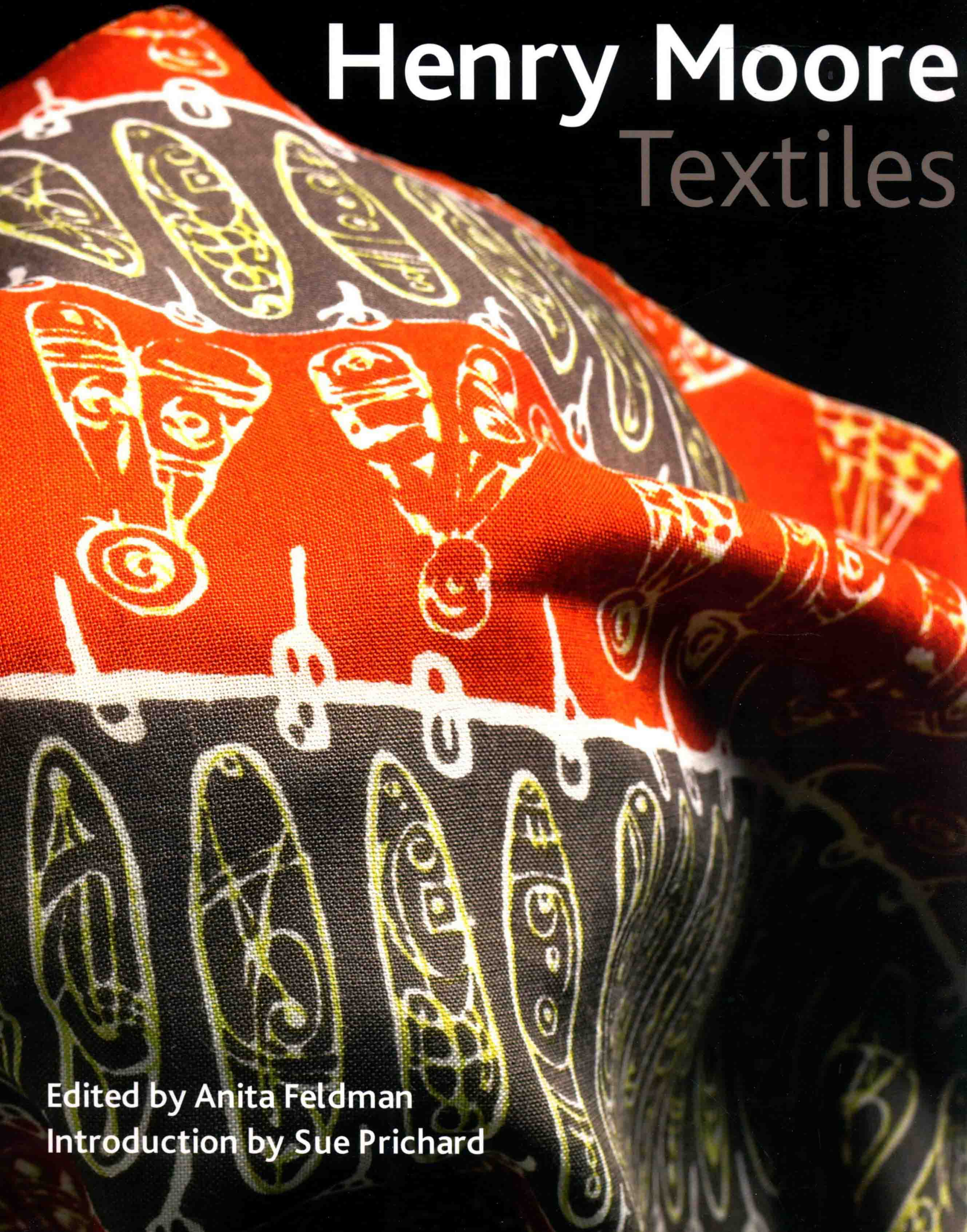
Henry Moore
Textiles



Edited by Anita Feldman
Introduction by Sue Prichard

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Lund Humphries

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(right)
Group of scarves designed by Moore

