factory. Jean-Jacques Bachelier's name is not today a familiar one, outside the field of the decorative arts, since few of his still-life and other paintings hang in public galleries. But in his lifetime he was a friend of many of the leading intellectual and artistic figures in Paris, amongst whom Chardin executed his portrait. Bachelier's writings, like his own career, mixed art and industry. His published works are important both for eighteenth-century design history and for eighteenth-century art education. Bachelier elaborated his views on the unjustified scorn poured on artisans by asking in the same pamphlet:

> In what system of physics or metaphysics can one see more intelligence, more shrewdness, more accuracy, than in the machines for spinning gold thread, for making stockings, and in the trades of trimmers, gauze workers, cloth manufacturers or workers in silk?

In most years Bachelier gave a discourse to students of the school of drawing he had established in 1767. In the course of what he had to say in 1774 he recognized a distinction between two kinds of art.[14] After making an obligatory reference to the Sèvres factory's royal patron, Louis XV, Bachelier went on to say, in a passage full of mixed metaphors, that the king

> felt that in order to multiply genius, it was not enough for him to erect as it were a temple and some altars, but it was necessary to increase further the means of bringing to fruition the germs of this precious seed. He had recognized that after these creative arts warmed by a divine fire, which gave birth to masterpieces, there exists an infinity of minor arts, essential to public utility, which need intelligent hands and eyes enlightened by taste.

These intelligent hands were the artisans in Bachelier's drawing school.

This placing of the fine arts on a higher plane than other arts was a theme to which writers constantly returned in the course of the eighteenth century. Even the famous son of a master cutler, Diderot, in his article on 'Art' in the first volume of the *Encyclopédie* (1751), did not upset conventions when writing in defence of the mechanical arts. Within that article Diderot had a subheading, 'Distribution of the arts into the liberal and mechanical', in which his main contention was that earlier thinkers had treated the mechanical arts unjustly, and he thus made a case for a more appreciative assessment of their importance.[15] He drew a distinction between those arts which were 'more the work of the mind than the hand', and those that were 'more the work of the hand than the mind'. Diderot went on to say, however:

> Though it was well-founded, this distinction has produced an undesirable effect. Firstly, it has vilified some eminent, respectable and very useful people, and secondly, it has enhanced a kind of natural laziness which tended to make us believe all too readily that for us to devote our constant and sustained attention to particular experience and to tangible, material objects was something unworthy of the human mind.

That material objects were far from being 'unworthy of the human mind' in the views of the editors of the *Encyclopédie* is abundantly clear from their inclusion of many articles and a lavish provision of plates devoted to the useful arts, such as porcelain manufacture, textile weaving, wallpaper printing, silversmithing and iron casting.

The mechanical trades in eighteenth-century France were defended not only by a painter and a cutler's son, but also by a sculptor and architect working in the silk town of Lyons. Antoine-Michel Perrache is now best remembered because his name was chosen to christen the main railway station in Lyons. It seems more than appropriate today that one of the glories of recent French industrial design, its TGV train, should terminate in the south at a station bearing the name of a fine artist involved with design. To the Académie in Lyons in 1762 Perrache delivered a discourse on the theme of

'Réflections sur l'education'.[16] As he was instructing at the time at the Lyons drawing school, Perrache had firsthand experience not only of teaching but also of workers' conditions, in factories producing goods to satisfy the ever-widening demands for the city's famous silks. In the course of his argument he said that because of the widely accepted divisions of citizens into two categories, the rulers and the workers, 'colleges and academies are set up to fashion scholars, but any need to promote public concern about instructing the artisan has not been recognised'. Perrache went on to tell his audience: 'The two classes of citizens are very distinct, it is true, but the second is the base, it supports the first, what would become of commerce without manufactures? What would become of manufactures without workers?' Perrache did not elaborate this point, but it has a similar ring to the extract from Bachelier quoted earlier.

