

Christopher Dresser's iconic five-legged chair dominates the poster for the Aesthetic Show. (The full poster does show the legs!)

AESTHETIC MOVEMENT SHOW AT THE KIRKLAND

By Dennis Barrett

The Aesthetic Movement and the Arts and Crafts Movement were parallel rebellions in late Nineteenth-Century Britain against the excesses of the Victorian Age. The artistic movements in the following hundred years, from Art Nouveau to Postmodern, all have their roots here – that is the contention that underlies the current exhibit at the Kirkland: *Truth, Beauty and Power: Christopher Dresser and The Aesthetic Movement*.

If the Aesthetic Movement, about which I knew just about nothing, is so closely related to the Arts and Crafts – I figured I'd better go see the exhibit and learn!



The chair does have legs, five of them.

So when the Kirkland once more opened its doors in late August, (after the villainous February burst pipe closed it for so many months), I was there on the first day. It was 'members-only' for the first two days, so I thought it would be less crowded. Not really. Hugh Grant, the founding director, was showing VIP guests around, and lots of other Museum staff were in evidence. But fortunately my good friend Maya Wright was there and as one of three curators of the show (along with Christopher Herron and Becca Goodrum), she had insights to share which I welcomed.

In broad strokes: the Aesthetic Movement reacted against the ugliness of the machine-made stuff that covered every surface of the Victorian home, and its poor design. And it is especially identified with fine art – painting. The Arts and Crafts Movement reacted against the factories, the "dark Satanic mills," that churned out all that fussy *stuff*, and the industrial workers, no longer artisans, whose souls were crushed in the process. And it is especially identified with the decorative arts – wood, metal, fabric.

Now the Kirkland is a museum of 'fine and decorative art,' but the decorative holdings are stronger, and certainly in the Aesthetic Movement, the collection is not extensive.

Enter Christopher Dresser. Though he himself didn't identify as an Aesthete, he was a prime exponent of the Aesthetic philosophies, and his prolific writings

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AESTHETIC MOVEMENT (CONT)

served the movement much as those of John Ruskin and William Morris served the Arts and Crafts. He was heavily influenced by Japanese design, as were the rest of the Aesthetes. And his products were in the decorative (useful) wares, in which the Kirkland collection excels. The show brings together the Aesthetic Movement and Dresser.

Thus it is that as you enter gallery 12, the first thing you see highlighted (and the star in the exhibit's advertising) is *The Chair*: the chair with five legs which has languished in the Kirkland's collection, designer unknown. And the fascinating story is told of how research for this show led to the discovery of Christopher Dresser as its designer. (Admittedly that's still a hypothesis, not proven, but the evidence is overwhelming). So here it's being shown for the first time as Christopher Dresser's work.

Truth, Beauty, Power (it's the motto in Christopher Dresser's studio) nicely occupies the temporary gallery.

With only 28 objects (all from the Kirkland's collection, some not previously displayed) there is plenty of space for interpretive placards. They are plentiful, and sometimes quite detailed. It's a great show to learn from! I took one of the folding chairs the museum kindly provides, and sat in front of each placard to read – slowly.

But the count of 28 objects is misleading. Frequent reference is made to other Kirkland holdings which are still at their usual home in gallery 3. And there are several very informative comparisons between



The Japanese influence on the Aesthetic and other Western art movements, captured in the French word Japonisme, is featured in the Kirkland show.

objects on display here and photos of contrasting objects held in other museums. So there are many more objects involved than the 28 – but they are all well organized to illustrate the ideas and themes of the Aesthetic Movement. It is a well curated show. (And probably should be made into a book, hint, hint.)

I amused myself by taking issue with the featured artist. Dresser is quoted as saying "There is no reason whatever why a chair should have four legs. If three would be better, or five, or any other number, let us use what would be best." True. And there is good reason for five legs.

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*You can't miss *The Chair*, newly identified as Dresser's, as you enter the gallery.*

AESTHETIC MOVEMENT (CONT)

The echinoderms, with which I have spent my professional career, know this (think the five arms of a starfish). But the reason is for stability; a five-legged chair does not tip over easily. The office chair in which I am sitting has five legs, as most office chairs these days do. But the legs are equally spaced (like the arms of the starfish); that's what makes them stable. And Dresser's chair in the exhibit has two sides of one length and three sides of another length. So I contend that there is good reason why five legs are best, but Dresser ignores it. I doubt that this was the sort of speculation the show was intended to provoke – but any curiosity is good curiosity, right? (And admittedly, he was under the non-echinoderm constraint that the chair had to seat a mammal with bilateral symmetry).