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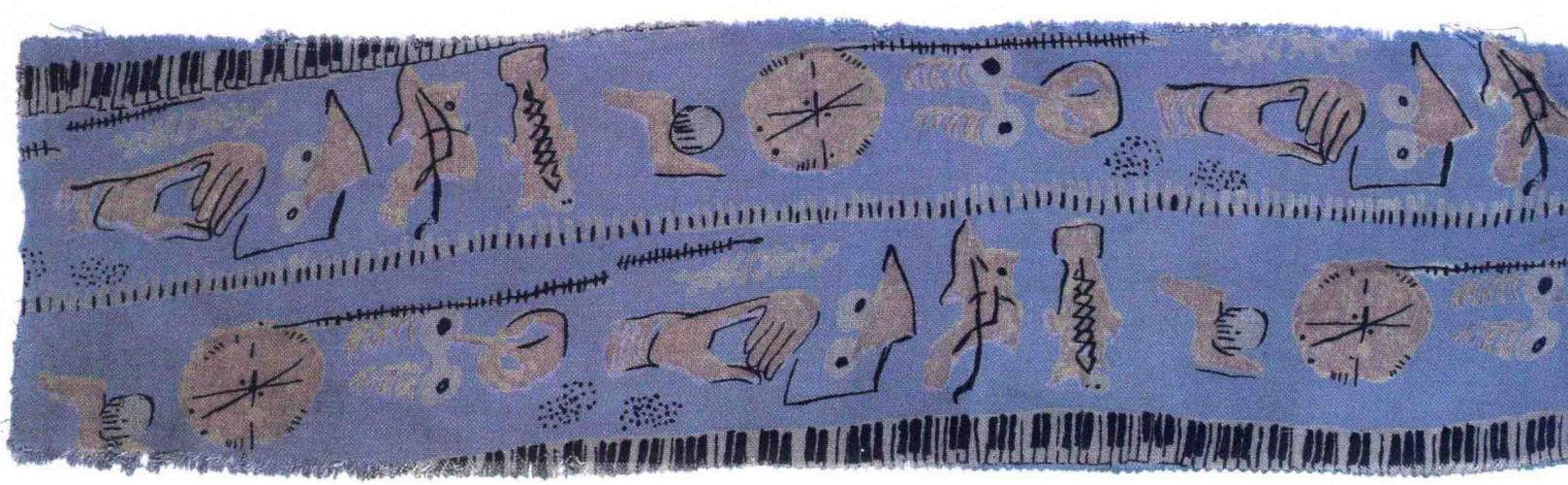

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fig.1 Moore drawing **Textile Design** 1943 (HMF 2155) in Perry Green. The drawing was separated – the upper half containing the name 'Ascher' has disappeared and the lower half is now in the Foundation's collection (see p.54).

Preface

David Mitchinson Head of Collections and Exhibitions
The Henry Moore Foundation, Perry Green

Henry Moore was requested to produce ideas for fabric designs in late 1942 or early 1943. Twenty-five were later worked up as samples in different colourways and materials, from which a few went into production: four as head scarves, four as wall hangings and seventeen as ideas for fashion and furnishing fabrics. All were made at the instigation of Zika Ascher, a Czech textile manufacturer who had been living and working in London since 1939. Later, in the mid-1950s, two further designs were produced for David Whitehead Fabrics, and later still a drawing of 1981 was used in 1983 as the basis for a silk scarf produced by art*foulard*, Vienna. This book details the story of the textiles' creation, examines the sources Moore went to for inspiration, illustrates all his known patterns, and puts his work into the context of British fabric design of the period.

Moore's use of colour in his two-dimensional work has often surprised the viewer. In his war-time drawings of sleepers in the Underground, layers of coloured crayon built up on a sketch of pencilled lines and areas of white wax were covered with watercolour washes, pen and ink and touches of gouache. In the textile designs that followed the black, sombre colours of the Coalmining sketchbooks of 1942, Moore brightened his palette: vivid red, green, purple and orange used in the sketches were carefully translated in printing inks for the fabric samples.

