

Pre-Raphaelites and the Book

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National Gallery of Art





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Many artists of the Pre-Raphaelite circle were deeply engaged with integrating word and image throughout their lives. John Everett Millais and Edward Burne-Jones were sought-after illustrators, while Dante Gabriel Rossetti devoted himself to poetry and the visual arts in equal measure. Intensely attuned to the visual and the literary, William Morris became a highly regarded poet and, in the last decade of his life, founded the Kelmscott Press to print books “with the hope of producing some which would have a definite claim to beauty.” He designed all aspects of the books — from typefaces and ornamental elements to layouts, where he often incorporated wood-engraved illustrations contributed by Burne-Jones.

The works on display here are drawn from the National Gallery of Art Library and from the Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, on loan to the University of Delaware Library.

front cover: William Holman Hunt (1827–1910), proof print of illustration for “The Lady of Shalott” in Alfred Tennyson, *Poems*, London: Edward Moxon, 1857, wood engraving, Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, on loan to the University of Delaware Library (9)

back cover: Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882), proof print of illustration for “The Palace of Art” in Alfred Tennyson, *Poems*, London: Edward Moxon, 1857, wood engraving, Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, on loan to the University of Delaware Library (10)

inside front cover: John Everett Millais, proof print of illustration for “Irene” in *Cornhill Magazine*, 1862, wood engraving, Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, on loan to the University of Delaware Library (11)

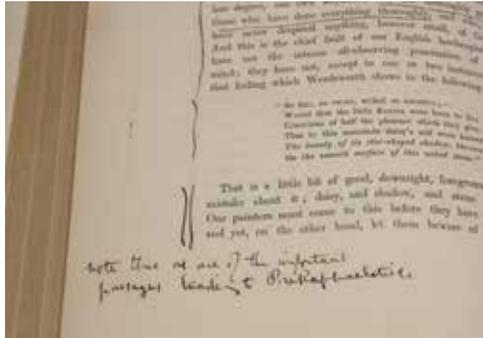
Origins of Pre-Raphaelitism

1 Carlo Lasinio (1759–1838), *Pittura a Fresco del Campo Santo di Pisa*, Florence: Presso Molini, Landi e Compagno, 1812, National Gallery of Art Library, A.W. Mellon New Century Fund



The original Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (PRB) formed in 1848 and comprised seven members—only three of whom were artists of note: William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Though these young men declared that they drew inspiration for their new school of painting from art that predated Raphael (1483–1520), they lacked the opportunity to travel to Italy to see these works in person. One of the few ways they could view late medieval and early Renaissance works at the time was through published engravings, such as this book, which documents the fourteenth-century frescoes of the Campo Santo in Pisa. In their quest to remake British art, the Pre-Raphaelites emulated the crisp precision of the line drawings.

2 John Ruskin (1819–1900), *Modern Painters*, London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1846–1860, National Gallery of Art Library, Gift of Paul Mellon



Originally published in 1843 as a single volume devoted to demonstrating the supremacy of painters like J. M.W. Turner in the genre of landscape painting, *Modern Painters* appeared in additional volumes and editions through the 1860s. This landmark work eventually totaled five volumes. Ruskin's directive to artists in the first volume to “go to nature in all singleness of heart” inspired the young artists of the PRB. Ruskin, in turn, became an advocate for the artists, whose early works drew harsh criticism. Shown here is the third revised edition of volume one, which belonged to Ruskin himself. It includes both his bookplate and the signature of his father, John James, and is heavily annotated with changes and corrections for the fourth edition, including the note about Pre-Raphaelitism seen here.



3 John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1858–1867, National Gallery of Art Library, Gift of Joseph E. Widener

In this seminal work, Ruskin combined architectural history with social commentary. He revered Gothic ornament and the ideal of hand-crafted work, and critiqued the modern-day division of labor that resulted from industrialization. This struck a chord with William Morris and influenced his later embrace of politics and the establishment of the arts and crafts movement. Shown here is the second edition of a three-volume work that was originally published from 1851 to 1853.



