

Pouncing on an opportunity to get creative



On Sunday 25th March, a group of creative souls gathered at Wandle Industrial Museum for a workshop held by the De Morgan Centre on the ancient art of pouncing.

Pouncing is the traditional way of transferring patterns to unfired tiles, using pounce (loose charcoal or graphite) rubbed

through small holes punched in a paper pattern. Our crafty visitors had the opportunity to learn all about the process and William De Morgan's links with the River Wandle and Merton area. There was also a chance to try their hand at pouncing, copying and colouring in a De Morgan design. It was a fun, practical, slightly messy workshop – perfect for the kids!

All Saints Church, Margaret Street

Our volunteer Angela led the Friends' visit to this mid-Victorian gem.

“Having lived in London my whole life it was a treat for me to visit All Saints, Margaret Street and I was absolutely awestruck by the architectural spectacle. Tucked away behind Oxford Street, I had expectations of not being able to find the location and so I arrived at Oxford Circus very early. However the church is easily detected by its soaring spire and I was pleasantly surprised to find I located it speedily.

You enter through iron gates into the courtyard and find a tranquil oasis of calm, with benches that seemingly greet you and allow for contemplation of the impressive edifice. All Saints was designed in 1850 by William Butterfield who was strongly associated with Gothic Revival church building. The stained glass is beautiful and the decorative tile friezes are superbly executed. Our knowledgeable Blue Badge Guides, Ian Godfrey and Joy Levine, complemented one another perfectly with their tour, bringing to life the history of the church with all its facets. The overall impression I was left with was of a magnificent visual feast.”



THE
DE MORGAN CENTRE

SUMMER 2012 NEWSLETTER

Inside this newsletter:

Discover an intriguing personal story involving Evelyn's 'Spear of Ithuriel'

Learn about the ancient art of pouncing

Preview the exciting events and exhibitions hosted by the De Morgan Centre over the next few months

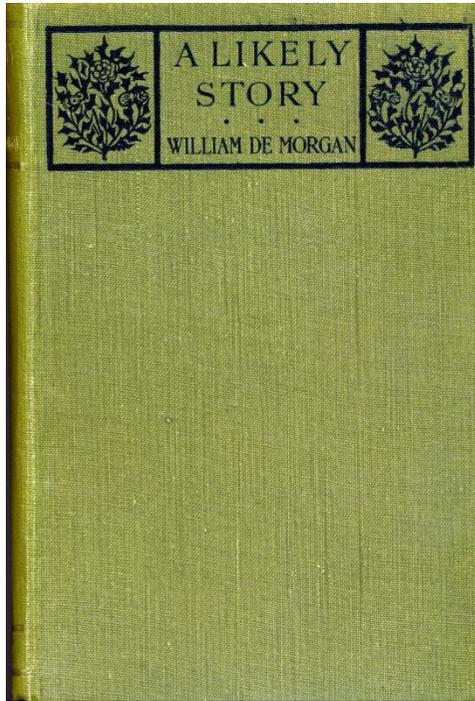


VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!!

The De Morgan Centre is in need of enthusiastic volunteers to help in the gallery during our weekend opening hours. If you enjoy a museum environment, are looking to learn new skills or contribute some spare time, and feel confident chatting at length about all things De Morgan, we'd love to hear from you!

info@demorgan.org.uk ♦ 020 8871 1144

William De Morgan, the Novelist



Although we are all familiar with the William De Morgan's pottery, it is a lesser known fact that he was also a successful novelist. Unfortunately De Morgan's pottery failed to provide a large profit. It was only the financial success brought by his writing that afforded him a comfortable retirement.

De Morgan wrote his first novel, *Joseph Vance*, at age 65, and it was an instant success in both Britain and the United States. He published seven novels in his lifetime, with two further books finished by Evelyn and published posthumously.

We have long intended to make some of William's novels available for sale in our shop in order to demonstrate the diversity of his abilities; but they have been out of print for some time. However we have recently been working with Ian Hodgkins & Co., antiquarian booksellers, to source copies of William's novels and other related books and are excited to finally stock some beautiful first editions of his novels *Joseph Vance*, *A Likely Story*, *It Never Can Happen Again* and more...

If you are interested in owning any of these fascinating novels, pop in to see them at the gallery or get in touch with us here at the Centre.