When the third volume of the catalogue raisonné of Moore's drawings was published in 2001, seventy-eight textile design sketches were described, with twenty-one cross-referenced to textiles in the Henry Moore Foundation's collection – a cross-referencing that made little sense as no pictorial images of the textiles corresponding to the numbers had been published. During the past few years further research has identified another nineteen sketches, including a previously unknown sketchbook, thereby greatly adding to an understanding of Moore's imagery and working techniques. The publication of this book has provided the opportunity for the newly discovered works to be catalogued and illustrated. Further designs, and possibly textiles, may exist, but all known examples in the main collections of this material have been studied, collated and used for the preparation of this book.

The Victoria and Albert Museum, London, as custodian of one of the world's finest fabric collections, holds a substantial group of Moore's textiles, as does Zika Ascher's son, Peter, who now runs Ascher Studio from New York. Further examples in private collections and in the Henry Moore Family Collection have been studied and the resulting information has been entered on to the Foundation's database, which is now available for further research.

The database has been meticulously put together by Jenny Harwood, Archive Assistant at the Henry Moore Foundation. She worked closely with the Foundation's Curator, Anita Feldman, who was responsible for selecting the works to be illustrated and for writing the text and individual entries, and the Victoria and Albert Museum's Curator of Contemporary Textiles, Sue Prichard, who has contributed the introductory essay. Others at the Foundation who have helped with the book's preparation are Martin Davis, Emma Stower and Michael Phipps.

The Foundation would like to thank Peter Ascher and his wife, Robin, for their patience in answering endless questions and for allowing items in their personal collection to be lent for photography, and Juliet Bareau, John Farnham, James Holland-Hibbert and Steven Gabriel who have been helpful in locating works in private collections. The book's editor, Angela Dyer, photographer, Matt Pia, and designer, Tim Harvey have worked quickly and with their usual expertise to put the book together, and Lucy Myers and Miranda Harrison, on behalf of the publishers Lund Humphries, have kept everyone on schedule with tact and professionalism.

Since the book is being published to coincide with an exhibition on the subject at the Henry Moore Foundation – and many items illustrated have been lent for the exhibition – I would like, on behalf of the Foundation, to thank all those who have helped with its preparation, particularly Suzanne Eustace and Charlotte Booth, and those who lent anonymously from their collections, as well as the Trustees of the Victoria and Albert Museum; the Ascher Collection; the Henry Moore Family Collection; Paul and Karen Rennie; the Sherwin Collection; John Robert Wiltgen, IIDA; Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture, Middlesex University; and Tate.

Introduction

British Textile Design: The Quest for a New Aesthetic

Sue Prichard Curator, Contemporary Textiles
Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Henry Moore produced four sketchbooks of textile designs in 1943, during one of the most troubled periods of the century. There is no documentary evidence to suggest why Moore became interested in textile design – his collaboration with the textile entrepreneur Zika Ascher and later participation in Hans Juda's *Painting into Textiles* exhibition in 1953 receive scant attention in official biographies. Writing in 1970, however, Zika Ascher considered Moore's textile designs as significant then as they were in 1943: 'I have . . . been thinking a lot over the week-end of what I mentioned to you, but I felt that I did not express myself very clearly. I feel that some of the non-figurative designs show the real strength of your art. I am so sure that I am right that I was thinking that this should be revealed in an exhibition.'[1]

A solo exhibition of Moore's textile designs never took place, although Ascher's contribution to the textile and fashion industry was celebrated in a major exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1987. The monumental tapestries designed by Moore and woven at West Dean are perhaps better known, the focus of both a publication and an exhibition held in 1980, also at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Despite the widespread media coverage accorded to both the 'Ascher project' (see p.16) and the *Painting into Textiles* exhibition, Moore's textile designs remained little known outside the field. However, his engagement with this most democratic of art forms can be placed firmly within the context of the debate regarding design reform and continuing concern as to the lack of a truly modern British style.