Diderot, Bachelier and Perrache may in some respects appear to be stating the obvious, but such truisms needed reiteration against a background of increasing production in the various manufacturing industries, whether in traditional workshops or in more modern factories. The survival of a basic distinction within the arts was an important part of accepted theory and could not be ignored. The distinction was, nevertheless, to outlive the eighteenth century.

After the turn of the century, the economic crisis in France caused by the disruption of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars indirectly generated fresh thinking into the debate about art and industry. The steps taken by the French government to rectify the sad plight of French industry included the creation of a new kind of exhibition, one devoted to industrial products. In the programme announcing the exhibition for 1801 it is clear that the organizers hoped that differences between the arts would disappear, or at least be blurred: 'No art ought to be excluded', says the programme, 'statues will be placed beside plough-shares, paintings will be hung next to fabrics.'[17] This desire to improve French trade also led to a literary competition run in the same spirit as the 1801 exhibition programme. Candidates were asked by the Institut National in Paris to write an essay in answer to the question 'Quelle est l'influence de la peinture sur les arts d'industrie commerciale? Faire connaître les avantages que l'Etat retire de cette influence, et ceux qu'il peut encore s'en promettre'. (What is the influence of painting on the commercial industrial arts? Indicate what benefits the state derives from such influences, and what others it may expect.) The published entry which won an honourable mention was written by Pierre Toussaint Dechazelle, who was involved in the Lyons silk industry.[18] He had been at the school of drawing there, and then became a textile designer and flower painter. His prize essay, published in 1804, runs to just over a hundred pages.[19]

Dechazelle's essay is the most important extended discussion devoted solely to the interrelationship of art and industry to appear anywhere in Europe before Laborde's volumes in mid-century. Dechazelle organized his argument historically in order to show that the fine arts had often in the past exerted an influence on the industrial arts, from which he drew the conclusion that they could indeed go on doing so to the benefit of the French economy.

Dechazelle's account is largely devoted to the period of the French Renaissance onwards, culminating in some very interesting, and rare, comments on the decorative arts of his own day. He detected the influence of Primaticcio in the ceramic design of Palissy, for example, and he saw the art of Le Brun having an impact on goldsmiths' and locksmiths' work of his day. Dechazelle saw paintings performing a dual role. On the one hand, he argued, 'the painting seems to say to the decorator, the goldsmith, the cabinet-maker, the costume-designer: *see what you can*'. Whereas on the other hand, painting says, 'to the wealthy citizen: *here is what you desire*'. It is thus that trade is nourished by pictorial inventions, and increases more and more communal riches and prosperity.

Coming closer to his own day, Dechazelle much admired the currently fashionable style of Neoclassicism. He acknowledged that the British were the 'first to borrow forms founded on ornaments of antiquity in order to put them on pottery products', an obvious reference, without his need to cite names, to Wedgwood and his contemporaries. The change in taste in France, according to Dechazelle, came about 'since the school of Vien propagated the happy imitation of antique models'. As a result of his influence

> our porcelain manufactures stopped showing puerile and grotesque inventions which made the most common vases

unrecognizable, by disguising them with Chinese grotesque figures and ridiculous chimeras.

Dechazelle valued Vien as a leading early Neo-classical history-painter, whose influence spread beyond that field, aided by Vien's only design pattern-book. He was one of the few Neo-classical artists to produce such a work, a collection of engravings entitled *Suite de vases composée dans le goût de l'antique* (1760).[20]

Contemporary designs in the wallpaper industry, as well as in his own field of silks, were also praised in Dechazelle's essay because of the beneficial influence of both painting and of the antique. He was particularly impressed by the quality of design in wallpapers shown recently in Paris in the 1802 industrial exhibition. He did not specify which firms he had in mind, but the papers shown by the leading producers Jacquemart and Bénard had been singled out for praise that year in the official report.[21] When discussing the silk industry, Dechazelle naturally cited the well known instance of the painter-trained designer, Jean Revel, who in the earlier years of the eighteenth century had been such a major influence on the designs of Lyons silks. From his own day, Dechazelle saw that the reinvigoration of the ailing silk industry, as a result of the Revolution, was largely due to the impact of classical antiquity, through antique cameos, paintings from Herculaneum, and Greek vases in Sir William Hamilton's two collections.

