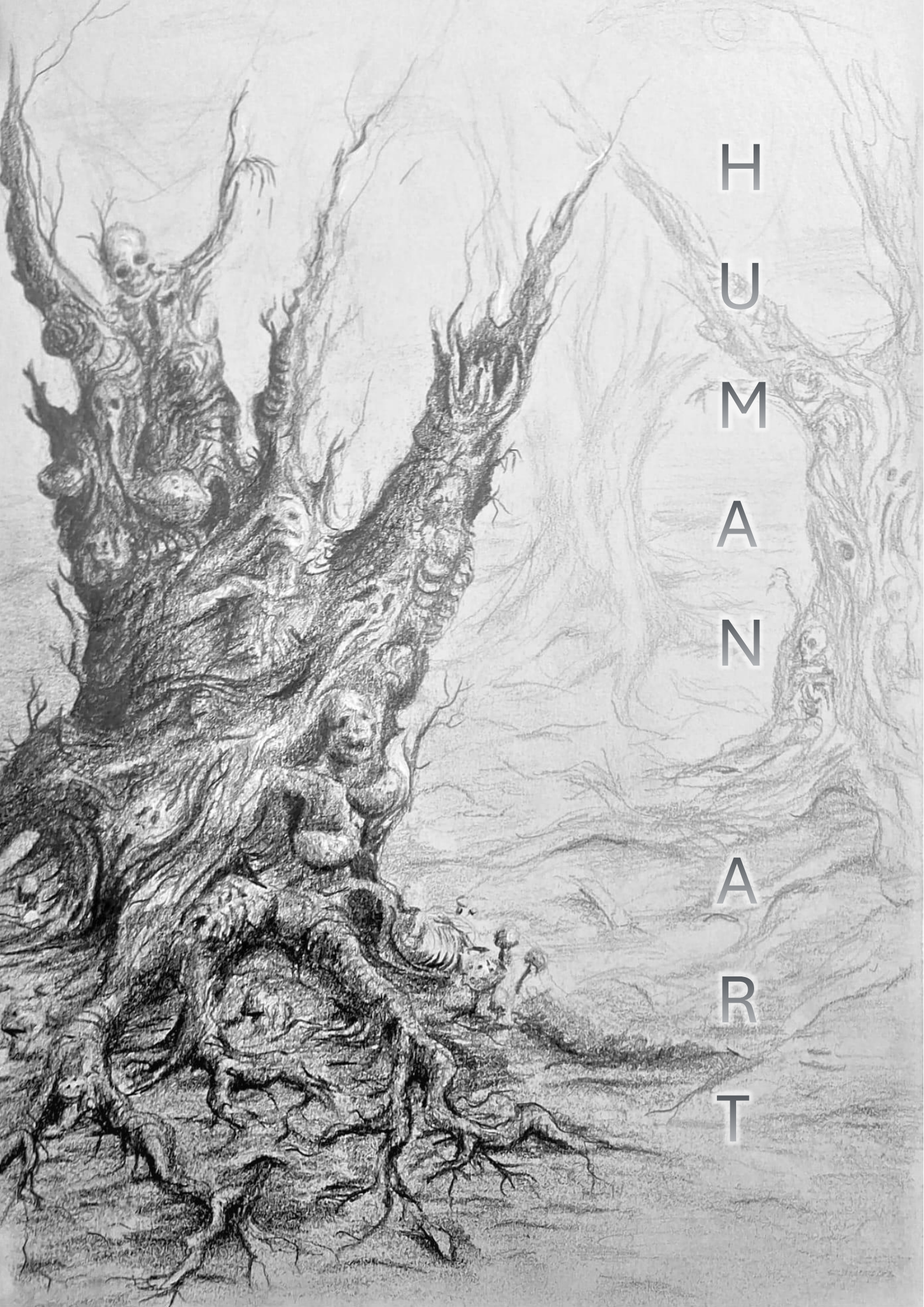




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*'The past is not dead, but it is living in us, and will
be alive in the future which we are now helping to
make.'*¹

Bachelor thesis by Michelle Liekens
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¹ Morris, William. *Morris: News From Nowhere*. Oxford University Press Books, 1995.

Introduction

"The danger with AI is not that machines will think like humans, but that humans will think like machines."

– Sydney J. Harris

I would like to ask you to imagine a large public place. Be it a shopping centre, a railway station, an airport, a school or an underground parking lot; just basically anywhere with multiple floors. You decide you want to go up to the third floor, and so in front of you are presented a few flights of stairs, some escalators, and an elevator.

You're a healthy person not afraid to stretch your legs, so you go up via the regular old stairs. Now the next day you return to this place and again want to go up to the third floor; however, today you feel a bit tired. You hadn't slept well the night before, so you decide to simply make it a little bit easier for yourself and step on the escalator. When the impressive piece of machinery has brought you to your destination, you think not much of it; however when the day after you once again have to follow that same path, you remember the ease the escalator brought you and think to yourself, 'oh, why tire myself out for no reason?' and you once again take the easier road.

This continues for a few weeks, and you don't really think about it anymore when you come to your usual crossing, stepping on the escalator out of habit and comfort. One day, you go to stand on your usual means of transportation but find it at a standstill. Discontented you walk up the familiar steps, but when you reach the top, you can feel your lungs burn and your legs ache.

Without really realising it, your ease and comfort have caused your physical health to deteriorate. Your very own lack of motivation to do just that little bit extra has caused you to rely on technology you never needed in the slightest before you got used to it.²

Now imagine you up the scale just a little bit and look around at the people who just like you need to reach the third floor. Everyone is used to stepping on the escalator, the stairs a human free zone, and the elevator used by those with mobility issues and people just

² Heald, Adrian H., Akul Purohit, Edward Jude, Nikolaos Tentolouris, Sundeep Puri. *Stairway to health: stair vs elevator usage and its impact on the health of NHS Staff*. Research gate, Journal of public health, 2025

that tad bit lazier than you, so that you and your escalator buddies feel better about yourselves in judging them.

This is a reality I see increasingly often, and more than that, I see the results it has on our society's architecture and infrastructure. When enough people of a society become so comfortable in their sloth that it's no longer an active decision, said society will adjust to this new normal. Many public places use escalators and elevators as their primary, if not only, means of reaching other floors, building regular staircases only into fire escapes and other emergency exits.

The frustration that led me to write this paper isn't just rooted in the means by which people reach certain places within public buildings though, but rather a much younger agent of laziness.

On April eight, 2026, PXL Mad School of Arts³ posted a promotional video on their Instagram page made entirely through the use of generative artificial intelligence. The reel opens with a non-existent person, supposedly representing a student at the institution, face merged into the letters MAD. This character then goes on a crack-fuelled tour through the ateliers of jewellery design, graphic design and visual arts as if speedrunning an artificially fabricated video game. Faces and actions are distorted in a sickly way, showing technologies and non-existent "creative" work as if it were something made by students.



Figure 1 PXL MAD, screenstils of an AI promotional video posted in the official PXL MAD Instagram page posted 08/04/2026

³ PXL MAD School of arts. (s.d.). Instagram. Consulted on: 01/05/2026
<https://www.instagram.com/p/DW4NwLNDqFX/>

This phenomenon isn't a coincidence; it's a pattern. All around me on a day-to-day basis I get confronted with the use and effects of the exceedingly fast technological revolution with generative artificial intelligence as its current flagship. I see people use chatbots to write emails and messages, to summarise meetings, books and papers, and to form better-worded opinions on anything from what food they like to the current political state of the world. I listen to people talk about how they tell ChatGPT of their feelings and emotions for validation and understanding. They ask it for translations and generated images that'll make their posts and ideas pop in an attempt to attract more views and clicks.

I see more and more people around me who use technology to think. Who need it to think.⁴ Just like their parents lost the ability to comfortably walk up a flight of stairs, they are actively losing their ability of critical thinking, all under the guise of 'all it does is save me some time and effort'. What happens to society when the greater part of its civilisation has become so reliant on this technology of progress that its social, mental, intellectual and emotional staircases start disappearing?

What happens to generations that grow up with a 'tool' in the palm of their hand capable of and expected to streamline and shortcut every possible thing they need and want in life?

If you as a reader think I'm exaggerating, let me return to the promotional video my own art institution posted as a representation of its students.

To generate videos and images like the one in question, massive databases of examples are needed.⁵ These examples used, of course, don't come out of thin air; they consist of decades of artistic works in their own way posted on the internet. Each and every one of these photographs, videos and texts were made through individual and unique processes of human life. Entire artistic and day-to-day human affairs are reduced to a single image, which then proceeds to drown in the meaninglessness of being just another number in the database.

Institutes of higher art education are where eager students go to learn how to nurture their craft. They make the incredibly conscious decision of dedicating themselves to the betterment of their lives and (most often indirectly) their surrounding society.

Generative artificial intelligence was made to take the results of these pure intentions and turn them into meaningless tools of neglectant indolence. Its very purpose is to dehumanise and abuse

⁴ Liu, Grace, Brian Christian, Tsvetomira Dumbalska, Michiel A. Bakker, Rachit Dubey. *AI Assistance Reduces Persistence and Hurts Independent Performance*. 6 Apr. 2026, ai-project-website.github.io/AI-assistance-reduces-persistence. Accessed 15 May 2026.

⁵ Bender, Emily M., Alex Hanna. *The AI con: how to fight big tech's hype and create the future we want*. New York: Harper Collins, 2025, Chapter 7.

the initial artist so that anyone could have a flashy and fun promotional video with the click of a button, in doing so gaining the ability to completely disregard the effort and skill that went into its making.

The use of such practices has become near fully normalised in our contemporary society, and as an art student myself, this makes me weep. Especially when it has become so incredibly ordinary that even art schools think it innocent to use, completely disregarding the potential of the students they themselves claim to train.

I know of fellow art students who use ChatGPT on their smartwatches to fill in their art history exams and teachers who promote its use to write faster with improved grammar.

I know people who make board games who stopped hiring artists for their designs, instead using AI, as it is faster and cheaper. Artists, product and graphic designers who lost their jobs with companies excusing it as having to follow the modern-day technology race or be left behind on their letters of resignation.

People I meet in all fields and layers of society seem either incapable or unwilling to admit the negative causes and effects technological 'advancements' and 'progress' are having on our society as a whole.

By obviating people for their creativity, you directly remove humanity from your worldview.⁶ Art has always been and always will be the purest reflection of the society it was created in. What does it say about our society when our art becomes nothing more than cheap merges of stolen works, without any sign of critical thinking or the beautiful discomfort of process?

As you may have noticed, the worldview I depicted on these previous pages is anything but positive. While I do in fact worry a great deal about the state of the world, I find myself in, I have neither the ambition of drowning in negativity nor the intention of ignoring it.

⁶ Vriens, Jorne. *Behaagzucht Als Beperking. Kunst En AI*. de Witte Raaf. Dewitteraaf.be, 2019, www.dewitteraaf.be/artikel/behagzucht-als-beperking-kunst-en-ai/. Consulted on 12 May 2026.

