

# BOOK REVIEW

JUDITH B. TANKARD, *GARDENS OF THE ARTS & CRAFTS MOVEMENT*, REVISED EDITION. PORTLAND, OR: TIMBER PRESS, 2018. HARDCOVER, 298 PAGES, \$45. ISBN 9781604698206

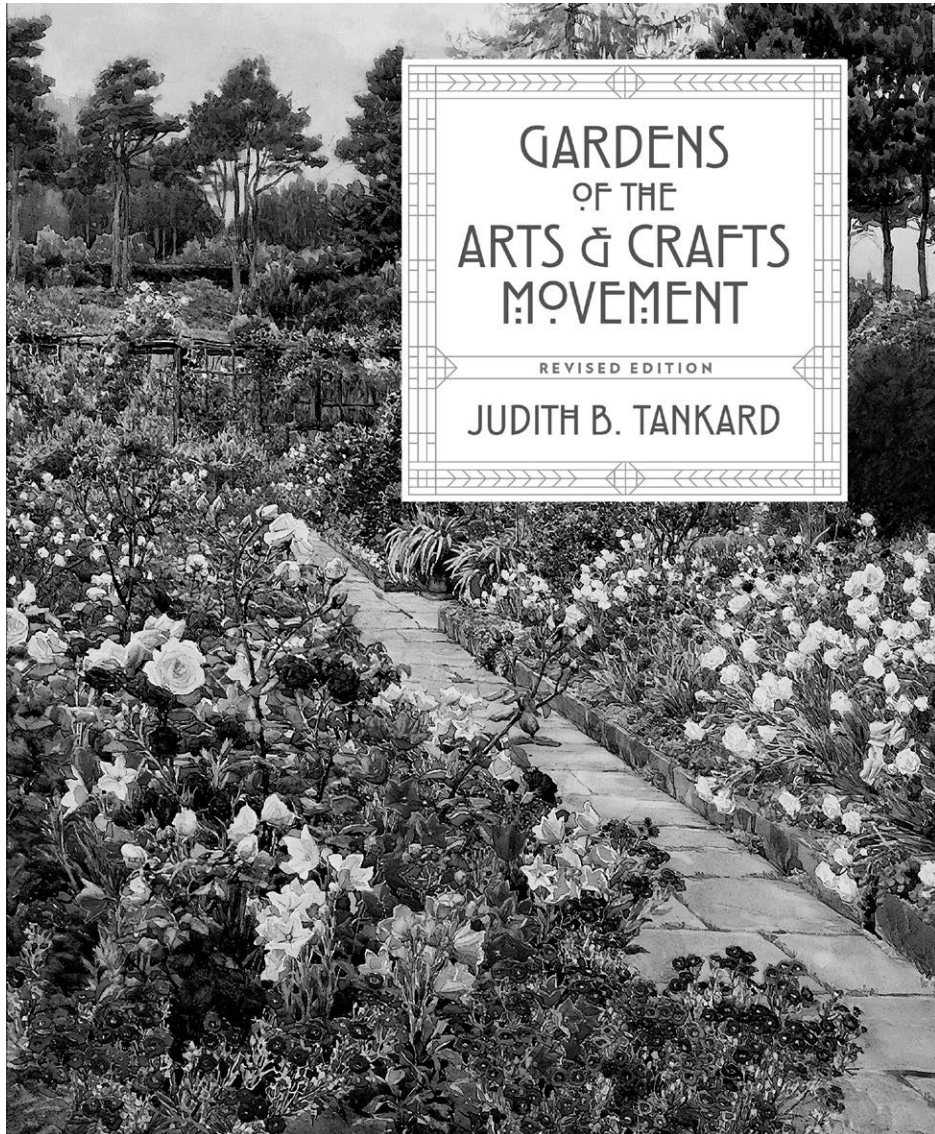
REVIEWED BY NANCY CAROL CARTER

As Americans were engaged in a civil war in the 1860s, the first stirrings of the Arts and Crafts Movement were felt in England. Arts and Crafts was flourishing by the 1880s and continued to dominate thinking about design until the movement faded during the First World War, 1914-18.