Emboldened by the substantial weight of evidence that Dechazelle had gathered, he threw down a challenge in his essay to the Neo-classical history-painters then working in Paris. Earlier in his argument he had already cited the example of David who 'has had made for his use chairs, tables and beds in the manner of the ancients'. Some of these items, made by Georges Jacob, appear for instance in a prominent part of the composition of David's *Brutus receiving the bodies of his dead sons* (1789, Louvre). Dechazelle would now like to see other painters equally interested in the decorative arts. He exhorted them:

> And you, worthy pupils of these three learned schools (David, Vincent, Renaud), Gérard, Girodet, Guérin, Meynier! May you often combine your paint-brushes with the caduceus of trade; the arts which fortune favours, and those which glory crowns, would share their mutual advantages.

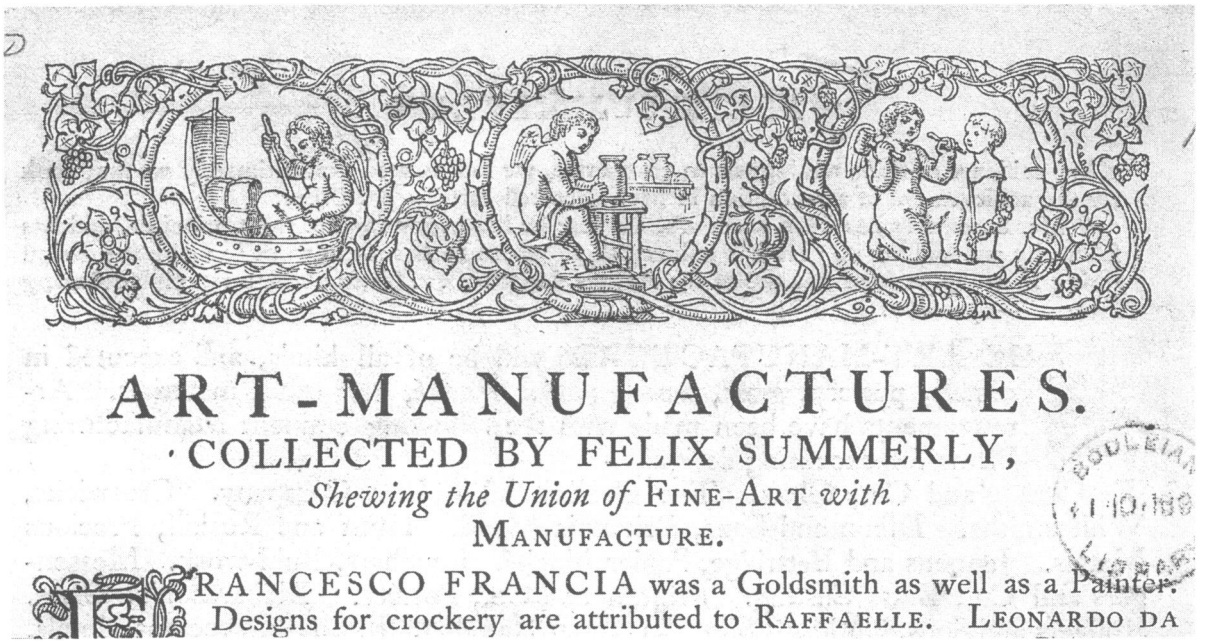
Absorbed over the next few years in producing some of the large official canvases recording Napoleon's triumphs, most of these artists were to have neither time nor inclination to take up the essayist's challenge. Of the artists mentioned, only Vincent was to continue being interested in the useful arts after the essay was published, as he was again to be a member of the Paris industrial exhibition jury for 1806, a role he had already performed in 1801 and 1802.