Design reform

The last decades of the nineteenth century witnessed a flurry of debate regarding the role of art and design as a 'force for good'. Against a background of momentous changes in technology, social mobility and public taste, enlightened individuals in the textile industry battled to develop a distinctly new and vibrant British design vocabulary. The roots of design reform were, of course, firmly embedded in the aims and objectives of the Arts and Crafts Movement of the 1880s. However, the general level of concern had been raised at the International Exhibitions of 1851 and 1862. Both events revealed that, although the quality of British manufacturing was a force to be reckoned with, the continuing lack of a distinctly original 'modern' style to equal the success of Britain's technological advances and business acumen was proving disastrous for the country's image and starting to affect its prosperity.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the quest for artistic and design reform covered all branches of the practical arts, including architecture. The lack of support provided by the Royal Academy, which held sway in matters of taste and fashion, would ultimately prove its downfall as calls for reform became increasingly vocal and indeed volatile. Realistically, an alternative to the exhibition policy of the Royal Academy had to be found, one which would offer artists and designers the opportunity to exhibit their work in sympathetic and, most importantly, accessible surroundings. Textiles played a crucial role in the Arts and Crafts exhibition from the very beginning,

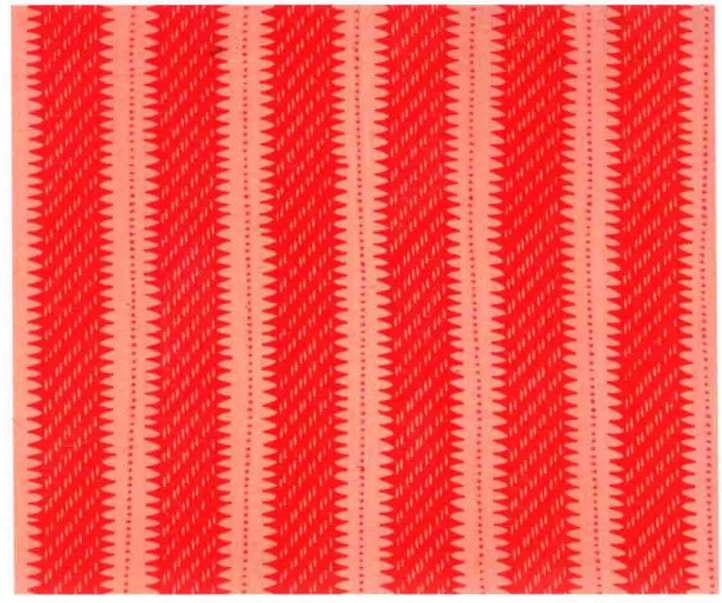

fig.2 Phyllis Barron, *Pointed Pip* 1938, hand blockprinted linen.

(opposite)
Selection of colourways of Moore's design, **Caterpillar and Insect Wings** (TEX 10).

with traditional hand-made crafts appearing alongside commercially woven and printed textiles. The block printing and hand-loom weaving techniques forever associated with William Morris would continue to be popular well into the twentieth century, primarily in small, independent workshops (fig.3). However, this type of hand-produced craft could not be sustained by a textile industry which ultimately relied on mass production for its survival. The vast majority of commercial manufacturers continued to focus their attention on supplying reasonably priced, if somewhat staid, textiles to the growing ranks of affluent middle classes.

The concept of a 'National Exhibition for the Arts' was supported by over four hundred of the country's leading artists and designers, convinced that the project would provide a unique opportunity for the decorative and applied arts to be shown together, in a co-operative movement which would emphasise the equality of the various branches of the arts. In the event, the exhibition fell at the first hurdle; in-fighting and dissent within the exhibition committee fractured the unity of the project. However, momentum had been established and at this point there was no going back. On 11 May 1887 the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society held its inaugural meeting, and in 1888 the first display of work by the society opened at the Grosvenor Gallery, thus securing the movement's place in history.