While the movement—which did not create a specific style, but rather a philosophical approach to design—was relatively short-lived, it continues to command attention. Topics for ongoing inquiry are abundant as Arts and Crafts spawned an engaging cast of characters on both sides of the Atlantic and filtered into every avenue of design. It intertwined with significant political, cultural and social changes and its influence is still discernable today.

The earliest writing about Arts and Crafts gardens was wrapped into architectural studies. As garden history came into its own as a distinct discipline, a few studies of Arts and Crafts in the garden appeared, but author Judith B. Tankard contends that scholarship in this field is lagging. She stepped up with a book-length study of the topic in 2004, *Gardens of the Arts & Crafts Movement: Reality and Imagination* (New York: Abrams, 2004). Tankard's new book, *Gardens of the Arts & Crafts Movement*, published by Timber Press, is a revision of her 2004 work and the newest treatment of the influence of Arts and Crafts on garden design.

Tankard's work builds on fifty years of literature exploring the Arts and Crafts Movement. A groundbreaking study put the topic back on the table in 1971. Gillian Naylor's *The Arts and Crafts Movement: A Study of its Sources, Ideals and Influence on Design Theory* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971) aimed to “examine the nature of the handicraft aesthetic in England... and to outline its impact on design theory in the United States and Europe.” Naylor looks to the ambiguities resulting from the movement's



underpinning of social criticism and argues that twentieth century designers remain deeply influenced by the reformers of the prior century.

Naylor's book does not deal with garden design in any way. The same is true for the book accompanying an exhibition at Princeton University Museum of Art (Robert Judson Clark, *The Arts and Crafts Movement in America, 1876-1916: An Exhibition*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972). Largely a display of decorative arts, the exhibition traveled to Chicago and Washington, D.C., introducing the Arts and Crafts Movement to many museum patrons.

An important survey of architecture came almost a decade later when Peter Davey published *Arts and Crafts Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli, 1980). Davey addressed larger societal themes while tracing the work and individual design theories of a succession of architects. A lavish new edition of the book incorporated a more extensive discussion of gardens and was published in London by Phaidon in 1995.

In the same year that Davey published the first edition of his work, architectural historian Robert Winter produced *The California Bungalow* (Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, 1980), a book presaging the next decade's fascination with the bungalow and Arts and Crafts. The book was reprinted time and time again. Winter later authored *American Bungalow Style* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

In 1981, Gertrude Jekyll's *Gardens for Small Country Houses*, co-written with Lawrence Weaver, was re-published. Despite dating back to 1912, this practical manual of garden making continues to attract readers. It was subsequently reissued and revised in 1997, 1999 and 2005, but with the market-savvy new title: *Arts and Crafts Gardens: Gardens for Small Country Houses* (revised edition, Woodbridge, England: Garden Art Press, 2005). The book is described as capturing a time when the Arts and Crafts Movement evolved into country house architecture and found its way into the making of gardens.

Soon after the initial republication of the Jekyll-Weaver classic, garden historian Jane Brown compounded interest in Arts and Crafts with her book on the celebrated partnership of English architect Edwin Lutyens and gardener extraordinaire Gertrude Jekyll. In *Gardens of a Golden Afternoon* (London: Allen Lane, 1982) Brown delightfully describes her obsession in pursuit of Jekyll-Lutyens projects as she aimed to make her book as comprehensive as possible. In her research Brown found that the famed Arts and Crafts duo collaborated on more than 100 gardens.

In the next decade, popular interest in Arts and Crafts was fueled by journals and books. *American Bungalow* magazine began publication in 1990. Paul Duchscherer produced a

trifecta of best sellers: *The Bungalow: America's Arts and Crafts Home* (New York: Penguin Studio, 1995); *Inside the Bungalow* (New York: Penguin Studio, 1997) and most important to Arts and Crafts gardens, *Outside the Bungalow* (New York, Penguin Books, 1999).