I'm fully aware many of these concerns stem from a place of fear, and fear has always been the fastest means to radicalisation, which, as a student of history, does not exactly sound like the road I would like to walk. While I would never claim to know what the world needs, I feel it imperative to try and find out anyway. In this paper I will therefore look at specific historical movements which I believe struggled and to a certain extent overcame issues similar to my own. I will attempt to contextualise these to form a better understanding of our present day, and I will look at how this reflects in the people and artistic organisations active around the world. Through the topics of the Luddites, the Industrial Revolution, the Arts and Crafts movement, William Morris, fantasy, RPG's, pop culture media and the possibilities of social media, I want to research a few threads of a plethora of possibilities in overcoming the age of sloth.

PXL's AI promo video was placed online with the caption 'Creativity moves here. Come see where it starts.' And so, with this paper I intend to do exactly that.

Chapter One: Historical context

1.1 The Luddites

'It is not this or that tangible steel and brass machine which we want to get rid of, but the great intangible machine of commercial tyranny, which oppresses the lives of us all.'

-⁷William Morris

During the 18th century, England was famous for its works in textiles. Being a weaver was a highly respected job many skilled workers called their own until the budding industrial revolution introduced the mechanised looms that would be the beginning of it all⁸. Machines powered by water wheels and then steam engines caused thousands of craftsmen to lose their income, and thus their means of providing food for their families. Factory owners were driven to cut costs on every turn, afraid they would fall behind on competitors, and so quickly replaced their entire workforces with machinations that never called in sick. New jobs were created, but a fraction of those that were there before. On top of that, these new jobs did not require any skill, so employers would hire at lower and lower rates, for example preferring children instead of adults, as they could be paid even less. There were many cases of people and mostly children being heavily physically abused, which resulted in maiming or death.

There were, of course, promises around every corner. Pamphlets and criers yelled about the positive sides of the revolution, supposedly improving the lives of everyone, while thousands went home at night unable to feed their starving children. Around 1771 traditional textile workers had had enough and decided on taking action. In an incredibly well organised manor, groups of protestors started sneaking into factories and smashing any examples of the machines that had replaced them to bits. Any older models were left alone.

They notably targeted only those who lowered workers' pay or those who treated them unfairly through the use of the fully automated monstrosities.

⁷ Morris, William. *Art and its Producers*. Liverpool: 1888, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1888/producer.htm>

⁸ Cartwright, Mark, and J. Tingle. "The Textile Industry in the British Industrial Revolution." *World History Encyclopedia*, Mar. 2024, www.worldhistory.org/article/2183/the-textile-industry-in-the-british-industrial-rev. consulted on 12/05/2026

Each attack was precise and meticulous. Groups of twenty to sometimes two hundred people (depending on the size of the operation) would operate under one interchangeable leader, a person they always referred to as 'General Ludd'⁹.

This is what gave this group their name, 'the Luddites'. Ned Ludd is a figure from an old story of a young boy who was sold into working at a textile factory. He was accused of not working hard and fast enough, so he was whipped as a punishment. When this was over, the boy picked up a hammer in angry defiance and smashed the contraption he had to work into a million pieces before running away into the woods, hammer still in hand.

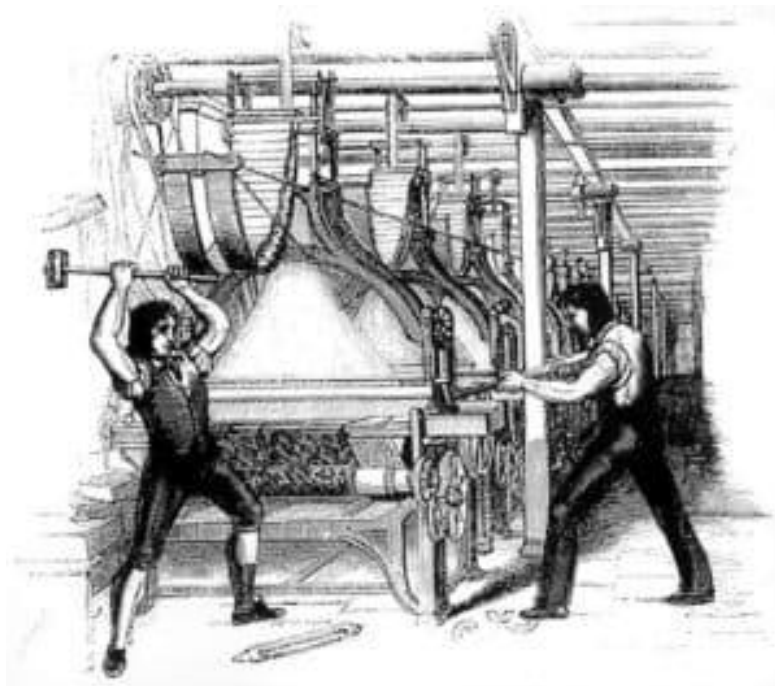


Figure 2 Picture of Luddites smashing a frame in Nottingham 1811, The Luddites. Historic-UK.
<https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofBritain/The-Luddites/>.
Consulted 12/05/2026.

There is no evidence that he was ever actually alive, so instead he took on a sort of mythical reputation similar to Robin Hood.

The Luddites wrote manifestos and produced acts of vandalism in Ned Ludd's name, becoming so grand the government even had to implant spies into their ranks. The group, however, never once talked or gave up one of their own. Eventually, in April 1812, the group

⁹ Brain, Jessica. "The Luddites - Historic UK." *Historic UK*, 12 Dec. 2023, www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofBritain/The-Luddites.
Consulted on 12/05/2026

suffered a truly devastating loss. At a mill near Huddersfield, Yorkshire, the army intercepted them and gunned down grave numbers of people. Whoever was captured was either hanged or taken to Australia for harsh imprisonment.

This bloody response resulted in a heavy blow to the Luddites' morale, causing their actions to soon dwindle until they completely vanished a couple of years later.

While the Industrial Revolution obviously prevailed, the Luddites were the first to organise such large-scale acts of activism against this capitalistic idea of progress.

I do, however, feel the need to clarify; the Luddites were never against actual technological progress but rather against the exploitation of humans and skill that seemed to follow hand in hand. Many textile workers even revered the invention of better automated looms; the idea of no longer having to break their backs every day was a bright vision to look forward to... but the reality of it all was that their craft was quickly deemed irrelevant, and instead of living better lives because of it, they had to work harder and harder for less and less.

The story of the Luddites is by many considered a perfectly possible forefather of science fiction. People like Cory Doctorow in 'Science fiction is a Luddite Literature'¹⁰ for Medium, or Nicholas C. Rossis in his article 'The Rise of the Luddites'¹¹ for the web collective Learn History describe how their story will become the basis of many science fiction ideals throughout modern history. Think of Dune by Frank Herbert, 1984 by George Orwell, Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury, Neuromancer by William Gibson, Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? by Philip K. Dick with the Blade Runner stories that were heavily inspired in it, and last but not least, Star Wars by George Lucas.

For now the idea of the major influence on literary works by events of the industrial revolution will be shelved, but I will further elaborate after having introduced the stories of a man named William Morris slightly further down this paper. First however, we will follow the flow of history as it progressed into the industrial age. The idea of the Luddites stood strong among many individuals, but unfortunately no individual could dent let alone overcome the rise of the machines, and the decline of humanistic values.

¹⁰ Doctorow, Cory. "Science Fiction Is a Luddite Literature: My Latest Column for Locus Magazine." Medium, 2 Jan. 2022, [doctorow.medium.com/science-fiction-is-a-luddite-literature-e454bf5a5076](https://medium.com/science-fiction-is-a-luddite-literature-e454bf5a5076). Accessed 14 May 2026.

¹¹ Rossis, Nicholas C. "Rise of the Luddites." Nicholas C. Rossis: Dream-protecting Author, 29 Jan. 2020. <https://nicholasrossis.me/2020/01/29/rise-of-the-luddites/> Last consulted on 14/05/2026

1.2 The industrial revolution and John Ruskin

*'The footsteps of a busy crowd, the crunching wheels of machinery, the shriek of steam from boilers, the regular beat of the looms, the heavy rumble of carts, those are the noises from which you can never escape in the sombre half-light of these streets. From this foul drain the greatest stream of human industry flows out to fertilize the whole world. From this filthy sewer pure gold flows. Here humanity attains its most complete development and its most brutish; here civilisation works its miracles, and civilised man is turned back almost into a savage.'*¹²

- Alexis de Tocqueville

The year is 1851 in Britain, around the border of London and Kent. You stand in the middle of a busy street, looming buildings on either side of you, each producing their own personal plume of dark smoke¹³, slowly feeding the permanent artificial cloud that hangs low over the city. You cough at the reminder of the persistent ache in your lungs, all the while putting great effort into ignoring the familiar stench that surrounds you. Passers by seem to pay no mind to any of these things, instead keeping their mental focus on hurrying to wherever they need to go. A sense of melancholy washes over you as you regard these walking shells of empty flesh, filled only with worry for losing what little good they have.

The scene just described was everyday reality for artist, writer, art critic and philosopher John Ruskin¹⁴. Every day he could feel the effects of the Victorian industrial revolution in his surroundings, his bodily health, and his critical mind. Rapid industrialisation and urbanisation required massive amounts of energy and heat, which they derived from the use of burning coal. As a result, a thick layer of black smoke covered big cities, leading to heavy

¹² Alexis de Tocqueville, *Journeys to England and Ireland* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1958), pp. 104-7.

¹³ Hatton, Tim. *Air pollution in Victorian-era Britain - its effects on health now revealed*. The conversation, 2017, <https://theconversation.com/air-pollution-in-victorian-era-britain-its-effects-on-health-now-revealed-87208>

¹⁴ Shrimpton, Nicholas. "John Ruskin English Writer and Artist." *Britannica*, 2 May 2026, www.britannica.com/biography/John-Ruskin. Accessed 12 May 2026.

respiratory issues, stunted growth, intellectual decline, massive infancy mortality rates and many more.

The river Thames had become a dumping ground for all types of waste, from faeces, dead bodies (animals as well as humans) and all sorts of decomposing organic waste, to massive amounts of toxic waste from riverside factories. This emanated horrible odours which could be smelled from anywhere in the city. Acid, alkali, arsenic, lead, coal tar, lime and ammonia from gasworks were dumped in the river daily, a river which common people still used as their primary and only source of drinking and bathing water¹⁵.

Heavy industry, steel production and steam powered transportation were promoted as the future, supposedly going hand in hand with so-called improved living standards for the middle class. However, in reality creating poor working conditions and pollution for the working class and ultimately all.