Much has been written regarding the progressive teaching style of Alice Gostick, Moore's art teacher at Castleford Secondary School, and her teaching was certainly based on the reforms promoted by the Arts and Crafts Movement. A leading member of the Art Teachers Guild, Gostick engaged both her pupils and their parents in extra-curricular evening classes, which tended to focus on pottery. She also took the unexpected but generous step of inviting pupils into her home, and here Moore would certainly have had access to a number of specialist art and design journals and publications. Roger Berthoud, in his biography of Moore, describes Gostick's home: 'In her sitting room were fascinating art books and such influential art magazines as *Studio*, which had a European circulation and reproduced the work of the continental avant-garde. With the Cubist movement in full swing at this stage, some of these reproductions must have looked baffling, if exciting, to teenagers who had not ventured far from Castleford. Such matters could be freely discussed in the Gostick salon'.[2] Established in 1893 and published until 1920, *Studio* became the most influential decorative and applied arts magazine and was unique in that, unlike other art journals, it gave equal weight to textiles as well as other arts. Access to such publications would have provided the young Moore with the opportunity to engage in the debate regarding design reform, possibly even regarding the textile industry.

A new century

The legacy of the Arts and Crafts Movement continued to resonate throughout the early decades of the twentieth century, causing *The Times* to note that 'much of the present day style of decorated fabrics is stamped with the personality of William Morris in the design and colouring.'[3] 'Le Style Anglais' proved equally popular in Europe, although by 1905 Arts and Crafts textiles tended to focus much on innovative hand-woven textiles, rather than the popular printed designs forever associated with Morris. Despite the success of the 1900 Paris Universal Exhibition and the emergence of Art Nouveau, many manufacturers turned their backs on major Continental developments. The conscious decision to disengage with developments abroad was in part due to the lingering economic depression of the 1890s but also a result of the implementation of the McKinley Tariff, which imposed duties as high as 60 per cent on textiles imported into the United States. This legislation effectively destroyed the lucrative overseas middle-class market which relied on cheap but well-designed commercially manufactured textiles from Britain and set the tone for the bleak decades leading up to the outbreak of hostilities in 1939. Given the volatile economic situation, manufacturers became increasingly more cautious regarding innovation: the reorganisation of the British Calico Printers' Association (CPA), founded in 1904,

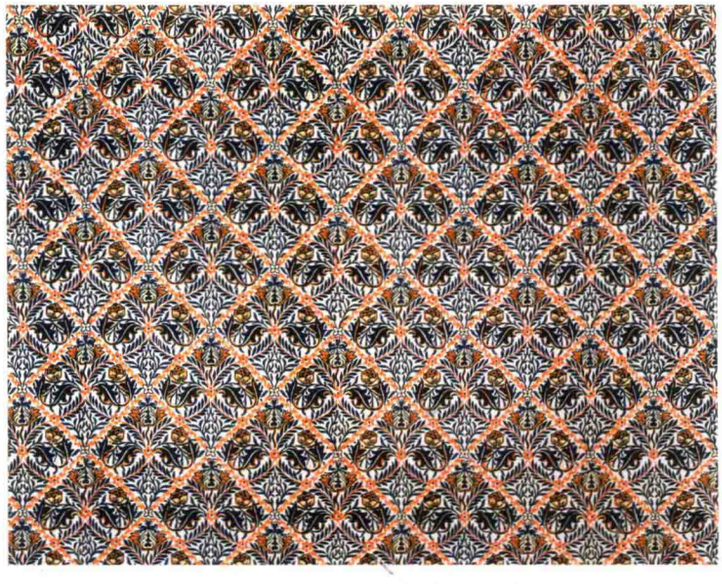

fig.3 William Morris, *Indian Diaper* 1875, blockprinted cotton.

exacerbated the move towards standardisation of pattern design as manufacturers sought to 'batten down the hatches' to ensure survival, relying on archives of unused historic designs, which, although unimaginative, were the bread and butter of the industry. Although British designers and manufacturers continued to participate in the influential international exhibitions, by the end of the decade the standard of commercial design had fallen considerably.