If you have read, or plan to read, one of William De Morgan's novels and would be interested in submitting a book review for inclusion in a future newsletter, please let us know.

info@demorgan.org.uk ♦ 020 8871 1144

De Morgan Exhibition at the Watts Gallery

6th November 2012 – 27 January 2013



We are delighted to announce that the Watts Gallery will be hosting an exhibition of William and Evelyn De Morgan's work at the end of 2012. The show will look at the mythical symbolism in their work and their parallels to G.F. Watts and his wife.



The Watts Gallery in Compton, Guildford, holds a collection of works by the Victorian painter and sculptor George Frederic Watts and his artist wife Mary Seaton Watts. The gallery re-opened to the public in June 2011 following an extensive period of restoration and refurbishment, and was recently shortlisted for the 2012 Art Fund Prize.

There are many similarities between the Watts' and the De Morgans. Initially the couples were introduced by Evelyn's uncle Roddam Spencer Stanhope (who trained under Watts) and they socialised and collaborated on many occasions. Mary Seaton Watts was heavily involved in the Home Arts and Industries Association. After settling in Compton she set about making designs for a cemetery chapel and trained local villagers to make the chapel's exterior decoration in her Terra Cotta Home Arts classes. De Morgan advised and built the necessary kiln and he also collaborated with Watts on the panels celebrating London's forgotten heroes at Postman's Park. Evelyn and Watts shared an interest in symbolism and similar themes recur in both their works. Watts gave credit where credit was due and said of Evelyn "I look upon her as the first woman artist of the day – if not of all time".

Superb parrot tile panel to undergo conservation

You may have spotted sections of this parrot tile panel in the gallery before. Once making two large fire screens the panel was unfortunately damaged when a fire ripped through an art storage unit in the early 90s. However we're excited to say that it's now in the trusted hands of our ceramics conservator, Clare Spicer, in order to restore it to its former glory.



The original design for the panel depicts brightly coloured parrots playing in a swirling grape vine. The panel is rather unusual for a De Morgan design as its subjects are depicted realistically rather than in De Morgan's typical stylised manner. In fact, so accurate are the parrots that they can be identified as a jolly ensemble of Scarlet Macaws and Blue-fronted Amazons.

Collecting rare birds and animals was a popular pastime amongst wealthy Victorians. Perhaps the most notable collector was artist Dante Gabriel Rossetti whose menagerie included wombats, a llama and a toucan which he kept as curiosities and pets at his Chelsea home. Following in this taste for the exotic, William's ceramics boast a wealth of curious creatures including peacocks, dodos and even a wombat - perhaps inspired by his friend's menagerie.

The conserved tile panel will be on view at the Watts Gallery this Autumn before returning to the Centre at the beginning of 2013.

Conservation is of utmost importance to the Centre as it enables us to display previously unseen pieces and protect them for future generations. We plan to continue our programme of conservation and welcome fundraising suggestions from our Friends.

Thursday Late Openings

The De Morgan Centre began its special Late Openings in February and we are now open until 9pm on the first Thursday of every month. Not only does this give you more opportunity to enjoy the gallery, it also allows us to host special evening events. Make a note of these dates in your diaries and join us for an event, or just to enjoy the gallery!

5th July: The De Morgans in Fulham, 7.00pm

Curator Claire Longworth will be giving a talk on the De Morgans' links with Fulham. William moved his pottery from Merton Abbey to Fulham in 1888 and it was here that he mastered many of his celebrated techniques. This event is part of Celebrating Fulham 2012.

2nd August: Late opening, until 9pm

6th September: Late opening, until 9pm

4th October: Screening of Old Battersea House documentary, 8.00pm

See overleaf for details

1st November: An Evening with Dr Jan Marsh & Frank C. Sharp, 7:00pm

To celebrate the release of their new book, 'The Collected Letters of Jane Morris', Dr Jan Marsh and Frank C. Sharp will be visiting the gallery to give a talk on William Morris' wife, who was a model for several of Evelyn's paintings including 'The Hourglass' (right). This is a ticketed event. See overleaf for more details.



Remember!

As a Friend of the De Morgan Centre, you receive free entry to the gallery during our Late Openings.

A free screening of *Old Battersea House* (1961)

Wandsworth Museum Café

4th October 2012, 7:30pm for prompt 8:00pm start



Old Battersea House

This short documentary is a fascinating foray into the home of Mrs Wilhelmina Stirling, the eccentric occupant of this Grade II listed building in Wandsworth, South London. Mrs Stirling was the younger sister of Evelyn De Morgan, and proudly displayed within her extravagant home Evelyn's highly symbolic paintings and the ceramics of her brother-in-law William De Morgan.