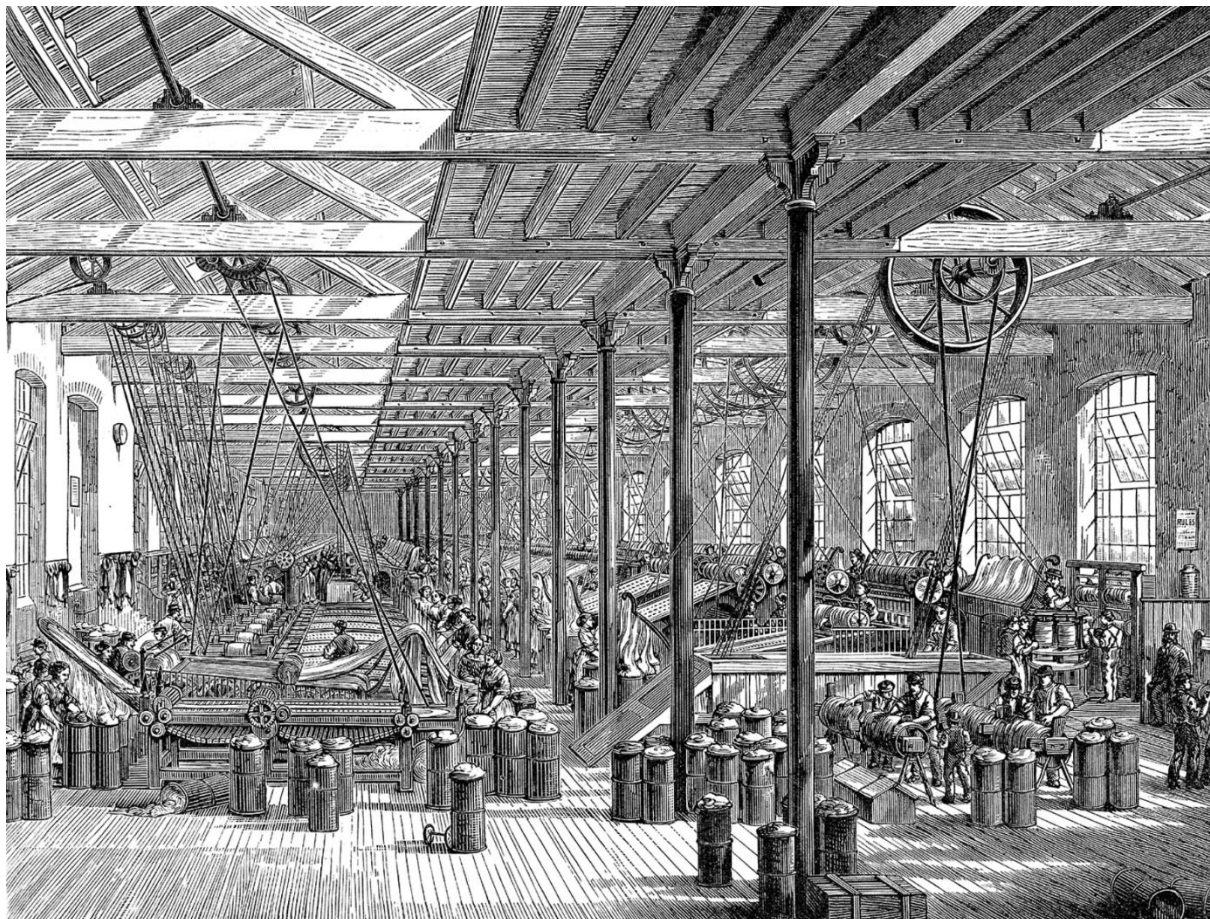


Figure 3 Image of Industrial Revolution: spinning room. Britannica, editor. "Industrial Revolution." Britannica, 4 May 2026, www.britannica.com/event/Industrial-Revolution. Accessed 12 May 2026.

¹⁵ Stockton, Hannah. "Pollution in the River Thames: A History: Lifeline, Water Source, Sewer? Follow the Murky Story of London's Relationship with the Thames." Royal Museum Greenwich, www.rmg.co.uk/stories/ocean/pollution-river-thames-history#:~:text=Sweepings%20from%20Butchers%20Stalls,%20Dung,into%20the%20river%20only%20increased. Accessed 14 May 2026.

Most people of his time were used to this, having gotten so accustomed to the excruciatingly strong pull of "progress", any diversion of the pre-determined pathway seemed so similar to suicide that the distinction could hardly be made. Most people, but not everyone. This is the year John Ruskin first published a book named *The Stones of Venice*. Specifically, a chapter in the second volume is of extreme relevance to the story.

As the name of the book suggests, Ruskin visited the Italian city Venice and was instantly enamoured by its beauty. Venetian architecture combines Gothic, Byzantine, Neoclassical, Baroque and Islamic influences, but is predominantly known for its Gothic masterpieces. Coming from an English society where every day was focussed on the idea of working and progressing, or dying where you stand, Venice showed a very stark contrast.

The art critic compared the effects of nature killing cement and steel monstrosities, fuelled by the need for mass production, to the inherently human means of building Gothic churches. Specifically, he talks about the importance of nature and craftsmanship. Things made through the labour and expertise of trained human hands were loaded with meaning a product of soulless mechanization could never possess.

'It is not that men are ill fed, but that they have no pleasure in the work by which they make their bread, and therefore look to wealth as the only means of pleasure.'¹⁶

- John Ruskin

"You must either make a tool of the creature, or a man of him¹⁷". Ruskin defines the core of Gothic architecture by its inherent freedom as it is created with a level of detail only the craftsman himself can attain and decide on. "To banish imperfection is to destroy expression¹⁸". He urges society to prioritize the wellbeing of the worker, and to reject cheap, mass-produced goods.

He writes about the bare materials, arches and intricately carved details as a main objective for a life loving society to return to.

¹⁶ Ruskin, John. *The stones of venice, volume two: the nature of gothic*. London: Kelmscott Press, 1851-1853. Chapter 5, Paragraph 15

¹⁷ Ruskin, John. *The stones of venice, volume two: the nature of gothic*. London: Kelmscott Press, 1851-1853. Chapter 6, Paragraph 13

¹⁸ Ruskin, John. *The stones of venice, volume two: the nature of gothic*. London: Kelmscott Press, 1851-1853. Chapter 6, Paragraph 23

The great popularity of the text proved just how many people craved a world he described. One in harmony with nature instead of one that destroys and pollutes it. How could one live a happy and fructuous life, when the basis of society kills the embodiment of life itself? How could one find meaning in existence, when every single product created, used and abused in daily life was so meaningless it was made to be thrown away and replaced.

The text ended up inspiring many, one of which people being founder of the Arts and Crafts movement: William Morris.

1.3 William Morris

'With the arrogance of youth, I am determined to do no less than to transform the world with beauty. If I have succeeded in some small way, if only in one small corner of the world, amongst the men and women I love, then I shall count myself blessed, and blessed, and the work goes on.' – William Morris, *The well at the world's end*, 1896

William Morris¹⁹ was born in London in 1834. Through the financial success of his father who worked as a broker, he grew up in the privilege of a country house in Essex. So privileged in fact, that William would never have to worry about earning an income. Instead, he could focus his time on exploring forests, parks and churches, along with the stories of writers like Walter Scott.

This upbringing caused an early affinity to nature, architecture and historical romance; and the willingness to be incredibly firm and outspoken about his tastes regarding these. When studying at Oxford University he met amongst other Edward Burne-Jones, who would later become an impressively important painter and designer heavily affiliated with the Arts and Crafts movement. He introduced William to a group of students now known as 'The set' or 'The brotherhood'. Other key members of this group were Charles Faulkner, Richard Watson Dixon, William Fulford, Wilfred Lucas Heeley and Cormell Price. Together they read, wrote and conversed about romantic stories of medieval chivalry and self-sacrifice, as well as pro-socialistic political opinions.

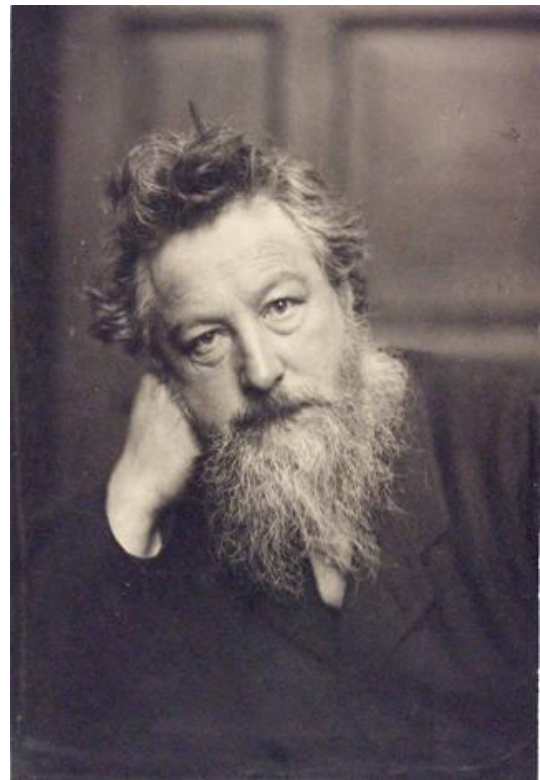


Figure 4 William Morris, photograph, Frederick Hollyer, 1884, England. Museum no. 7715-1938. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

¹⁹ "Introducing William Morris." Victoria and Albert Museum, 17 Apr. 2024, www.vam.ac.uk/articles/introducing-william-morris?srsltid=AfmBOogxKTdJwAVsUVhPwCPbMoNeb30hz0xs2lAf5q. Consulted on 12/05/2026

Together they wrote 69 contributions to a self-founded publication called The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine over the course of one year, which consisted of short stories, poems and essays on literature, art, society and politics, history, religion, philosophy and on other miscellaneous topics. When reading these you can see the first reasonings behind the founding of the arts and crafts movement. 'The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine' was meant as an agent for social change. They discussed specific aesthetic theories which underlie for example the aesthetic revolt of William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais and Dante Rossetti, along with opinions regarding social dissatisfaction inspired by Ruskin and others. Despite the fact that the magazine was only in publication for the short period of one year, it still became a very important factor in changing the direction of pre-Raphaelite thinking, as well as planting seeds which would later help shape the social ideas or society as a whole.

For Morris being a part of this critically thinking group changed a lot about his ambitions and aspirations. He went from studying to enter clergy to choosing the life of an artist and writer.

The idea of this art, however, is a little different to what most people in contemporary society would imagine. While at this time Morris already enjoyed spending his time drawing and painting, his primary artistic focus would be his interest in architecture, interior design and overall, the idea of the community-based influencing society through hand focussed crafts. This was first outed in the building and decorating of Red House around 1860.

Morris and his wife Jane (who would become a greatly appreciated art model to the movement) were quick to discard all mass-produced furniture that was available to them, and so with the help of their circle they spent two years furnishing and decorating the place. The house would become a statement of the value of a handcrafted living space, and inspired by this success, they founded Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. An interior design company fully focussed on the principles they used while building their own home. Initially they wanted to focus mostly on large scale murals and tapestries, but they ended up becoming most known for their work in stained glass instead.

Due to some unfortunate circumstances however, the idea of their medieval style craft-based community was abandoned, and in 1865 Morris sold Red House and moved back to London.

From there, they continued work via their company, receiving a commission to decorate at the South Kennington Museum, and another at St. James's Palace. During this same period Morris was focussing on his first wallpaper design, inspired by and made through the beauty of nature. This because while the designs clearly reference plants, trees and animals, they were also painted through meticulous research on historical printing and dying methods. He found it very important to focus on every single aspect of the making process,

creating everything himself. Personally, I think this greatly proves how much respect he had for his materials, work and skill, as well as his revulsion for mass production and industrialism.

This same message is to be very clearly read in *The Earthly Paradise*, an epically poetic retelling of Greek and Scandinavian legends and myths. Morris was working on the first volume of this, but I'll talk more about the importance of this book in a following subchapter.

In 1875 Faulkner & Co. was renamed Morris & company²⁰, after he became the sole director. He started focusing more on the production and designing of his wallpapers and tapestries. Outside of his business which was already always heavily politically tinted, he became increasingly frustrated with society around him. In 1884 he helped found the Socialist League. I've read a few of his texts about how and why he became a socialist, and I feel it is safe to boil it down to the following.