The gravity of the situation was not lost on artists and teachers: in 1909 the students at Macclesfield School of Art were informed that 'the reproduction of period styles provides work for the draughtsman, not the designer, and their frequent use is not so much due to their being preferred as to the scarcity of modern original designs equal in merit and pure in detail of motive and ornament.'[4] C.R. Ashbee, an architect, planner and Master of the Art Workers Guild, well aware of the developments taking place on the Continent, was loud in his demands for educational reform and the training of designers for industry – a demand which would eventually come to fruition in the establishment of the Royal College of Art. Despite the continued efforts of enlightened manufacturers such as G.P. & J. Baker, A.H. Lee, Alexander Morton, Turnbull & Stockton, Warner & Sons and Wardle & Co., the onset of war proved disastrous for an industry desperately in need of radical reform.

'I wish to develop a definitely English style . . .'

In the first decades of the twentieth century perhaps the most important contribution to British textile design was made by the artists employed by the Omega Workshops. The founder of the workshops was Roger Fry, the painter and critic whose writings so profoundly affected Moore as a young man. Fry had the vision (if not the leadership skills) to challenge the prevailing taste for the dark and sombre tones of the Edwardian domestic interior, and endeavoured to create a truly 'modern' style, one which would match his interest in Continental art movements. In 1910 and 1912, Fry had organised the two avant-garde Post-Impressionist exhibitions which were to influence a generation of young artists; his next venture would ensure that home-grown artistic talent would get an opportunity to make its mark in both the decorative and applied arts. The Omega Workshops, in effect a loose co-operative of artists and designers championed by Fry, Duncan Grant and Vanessa Bell, represent a turning point in the alliance of art and design and witness the development of a radically new style in the field of textile design.

Fry was damning in his analysis of the crisis facing British textile production: 'I wish to develop a definitely English tradition. Since the complete decadence of the Morris movement nothing has been done in England but pastiche and more or less unscrupulous imitation of old work.'[5] He looked for inspiration for his venture to the Paris-based workshop Studio Martine, created by the innovative French couturier Paul Poiret. Poiret had initially commissioned designs from the French artist Raoul Dufy for his interior decorating company Maison Martine. Dufy's stylised designs, inspired by primitivism and folk art, combined elements taken from woodcuts and the modern art movements of Fauvism and Cubism – all of which can be identified in the subsequent designs produced by Omega. These blurred the boundaries between art and design; the abstract and geometric textile designs produced by artists such as Edward Wadsworth, David Bomberg and Paul Nash, all of whom had studied at the Slade, together with Henri Gaudier-Brzeska challenged the conservatism of much of contemporary textile production. Although Omega tended to concentrate on furniture and ceramics, textiles played an important part in the overall concept of the complete 'artist-designed' interior. The launch collection included printed and woven furnishing fabrics, carpets and hand-painted silk scarves; the artistic freedom offered to those artists involved in the project effectively meant that they could create a custom-made design service for their clients, who could choose to use the textiles as either dress or furnishing fabric.

There is no doubt that Fry's ideals were laudable, but the chaotic management structure of Omega and somewhat arbitrary approach to commissions and orders ensured that the enterprise was short-lived; the onset of war and the rising cost of materials contributed to its demise in 1919, but Omega had secured itself a place in the history of artist-designed textiles. The abstract designs and bright colours produced by the workshops would continue to influence the more innovative designers and manufacturers for the next thirty years.