4–5 *The Germ*, numbers 1 and 3, London: Aylott & Jones and Dickinson & Co., 1850, Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, on loan to the University of Delaware Library

Founded in 1850, *The Germ* was a periodical intended to promote the ideas of the PRB and their circle to the general public. Combining art and literature, the journal included poetry, essays, short stories, and engraved illustrations. Ford Madox Brown (1821–1893) contributed this etching, *King Lear*, to issue number three. The illustration clearly demonstrates the influence of Lasinio’s engravings: its sharply defined lines focused attention on the figures and created a detailed realism that marked the Pre-Raphaelite approach to art. The magazine quickly folded due to lack of sales, but its ambitious intent was noticed by many contemporary reviewers.

6 *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, number 1, London: Bell & Daldy, January 1856, Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, on loan to the University of Delaware Library

The younger William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones were inspired by Rossetti’s work, and in 1856 Morris and some of his friends founded *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* while university students. Rossetti himself became closely involved in this periodical as well and made several contributions. Morris financed the magazine himself and edited the first issue, but he was replaced as editor by William Fulford and publication was suspended after just one year.



7 Edward Burne-Jones (1833–1898), title page and frontispiece in Archibald Maclaren, *The Fairy Family: A Series of Ballads & Metrical Tales Illustrating the Fairy Mythology of Europe*, London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, and Roberts, 1857, Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, on loan to the University of Delaware Library

Burne-Jones' first commissioned work was the illustration of this volume. He provided engravings for the frontispiece and second title page shown here as well as a tailpiece. Though he was primarily a painter, Burne-Jones claimed that he was inspired to become an artist by Rossetti's illustration for William Allingham's *The Music Master* (London, 1855), and he continued to execute book illustrations throughout his career.



8 John Everett Millais (1829–1896), illustration for "Mariana" in Alfred Tennyson, *Poems*, London: Edward Moxon, 1857, wood engraving, National Gallery of Art Library, David K. E. Bruce Fund

Rossetti, Millais, and Hunt provided thirty of the fifty-four illustrations for this edition of Tennyson's poems, called the Moxon Tennyson; they treated each one as an individual work of art, elevating illustration from a previously rather workmanlike task to a fine art, similar to painting or sculpture. Objects 9 and 10 on the wall opposite are proof prints of illustrations by Hunt and Rossetti for the same edition.

12 Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Early Italian Poets from Ciullo d'Alcamo to Dante Alighieri* (1100–1200–1300), London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1861, Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, on loan to the University of Delaware Library. Inscribed: “To William Morris / from his friend / DG Rossetti / Xmas 1861”

Rossetti was both a painter and a poet and focused a great deal of energy on promoting the combination of word and image. He came from a literary family: his father was an Italian scholar who had emigrated to England, and his siblings included poet Christina, author Maria Francesca, and critic William Michael. Beyond his own writings, Rossetti also translated the work of medieval Italian poets, including his namesake Dante Alighieri. He was very interested in the attendant crafts of presenting his work, closely overseeing the framing of his paintings and the layout, illustration, printing, and binding of his books.

13–14 Dante Gabriel Rossetti, binding, title page, and frontispiece in Christina Rossetti, *Goblin Market and Other Poems*, Cambridge and London: Macmillan & Co., 1862, Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, on loan to the University of Delaware Library. Inscribed: “Mrs [Amelia] Heimann / from her old friend C.G.R. / 3rd – April 1862”

In a period when it was still difficult for female authors to attract publishers, Christina Rossetti used her brother Dante Gabriel’s literary connections to secure an agreement with Macmillan & Co. for her work. Dante Gabriel was particularly involved in Christina’s publishing projects, and in the case of *Goblin Market* he provided illustrations in the form of a frontispiece and additional title page. The title poem recounts the tale of two sisters tempted by the call of goblins during their nightly chores; one succumbs but is saved by the courage of the other. Dante Gabriel also designed the volume’s binding, just as he did for his own books.





15 William Morris (1834–1896), *The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems*, London: Bell & Daldy, 1858, Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, on loan to the University of Delaware Library. Inscribed: “John Ruskin / from his friend / the author”

This book was Morris’ debut as a poet and the publication signaled his arrival

on the British literary scene. Morris’ writing is full of romance, evoking the Arthurian medieval world.