He had an intense hatred of modern industrial civilization's impact on art and humanity, coupled with the desire to create a more beautiful and meaningful society for all. He was fed up with hypocritical politicians profiting off broken backs from labourers and lower class, and desired an end to commercialism, imperialism, toxic industrialization and classicism.

'How can I ask working-men passing up and down these hideous streets day to day to care about beauty?' - how I became a socialist, Morris

Due to his increased political frustrations, Morris started to pull away from his company and art in the commercial sense. He saw that only the rich hypocrites could afford the time and effort that went into his creations and realised he was partly feeding the machine he couldn't stand. Instead, he started focussing very heavily on his political activism. While he still made designs, tapestries and especially writings, they were all made without any desire to be bought or sold.

His main objective was to inspire a society to change. To respect integrity, craftsmanship, nature and humanitarian values above all.

²⁰ "Morris and Co.: Heritage Icons, Journal." Morris & Co., 30 July 2024, www.wmorrisandco.com/eu/about-us. Accessed 14 May 2026.

1.4 The Arts and crafts Movement

'All the minor arts were in a state of complete degradation especially in England, and accordingly in 1861 with the conceited courage of a young man I set myself to reforming all that.'

The Arts and Crafts movement²¹ didn't start at the whim of a thought. Morris didn't sit on a bench in a park one random Tuesday and thought to himself 'Hey you know what! Let me start an artistic movement today!'. No, instead the directive took shape throughout the entirety of his life. This is why I felt the need to dedicate an entire subchapter of this short paper to a summarised biography. The construction of the aforementioned Red House is often regarded as the first Arts & crafts building, which influenced the entirety of the movement.

In actuality, the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society²² was the first to make use of the name, and while its members were heavily inspired by him, Morris himself only joined the team in 1891, three years after its creation (and five years before his death in 1896).



Figure 5 Printed season ticket, Walter Crane, 1890, England. Museum no. E.4164-1915. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

²¹ Blakesley, Rosalind P., *The arts and crafts movement*. London: Phaidon Press, 2006

²² "Arts and Crafts: An Introduction." *Victoria and Albert Museum*, 23 Apr. 2025, www.vam.ac.uk/articles/arts-and-crafts-an-introduction.

The society was initially formed to shed a new light on the decorative arts, and to create exhibition spaces to showcase these. After Morris joined and finetuned the society into the movement he had been stirring up for years, it turned into the Arts & Crafts movement that had an indelible impact on the modern art world.

Led by Morris, riding on Ruskin's ideas that a nation's social health was heavily intertwined with the way its goods and cities were created or built, and inspired by others like Gothic revivalist Augustus Pugin as interior designer and architect, the Arts and Crafts movement flourished in the final decade of the 19th century and into the first of the 20th.

Exhibition spaces like the original one in London sprouted up in cities like Birmingham, Manchester, Edinburgh and Glasgow, in doing so opening space to spread the artist's message; A better system of design and manufacturing is in fact possible and would actively improve people's lives. Organisations and guilds thriving on those principles were erected at rapid pace, influencing progressive new art schools and technological colleges all throughout Britain to incorporate a revival of artistic techniques.

It is notable that a great many of the artists active in the movement were originally architects. The idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* was a very popular one, and this often translated in projects similar to Red House. Soon people started deciding their ideals could be much better acted upon in the rural countryside than the ever-progressing cities, and so many organisations and individuals left to work in places with greater eye for nature, simplicity and a slower, more humane pace.

This made for a very fast decline in people actively pushing the agenda, causing the Arts & Crafts movement to rapidly decline in popularity. Industrialised cities instead quickly shifted to ideals of the Jugendstil, Art Nouveau, Modernism & Functionalism, and a decade and a world war later the combination of these: Art Deco.

Making art and architecture through the ideals of the Arts & Crafts took a lot of time, skill and effort, and in the industrialised world there was unfortunately room for none of these. The only ones who could afford the style were those so rich it could be questioned if they were even a part of the society the movement was trying to change. Many artists either walked the same path of Morris in deciding active protest was the only way, others caved into the modernist style or were smothered by reality.



Figure 6 Woodcut print, Munakata Shikō, 1954, Japan. Museum no. CIRC.283-1955.
© Victoria and Albert Museum, London

While the active artists dwindled rather quickly, the ideas that defined the movement did anything but. Conversation spread from Britain the central Europe, then to America, and eventually to Japan around ca. 1926²³. The country suffered a very similar issue of rapid industrialization, so a very own version of the Arts & Crafts was instated as the Mingei Movement²⁴ ('folk crafts').

The movement was active for only a relatively short period of time, but its influence still ripples through in many places and societal levels. Though I personally believe we could be feeling it a lot more. The artists of the late 19th century were faced with many challenges that ultimately led the movement to dwindle, so I would like to compare these to what challenges we have today and if we thus have a chance at reviving the valuable way of looking at art and ultimately life. To do so, I'll first have to establish how the movement is still active in my own daily life, and for this, I focus on Morris's favourite form of literature: Fantasy.

²³ "Arts and Crafts: An Introduction." *Victoria and Albert Museum*, 23 Apr. 2025, www.vam.ac.uk/articles/arts-and-crafts-an-introduction.

²⁴ "Arts and Crafts: Beyond the UK." *Victoria and Albert Museum*, 17 Apr. 2024, www.vam.ac.uk/articles/arts-and-crafts-beyond-the-uk?srsltid=AfmBOoqDA3t8C6ziS88kkmiUk8utD5qvIXN8FXgSraCDojXrTVPDAkNq. Last chapter

1.5 The Earthly Paradise: From dwarves to dragons

'Forget six counties overhung with smoke, Forget the snorting steam and piston stroke, Forget the spreading of the hideous town; Think rather of the pack-horse on the down, And dream of London, small and white and clean, The clear Thames bordered by its gardens green'

- William Morris, 'Prologue', the earthly Paradise

As promised in the subchapter on Morris, I'd now like to take a closer look at his writings. As mentioned, he was heavily inspired by historic romance writers that came before him. Myths, legends and fairytales were a clear source of inspiration he used to form his views on the world around him. They were also the basis of *The Earthly Paradise*, the book from which the quote above was taken.

*The Earthly Paradise*²⁵ is a compilation of 24 tales, all inspired by myths and legends, and all written in a very lyrical poetical style. This book is also why he got offered the position of Poet Laureate of the United Kingdom in 1892. He declined this, claiming it went against his socialistic activist political opinions which were very critical towards the government.



Figure 7 *Strawberry Thief* (detail), design registered 1883. William Morris (British, 1834–1896). Indigo-discharged cotton: plain weave, block printed; 88.2 x 99 cm. The Cleveland Museum of Art, Gift of Mrs. Henry Chisholm, 1937.696.

²⁵ Morris, William. *The Earthly Paradise: The Complete Edition*. 1868. Ragged Hand - Read and Co., 2021.

The Earthly Paradise is far from his only literary work though. Of his fantasy novels I have so far read two others: *News from Nowhere* (1890)²⁶ and *The Wood Beyond the World* (1894)²⁷. In the first he writes through the perspective of a Victorian man suddenly transported over a century in the future.

Specifically, he describes widespread houses which are all made individually with great attention to the crafts and materials that go in them. The describes a clean and lively Thames, with fields, woods and smaller greenery all around it. People don't work because they have to, as a monetary system of any sort seems barbaric to these people, but because they genuinely enjoy labour of any sort as it betters themselves and their society. Education in our traditional sense does not exist. People simply teach each other what is valuable to them, and the rest they will figure out through interest and experience. Spending weeks or months just frolicking in the forest is considered a greatly valuable way to spend one's time to matter their age, as nature and agriculture is revered.

People are kind and live to better the days of all they pass. Even children create beautiful object "fit for only the kingliest of kings", and give them away to strangers with great pleasure. Because of their mentality and way of life, these people live incredible long lives, keeping their vitality, spirit and incredible outward beauty.

This utopian world he describes is based on exactly what he missed in his own society, and while the text is so estranging in its 'too good to be true' aspect, I would love nothing more than to dream along with the writer, and aspire to make my reality just a little more like the one he had hoped it to be.

The novel ends with the man slowly waking up from his idyllic dream and waking up in his own time. At first he is incredibly devastated at the idea of losing this incredible world, before he realises he could make it a reality, if only he shares the dream with enough others. He decides that instead of letting it be a dream, it will be a vision instead. One that he and any who will hear it will make come true.

The third of Morris' novels I will be discussing is the *Wood Beyond the World*. I must admit, this book is probably one of the strangest stories I have ever read. A very short summary for context:

²⁶ Morris, William. *News From Nowhere*. 1890. Penguin Classics, 2009.

²⁷ Morris, William. *The Wood Beyond the World*. 1894. Createspace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016.

Golden Walter is a man whose wife was unfaithful, so he set sail, leaving his old father to deal with the mess. Upon arrival at the first island, they find Walter learns that his father has been killed by his in-laws and so must quickly return home for revenge and to take over his father's estate. He doesn't really want to, but society compels him. While underway their ship gets caught in a storm which takes them to a mysterious island. Here they meet an old man with a dark past who tells him not to follow the mountain pass; Walter does it anyway. He makes this decision mostly because he is chasing a vision of three strange figures: a beautiful maiden, a hideous dwarf, and a gorgeously regal lady.

He meets all three of them in a strange and dubious game of love, betrayal, power and pretty much every 21st century trigger warning you can think of. Everything is written in a very beautiful and lyrical archaic style, so it definitely feels like an estranging read at times. Eventually the problem gets fixed entirely off screen while Walter hides in the bushes somewhere, and he runs off with his beloved the maiden.

I personally thought the book would end there, but it really didn't. They go off to meet the 'bear-folk'. A rough people who they trick with magic and guile. After leaving Walter suddenly becomes king of a realm completely at random, and they live happily ever after.

This retelling is admittedly incredibly crude, and I would certainly advise anyone to read it for themselves as I believe the overall story to be the thing with the least amount of relevance to the book. It is filled top to bottom with strange symbolism and hints, never providing the reader with what they expect, yet somehow still clinging to the Arthurian style of valour and honour romances.

I believe the book to be open to many interpretations, but all remain rooted in Morris's love for beauty and hatred for the modernistic society of 'progress'.

Aside from its dubious storytelling choices, there can be no doubt of the influence the novel had on later writers. The idea of a personified good fighting evil can at this point be described as absolutely ancient, from the zoroastrisme²⁸, which begun in the 6th century BCE, to whatever bedtime story your mother read you as a child, the possibilities have always been endless. But the reason I point so heavily towards William Morris, is because he was the first to make this fantasy and his real life collide in a centre of pure activism, with political and societal influence so impactful that its relevance still reverberates strongly today.

Morris wrote his *Earthly Paradise*, *News from Nowhere*, *Wood Beyond the World* and so many others as a means of wide-reaching protest and reach wide it did.

²⁸ Wikipedia-bijdragers. "Zoroastrisme." *Wikipedia*, 27 Mar. 2026, nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zoroastrisme. Last consulted 15/05/2026.

