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The sculpture of C.F.A. Voysey

Tony Peart

Architecture and sculpture are both concerned with three-dimensional form and, historically, both disciplines have been closely related through the role sculpture has played in architectural decoration. With such a close relationship it is surprising how few architects have concerned themselves with the creation of sculpture, the most well-known being: Antoni Gaudi; Le Corbusier and more recently, Gottfried Böhm and Daniel Libeskind. Throughout his career Voysey, along with many fellow architects, would often design sculptural embellishments for buildings (both executed and unexecuted). However, unlike these contemporaries, Voysey not only designed these elements on paper but on occasion was also prepared to execute sculptural pieces himself, a practice that continued throughout his long career. This article seeks to explore Voysey's attitude towards sculpture, his activities as a sculptor and his friendships with many of the leading sculptors of his day. It commences with his only period of formal education, the eighteen months he spent at Dulwich College between 1872-74.

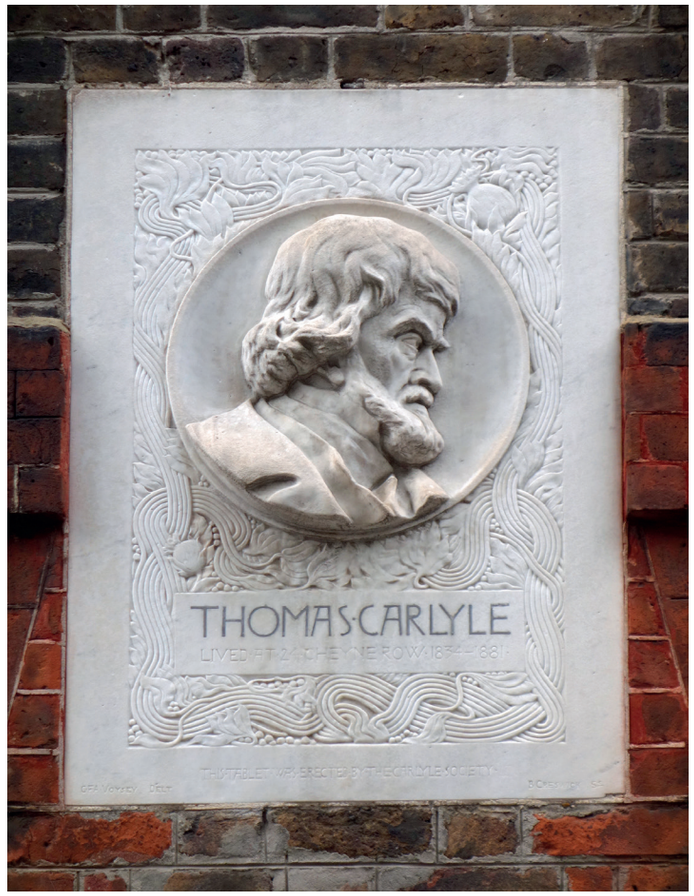
Bronze paperweight designed in 1907 for use in the offices of The Essex & Suffolk Equitable Insurance Company, Broad Street, London

Although it seems certain that the seeds of Voysey's subsequent career as an architect and designer of both pattern and furniture were first sown during the years 1874-79 whilst a pupil of John Pollard Seddon, his skills as a draughtsman and modeller of sculpture may be traced back a little earlier to the unhappy time he spent at Dulwich College. The view of his art master that he was: *"no good at all, and quite unfit for an Artist's Career"* is well known whereas the man whose opinion it was, is not.[1]

The art master in question was John Charles Lewis Sparkes (1833-1907) and it would be easy, from his comment regarding Voysey, to assume he was a narrow-minded and conservative tutor. This would be a mistake as Sparkes was one of the most respected and progressive art educators of his generation. Born at Brixton, he trained at The National Art Training School, before becoming drawing master at Lambeth School of Art in 1856 and by the following year its headmaster. During the 1860s Sparkes formed a close relationship between the School of Art and Henry Doulton's nearby pottery, encouraging Doulton to undertake the manufacture of decorative wares. Susan Beattie in The New Sculpture writes:

> *"Sparkes's early interest in pottery developed into a deep concern for the art of clay modelling in general. He came to believe that its proper teaching was of crucial importance in raising standards of industrial design and when he set about the improvement and expansion of Lambeth's classes in life drawing, modelling and design it was sculpture's interests that he had chiefly in mind."[2]*

During his time at Lambeth, Sparkes was instrumental in supporting and developing the nascent careers of the ceramic sculptors George Tinworth and Robert Wallace Martin and one of the leading figures of 'The New Sculpture' movement (and later, a close friend of Voysey's), George Frampton. It was while still in his post at Lambeth that he also took on the role of art master at Dulwich College.