16 William Morris, *The Earthly Paradise*, London: F. S. Ellis, 1868–1870, Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, on loan to the University of Delaware Library. Inscribed: “W. M. Rossetti / from his friend / the Author / 1868”

Morris published this work of poetry in three volumes in the late 1860s, and it won him his greatest fame. Modeled on the structure of Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales*, it comprised twenty-four stories based on medieval and classical legends. It was written at a time of personal turmoil for Morris as his marriage to Jane Burden, whom he had wed about ten years before, became strained due to her relationship with Rossetti. The poems did not entirely please critics (who in some cases dismissed them as mere entertainment, following Morris’ own description of himself in the prefatory poem as the “idle singer of an empty day”), but they found favor with the reading public for their archaic language, vivid imagery, and stories tinged with melancholy.

17 Eiríkur Magnússon and William Morris (translators), *Volsunga Saga: The Story of the Volsungs & Niblungs, With Certain Songs from the Elder Edda*, London: F. S. Ellis, 1870, Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, on loan to the University of Delaware Library

As he was completing *The Earthly Paradise*, Morris became fascinated with the rich literary heritage of Iceland and worked closely with Icelandic scholar Magnússon to translate several ancient sagas into English. The cover design of this book is by Philip Webb, the architect of Morris’ home Red House and a partner in his decorating firm, Morris & Co.

18 William Morris, *The Roots of the Mountains: Wherein Is Told Somewhat of the Lives of the Men of Burgdale, Their Friends, Their Neighbours, Their Foreman, and Their Fellows in Arms*, London: Reeves & Turner, 1890, National Gallery of Art Library, David K. E. Bruce Fund



Morris began writing a series of prose romances beginning in 1888. Before establishing his own printing press, he became involved in the design of a number of these saga-inspired stories with the Chiswick Press. Two hundred and fifty copies of *The Roots of the Mountains* were bound in the chintzes designed by Morris and produced by his decorative arts firm, Morris & Co. This example is bound in the “Honeysuckle” fabric. Morris was thrilled with the experimental binding and the design of this book, writing that “I am so pleased with my book — typography, binding, and must I say it, literary matter — that I am any day to be seen hugging it up, and am become a spectacle to Gods and men because of it.” The book had wide margins, Basle Roman type (based on an early sixteenth-century typeface), and side-notes rather than running heads. The design was innovative and differed from the ordinary run of Victorian books.

19 William Morris (author) and Edward Burne-Jones (illustrator), *A Dream of John Ball; and A King's Lesson*, London: Reeves & Turner, 1888, National Gallery of Art Library, Gift of Mark Samuels Lasner

This book consists of two short political novels by Morris first published in the Socialist League’s journal, *Commonweal*. In *A Dream of John Ball*, the narrator imagines himself in 1381 during the Peasants’ Revolt, evoking an idealized radical moment of the past. Burne-Jones provided a single illustration, *When Adam Delved and Eve Span Who Was Then the Gentleman*, which depicts John Ball’s rallying cry from his sermons. The narrator describes seeing the words on a banner when he hears Ball speak.



20 William Morris, *Art and Socialism: A Lecture Delivered January 23, 1884, before the Secular Society of Leicester*, London: W. Reeves, 1884, Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, on loan to the University of Delaware Library

21 William Morris, *Monopoly, or, How Labour is Robbed*, London: Office of *The Commonweal*, 1890, Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, on loan to the University of Delaware Library

In the 1880s, Morris joined the socialist movement. Both the romantic themes of Morris' poetry and writings and his practical experience in the world as a designer and businessman set the stage for his politics. Morris' fight against the conditions of industrial capitalism and mass production through his adherence to traditional techniques of handicraft opened his eyes to the conditions of life for the working classes. He wrote tirelessly for the socialist cause, serving as editor of the Socialist League's *Commonweal* journal and publishing many pamphlets, such as these examples.