Chapter Two: Contemporary influence

2.1 Tolkien and fantasy writers

*"Where Our Hearts Truly Lie Is In Peace And Quiet And
Good Tilled Earth. For All Hobbits Share A Love Of
Things That Grow." - Bilbo*

One of the most famous and relevant neo-Morris fantasy writers, is without a doubt John Ronald Reuel Tolkien. With his most famous work 'The Lord of the Rings', Tolkien managed to perfectly translate Morris' socio political ideals.

In this book Tolkien starts by describing a kind, generous life loving folk he calls Hobbits. These humanoid creatures live in houses in the ground, have a great love and affinity for nature, and spend their days enjoying life by carving wood, growing and eating food, smoking pipes and enjoying the company of family and community.

They are a pre-industrial agricultural society, which is inherently in complete opposition with the antagonist of the books. Sauron is the personification of evil, which is supported by his actions going directly against everything hobbits stand for. In Sauron's quest for world domination, he cuts down ancient wisdom filled forests, leaves nothing but barren lands, creates ugly soldiers and minions without any coherent thought but doing their masters bidding.

Not only that, but his main base of operations is the volcanic landscape of Mordor. An area devoid of colour and life, instead housing corpse filled bogs, creatures like enormous spiders that will enweb you in an attempt to keep you there until your dying breath, sharp ash covered rocks as far as the eye can see, and at its centre, a looming ever burning volcano, belching fires and lung-searing smoke just like the smog of mass industry.

I myself made the relation between Morris and Tolkien while reading 'The Wood Beyond The World'. In this fantasy novel there is a character referred to as a dwarf, described as a hideous little monster with a great number of similarities between himself and Tolkien's character Gollum. After making this connection I noticed many details the younger writer had taken over, but after a bit of internet searching, I discovered I was certainly not the only one to connect these dots.

2.2 Hobbits and Handicraft

*'Arts and Crafts was a movement that was, at its heart, about integrity. It was about respect for skill in craft as a concept and for the people who possessed these skills, and had worked their entire lives to attain them. It was about the materials themselves and how skilled craftsmen used these materials to create something worthwhile, lasting, useful and beautiful. It was about retaining a certain order in the natural world by respecting where these materials came from and the manner in which they were obtained'*²⁹

- Gina L. Hewitt

This quote is taken directly from a master thesis named Handicraft, hobbit craft and the fires of Mordor written by Gina L. Hewitt in 2014. In this paper, Hewitt dives deep into how William Morris manages to influence our own contemporary society through the means of fantasy, media and scepticism of the material world. She focusses on explaining what the spirit of the arts and crafts truly entailed, so she could properly relate them to their relevance today.

Just like I did in the previous subchapter (but of course way more in depth and detailed), Hewitt talks about how elements from the famous fantasy trilogy are clear metaphors for societal critique. Further than that she explains how through this, the arts and crafts have pushed their values onto fans and ultimately society as a whole.

Fantasy has the ability to reach a widespread of people, especially in the film media. Have you ever watched a particularly intriguing movie only to afterwards feel just a little changed? Whether it leaves you deep in thought and suspicious of society like The Matrix or ready to start practicing high kicks after watching Karate Kid, these created stories influence us all. Specific tales that were heavily inspired on the Arts & Crafts ideals will thus automatically imprint a level of longing towards a more Hobbit-like lifestyle.

²⁹ Hewitt, Gina L., "Handicraft, Hobbitcraft and the Fires of Mordor: The Arts and Crafts Movement, Industrial Revolution and The Lord of the Rings" (2014). Master of Liberal Studies Theses. 51.
<http://scholarship.rollins.edu/mls/51>

2.3 Enactment and re-enactment

To stay close to Tolkien's Lord of the rings, which I believe to be a near direct descendant of Morris' tales, I'd like to mention a first bit of proof of how the fantasy medium is quickly growing to indeed be an incredibly important part of a vast number of daily lives. I present: The Brandywine festival in New Zealand.

WHAT IS THE BRANDYWINE FESTIVAL?

Not Simply a Festival.

A Living World.

The Brandywine Festival is a fully immersive multi-day experience set in the The Shire. From the moment you arrive, the modern world gently fades – replaced by lantern-lit lanes, woodsmoke, living music, and a community of people who all share the same warm Hobbit identity.

Everyone arrives as a Hobbit of their own creation. You bring your name, your backstory, your corner of The Shire. The world does the rest.

This descriptive excerpt was taken directly from their website. As you thus may have guessed, is the festival based around the idea of using imagination to experience and live the lifestyle of Tolkien's protagonist race: Hobbits. If you take a quick look at their program you'll see a variety of workshops like dancing, cooking and role-playing, but more importantly to this paper, crafts like weaving, spinning, other textile-based arts, carving and whittling.

People thus spend their free time living in exactly that world Tolkien and eminently Morris were fighting for; through the fantasy medium!

The Brandywine Festival isn't the only one of its sort by far. Every year thousands of sort like events take place all across the world. LARP-ing (Live-Action Role-Playing) events come in all shapes and forms. The Brandywine has a very focussed fantasy theme, but the main topic can defer an incredible lot. To mention a few close to home:

MysteriA in Aarschot is a small event celebrating an overall fantastical theme with heavy focus on small independent artists working medieval style crafts. Sturm auf Zons³⁰ is very focussed on a specific historical event, re-enacting the siege on Zons with thousands of enthusiasts who every year spend three days forming a tight community around the shared interest and the beauty and simplicity of medieval life. Events like Comic-Con and facts combine these ideas with the wider spread of the entertainment industry like cinema, videogames or other internet-based media. No matter the overall theme though, at every single one of these events there is plentiful space reserved for the making or showcasing of art.

Elftopia, The Celestial Court, Siren Haven: Mythologica, Médiévales de Corroy le Château, Elfia, Fantasy Fest, Helicon, Icarus Foundation, Dresdner Rauh Nächte, MegaCon, Normannia, Festival Yggdrasil, Ostara, Trolls & Legends, Natale di Roma,...³¹

These are but a few examples of events, representing an incredibly quickly rising community of people who spend their time focussing on living simpler lives in tune with each other, nature and crafts.

On October 29th, 2026, I visited Lucca Comics & games in the city of Lucca, Italy. Anyone who has ever been to the city could easily tell you this is a large, historically beautiful place with jaw dropping architecture. I'm not exaggerating when I say the entire city was absolutely brimming with people. While I myself was previously aware of the reach of these types of events, I was absolutely not prepared for the total of 280.000 people inside the old city walls. Not only that, but the incredible variety of sorts of visitors was jaw dropping. I talked to some who had spent years handcrafting their outfits. The respect for gravely time-consuming work with the intention of creating something beautiful was nearly overwhelming.

Another very well-known example of creating a fantastical space to fuel your own happiness, are theme parks. Many of these are of course known as a place for thrill seeking and candy eating, but inherently theme parks are places created to bring fantasy into reality.

³⁰ "Lebendiges Mittelalter in Zons Am Rhein." Sturm Auf Zons 2026, www.sturm-auf-zons.de.

³¹ Valk, Nienke. "Festivals and Events Calendar 2026." Celtic WebMerchant, 15 Jan. 2026, www.celticwebmerchant.com/nl-be/blogs/community/middeleeuwse-fantasy-festivals-kalender-2026.

2.4 Dungeons and Dragons

'History (so called) has remembered the kings and warriors, because they destroyed; Art has remembered the people, because they created.'

- Morris

Dungeons and Dragons³² is tabletop role playing game (or ttrpg) first introduced in 1974 by Ernest Gary Gygax and David Arneson. In 1997 it was acquired by Wizards of the Coast, a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. For about two decades the game remained a very niche thing to do or know about, generally being mostly played by small friend groups of societal outcasts often referred to with the term 'geeks'.

After the 2000s geek culture experienced a massive uprising in popularity, mostly because of its embrace in pop culture, which mainstreamed fantasy. Movie adaptations of Lord of the Rings and shows like Game of Thrones made fantasy a normal and even integral part of media. Other shows like The Big Bang Theory, Community and later Stranger Things showed the gameplay directly, which led to many people wanting to try it for themselves.

Now DnD has become incredibly popular at an amazingly fast pace. The movie 'Dungeons & Dragons: Honour Among Thieves' was created in 2023 (inspired by a first DnD movie that aired in 2000), and all over the internet shows, podcasts, series, books, animations, movies, and many more are popping up daily. Big players here are for example Critical Role or Dimension 20.

Now why is this relevant to my paper? Well for starters, because it has become so popular that everyone I meet either plays it or knows someone who does. While this is of course greatly because my own interests lie here, I still believe the speed at which its popularity rises shows of the incredible interest contemporary society has in the medium of fantasy, and so indirectly in Morris' ideals regarding The Arts & Crafts. To elaborate its importance further we should look closer at the contents of the game.

³² Hosch, William L. "Dungeons and Dragons." Britannica, www.britannica.com/topic/Dungeons-and-Dragons. Last Consulted 12/05/2026.

DnD at its core is heavily inspired by the very same medieval fantasy that William Morris called for. I would in fact argue that through his contributions to fantasy, he himself inspired the game a great deal.

To play DnD you create your own character by using a rulebook³³ and most importantly your imagination. You then play as this character in a world either imagined for you by friends or others, or one you made entirely yourself. As your character lives and interacts with this world they will continuously shape their surroundings, often requiring innovative and creative thinking to do so.

As it is fully based on imagination, the way to play can vary a great deal. Some groups choosing to play in a mythology-based setting, an authoritarian steam punk one or basically anything. The most common one though is the medieval high fantasy. The ruleset provided by the game has some standard races, classes and backgrounds for you to choose from. Interesting to see here, is that many of these choices are heavily reliant on crafts. A lot of people's characters coming from families of blacksmiths, weavers or woodworkers. The druid is a class based entirely around harmony with nature, while the artificer allows for tinkering and craftiness.

Many players learn how to draw or write better to support their creativity. Just the other day I was in a board game shop in the city of Gent, and I saw a man there sitting at a table meant for playing with whittling tools in hand. He was hand carving Dungeons and Dragons minifigures to use in his gameplay. He told me the role play game itself is what pushed him to try the craft, and that since the fantasy world was so heavily based on his own imagination, it felt only right to fuel this through the many hours spent intricately carving the world he created into the natural material.³⁴

"Fantasy is about creation and letting our imagination guide us to meaningful encounters".

³³ Frontpage - DND 5th Edition. dnd5e.wikidot.com/#toc98.

³⁴ Russell, Mollie. "DnD Fan Hand Carves Wooden Miniatures for His Campaign." Wargamer, 2 May 2024, www.wargamer.com/dnd/miniatures-wood-carving. Last consulted on 12/05/2026



Figure 8 Image from Russell, Mollie. "DnD Fan Hand Carves Wooden Miniatures for His Campaign." Wargamer, 2 May 2024, www.wargamer.com/dnd/miniatures-wood-carving.

DnD is inherently about creation and imagination, which to me sounds a lot like what art should often aspire to be.

The insane popularity of the game proves to me that many in our contemporary society crave escape from the efficiency-based ideals of daily lives, instead rather returning to imagination, arts, crafts and community.