Museum exhibitions reinforced popular interest. The Oakland Museum mounted “The Arts and Crafts Movement in California: Living the Good Life,” in 1993. Landscape historian David Streatfield wrote an article on the Arts and Crafts garden in California for a book accompanying the exhibit: Kenneth R. Trapp and Leslie Greene Bowman. *The Arts and Crafts Movement in California: Living the Good Life* (Oakland: Oakland Museum, 1993). In Southern California, “The Arts & Crafts Movement in Europe & America, 1880-1920,” debuted at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 2004. The widespread influence of the movement underlaid curation of the “International Arts and Crafts Exhibition” at London's Victoria and Albert Museum in 2005.

Two notable scholarly efforts predated Tankard's 2004 book on Arts and Crafts gardens. In *The Gardens of Gertrude Jekyll* (London: Frances Lincoln, 1992) University of Reading landscape architect and garden historian Richard Bisgrove analyzes and interprets beautifully reproduced Jekyll landscape planting plans drawn from the “Gertrude Jekyll Collection, 1877-1931,” housed at the Environmental Design Archive, University of California, Berkeley. Bisgrove's work was republished by the University of California Press in 2000.

University of Sussex art historian and Arts and Crafts scholar Wendy Hitchmough published *Arts and Crafts Gardens* (New York: Rizzoli, 1997). After describing the Victorian garden, she turns to William Morris' Red House as the starting point for a look at Arts and Crafts sensibilities in the design of more than 60 gardens. Jekyll receives a full chapter, but Hitchmough's narrative reaches beyond garden descriptions for larger artistic, social and cultural themes. She stresses the early Japanese influence on all areas of design and identifies a relationship between the women's suffrage movement and Arts and Crafts gardens. The Arts and Crafts garden, she concludes, “resolved the interface between architecture and nature.” In 2005 Hitchmough's book was republished in London by V & A Publications and in New York by Abrams.

There was a place for Tankard's scholarship when she entered the conversation in 2004 with the first iteration of her current book. The work was well-received as a useful contribution to the field. Reviewers described it as beautiful and informative. Tankard had bona fides as a garden historian, having published dozens of articles and four books before 2004. She was a faculty member of

the Landscape Institute, Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University from 1987 until 2008 and continues to produce important work, including studies of Ellen Biddle Shipman, Beatrix Farrand, and Gertrude Jekyll.

Tankard's approach is to place Arts and Crafts gardens within a broader perspective, much as Wendy Hitchmough sought to do, but the authors looked to different backdrops for their analysis. Hitchmough focused on the influence of social movements and societal debates in the larger world; Tankard aims to present Arts and Crafts gardens in the “broad context of art, architecture, interior design, and decorative design.” The Arts and Crafts Movement, she writes, “gave the garden a new definition as a harmonious component of the house.” She believes that garden design of the Arts and Crafts era cannot be appreciated without understanding the house with which it is connected. By including several full garden and home plot plans in the book, she emphasizes the unity of the whole as a central feature of Arts and Crafts design.

Tankard takes pains to explain that Arts and Crafts is not a specific style of garden making or architecture, but rather a way of thinking about design and working with materials. Nothing could illustrate this point more effectively than the wide variety of gardens included in her book. The 2018 revision is substantially longer than the original edition. The first ten chapters of the two editions track closely, although all text has been edited for the revision. In the new edition, for example, the Cotswold chapter includes the important example of Hidcote Manor which was only briefly mentioned in the original book. The revision rearranges the final chapters and adds new chapters on contemporary gardens and the design inspiration of Arts and Crafts. American gardens are included, but Tankard disclaims any effort to produce a definitive study of Arts and Crafts gardens in the United States.

The scholarly and readable text Tankard presents is not to be missed, although this book is so handsomely and generously illustrated with color photographs, landscape plans, drawings and paintings that it also can be appreciated simply for its visuals. Many of the illustrations used in the 2004 book are repeated in the revised edition, but they are much brighter and often resized, a graphic decision particularly welcome in the reproduction of plot plans. The book's layout is clean and attractive, though captions for all the illustrations strain the eye due to an unfortunate choice of font color and size. This new publication has useful endnotes, a very rich bibliography and a more detailed index than the 2004 edition. An appendix suggests houses and gardens for Arts and Crafts aficionados to visit in Great Britain and the United States. ■