Historical Justification

As the nineteenth century progressed writers increasingly turned to the historical past to justify a liaison between art and industry, frequently citing the period of the Italian Renaissance as a model. Within a year of each other, writers on either side of the Channel made almost identical references. Percier and Fontaine in the 1812 preface to their *Recueil de décorations* looked back longingly to what they saw as a union of all the arts in sixteenth-century Italy, where they shared a common source of inspiration and influence: 'The genius of Raphael, is it not noticeable in all the objects of ornament that received his influence?', they asked.[22] A year later, Prince Hoare, in his *Epoch of the Arts*, argued that Raphael's influence

> pervaded and swelled the streams of commerce. The earthenware now known by his name [Urbino majolica], ennobled by beauties before unseen, was sought with avidity, and the tapestry of Flanders gathered splendour from his designs, and those of Giulio Romano and others of his school.[23]

Further into the century, a few years before Henry Cole became so actively involved in helping to organize the 1851 Exhibition, he launched his Summerly Art Manufactures scheme in 1847. Cole hoped to persuade a group of manufacturers whom he met in London, Stoke-on-Trent, Sheffield and elsewhere to put into production a range of ceramic, glass and metal objects that had been designed for the purpose by painters and sculptors. Cole seems to have felt that some justification was needed, since the publicity brochure he published describing the scheme and illustrating the items **[4]**, started with a brief, historical survey, concentrating on the Renaissance, both south and north of the Alps.[24] Although nowadays the names he mentions would



4 Henry Cole, brochure advertising his Summerly Art-Manufactures, 1847; engraved vignette

not be accepted in every instance without scholarly reservations, the list records what were regarded as acceptable historical facts in the late 1840s. He selected examples from many different types of decorative art:

> Francesco Francia was a goldsmith as well as a painter. Designs for crockery are attributed to Raffaelle. Leonardo da Vinci invented necklaces. In the Gallery of Buckingham Palace is a painting by Teniers to ornament a harpsichord; and in the National Gallery there is one by Nicolo Poussin for a similar purpose. Holbein designed brooches and saltcellars. Albert Durer himself sculptured ornaments of all kinds. At Windsor is ironwork by Quintin Matsys. Beato Angelico, and a host of great artists, decorated books; and, in fact, there was scarcely a great medieval artist, when art was really catholic, who did not essay to decorate the objects of every day life.

From this view of history, Cole felt he could sell his shaving mugs and water carafes, since his forebears showed that 'beauty, form and colour and poetic invention were associated with everything. So it ought still to be, and we will say, shall be again'. Cole's optimism was not matched by the economic success of the venture, as a whole, with the notable exception of his tea-service which sold in large numbers. But this does not undermine his important contribution in theory and practice to the debate on the relationship between art and industry. Even his use of the term 'art manufactures' is itself noteworthy.

The middle of the century produced several zealous art reformers in Britain, amongst whom William Dyce was undoubtedly one of the most active. His many commitments included the new schools of design, and it was to the students of one of them, at South Kensington, that he gave a lecture on 'Ornament', printed in full in three successive issues of Henry Cole's *Journal of Design* in 1849.[25] In the middle of the lecture Dyce elaborated on the idea of the total union of the arts, introducing analogies not from usual sources but rather from other cultures altogether, the 'primitive' or 'savage'. Discussions of design in the middle decades of the century rarely strayed outside a European, and partly Middle Eastern and Oriental, frame of reference. Owen Jones was eventually to start his *Grammar of Ornament* with a section devoted to 'Savage Tribes', including Oceanic and Maori art. But that important volume did not appear until 1856.

Dyce's audience must have been surprised when he made his imaginative excursus into ethnography. He showed an unusually enlightened, aesthetic approach to a kind of art regarded at the time merely as a curiosity. He could have seen many examples of tribal art in the British Museum and on the Continent, as well as in his native Aberdeen at Marischal

College. His sensitive understanding of 'savage' art, which could have included Pictish as well as African and Oceanic, is worth quoting fairly extensively:

> The love of ornament is a tendency of our being. We all are sensible that mechanical contrivances are like skeletons without skin, like birds without feathers. . . . This feeling is not the offspring of a refined state of society; for we discover among savages the exercise of ornament as art. . . . Do not savages paint ornaments on their skins, before they have learnt the art of weaving dresses to cover themselves withal? Are not their bows and arrows, their spears and war clubs, their canoes and paddles, all decorated with ornamental painting and sculpture? Does it not thus appear that ornamental design has had its birth long before the very conception of the fine arts? And shall it be said that a kind of art, to the practice of which all mankind savage or civilised, have in all ages been impelled, does not hold a high rank, either considered philosophically or in relation to its utility, in adorning the artificial world in which we live?