22 William Morris, *Catalogue of the Books of William Morris at Kelmscott House*, auto-graph calligraphic manuscript, c. 1890, Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, on loan to the University of Delaware Library



In his twenties, Morris briefly experimented with manuscript illumination. He had studied medieval models during his Oxford days and then at the British

Museum in London. Rossetti felt that “in all illumination and work of that kind he [Morris] is quite unrivalled by anything modern that I know — Ruskin says, better than anything ancient.” In the early 1870s Morris became a skilled calligrapher and illuminator, and, in his spare time away from business, he produced a number of calligraphic manuscripts of his translations of Icelandic sagas and other texts. This example, the start of a catalogue of his own library, is bound with a fragment of *The Tale of Haldor*. A lifelong bibliophile, Morris amassed a collection of rare books, including incunabula and many superb illuminated manuscripts. His home at Kelmscott House was described by a visiting journalist as containing “shelves and shelves of bulky old volumes.”



23 Edward Burne-Jones, *Visitor's book for North End House, Rottingdean*, autograph manuscript, 1881–1898, Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, on loan to the University of Delaware Library

This volume records the constant stream of family and friends who came to the Burne-Joneses' holiday home in the Sussex village of Rottingdean. In many

cases the artist annotated the visitors' names with a lively range of humorous drawings, some of persons, many of animals. In the page displayed here, Burne-Jones drew a portrait next to his signature of the rotund Morris out for a walk in the countryside.

24 Edward Burne-Jones, *Georgiana Burne-Jones Studying Latin in the Dining Room at the Grange*, c. 1880s, ink on paper, Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, on loan to the University of Delaware Library



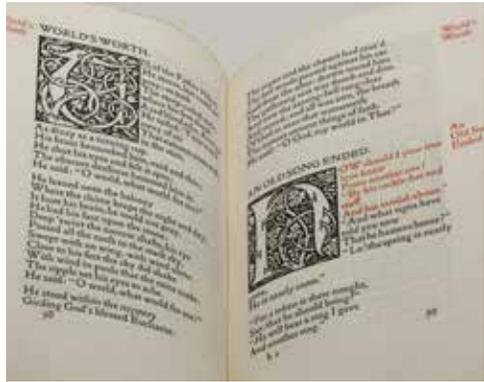
25 Edward Burne-Jones, *Self-Caricature, Painting, with Cat*, 1891, ink on paper, Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, on loan to the University of Delaware Library

Burne-Jones made dozens and dozens of quick sketches and caricatures, including the two shown on the wall: one of Georgiana, Burne-Jones' wife, surrounded by books as she studies Latin in their London home, the other a caricature showing a disheveled Burne-Jones painting birds while a cat looks on.

26 Edward Burne-Jones, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti Bringing Cushions to Jane Morris*, c. 1868–1877, pencil on paper, Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, on loan to the University of Delaware Library

This caricature dramatizes the relationship between Rossetti and Morris' wife, Jane. Though the exact date of the drawing is not known, Jane had started modeling for Rossetti in the late 1860s, and the two began an intimate relationship. Burne-Jones draws Morris as Rossetti pictured her, with a languid body and long neck. In contrast, the portly Rossetti lumbers after her with cushions to tend to her comfort.

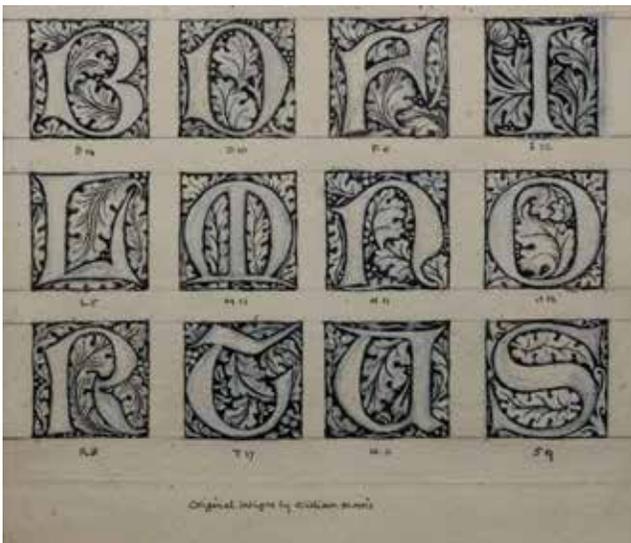
27 Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Ballads and Narrative Poems*, Hammersmith: Kelmscott Press, 1893, Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, on loan to the University of Delaware Library. Inscribed: "to Kate Faulkner / from William Morris / December 14th 1893"



In the last decade of his life, Morris added the profession of book printer to his already tremendous number of accomplishments. He founded the Kelmscott Press in 1891 in London. It issued books all designed and ornamented with initials and borders by Morris and printed on handmade paper in a handpress. The books included English classics, Old English and medieval texts beloved by Morris, Morris' own writings, and works by his friends and contemporaries — such as this edition of poems by Rossetti, published ten years after his death. It is set in roman Golden type, one of three different typefaces designed by Morris (the other two were the Gothic Troy and Chaucer, a smaller version of the Troy).