2.5 Fighting progress: Blood in the machine

*'As the scales tipped against working men and women, as machines reaped profits for their owners at the expense of their neighbors, some of those neighbors decided to fight back. They showed us whose blood runs in the machines that move the world.'*³⁵

-Brian Merchant

During the writing of this paper, I aspired to read as many books as possible, articles and semi-related texts to better understand the world I find myself in. Much of this has been historical information to better contextualise myself, but aside from that I also tried to learn as much as possible about what it is exactly I'm trying to understand. The result of this has been shortly explained in the introduction, but now I would like to talk about two very specific books that helped me grasp the situation the technological revolution places me in. Their relevance doesn't stop there either, as since both books were written very recently, it proves to me others are actively critical towards their societal situation.

The first example is written by Brian Merchant in 2023. The book is titled 'Blood in the machine'³⁶: The origins of the rebellion against Big Tech. It goes incredibly in depth about specifically the situation of the Luddites and does so by continuously comparing their lives to ours. He starts off with giving lists of people of interest, after which a collection of machines (specifically for textile work) with images and explanations.

He names real examples of people's lives, like the one of Robert Blincoe³⁷ and other children like him, bought by textile factories, forced to work through horrid abuse and the looming threat of machines, people, and death. He names Gravener Henson³⁸ as an example of a skilled craftsman who felt forced to take action against the situation wrongful mechanisation put him in, and he compares it to for example independent Taxi drivers who lost their livelihood because of Uber and Lyft. The book follows the lives and stories of several historical personas, all ultimately to better understand the

³⁵ Merchant, Brian. Blood In The Machine: The origins of the rebellion against Big Tech. New York: Hachette Book Group, September 2023, Introduction:p.6

³⁶ Merchant, Brian. Blood In The Machine: The origins of the rebellion against Big Tech. New York: Hachette Book Group, September 2023

³⁷ Merchant, Brian. Blood In The Machine: The origins of the rebellion against Big Tech. New York: Hachette Book Group, September 2023, P.14-16? p.92, p.313

³⁸ Merchant, Brian. Blood In The Machine: The origins of the rebellion against Big Tech. New York: Hachette Book Group, September 2023, p.28, p.114, p.203, p.252, p.268, p.288, p.322

meaning and reasoning behind the first known uprising against big tech. Eventually, near the end he compiles his findings and makes it crystal clear how all the ingredients for a similar uprising to happen now.

The second book I wanted to mention is 'The AI Con'³⁹, written by Emily M. Bender and Alex Hanna in 2025. Herein the writer focusses mainly on what the phenomenon now widely known to us as AI actually means. A newish type of technology that to many if not all readers will be familiar with. They start by debunking the term and actively explaining how "AI" is simply a marketing scheme. While the finer details and contents of the book are incredibly interesting and relevant to anyone living in contemporary society, for this paper it will suffice to summarise their conclusion.

AI in all its shapes and forms is not and has never been what it was sold as. There is no such thing as artificial intelligence. There are no machines coming for your jobs and livelihoods. What there are, however, are tech giants and venture capitalists that would rather make you obsolete than lose a cent. There is no need to fear machines or technologies, but it is vitally important to be incredibly critical of the people who make and popularise them. The technologies like AI need to be regarded together with the intentions with which they were made, As well as the effect they can have on your humanity.

But resisting hype can also be empowering, grounding, and even joyful. It is empowering to reaffirm the value of our skills and expertise. It is grounding to lean in to the value of human-to-human connection, of being human together. And it can be flat-out fun to find the silliest excesses of the hype machine and deflate it, with ridicule as praxis.⁴⁰

- The AI con

Reading books like the aforementioned make it clear to me that my frustrations with technology usage aren't rooted in a place of hatred or longing for the past, but rather a love for what could be.

³⁹ Bender, Emily M., Alex Hanna. The AI con: how to fight big tech's hype and create the future we want. New York: Harper Collins, 2025

⁴⁰ Bender, Emily M., Alex Hanna. The AI con: how to fight big tech's hype and create the future we want. New York: Harper Collins, 2025, p.196

Chapter Three: Contemporary context

3.1 Fantasy in the digital age

"You know, hobbies don't always have to be useful. I'm enjoying the uselessness of today, and readying my usefulness for tomorrow."

– Gustave, character from Clair Obscure: Expedition 33

Books, however, are not the only media currently being used for critical research; and most importantly the spreading of the ideas as result thereof. As mentioned before, fantasy has become a fully normalised part of mainstream culture. No matter how involved or interested you are with the style, it is simply a standard part of contemporary civilization.

As I have argued fantasy is a wide and easily reachable road for anyone to experience neo-Morris ideals and even ways of life. It introduces people to art, crafts and other topics that can bring meaning to otherwise modern streamlined daily going ons. I've already talked about real physical and community-based ways of this, but in this chapter, I would like to move things to the virtual world.

The main reason why neo-Morris fantasy gained in popularity so rapidly was because of movies, series, social media, virtual platforms, the general internet and gaming.

On April 8th, 2025, Kepler Interactive published a videogame developed by Sandfall Interactive: Clair obscur: Expedition 33⁴¹. The world itself was created with a complete and utter focus on art, specifically in a dark fantasy Belle Epoque style. Everything about the story is deeply rooted in sculpture, architecture, performative arts and many more, but most importantly: painting. From the names and linguistic terms used by the characters to the fact that (as it turns out later in the story) the entire world is literally painted in a canvas.

The storyline and dialogue are often incredibly deep, emotional, unapologetically uncomfortable and very relevant to any artist living in today's world. Struggling with death, loss, grief, the feeling of helplessness and getting beaten down at every turn only to get back up no matter what to fight for what you believe in and sacrifice for the ones who come after. The game is fully packed with

⁴¹ Overview. Expedition 33. Consulted on 13/05/2026.
<https://www.expedition33.com/overview>

both obvious and more hidden messages of the ever-looming danger the arts and humanities are facing through the effects of the greater power of "progress".

After the game released, it was met with immediate success, being applauded for mostly what the project represented. The gaming industry has been facing ever growing pressure from the efficiency-based society for years, so the societal critique from art for art was absolutely beautiful and inspiring for many artists, developers, animators, and others.

This is also why the game faced strong and harsh backlash when one of their developers admitted to having used an AI placeholder during early production. At this time, generative artificial intelligence was still in its budding phase, leaving many wondering how this technology should be used. The makers of Expedition 33 thus used artificially generated images for a few small posters in the background of act 1, to give their artists and investors an idea of the final product. They claimed however that this felt very wrong, so when everything was then set up, they fully replaced everything with real human made art.

"Everything in the game is human made," Broche responded, "When AI first came out in 2022, we'd already started on the game. It was just a new tool, we tried it, and we didn't like it at all. It felt wrong."⁴²

Sandfall interactive has now noted they are against the use of AI in the creative process and anything that entails, as it goes against everything their project stands for; information they say they were not aware of when they were trying it out. Many have forgiven the developers as the major public agrees on their thought process and appreciate their harsh final stance against the technology. This however comes to show just how many people within the online creative community are incredibly critical towards what types of technology are helpful, and which are unacceptably destructive.

Clair Obscur: Expedition 33 isn't the only one of its sort by a longshot. Societal critique has been imbedded in the medium as long as it has been around. A few examples of this are Fallout 4 (about consumerism And Immoral Corporations), Deus Ex (Extreme Wealth Imbalance and Misused Technology), Mirror's Edge (Mass Surveillance Police State), Detroit become human (the dangers of uncontrolled

⁴² Hernandez, Patricia. *After GOTY pull, Clair Obscur devs draw line in sand over AI: 'Everything will be made by humans by us': A recent interview session between Twitch streamers and content creators saw Sandfall Interactive clarifying its AI usage.* Dec. 2025.
<https://www.polygon.com/game-awards-expedition-33-disqualified-did-it-use-ai-response/>. Last consulted 13/05/2026

Artificial Intelligence and the question of artificial empathy vs. human empathy)⁴³.

A very important factor to consider here as well, is that within the fantasy media there has been shift happening regarding the simplicity of its content. While many know the media to be very black and white, fantasy of the past couple of years has been increasingly denying of clichés, instead preferring to be as critical as possible on contemporary society and often itself. In other words: no more good against evil, but rather a dialogue of what the lesser evil could be, and an active struggle for morality which forces people to question their worldview.

Next to gaming there is an abundance of other digital media with the same idea. People in the animation and movie industry are for example actively fighting back against the looming threat of Hollywood's interest in decreasing the presence of human influence in their art.

In November 2024 animator Aaron Blaise released the short film *Snow bear*⁴⁴. The entire film was hand drawn using old flipping paper techniques the animator also used while working on early Disney movies like *Brother Bear*, *the Lion King* and *Spirit*. In the end Blaise spent 3 whole years singlehandedly making 11000 drawings. He did this solely for the love of his craft and the hope to inspire young artists to continue the tradition.

⁴³ Winter-Roach, Jordan Blaise. "Games About the Dangers of Unchecked Capitalism." *GameRant*, 20 May 2024, gamerant.com/games-about-dangers-unchecked-capitalism. Last consulted 14/05/2026

⁴⁴ "Snow Bear Short Film | an Independent Short Film, Hand Drawn by Aaron Blaise." *Snow Bear Short Film | an Independent Short Film, Hand Drawn by Aaron Blaise*, 6 Feb. 2026, snowbearshort.com. Last consulted on 14/05/2026



Figure 9 Image taken from "Snow Bear Short Film | an Independent Short Film, Hand Drawn by Aaron Blaise." 6 Feb. 2026, snowbearshort.com.

Another perhaps more well-known example is Laika Studios⁴⁵. Instead of focussing on staying solely with old techniques, they choose to combine it with innovative technology. This does not mean AI, but rather the art of engineering. Laika Studios focus entirely on making stop motion movies. This is a well known painstakingly slow and artistic process, handcrafting everything from the characters to the set, only to then move everything frame by frame into position to create fluid motions.

The studio takes this process, and instead of using technology to replace human creativity or craft, they use it to enhance those things. For example, they made a roaring ocean with constant movement within the waves. The creators decided to made hundreds of drawings and mats to mount them on an electric construction that could move them all in tandem, creating a shimmering ocean effect.

Laika Studios is a notable example of how technology is incredible, as long as it is used in the right way.

⁴⁵ LAIKA Studios. www.laika.com.