My guess is that the current show at the Kirkland (running till next January 2) is good at many levels. If you're a beginner, like me, then it's a primer, a great introduction to a movement that ran parallel to the more familiar Arts and Crafts Movement. If you're a veteran, you'll find interesting (and often overlooked) objects in interesting juxtapositions and much to think about.

A word to the frugal: stay away from the gift shop if you can summon the will power! The Kirkland's notice of reopening notes that the shop is stocked with plenty of new products, mainly from local artisans. And it's all true. Lots of new, and tempting, stuff at affordable prices. I was unable to escape without buying a vase.

My Aesthetic Movement education takes another step on September 18, when the Kirkland staff is collaborating with the museum in Northern England that specializes in Dresser's art, to put on a morning zoom symposium, "Join US: Dresser Fest 21". (Since this review is getting to you after September 18, most of the Dresser Fest lectures will be made available afterwards, with a link at the exhibition page:

kirklandmuseum.org/truth-beauty-power/.

(And if you're chary of crowds, even thin, masked, crowds: there will be occasional virtual tours of the show, through the same site.)

After the Aesthetic show, on January 21, 2122, Kirkland's gallery 12 will host *Josef Hoffmann's Vienna*, and we can expect to learn more about the Austrian Secession and the Wiener Werkstätte!

CACS WINTER SYMPOSIUM FEATURING THEODORE ELLISON JANUARY 15, 2022 5.00 PM



Celebrated stained glass artisan Theodore Ellison will be our keynote speaker at our Virtual CACS Winter Symposium this coming January. He will be presenting his talk: *From Hand to Heart: The Untold Story of American Glass Mosaic Fireplaces*. An

accomplished craftsman and designer, he brings a historical perspective to the introduction of mosaic to the buildings of progressive American architects around the turn of the twentieth century.

Theodore Ellison Designs has made original mosaic and leaded glass for new construction and fine homes all over the United States. Ted currently designs and constructs interior and exterior mosaic, leaded glass for windows, cabinetry, lay lights and entryways in a variety of styles.

His passion stems from a desire to create something truly unique for each individual project. With a keen attention to detail, Ted collaborates with homeowners, architects, and designers to deliver a one-of-a-kind piece. Every project honors the artistic integrity of classic styles, and most projects use glass made specifically for his studio.

Ted studied art at San Francisco State and apprenticed in a glass studio before starting his leaded glass and mosaic company Theodore Ellison Designs in 1998. Honoring the artistic integrity of the Arts and Crafts tradition he has created original designs for homes all over the country. His work has appeared in *Fine Homebuilding*, *Old House Interiors*, *American Bungalow*, *Style 1900*, and *Old House Journal*. His research on the history of glass and mosaic focuses on lesser-known artists and craftspeople.

Our Winter Symposium is free for CACS members, \$15 for non-members. Mark your calendars now, because we know you won't want to miss out on this educational evening full of color, glass, and inspiration!



by Julie Leidel

LEXI ERICKSON

This quarter's featured artist is none other than our very own Lexi Erickson, who has served for many years as our CACS Secretary. Lexi has been creating since she was a child, and is an archaeologist with an expert focus on Stonehenge. Her love of nature and the ancient world culminates into true beauty through her jewelry. Metal and stone speak to her as she creates. These elements of our earth bring her inspiration. She has mastered her craft and teaches others to create as she hosts private students in her Highlands Ranch home.



Lexi and I have grown quite close over the years, and she is someone who deeply inspires me in my quest for creativity and connection. Her wealth of knowledge in archaeology, history, and art gives us endless conversation opportunities every time we are able to spend time together.

Tell us a little bit about how and when you fell in love with stone and jewelry making.

I was in my post graduate studies, mid-1980s, at the university when I fell in love with making jewelry. I had never worn much jewelry. Archaeology is not conducive for wearing jewelry because we are mainly digging in dirt and rocks.

Was your background in archaeology something that influenced your art?

Absolutely! I studied jewelry only as a last resort. I was writing an archaeological dissertation on how cultures developed from the Stone Age to the Bronze age, but I wasn't totally sure what bronze was. Sure, there were bronze statues, but I never saw anything else made out of bronze, yet here was an entire period of history (3300-1200 BCE) of

history known as the Bronze Age. I took a metallurgy class, that not only was for chemistry majors but never even mentioned bronze. I was so in over my head! A friend finally talked me into taking a jewelry course through the Art Department. My first degree was Art History, so I had all the pre-requisites. I told him I didn't like jewelry, never wore any, but he persisted.