Amongst other writers in mid-century who devoted themselves to aspects of all kinds of art were the critic John Ruskin, the archaeologist A. H. Layard, and the Marquis de Laborde. The textile town of Bradford provided the setting for Ruskin's lecture on 'Modern Manufacture and Design', delivered in 1859. By this stage of his career, Ruskin's famous writings on art and architecture were already behind him, the *Seven Lamps*, the *Stones of Venice*,and most of *Modern Painters*. His writing was becoming more disconnected, and increasingly his interest in art was to become allied to social theories. These trends are evident in this lecture, which ingeniously turns the art versus design debate on its head, by arguing that the best of fine art is decorative anyway. He says that the aim of his lecture is to analyse the 'obstacles which stand at present in the way of our success in design'. He identified the first of these obstacles as the 'idea of decorative art being a degraded or a separate kind of art'. He disproves this misconception by giving a synoptic view of the High Renaissance. For him the state of design—by which Ruskin means decoration—indicates the quality of a society's aesthetic health:

> There is no existing highest-order art but is decorative. The best sculpture yet produced has been the decoration of a temple front—the best painting, the decoration of a room. Raphael's best doing is merely the wall-colouring of a suite of apartments in the Vatican, and his cartoons were made for tapestries. Correggio's best doing is the decoration of two small church cupolas in Parma; Michelangelo's, of a ceiling in the Pope's private chapel; Tintoretto's, of a ceiling and side wall belonging to a charitable society at Venice; while Titian and Veronese threw out their noblest thoughts, not even on the inside, but on the outside of the common brick and plaster walls of Venice.[26]

A less idiosyncratic use of the past is to be found in a series of lectures given by one of Ruskin's friends, Austen Henry Layard, famous for his excavations at Nineveh and Babylon in the late 1840s and early 1850s. Both men were involved in the activities of the Arundel Society, dedicated to a didactic role of spreading knowledge about great art, especially Italian Renaissance frescoes. Layard expounded his own views in a series of lectures delivered to the Royal Institution in London in 1859. The reason for the greatness of the Italian Renaissance was, according to him, because artists lived in a Christian and free society, in which art was closely connected with common beliefs and everyday life. Art derived its vitality from these links, resulting in a lack of any barriers between the fine and the useful. This separation in the arts only arose, according to Layard, when they were losing their vitality. In other words, a total fusion is a healthy state of affairs. As the lectures have remained unpublished, a substantial quotation is justified:

> There is the division generally made between the *Fine arts* and the *Useful arts* and this distinction is so readily accepted as one self-evident and well-defined that we are apt to consider the terms as distinct contradictions and to assume that because one art is *fine* it cannot be *useful* and the inversion of the proposition that because an art is *useful* it cannot necessarily be *fine*.
>
> This distinction may have arisen with us from the term borrowed from the *Belle Arti* of the Italian or the *Beaux Arts* of the French, applied exclusively to those arts whose chief if not only aim is the embodiment of the beautiful in material form. But such terms were introduced when painting, sculpture and architecture had begun to lose their original intentions and functions. As long as these arts were but the outward and visible expression of some earnest inward want, sentiment or conviction—such as in the time of the revival during the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries when they conveyed deep religious truths or incited to holy life and pious deeds—such terms and distinctions were unknown. The painters of the finest pictures and the sculptures of the finest statues were designers of metalwork, of [marriage] chests, of armour, and in fact any article that might be required for the most ordinary everyday use. It was only when pictures and

statues began to be considered as mere objects of curiosity and *virtù* to be penned up in galleries and museums for our amusement and gratification that these terms *Belle Arti* and *Beaux Arts* were invented, and that this distinction between 'the fine arts' and the 'useful arts' was recommended.[27]