A brave new world

The onset of the First World War did nothing to abate concerns regarding the future of the British textile industry; the conviction that Britain continued to lag behind foreign competitors was fuelled by manufacturers' stubborn reliance on the perennially popular, if somewhat obsolete, styles of the last century. The Design and Industries Association was

formed in 1915 with the specific remit to raise the standard of design and 'promote the development of British industry by encouraging good workmanship based on excellence of design and soundness of material and to educate public taste to look for such design in what they buy'.[6] The DIA recruited teachers, artists, craftsmen – indeed anyone with a vested interest in re-energising the industry, including retailers. Emphasis was placed on the need for technological revolution – the ability to mass produce well-designed consumer goods at a price which the vast majority could afford, summed up by the slogan 'Nothing Need Be Ugly'. Despite the DIA's best efforts in terms of innovative textile design, commercial production in the immediate post-war years was, on the whole, unremarkable. Meanwhile, developments on the Continent continued to cause alarm among the most passionate of British design reformers.

The post-war period has been identified as the point at which textile design became more closely aligned with major developments in art and architecture. In 1925 the seminal Paris-based *Internationale des Art Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes* provided the catalyst for the decorative movement which would dominate and influence the textile industry for the next fifteen years. This was effectively a trade fair designed by the French to increase their lucrative export markets; British manufacturers took a back seat at the exhibition, believing that they were unlikely to drum up much trade amongst their French rivals. Although technically superb, the British designs were no match for the luxurious ornamental patterns of the French, and the more angular and abstract designs associated with America were to prove extremely influential for textile designers.[7]

The dark days

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s the British design reform movement gained momentum, driven by the continuing need to rival overseas competition. Several government-sponsored organisations followed the example set by the independent DIA in influencing and developing public taste. The Society of Industrial Artists (1930), established to protect the interests of designers, campaigned vigorously – albeit ultimately unsuccessfully – to legitimise the profession, advocating the establishment of qualifications along the same lines as those held by the Royal Institute of British Architects; it also played an active role in encouraging fine artists to engage in industrial design. In more rural areas, the debate regarding the marriage of craft and design had been taken up by the formation of the Rural Industries Bureau (1921). Driven by the need to address high unemployment in rural areas, the RIB provided opportunities for training, as well as employing professional designers to produce pattern books and drawings, and even securing funding for two design research studentships at the RCA.[8] The recognition that artists could help to regenerate the textile industry was echoed in a pamphlet published in 1929 by the Board of Education: 'As a result of the undoubted rise in the general level of taste in this and other countries, the demand for good design is increasing . . . It is, therefore, vitally important that effective means shall be found to draw into the service of the industry men and women of trained artistic ability.'[9]

Educating and influencing taste was most successfully achieved via exhibitions, and both independent and government-backed agencies developed a series of events to raise public and commercial awareness to the benefits of good design. In 1933 the DIA mounted an exhibition entitled *British Industrial Art in Relation to the Home* at Dorland Hall, London – a year later publications on industrial design and the role of art in relation to the home and industry could be found in any booksellers. The *British Art in Industry* exhibition held at Burlington House in 1935, sponsored by the Royal Society and the Royal Academy, played its part in the propaganda campaign, followed by the *Exhibition of Everyday Things* mounted by the Royal Institute of British Architects (1936). However, not all critics were impressed by the broad range of styles exhibited at Burlington House; Herbert Read, Moore's friend and mentor, was particularly concerned at the lack of a modern aesthetic. This is hardly surprising given that Read had published his influential treatise *Art and Industry* a year earlier and had been instrumental in introducing Continental modernism into the country.[10]

The implementation of tariffs by the British Government bolstered the British textile industry, and the ever-present spectre of aggressive foreign competition was, to a certain extent, laid to rest as the home market once again looked towards British manufacturers. That said, the French lead in dictating fashion continued unabated and French dress fabrics continued to be highly desirable, as evidenced by the number of French designs bought by the British textile industry. This was not, however, a one-way street; some British designers were selling overseas, but such was the reputation of the French that the Board of Education, in its pamphlet *Design and the Cotton Industry* (1929), stated: 'There is evidence that the free-lance artist is more likely to get his designs placed

if he commissions a French agent than if he tries to place them himself.'