This Ken Russell-directed documentary is part of the BBC's *Monitor* series. The viewer is led through the house on a lamp-lit tour by Mr Peters, Mrs Stirling's manservant. Mrs Stirling, in her nineties at the time of filming, regales the viewer with characteristic anecdotes about the Arts and Crafts couple and her thoughts on the Pre-Raphaelite Movement.

This is a wonderful opportunity to view the De Morgan Centre's collection in its previous incarnation at Old Battersea House, where walls were completely covered by oil paintings and ceramics were crowded atop sideboards.

We hope you will join us for this exclusive opportunity to experience the stunning interior and the vivid personality that once occupied one of Wandsworth's most spectacular buildings.



Mrs Stirling

Film length: approximately 20 minutes

Entrance to the café and screening is free of charge.

The café will be serving refreshments before and after the screening.

Heather Konschuh Glass: 30th August – 27th September 2012

Having exhibited at the De Morgan Centre for the first time at our 2011 Christmas Show, Heather returns with a full selling exhibition. This up and coming Canadian artisan is fascinated with the play between transparency and opaque glass materials. She has created stunning jewellery and glassware to exhibit exclusively at the De Morgan Centre this autumn.



Tim Boon Presents 'Renewal': 26th October - 3rd November 2012

In October of this year we will welcome an exhibition of ceramics, paintings, print and textiles from renowned ceramicist Sandra Eastwood and the multi-disciplinary artist Jacy Wall. We have hosted Tim's carefully curated shows previously at the Centre and are delighted to once again display a range of hand-crafted objects in this selling exhibition.



Transformations: 13th November 2012 – 19th January 2013



Our Christmas shows are always the perfect opportunity to purchase beautiful design and craft gifts. Natural materials, undulating lines and gorgeous hues are the order of the day this year. The exhibition will feature luxurious, pleated, fine silk scarves and stoles from Anne Selby, and beautiful turned boxes and vessels made from the finest of woods by Kevin Hutson.

Paradise pursued: a quest, by Chris Rogers



Obsessions are funny things. They force you to try any approach, no matter how tangential, to resolve the problem, and even when an ending is startling and unexpected, that can be a strange kind of reward.

It began many years ago with a brief, un-illustrated reference in a newspaper article to a particular painting. The painting was *The Spear of Ithuriel* by Evelyn De Morgan, and that tiny kernel of information set me on my journey.

This encounter pre-dated the web, but every book I consulted failed to mention the picture, whilst Evelyn herself seemed to warrant only slightly more coverage, given the profile of her husband and uncle.

It became a kind of ritual to flip to the index of every art history book I encountered, in every bookshop and gallery, to see if my curiosity about this peculiarly elusive painting could be satisfied. I always drew a blank.

Revisiting the conundrum years later, I contacted the National Art Library and simply asked whether they had an illustration of this mysterious painting.

A few days later, from a nondescript brown envelope emerged a miracle – a monochrome image of *The Spear of Ithuriel*, together with a few pages from a seventy-five-year old magazine article.

The title is a reference to Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Gabriel sends the angels Ithuriel and Zephon to watch over the sleeping figure of Eve in the Garden of Eden. Ithuriel discovers Satan, that fallen angel, in the form of a toad squatting next to Eve.

Even in black and white, with details dulled by camera and time, De Morgan's is an extraordinary vision. Surrounded by a cloud of cherubs, Ithuriel fills the frame, arrayed in flowing robes and with an immense triple set of wings. A beautifully-rendered nude figure of Eve lies peacefully asleep amidst a spray of delicate

flowers. The toad sits quietly but disconcertingly next to her head. The notes described the fiery colours for which De Morgan was known, such as cherubs' wings of lapis lazuli, the rare blue pigment.

So, I finally had my picture, but why was this astonishing work not better known? And why was it never shown in books?

Browsing the Courtauld Gallery's shop months later, I came across a catalogue for an exhibition of De Morgan's work. Inside I found *The Spear of Ithuriel*, but only in the same monochrome reproduction that I already possessed. It was maddening. There were plenty of colour plates but also, I noticed, other black and white pictures, huddled together as though ashamed. I turned the pages carefully.

Finally I found it. And was brought up short in shock. For there, in a blunt statement, was the fate of *The Spear of Ithuriel*: "Destroyed by fire, October 1991".