Looking outside a western European framework, Layard finds encouragement for his own day in:

> Those races who seem to have an innate perception of any feeling for the beautiful, arising from a very high natural organisation of the intellect, [who] will show it in the most ordinary work of their hands. Thus an Arab who requires the earthen vase to fetch water from the well will mould the clay with the most graceful shapes, and the Persian who weaves the silk or the Kurd who makes the carpet for his tent will choose the richest colours and combine them in the most agreeable harmony.

The Marquis de Laborde's monumental *L'Union des arts et de l'industrie*, published in 1856 as a direct result of his impressions of the Great Exhibition, has already been mentioned. In his second volume, subtitled 'Le Futur', Laborde started with a forthright declaration of the futility of barriers between types of art:

> Art is neither aristocratic nor popular, it is neither industrial nor of a superior nature; art is one. Man's industry is the bringing together of these active faculties, put at the service of his needs: intellectual activity is for the satisfaction of his intellectual needs, corporeal activity for the satisfaction of his physical needs. The arts, letters, sciences, the clothing of his body, the furnishings of his house, are as much branches of his industry considered in the just extension of the world. Art embraces then all the activity of man.[28]

Laborde continued by addressing himself to the solution of a problem which suggests that the division between art and industry had changed character by mid-century, in France at least. According to Laborde, industrial artists have now become more self-assertive, complain they are excluded from fine art exhibitions, want industrial schools and museums, and even want their own class in the Académie des Beaux-Arts (to which Ingres took exception). Laborde, however, must have been an optimist as he saw that 'this malaise is temporary, like the idea itself of dividing art up into specialities—industrial, religious, military, etc.—is transitory'. The current state of affairs, however, was having one serious result, in that 'artists enter into industry like victims crowned with flowers, like triumphant martyrs, but in tears'. New attitudes, new education, should change that sad state of affairs, a conviction which underlines his second volume, which is largely devoted to educational methods.

Dyce and Laborde represent the new spearhead in design education in the mid-nineteenth century, which increasingly had come to recognize the importance of a type of art school concerned with manufactures, not merely with the fine arts. Underlying that new form of art education were basic assumptions about the relationship of art to industry.

Conclusion

In the period that has been under discussion, from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries, there was no general consensus of opinion on the relationship between art and design. It is only by the middle of the nineteenth century that one even finds extensive discussions of the role of the artist in an industrial context. The unusually long prize-winning essay by Dechazelle in 1804 was a notable exception. Otherwise contributions were short forays rather than the prolonged assaults one associates with the likes of Morris and Gropius. The two sides to the debate were in no sense organized or clear-cut. Some opinions, notably Hogarth's, even remained unpublished. But an increasing number of individuals in all fields, on both sides of the Channel, were aware that some kind of interrelationship between art and design existed, either to be fostered or discouraged. Famous and unfamiliar names jostle in this debate, drawn not just from one area of the arts. Protagonists represented a wide cross-section of both practitioners and theorists, with experience in architecture, painting, sculpture, archaeology, designing for the decorative and industrial arts, criticism and teaching, manufacturing and marketing. The abundance of evidence from the 1860s onwards, through the Arts and Crafts movement, the Art Nouveau period, the Bauhaus, and further, is familiar territory to any reader of this journal. It is hoped that this article, by shedding some light on the earlier period, will now make it less unfamiliar.

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Notes

1 Hogarth's manuscript edited by Michael Kitson, *Walpole Society*, vol. XLI, 1966–8, pp. 46–111; see especially pp. 78–9, 87–8, 98, 102–3.

2 John Bell, *Rudimentary Art-Instruction for Artizans and Others*, Part I, London, 1852, Prefatory Note.

3 Isaac Ware, *Complete Body of Architecture*, London, 1767 edition, Bk. V. Ch. 1, 'Of Decorations of the Sides of Rooms in General', p. 468. The *Complete Body* was first published in 1756.