28 William Morris, design for initial letters for *The Tale of Beowulf*, 1895, ink and pencil with Chinese white on paper, Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, on loan to the University of Delaware Library

Morris designed all of the ornamentation for the Kelmscott Press publications, such as the series of decorative capitals displayed here.



29 William Morris, design for a border for *The Well at the World's End*, c. 1892–1893, ink and pencil with Chinese white on paper, Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, on loan to the University of Delaware Library

30 William Morris, *The Well at the World's End*, Hammersmith: Kelmscott Press, 1896, Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, on loan to the University of Delaware Library. Inscribed: "H. Thackeray Turner / from Jane Morris / Nov. 6. 1896"

Shown here is a sheet with Morris' design for an elaborate border decoration and the final version as printed in the book, one of Morris' prose romances. His drawing is built up in pencil, india ink, and Chinese white, with the combination of the white over the dark ink creating the bluish hues that give the drawing a depth not possible in the printed version. The architect W. R. Lethaby, observing Morris at work, explained:

He would have two saucers, one of Indian ink, the other of Chinese white. . . . The actual drawing with the brush was an agreeable sensation to him; the forms were led along and bent over and rounded at the edges with definite pleasure; they were *stroked* into place, as it were, with a sensation like that of smoothing a cat. . . . It was to express this sensuous pleasure that he used to say that all good designing was felt in the stomach.



31 Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Poems. (Privately Printed)*, London: Strangeways & Walden, 1869, Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, on loan to the University of Delaware Library

32 Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Poems, Privately Printed, July to Decr. 1869*, London: Strangeways & Walden, 1869–1870, Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, on loan to the University of Delaware Library

33 Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Poems*, London: F. S. Ellis, 1870, Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, on loan to the University of Delaware Library. Inscribed: “To Fanny / from her sincere friend / DGR 1870”

34 Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Poems*, London: F. S. Ellis, 1870, Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, on loan to the University of Delaware Library. Inscribed: “To Dr. Llewellyn Williams / with regards and compliments / D. G. Rossetti 1870”

In 1869, Rossetti began putting together a book of poems with the aim of making a name for himself as a writer. Gathering sonnets and lyrics from the 1840s and 1850s, he worked with F.S. Ellis, the London publisher who had issued Morris’ *The Earthly Paradise*. Rossetti wrote to Jane Morris that he sent Ellis “a number of scrappy poems and sonnets to print,” but eventually decided to fill out the volume with work from an unusual source — the manuscript notebook he had buried in the grave of his late wife, Elizabeth Siddall, when she died in 1862. In October 1869 Siddall’s coffin was exhumed and the notebook recovered.



Two proof copies are displayed here. The first, according to an inscription by William Michael Rossetti, was the first version of the book, which “shows the compositions wh. were in Gabriel’s hands before the exhumation of the other compositions buried with his wife.” The second, with annotations by Rossetti’s friend Alice Boyd, who helped Rossetti put together the volume, includes an index in her hand of the contents, with the last poems in the list annotated as “added afterwards,” thus indicating that these were among the poems recovered from Siddall’s grave.

The third, closed copy, shows the book as published by F. S. Ellis in 1870 with the cover designed by Rossetti himself. The final copy displayed here is inscribed to Dr. Llewellyn Williams, the doctor present at the exhumation who disinfected the notebook before it was returned to Rossetti.

Checklist of the exhibition *Pre-Raphaelites and the Book*, February 17 – August 4, 2013.

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The Gallery website features highlights from the exhibition and links to exhibition-related activities at www.nga.gov/exhibitions/preraphaelites.htm#library.