Skimming the text, I saw references to De Morgan's tangled probate, to her sister, Mrs Stirling... and to a fire in the warehouse of art shippers Bourlet's, near Heathrow Airport, which consumed sixteen of her paintings as well as a number of preparatory drawings including, tragically, a pastel version of *Ithuriel*. I closed the book slowly. My quest had come to an end.

Evelyn De Morgan's pictures are now much better known. Happily the majority survive and many can be seen today in public galleries, although the search for an accessible home for the Foundation's holdings continues. As for *The Spear of Ithuriel*, I like to think that it survives in an artistic afterlife somewhere, perhaps reunited with its maker, who became interested in spiritualism after the Great War.

Chris Rogers writes on architecture and visual culture. He is a regular reviewer for *Art of England* magazine, has contributed to *The Architects' Journal* and guest-edited the *London Architecture Diary*. He is currently working on his second book, on post-war commercial architecture in the City of London. If you would like to read the extended version of this article, please visit www.bit.ly/demorgan

London Open House Weekend
22nd - 23rd September 2012
FREE ENTRY

Open
—City | **Open House
London
2012**

Open House London Weekend is an initiative of Open-City, whose aim is to showcase the capital's architecture. The weekend gives access to buildings of all types and periods for free, celebrating the rich culture and architecture of London.

The Longstaff Reading Room, which now houses the De Morgan Centre, was part of West Hill Library, built in 1887. Its striking interior boasts a spectacular Arts & Crafts ceiling and a Golden Jubilee tile panel installed above the large bow window.

We will be open on both Saturday and Sunday of this weekend and admission will be free for all visitors, so it is a fantastic opportunity to invite friends or family to experience the De Morgans for the first time!



www.campaignfordrawing.org

The Big Draw 2012: 2nd - 20th October The Drawing Room of Mr and Mrs De Morgan

The Big Draw is part of the nationwide Campaign for Drawing which aims to connect communities in creative ways and inspire the artist in all of us. We are excited to be taking part in The Big Draw in October for the first time.

Our temporary exhibition space will be transformed into a Victorian sitting room, and adults and children alike will be invited to decorate the room with paintings, vases, plates and tiles featuring their interpretation of De Morgan designs, or patterns and scenes of their own invention. Over the course of the month, we hope to see the space transform from a blank canvas into a vibrant display glowing with the artistic creativity of our visitors.

Our De Morgan Sitting Room will be open during normal gallery hours. Entry is included in the gallery admission price (free for Friends of the De Morgan Centre).

The Collected Letters of Jane Morris
Talk by Dr Jan Marsh and Frank C. Sharp (editors)
Thursday 1st November, 7:00pm

Jane Morris, muse and wife of William Morris and lover of Dante Gabriel Rossetti is the subject of a new book of edited letters, to be published this autumn.

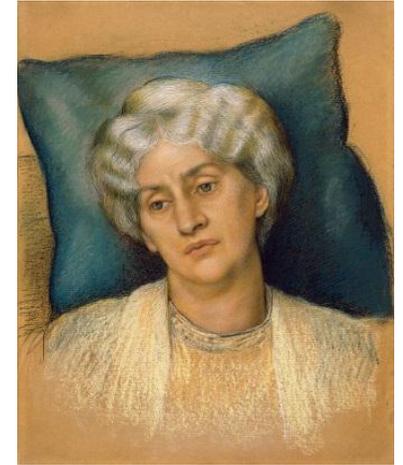
Jane was an artist's model and has been described as the embodiment of the Pre-Raphaelite beauty ideal. Evelyn De Morgan painted her on several occasions and the drawing (right) shows her fine features remained even in later life.

The editors of this volume have discovered more than 500 letters from Jane to many diverse correspondents, which reveal the range of her interests and opinions. The majority of the letters are unpublished and are fully annotated.

Jan Marsh is a researcher and author specialising in artists and writers. She has researched and written extensively on the Pre-Raphaelite circle and Victorian women artists. She has also been a curator for many exhibitions and is currently developing the late-Victorian catalogue at the National Portrait Gallery.

Frank C. Sharp has written extensively on William Morris for the Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies and the William Morris Society Journal in America. These two talented authors will be joining us to give what is sure to be a fascinating talk on their latest edited volume.

Tickets will be **£12** and will include entry to the gallery, the talk, and a glass of sparkling wine. However, Friends of the De Morgan Centre can join us for just **£8.00** Please see enclosed booking form for further details.



Evelyn De Morgan's study of Jane Morris for 'The Hour Glass' (1904)