4 John Gwynn, *London and Westminster Improved, to which is prefixed a discourse on Public Magnificence*, London, 1766, quoted in E. A. Entwistle, *A Literary History of Wallpaper*, London, 1960, p. 38.

5 C. N. Ledoux, *L'Architecture considérée sous la rapport de l'art des moeurs et de la legislation*, Paris, 1804, vol. I p. 14.

6 C. Percier and P. F. L. Fontaine, *Recueil de décorations intérieures, comprenant tout ce qui a rapport à l'ameublement*, Paris, 1812 edition, pp. 12–13.

7 L. E. S. J., Marquis de Laborde, *L'Union des arts et de l'industrie*, Paris, 1856, vol. I, p. 235.

8 Gustave Planche, 'L'Art et l'Industrie', *Revue des deux mondes*, vol. X, 1857, pp. 185–210.

9 Gautier's articles appear in the issues of *La Presse* on 13 and 27 December 1836. He had raised some of the same points in his shorter article in the newspaper *Figaro*, 11 November 1836.

10 Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, *La Révolution dans les moeurs*, Paris, 1854, not paginated.

11 J.-A.-D. Ingres, *Réponse au rapport sur l'Ecole Impériale des Beaux-Arts*, Paris, 1863, pp. 4–5. The Collège des Beaux-Arts appliqués à l'Industrie was to be established in 1864. Earlier in his career Ingres had been closer to industry, as he was prepared to design the diploma for the grand medal of honour for the 1855 Paris international exhibition.

12 Ingres's attitude makes a good debating point, even if it is not historically sound: as one of his contemporaries pointed out in another context, the ancient Greeks did not make a distinction between the fine arts and the rest, since they used only one word for both kinds of art. The French journalist specializing in economics, Jules Burat, in his *Exposition de l'industrie française, Année 1844. Description méthodique*, Paris, 1844, Vol. II, p. 1. On *techne* see the discussion in Alison Burford, *Craftsmen in Greek and Roman Society*, London, 1972, particularly Ch. VI.

13 J.-J. Bachelier, *Project d'un cours public des arts et métiers*, Paris, 1789, p. 27; originally written in 1772.

14 J.-J. Bachelier, *Collection des discours*, Paris, 1790, p. 22.

15 Diderot and d'Alembert, *Encyclopédie*, Paris, 1751, vol. I, p. 714.

16 Unpublished, Lyons, Académie, MS. Recueil 147, ff. 131 verso–132.

17 Quoted in Laborde, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 218.

18 Another competition essay, which remained unprinted, is in manuscript in the Victoria and Albert Museum Library, 86, cc.34, by A. P. Pineaux Duval.

19 Dechazelle's essay was known on both sides of the Channel, as is evident from the quotations used by the painter Prince Hoare in a chapter entitled 'Exclusion of the arts of design, in their higher branches, from the ordinary methods of national prosperity and affluence', in his *Epochs of the Arts*, London, 1813, Pt. I, Ch. III, pp. 96ff.

20 Dechazelle does not mention the *Suite*, by name, but he must have had it in mind. Quotations from pp. 27 and 29.

21 *Exposition publique des produits de l'industrie française. Procès verbal*, Paris, 1802, p. 68.

22 Percier and Fontaine, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

23 Prince Hoare, *op. cit.*, pp. 101–2.

24 *Art-Manufactures, Collected by Felix Summerly, Shewing the Union of Fine-art with Manufactures*, London, 1847, p. 1.

25 *Journal of Design*, vol. I, no. 1, March, no. 2, April, and no. 3, May 1849. The long quotation in the next paragraph is from April, p. 65. The South Kensington School of Design was later to become today's Royal College of Art.

26 John Ruskin, *Two Paths*, London, 1859. p. 92.

27 British Library, Add. MSS, 39072 and 390073, Layard Papers, volumes CXLII and CXLIII, seven Royal Institution lectures on art. The quotations here are from the first lecture in the first volume, ff. 6–9.

28 Laborde, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 2.