What were some of the biggest challenges as you learned your craft?

Patience. There are many other skills to learn beside just making a piece of jewelry. Everything is done by hand, and back then there were not as many tools for jewelers as there are now. We had to make our own specialty pliers and tools. Our saw blades are the thickness of a human hair, bending metal takes skill and muscles, and we are playing with torches and an open flame.



Above: Sterling and ammonite fossil earrings



Left: Southwestern Native American pottery shard etched onto copper with chrysoprase, copper and sterling

LEXI ERICKSON (CONT)



*Purple Manakara
from Manakara
Beach, Indonesia,
inspired by William
Morris, sterling*

It was scary. On top of this, I am color blind and highly dyslexic. That's been a real challenge, too.

Can you walk us through your process from conceptual inspiration to the final piece?

Most of my pieces are based upon archaeology and rock art of the American Southwest or the British Isles and Ireland's ancient sites, such as Longcrew, Stonehenge, and Callanish. The Neolithic period is my archaeological academic specialization. Each of my pieces has esoteric symbology designed into it, if you know how to read it (secrets, and they all tell a story). I start by sawing the piece from sheet sterling silver, using the afore mentioned hand saw with hair thin sawblades. Then I texture the metal by hammering it on specially selected rocks or create a texture with hammers, for texture gives jewelry "life."

Next, I file the edges smooth by using a variety of small, specialized German files and then finish the process pieces using various finer grades of micron finishing film made for the automotive industry. I then use a hand-held acetylene torch to solder any bezels down which hold the stones. I am extremely picky about which stones I use. I love using very rare stones, some from exotic places around the globe. Some are just rough rocks I find in my travels, others are bought from the top three quality stone cutters in the US. They know I'm color blind, they understand my work, and help with my selections. I never use any electricity when making my jewelry, it's all done the way the ancients would have made jewelry. Just check out the prehistoric jewelry in museums. It's mind-blowing! Today's jewelry techniques have not

changed for over 4,000+ years except for the redesign of some of hand tools and electricity.

What are some of your proudest moments as a Jeweler?

As a child I read my Dad's Lapidary Journal magazines, which helped foster my love of rocks. When I started making jewelry, I secretly wished I would be mentioned only once in the magazine. In 2007 I was asked by the editor to write an article for them. My first piece for them ended upon the cover. From then I became a regular contributor, landing on a lot more covers, and then I became one of the editors in 2009. I started doing more teaching and now have students from all over the US and world come take classes from me at my private studio. But last year, Brian Henson, son of Jim Henson (of Muppet's fame), fell in love with one of my pieces, so now I can say he owns one of my pieces. Also, a few members of CACS own pieces of my work. To have one's peers love and purchase your work is the greatest honor.

How has the Arts & Crafts Movement influenced your work?

Unknown to many, most of the jewelry made in the A&C years was designed by men, but actually produced by women. Much of it is a technique known as chasing and repoussé, which I do not do. However, I am called to the leaf designs by William Morris, and use leaves more in my pieces. But mostly I now find my inspiration in the work of Charles Rennie Mackintosh, the Scottish designer, his partner Margaret Macdonald Mackintosh, and the Glasgow Style. I love their entire philosophy, and am now designing a whole new series inspired by their art, which I will debut at the CACS Gathering of the Guilds next year.



*Arkansas wavelike stone,
padparadsha faceted
stone, with ancient
spiral, sterling and gold.*

MODERN BUNGALOW IS MOVING!

By Julie Leidel



Modern Bungalow has been looking for a new home since 2019 for their world-class Arts and Crafts home furnishing store. Owners Matt Hubbard and Danielle Sandusky found the perfect

location in the heart of Washington Park during the pandemic, and they closed on the new property in May of this year. They will be closer to many of their clients and their treasured

bungalows, at 1028 S. Gaylord Street. The building is over 90 years old and most recently housed the Charcoal Bistro restaurant, but was originally home to the D&R Theater when it opened in 1925.

Over the years, this location has housed the Guild Theater, Trident Theater, a bottle shop, a hair salon, and teen center, but nothing could be more perfect for this historical property than Modern Bungalow. This deco-era brick building is now undergoing extensive renovations and restoration inside and out in order to house Modern Bungalow. It is the oldest building on the block, and will serve as an anchor for many of the shops and eateries nearby. The store is expected to move to the new location in December, with a grand opening coming in the New Year. We'll let you know when you can come and raise a glass to celebrate the new location!