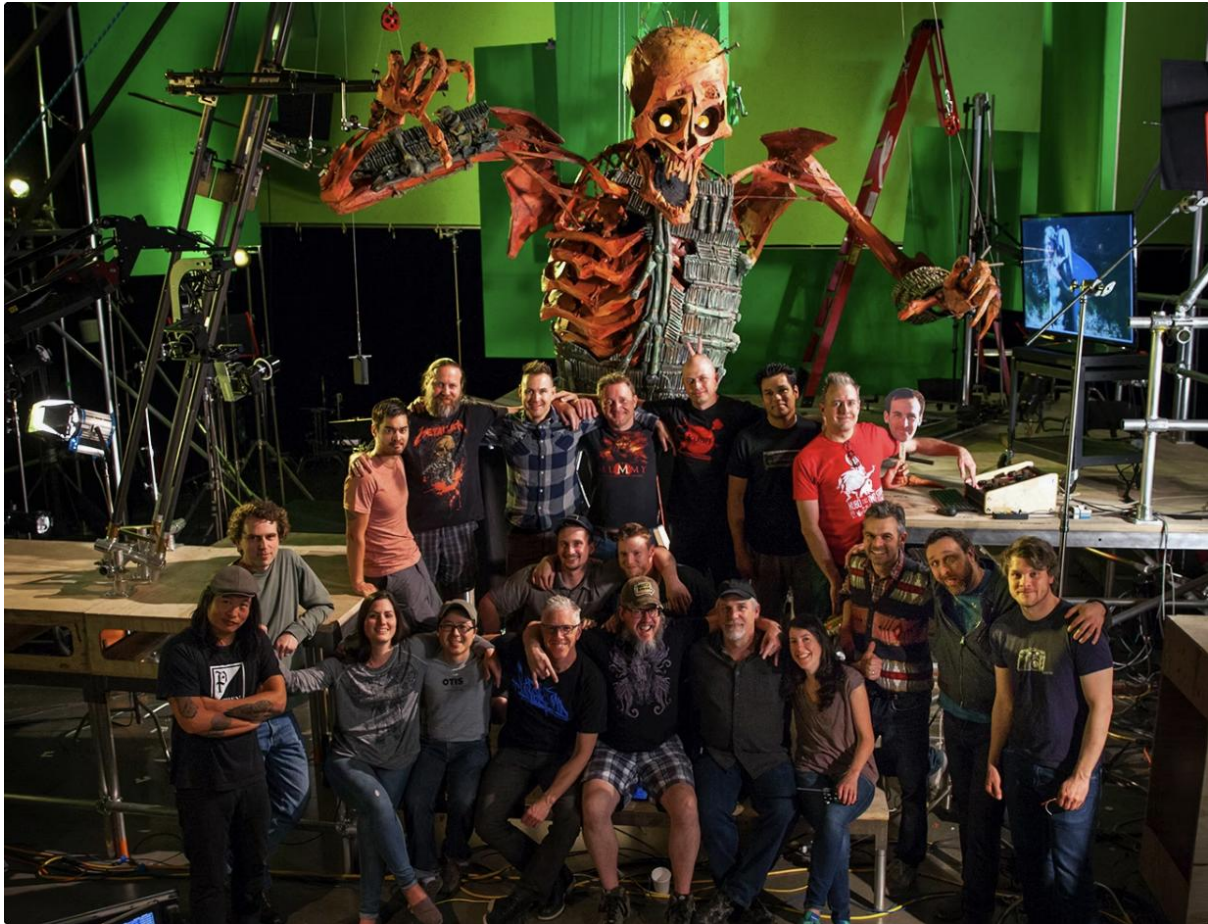


Figure 10 Picture from the set of Kubo. Laika Studios. <https://www.laika.com/our-films/kubo>

This is in complete opposition with for example Disney, who in April 2026 decided to fire ca. 1000 of their artists and creative personnel with the intention of replacing them with outside contractors and AI⁴⁶.

⁴⁶ Crisolago, Mike. "Disney Axes 1,000 Jobs, Gutting Marvel's Award-winning Team – 1 Artist Was Laid off in a Room Adorned With His Own Mural." *Yahoo Finance*, 17 Apr. 2026, finance.yahoo.com/markets/stocks/articles/disney-axes-1-000-jobs-100500306.html. Last consulted 17/05/2026

3.2 Contemporary Luddites

In December 2025 the company of Disney signed a contract with OpenAI that would for the first time license its intellectual property to an AI platform, with a one billion dollars equity investment in OpenAI.⁴⁷ The companies new app called Sora allowed its user to generate short films, and the three-years licence contract would let Sora feature over 200 of Disney's characters to do so.

However, only three months after the ink had dried Disney stopped the deal. As running the app costed them approximately 15 million dollars per day and people just simply refused to use it because of love for the artistic Disney movies they grew up with⁴⁸, OpenAI made the forced decision to pull the plug on Sora entirely.

To get people to not use the app, first an insane amount of exposure was needed. Thousands of posts and videos from all over the world called for a Disney boycott by simply not using the app, cancelling Disney+ subscriptions, and staying away from the Disney theme parks. And it worked! While the company still fully intends to use AI wherever they can, the Sora case shows us that this way of protest does indeed work. At the time of writing this, people are actively shaming the company for their firing round of creatives in April 2026. Maybe if enough people jump on the boycott train, there is hope for change?

This brings me to a question I have been asked before about a contemporary sort of revival of the Luddites: During the industrial revolution people could simply smash the wooden frames to bits, but the digital age is much grander and feels way more complex than early textile automation. If rash revolutionists were to blow up data centres, Big Tech factories or maybe even Silicon Valley as a whole, they would in one fell swoop take out a lot more than just the machinations responsible for exploitation. The entire contemporary world would instantly collapse, and the actual positive progress we did make through the technical and digital revolution would be lost.

⁴⁷ Jackson, Abby. "Disney Cancels \$1B Deal With OpenAI After Video Platform Sora Is Shut Down: 'The Future Is Human.'" Yahoo Finance, 31 Mar. 2026, finance.yahoo.com/sectors/technology/articles/disney-cancels-1b-deal-openai-043000427.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAIAsX-tHqiYxNKKmwSgpjDIRPfnWhDFtwx2SrJhPkq3Z6Dnph9n6l5QThDbMIRQT3-CrKB2dfp-WWb-jnwEqHYRGHhqqmEK6fePF7fbd5aIveS-5rXVSSxuhN2xOpihsT0DTTlZApE6YliJRXMnG_ESvRN4FxAQXzfXrH0QaVv. Last consulted on 14/05/2026

⁴⁸ McCallum, Shiona. Creative Industries "incredibly Worried" About OpenAI-Disney Deal. 12 Dec. 2025, www.bbc.com/news/articles/c5ydp1gdqwqo. Last consulted 14/05/2026

This is why I believe that at this moment in time, one of the best ways to do a Luddite like way of protest is to take inspiration from the Sora case. Spread information, be loud about what you think is right while always having your ears open to new information and simply do not participate in things you don't stand behind.

A second great way of protest leans heavily into the 'just don't use it' method. It is the answer to the common question: "But if we don't use these technologies, then what do we use instead?". To this I say very simply exactly what you were doing before it came out. A few weeks back I was scrolling through Instagram when I came across a very interesting post. A small group of people had bought an old farm in Alsace, France, to turn into La Table Ronde de l'Architecture: School of architecture and crafts⁴⁹. This project started in Brussels in 2020 by two people who had gotten their master's in architecture, only to realise they knew nothing about the skills of building. They started with workshops and summer school camps to learn about traditional building materials like stone, wood and dirt. By now they had grown enough to take on the project of building a permanent school, using Instagram and the internet as a means of reaching people to spread their goals.⁵⁰

Several such projects or companies use the same method. Jack Badger for example is a company focussed solely on traditional joinery and woodworking skills⁵¹. Or The Traditional architecture group who actively build and conserve new structures using overall traditional manners⁵².

The reason I bring up these examples is to show an example: you can absolutely use Instagram or other means of social media and modern technologies while still focussing on the traditional methods that will enrich your daily life. Choosing what tech you do or do not use can be a difficult search, but by using all the information provided on the general internet and the ability to converse all across the world should open up the possibility of deciding for yourself what progress actually means.

⁴⁹ *Instagram*.

<https://www.instagram.com/latablerondearchitecture/followers/mutualFirst>
Last consulted on 14/05/2026

⁵⁰ "La Table Ronde De L'Architecture." La TRA,
www.latablerondearchitecture.com/en. Last consulted 14/05/2026

⁵¹ Jack Badger Story. www.jackbadger.co.uk/about-us/jack-badger-story. Last consulted on 14/05/2026

⁵² "Traditional Architecture Group." Traditional Architecture Group,
traditionalarchitecturegroup.org. Last consulted on 14/05/2026

Chapter Four: Conclusions

3.1 On a societal level

'So long as the system of competition in the production and exchange of the means of life goes on, the degradation of the arts will go on; and if that system is to last for ever, then art is doomed, and will surely die; that is to say, civilisation will die.' -
Morris

I have major concerns with the way technology is currently being used, but at the same time I cannot help but still see the incredible possibilities it carries in its palm. This brings me to one of the main questions posed in the introduction of this paper: Can we use the technologies that bring us harm to fight and overcome the risks and effects it itself brought us?

This very paper is largely if not entirely the result of the internet. Social media has inspired and influenced me in many ways to think the way I do. Without it, I would probably never even know about all the amazing people in the world fighting for what they believe in, and I would not have been able to find as much information as I did now without the use of websites and apps.

As someone who grew up with a phone in the palm of their hand, I like to think myself aware of the effects the device has on my attention span, critical thinking skills and overall wellbeing, but that doesn't change the phenomenon I have been seeing on the internet as of late. When I open Instagram, YouTube or TikTok, about 30 percent of posts and videos I see are people warning me about the dangers of the technological revolution we are facing today.

I find this a very interesting notion to receive via the exact supposed problem. This makes me wonder if with enough regulations or self-imposed society wide moral code, we indeed could use social media as the positive carrier of progress it has always claimed to be. This of course must happen while keeping in account that these things I see on social media are also exactly just that. Algorithms create personalised bubbles which show the user exactly what they want to see. My hope here thus lies in spreading enough valuable information that we can influence the bubbles of others, ultimately creating a worldwide platform of hope.

The remaining 70 percent of videos and posts I see are people sharing their craft. Some talk about their traditional stone carving methods, others about ancient methods of building natural housing structures. I see people experimenting with natural materials in the name of their fantasy interest or sharing tips and tricks for drawing and painting.

One of the major problems the Arts & Crafts movement faced that led to its "demise", was the fact that it couldn't reach enough people in a short enough period of time. Now however, thousands of people are sharing their arts and crafts with millions, influencing them from their own homes in a matter of seconds. A great example of this is something I have been seeing more and more lately: Artists and people offering their services not for money, but for trade. Several decorators, tattoo artists, commission artists and more share in their account bio a list of things they accept as payment that doesn't fit in the current monetary system Morris himself despised.

At the start of writing this paper I wondered if it was possible to bring about a revival of the Arts & Crafts ideals, but now I may instead wonder if it is actually already happening. Through the internet and social media, we are given the chance to actively converse with people from all over the world. Sharing techniques, ideas and importantly warnings. I wonder if this contemporary silent neo-Arts & Crafts movement is actually the seed that could inspire the drastic political change I believe the world needs.

It is for this reason that I could never be against technology but am firmly against the use of it as a means for exploitation in the name of capitalism and false progress. I am hopeful and believe we all should be, while actively resisting the common lie shoved down our throats; "AI and progress are inevitable, it is here now and you can't stop it or take it back. Learn to live with it or die by it."

Let's instead of believing this, use the world in our pockets to spread the following facts: Progress is only progress when we move towards something better. Generative artificial intelligence in the way it is used today only leads to polluted air, global water bankruptcy, cognitive decline, AI psychosis, the disappearance of creative jobs, direct exploitation of minorities and people in third world countries, distorted worldviews and collective laziness. What it gives us in return is millions of stolen artworks merged into credit less slob, the ability to outsource that which makes us grow and deeper and deeper pockets of people silently creating an authoritarian tech regime.

The only way for this nightmare to be indeed inevitable, is to lie back and believe it is. Instead what you should do, is to simply not even amuse it. Using ChatGPT, Grok, Google AI or any other will not give you an edge over your peers, it will instead chip away at yourself until you wake up in a reality those science fiction stories have always tried to warn you about.