The search for new materials and techniques

The trend for simplicity, order and convenience in the home throughout the 1930s provided a welcome opportunity for some manufacturers to look for new ways of producing cheap furnishing fabrics for the home market. This was in part dictated by the continuing rising cost and limited availability of natural fibres, as well as the need to provide fresh new designs for a more demanding consumer. Much of the success of British textile design during this period may be attributed to the introduction of screenprinting,[11] although for the vast majority of commercial manufacturers, roller printing continued to be the most viable method of producing vast yardages at competitive prices.[12] The rigidity of this system, however, worked against any form of spontaneity or freedom of artistic expression; screenprinting, like hand blockprinting in the nineteenth century, offered artists and designers scope for experimentation. Ideally suited to short runs of good quality, albeit of exclusive printed and woven furnishing fabrics, screenprinting provided small manufacturers a relatively cheap means of responding to calls for design reform.

Silk-screen printing originated from a Japanese technique of stencilling and had been developed in both America and Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Quicker than traditional hand blockprinting, screenprinting could be used on fabrics of varying thickness and also offered benefits in terms of cost; it required less financial investment by manufacturers, as the fine mesh screens were relatively inexpensive and allowed each colour in the pattern to be printed separately. Rollerprinting restricted not only pattern height but also extensive use of dyes and pigments, since individual rollers were required for printing each successive colour.[13] Certainly the greater number of designs created during this period by freelance designers were specifically intended for hand screenprinted fabrics – and they could afford to experiment. Anthony Hunt, a textile designer and commentator, extolled the numerous virtues offered by the medium: 'Brushwork, stipples, dapples and etched effects can be faithfully reproduced by screenprinting and help to convey different surfaces and provide contrast and interest.'[14]

More affordable experimentation during the 1930s was also helped by the technological advances made in the production of fabrics and synthetic dyes, which facilitated the use of strong colour in pattern design. Rayon, also known as 'artificial silk', had initially been manufactured in America in the nineteenth century, but its gleaming appearance was considered by many to be cheap and vulgar. By the late 1920s the process had been perfected and reputable companies such as Courtaulds, Britain's largest rayon producer, embarked on publicity campaigns to help improve its image. By the 1930s, rayon equalled silk in terms of its draping qualities and feel, and its use in textile production became increasingly important as the availability of natural fibres dwindled. The combination of new delustred finishes, brilliant colours and fresh, contemporary designs appealed to both the mass and more select markets. Most importantly rayon, unlike silk, was remarkably inexpensive, an attribute which became increasingly attractive during a period of economic depression.

The name 'rayon' originated in America and entered into the British vocabulary in 1925, a generic term for man-made fabrics made of regenerated cellulose derived from wood pulp. Rayon could be divided into two main types according to the method of manufacture. Rayon acetate was more usually used for fashion fabrics, most suitable for dresses and lingerie, whereas rayon viscose produced a harder-wearing fabric and proved more suited to home furnishings. At approximately half the price of silk, rayon provided an affordable substitute for many women eager to purchase new dress and furnishing fabrics in modern designs and colourways. By 1939, rayon and rayon mix fabrics became the staple of every home; hard wearing and colour fast, they did not fade as a result of washing and exposure to sunlight. This opportunity to bring much-needed colour into the home provided welcome relief as the threat of war loomed once more over Europe.

The rise of the avant garde

Throughout the decades before the onset of the Second World War, many emerging and indeed established British artists joined the crusade and actively engaged in the creation of a distinctly British modern style. In 1933, in the midst of deepening economic depression, Henry Moore and Ben Nicholson were approached by Paul Nash to form a progressive new group called 'Unit One'. Supported by Herbert Read, who edited the *Unit One* publication, Nash chose *The Times* to launch his crusade for a 'truly contemporary spirit, for that thing which is recognised as peculiarly *of today*'.[15] It is important to stress that many artists did not see any contradiction between designing for industry and artistic