For updates, visit: modernbungalow.com

A FALL TOUR OF ARTS AND CRAFTS ERA WASHINGTON PARK



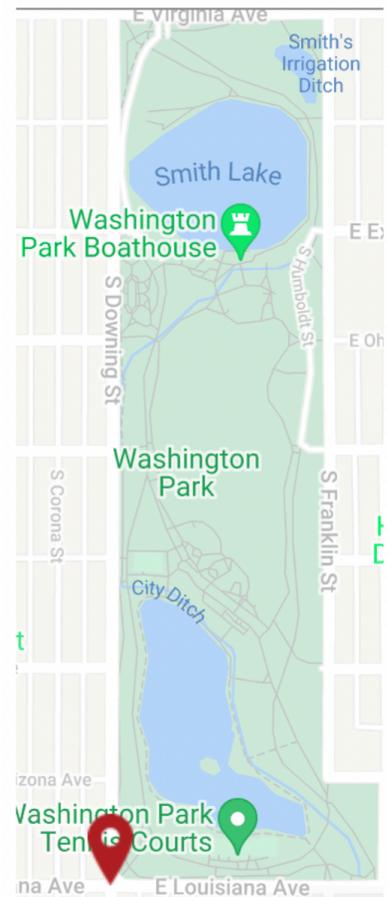
Saturday October 9th 9:30 AM
Tour led by Robert Charles Rust

We will meet at the Boathouse/Pavilion in the Park and will walk through and around the 155 acre park to discover the historic park itself (One of Denver's Oldest) and its adjoining neighborhoods. A variety of Arts and Crafts Era architecture can be viewed from the street and a discussion of the City Beautiful Movement in Denver will also be held during our journey.

Time permitting, we can discuss how Historic preservation efforts have affected the area surrounding the park.

Please wear weather-appropriate clothes and comfortable shoes, as we will be walking about 2-3 miles, before we are finished. You might want to have a lunch afterward in the nearby South Gaylord or South Pearl districts both East and West of the Park.

RSVP TO
ROBERT:
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ROYCROFT RENAISSANCE ARTISANS PROVIDE INSIGHT INTO THEIR PROCESSES



Brian Brace and Julie Leidel at the Arts & Crafts Conference in 2016.

By Beth Bradford

On August 18th, the Colorado Arts and Crafts Society (CACS) provided a virtual symposium in conjunction with the Roycrofters-at-Large Association (RALA). The event, presented as a Zoom meeting, featured two of the Roycroft Renaissance Artisans: fine furniture master craftsman Brian Brace and fine artist Julie Leidel.

Brian Brace

Brian provided us with a brief history of his artistic endeavors, then a tour of his showroom and workshop. Brian began his woodworking journey as an apprentice to a master furniture maker in Vermont at age 16 while attending high school. He completed the 8000-hour apprenticeship by working in the wood shop on Monday and Friday and became the first to receive Vermont State certification. He moved to Naples, Florida and expanded his experience with cabinetry and home woodwork installations. In 2004, he opened his own shop in Naples. Happily, he relocated his workshop to Black Mountain, North Carolina (just 15 minutes east of Asheville) in 2010. The showroom is located on the second floor with the wood shop on the first. In 2018, Brian became a Roycroft Renaissance Artisan.

His shop includes all the traditional woodworking machinery (saws, drills, etc.), self-built tools (steam box) and jigs for simplifying cutting and assembly, and some very up-to-the-minute equipment. He

featured what he described as the “furniture makers dream machine:” the multi-router which allows for positioning and cutting in all three axes.

Brian is of the belief that “Fine furniture should be crafted to endure use over multiple lifetimes... to be passed on to future generations.” He selects the lumber and constructs each piece using traditional mortise and tenon joinery to maximize the strength of the wood. The process to complete each high-quality piece is extensive; it may take as long as two weeks to complete one chair. The wood species he uses include cherry, oak, maple, walnut, birds eye maple, white oak, ebony, and sapele (a wood in the mahogany family). His designs include the traditional Arts and Crafts, Mission, Morris, and Greene & Greene along with his updated designs inspired by the originals. As an example, Brian makes the traditional slant-arm Morris chair and the bow-arm Morris chair but has designed an update that he named the arbor Morris chair.

Brian has plans that will both enhance his furniture making business and expand his influence on future craftsmen. He is looking for land on which to set up a solar kiln to process the fresh-cut trees and produce his own lumber. Additionally, he is starting a YouTube channel and expects to teach classes in woodworking.