But resisting hype can also be empowering, grounding, and even joyful. It is empowering to reaffirm the value of our skills and expertise. It is grounding to lean into the value of human-to-human connection, of being human together. And it can be flat-out fun to find the silliest excesses of the hype machine and deflate it, with ridicule as praxis.⁵³

⁵³ Bender, Emily M., Alex Hanna. *The AI con: how to fight big tech's hype and create the future we want*. New York: Harper Collins, 2025, p.196

3.2 My conclusions for contemporary art

*'I do not want art for a few, any more than education
for a few, or freedom for a few.'*⁵⁴

- William Morris

I believe society has shaped our vision to force a need for constant progress. The fear of drowning in the mass of images and information have pressed upon us the idea we need to constantly bring new visions and "unique" progressions into the world. I believe this is an endless illusion that will more often than not cause a decline in value of art both aesthetically and educationally for both the maker and viewer.

In the decade laying between the industrial revolution and the first world war, many artistic movements stepped away from beauty, craftsmanship and nature because this was not remotely what their society had come to represent. Works like for example 'Le bonheur de vivre' made in 1906 by Henri Matisse depict the well known idea of the garden of paradise, but he did so in a strangely grinding and violently primitive way.

While I fully understand and admire his methods of using abstraction to better depict the feeling of reality, I also believe styles like his may indirectly have caused a sort of downfall of value and skill in contemporary art. Do not misunderstand; I in no way am breaking down his knowledge or skill, and value greatly the way these styles shaped the present, but when I for example compare the specific work with one that inspired it: 'Reciproco Amore' made by Agostino Carracci in 1557-1602, I know where my own stylistic preferences lie. The Fauvistic movement and many others of its time were often meant to represent the opposite of beauty, believing that doing otherwise was naïve and foolish. And they did this well, creating an entirely new set of skills and ideals to focus on. I however can't help but wonder if the choice of resisting beauty because there is already so little of it is a very easy road to yourself creating an inherently pessimistic world view.

What if instead of following in the footsteps of these older artists, instead of fighting ugliness by making more ugliness, we instead fight ugliness by feeding it beauty, craft and skill?

⁵⁴ William Morris: 'I Do Not Want Art for a Few.'
tribunemag.co.uk/2021/03/william-morris-i-do-not-want-art-for-a-few-essay.
11th Paragraph. Last consulted 14/05/2026



Figure 12 Henri Matisse. *Le Bonheur de vivre*, also called *The Joy of Life*, between October 1905 and March 1906, Oil on canvas. The Barnes Foundation, BF719.

<https://collection.barnesfoundation.org/objects/7199/Le-Bonheur-de-vivre-also-called-The-Joy-of-Life/>



Figure 11 Agostino Carracci. *Reciproco Amore*, between 1557-1602, engraving, 22 x 30cm. Copies are held in prestigious collections including The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), the Ashmolean Museum (Oxford), and the Nasjonalmuseet (Oslo). Picture ta

Matisse made the conscious decision to leave a great deal of craftsmanship and knowledge behind, replacing it instead with skills that were meant to reflect the turbulence, violence and primitivistic exoticism his society called for. While this is important, I fear that if the art we make now is with the intention of reflecting our society, we in so doing ignore or forget a multitude of meaning and value we could be infusing in our work instead. Alternatively, we could be making art that reflects the world we would want to live in.

I find it incredibly important to make yourself and others aware of the reality we live in with all its beautiful and horrendous facades, but in doing and choosing our focus we ourselves choose the vision with which we face tomorrow.

Choosing to take inspiration from artistic styles before the time of the industrial revolution is therefore not escapism towards an unrealistic time rooted in nostalgia, but rather a way of combining the knowledge, freedom and wide array of possibilities of today with values and norms that were left behind in our haste towards tomorrow and our distaste for today.

The knowledge of the past is the most valuable thing to have when you intend to shape the future, and in art especially I think it of undeniable importance.

This in no way means I think we should now all start making religious tapestries? or should depict only idealistic delusions, but instead I call for a renewed interest in craftsmanship, natural materials and techniques. We can use the artistic freedom our society provides us as an excuse to look at the past and actively piece together everything of beauty or relevance and use them to shape the present. There is nothing that will reach those deep-rooted places inside ourselves better than our actual roots.

3.3 Conclusions for myself

*'I cannot suppose there is anybody here who would think it either a good life, or an amusing one, to sit with one's hands before one doing nothing - to live like a gentleman, as fools call it.'*⁵⁵

While searching the internet for opinions to either support or challenge my personal views, I came across the website of a man named Craig Boehman. On this website he published a text in which he shares his views on AI, titled '*In Defense of AI Art: History Repeats Itself, Again, Again, and Again*'⁵⁶. On this page, he advocates for the use of generative artificial intelligence to make art, declaring it is no different from the invention of photography or the printing press.

At the risk of sounding biased, are lazy, contradictory and either uninformed or deliberately ignorant opinions like this one exactly what I want to avoid while making my own art. I firmly believe that the process of making anything has a massive impact on the thing itself as well as on the maker. Boehman states: "As a photographer-turned-artist, I'm very much in favor of AI and I use it to create pieces that are typically conceptual or express ideas that I don't have the time or resources to photograph myself." I believe that while art should be accessible to all, a huge part of the necessary process is to *make* time and to *find* or *create* your resources. Making art was never meant to be easy and fast, so using an inherently harmful technology to cut corners, feels to me like it is against everything my definition of the word artistic stands for.

Boehman states that since AI is already present basically everywhere, there is no sense in trying to avoid it, which is why he calls for all artists to actually try making art through generative artificial intelligence. When asked about the value of handmade art vs. "AI art", he responds this: "If history has taught us anything, it's that art markets are unpredictable. Handmade art has dominated the high-end market, with paintings selling for hundreds of millions of dollars, while photography and digital art have yet to breach such astronomical figures consistently. However, last year, an AI-generated artwork sold for over a million dollars, proving that AI art is no longer a novelty—it's a contender."

⁵⁵ Morris, William. *The Decorative Arts: their relation to modern life and progress*. London: Printed by John Strangeways, Castle St. Leicester Sq. December 1877.

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1877/decorative.htm> Last consulted 14/05/2026

⁵⁶ Boehman, Craig. "*In Defense of AI Art - Craig Boehman*." Craig Boehman, 26 Feb. 2026, craigboehman.com/blog/in-defense-of-ai-art. Last consulted on 15/05/2026

This to me proves that Boehman feeds into the capitalistic art scene I wish to either stay away from or preferably destroy altogether. Seeing the value of a piece of art only as a monetary number is a degradation of humanity, and I feel that it fits perfectly in the idea's the technological revolution has pushed upon us.

It is for this reason that I make the conscious choice *not* to be a part of this. The combination of artistic periods I myself look back on for inspiration instead, had many restrictions and negative facades I am glad we no longer face. While I heavily disagree with the idea that Gen AI has a place in the artworld (or society for that matter), I am still grateful that differing opinions can be freely shared and heard. This is after all the only way to start conversations on the matter, which should ultimately improve critical thought on all sides.

While I am active in such conversations, I however still make the confident call for a renewed interest in the core principles of the arts and crafts movement, and with that of those who inspired them.

This is why in my own work I will focus on tactility and physical interaction with natural materials. Stone, wood, wool, clay... there are near endless possibilities. There is something so inherently right about letting myself learn through my hands reaching deep into the earth. I will continue focussing on craftsmanship. Power tools and other mediums designed to make the work faster, easier, yet inherently different and distant will not touch my palms. I will focus on the most basic ways of working with chisels, hammer and files. In doing so my handling will mark the material, but the material will mark me all the same.

As a style I will actively reach for realism and figuratism as I believe they allow for an illusion of perfection to strive towards, which forces me to keep learning without the ability to cut corners. I believe there is something inherently beautiful about the attempt of perfecting anatomy, perspective, and other basic principles today often overlooked, choosing to thus provide a meaningful playing field for my imagination opposed to letting it float around and lose meaning in the absence of the skills I strive to acquire.

*'Craft is more than a practice of making, it is a way of thinking, sensing, and relating to the world. If we take seriously its lessons of attentiveness, reciprocity, and care, we might be open to reimagining not just how we create objects, but how we shape our futures with greater empathy and resilience.'*⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Hedin, "Evelina. What We Don't See When Watching People Make." *The Vessel*, vessel-magazine.no/issues/9/make-me-see/what-we-dont-see-when-watching-people-make. Last paragraph. Last consulted on 14/05/2026

Aside from all that, I've believed for quite a while that art is supported by three major pillars: Context, craftsmanship and personal touch. When any of these three reaches an admirable level, I believe the work can be considered good art. When two or even all three are equally incredible, then I will speak of great art.

In my own work I've always been interested in the historical context that surrounds us and where this came from, so reaching for the first pillar came only natural. As someone with a rather technical background and a drive to improve on the impossible in the physical sense, I strive for a better understanding of craftsmanship on a daily basis. The third pillar however is the one I have struggled with most. My belief was for a long time that my interest in the first two were shaping my personal touch, but I realised this idea kept me stuck in self inflicted restrictions that kept me from growing beyond what I already knew.

The research I did during the writing of this paper made it clear to me that I actually had been working on my personal touch through another medium that I considered separate from my art: fantasy. I've always imagined creatures, places and people that came from a place deep inside of myself instead of my immediate surroundings. When I work on my art I tend to start with a long process of analysing the piece before I even start, but when I let myself be free to just do, when I sketch or am simply trying new materials or ways of working, it is those images of fantasy that effortlessly flow out of my fingertips.

Something I can most easily describe as a post-apocalyptic world of natural structures that have fully merged with people and animals. Anatomical figures grown into trees and mountains, the ground consisting of moss, bones, mushrooms, and flesh. A world where everything has died but has never been more alive at the very same time.

This is therefore what I will decide to focus on. Thanks to Morris and other figures mentioned in this paper, I now understand the artistic importance of fantasy. My imagination is an important key to using art historical context and craftsmanship to shape both myself and hopefully at some point the world around me.

I cannot say for certain where this will lead me, but I sure know that I'm ecstatic to learn all I can find on the way there.

End word

To all it may concern,

This is the most important time to be as human as possible. Go through the trouble of finding the words, pursue the discomfort it takes to arrive at something true. Deliberately seek out ideas, inspiration and the friction those bring. Revel in the beginning stages of a budding idea while it is still alive with possibility. Resist the urge and expectation of producing things already polished.

Resist the urge to rush past the process. Linger with your questions a little longer, but most importantly, let yourself care, deeply and inconveniently.

When you feel like the results you publish are the only things of value, let yourself forget all purpose but the inspiration, imagination and physical labour that made up the process.

There is nothing about a creative life that I want outsourced, shortcut, or streamlined. I don't want a faster way through life and its endlessly beautiful possibilities. I want a way that is true in all its discomfort, uselessness and valuable experience. I want a way that is natural, difficult and honest.

I want the human way.

*'You whose hands make those things that should be works of art, you must be all artists and good artists before the public at large can take real interest in such things; and when you have become so, I promise you that you shall lead the fashion; fashion shall follow your hands obediently enough.'*⁵⁸

- Morris, The Decorative Arts: their relation to modern life and progress

⁵⁸ Morris, William. The Decorative Arts: their relation to modern life and progress. London: Printed by John Strangeways, Castle St. Leicester Sq. December 1877.
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1877/decorative.htm> Paragraph 16. Last consulted 14/05/2026

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