Find Brian at:
website: brianbracefinefurniture.com,
Facebook @Brian.Brace.Fine.Furniture.Maker
Instagram @brianbracefinefurniture.



Greene & Greene inspired chairs in Walnut & Sapele

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ROYCROFT RENAISSANCE ARTISANS (cont)

Julie Leidel

The second presentation featured CACS board member Julie Leidel. Julie discussed her philosophy for creation, provided a studio tour, and highlighted her artistic process.

Julie graduated from Colorado State University in 1997 with a BA degree in Graphic Design and worked as a graphic designer, photographer, and user interface designer until she was able to become a full-time fine artist in 2013. Julie exhibits her artwork at 15-20 fine art festivals and shows annually. In 2016, Julie was accepted as a Roycroft Renaissance Artisan and in 2021 she became a Master Artisan. She is the first board member for the Roycrofters-at-Large from outside of New York State.

Julie stated that she creates to connect with nature and with people. She finds beauty in nature and inside people. She is looking to live a purpose-driven life and to develop deeper connections. She finds this spiritual fulfillment in the actions involved in creating her art.

Julie's studio is on the first floor of her home in Evergreen, Colorado. She has two main work areas surrounded by rows of shelves with carefully organized art supplies, completed works, shipping supplies, and business materials. In



Julie using her light table for design work

Evergreen, she is surrounded by nature. For many of her paintings, her process starts with jeep jaunts either here or in the other areas of Colorado and with photographing the buildings, mountains, flowers, skies, and surroundings. These photographs and the accompanying experiences provide the inspiration for her art.

Julie doesn't confine herself to one medium or to one style. She has produced multiple series of work with Arts and Crafts, Art Nouveau, and the 1930's WPA national parks posters as style inspirations. The poster-inspired work is accomplished with gouache on cold press illustration board. Many of the Arts and Crafts and Art Nouveau inspired works incorporate textured or molded areas in the work. She creates work with inspirational mottos and natural elements. The paintings emulate ceramic tile, stained glass, mica, wood, and leather. The tile-inspired paintings are created with acrylic paint on Masonite with hand-sculpted polymer clay accents or with molding paste for subtler outlines. Multiple layers of watered-acrylic supply the depth of color.

All of Julie's shows are in Colorado this year but she hopes to be traveling again to the reopened national shows in the new year.

Find Julie at:

Website: www.thebungalowcraft.com,

Instagram: @thebungalowcraft_julieleidel

Facebook: @TheBungalowCraft



"Jenny Lake" by Julie Leidel. 48" x 72" acrylic on panel.

THE ROYCROFTERS-AT-LARGE ASSOCIATION GOODIE BOX

What was the original Goodie Box? Elbert Hubbard's early attempts to develop personal connections with customers began while he was a salesperson for the Larkin Company. The "Goodie Box" was a comparable promotional sales strategy that he employed to bring awareness and entice customers to the Roycroft in the early 1900s.

The Roycrofters-at-Large Association's "Goodie Box" Raffle for the 2021/2022 season is open. This event is a fundraiser to support RALA's educational programs. Many of the Roycroft artisans collaborate every year to bring together a wonderful prize. There are 21 Roycrofters contributing to the prize this year worth over \$7,000! ONE WINNER GETS IT ALL!

Raffle Chances: 1 ticket for \$5; or 3 tickets for \$10. The live drawing will take place at Grove Park Inn, in February 2022. You do not need to be present to win.

Due to the gaming commission rules in the state of NY, there's not a way to take online payment, so print your tickets at ralaweb.com/goodie-box, include your payment, and mail it off to Roycrofter At Large Association, 1054 Olean Rd. East Aurora, NY 14052 for a chance to win!

All proceeds benefit the Roycrofters-At-Large Association (RALA).



Brian Brace's beautiful hand-made quartersawn oak end table and matching frame, along with Julie Leidel's original "Nature's Way" painting are part of the raffle



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A Year of CACS Membership

Annual membership fees are below. You can make your membership payment through PayPal to: [Paypal.me/CACSmembership](https://www.paypal.com/US/membership).

Checks can also be made out to the Colorado Arts & Crafts Society and mailed to: Beth Bradford at 413 S. Humboldt St. Denver, CO 80209.

Please contact our membership chair, Helene Arendt at CACSmembership@gmail.com with any questions.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL/GIFT FORM

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THIS IS YOUR
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OF
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A YEAR'S MEMBERSHIP
IN THE COLORADO
ARTS AND CRAFTS
SOCIETY!