1
Thomas Carlyle memorial plaque; designed by CFA Voysey, executed by Benjamin Creswick, 1885

Voysey would have benefited from Sparkes' belief in the importance of teaching life drawing and may well have also learned the basics of clay modelling from him at this time. Later, from 1876 until his retirement in 1898, Sparkes would hold the post of headmaster of the National Art Training School (after 1896 The Royal College of Art) influencing a generation of painters and sculptors.

Leaving Dulwich in 1874 for an apprenticeship in Seddon's office, Voysey's years of pupillage coincided with the senior architect's close involvement with the design and manufacture of modelled ceramic pieces with relief tiles executed by Maw & Co. and a range

of jardinieres, tankards jugs and architectural pieces manufactured in stoneware at the Fulham Pottery. A detailed drawing of a Seddon designed salt-glazed, stoneware capital and base survives, brilliantly executed in watercolour by the 20-year-old Voysey.[3] This is a work that was obviously painted 'from life' and one may speculate that Voysey's detailed depiction is of an object he may well have had an active role in sculpting under Seddon's supervision.

It is well known that Voysey's independent architectural career (commenced in late 1881), took many years to establish and it proved necessary for the young architect to explore alternative sources of income. By 1884 Voysey had been taken under the wing of the slightly older architect and designer Arthur Heygate Mackmurdo (1851-1942) who introduced him to the basis of pattern design. Mackmurdo had established the Century Guild of Artists in 1882 bringing together a group of architects, painters, decorative artists, and sculptors in an enterprise that prefigured the ambitions of the later Arts and Crafts Movement. Dating to these years is a low relief, commemorative portrait of the essayist and historian Thomas Carlyle, executed in 1884 for The Carlyle Society. This large, carved marble plaque (figure 1) captures Voysey's developing skills as a pattern designer and calligrapher but also features a large, central roundel bas-relief of Carlyle's head in profile. The final piece was executed by one of Mackmurdo's close associates, the sculptor Benjamin Creswick (1853-1946) and it would be easy to assume that this was a joint effort with Voysey designing the two-dimensional elements and Creswick providing the sculpted portrait. This was not the case as a full-size plaster maquette of the portrait survives (figure 2) signed in the plaster 'C. F. A. Voysey, 1884' clearly demonstrating that Creswick was employed as an artisan to render in marble, a piece modelled entirely by Voysey. The earliest extant example of commissioned work executed by CFA Voysey is therefore a piece of sculpture.

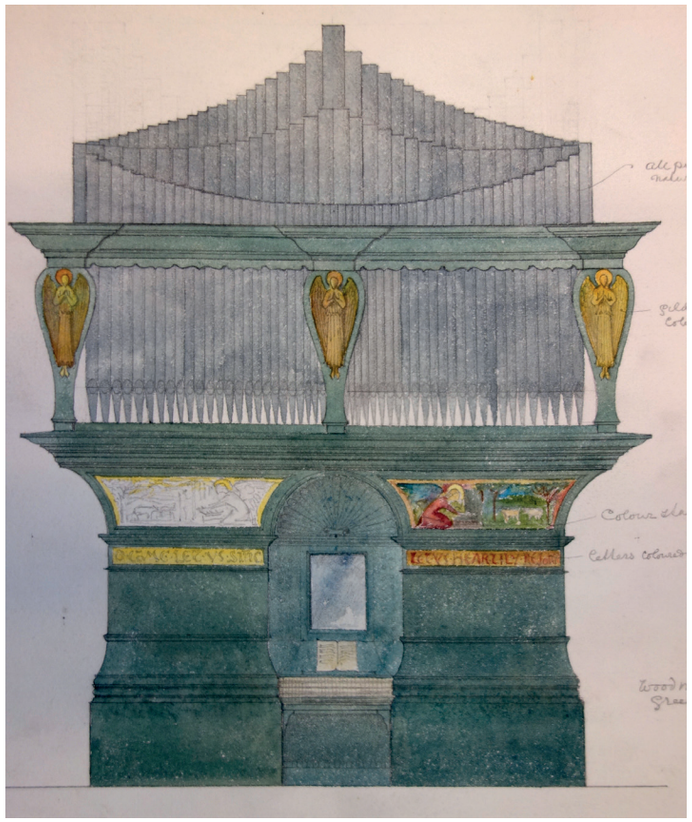
2
Thomas Carlyle: plaster modelled by Voysey, 1884 (National Trust Collections)

Richard Hollis has written of 'Voysey: the clubbable man', documenting the various artists' clubs and associations joined throughout his long career, and in this milieu many long-lasting friendships with sculptors were formed.[4] The earliest of these groups was the Art Workers' Guild which he joined shortly after it was founded in 1884. The Guild was created by a group of young architects, designers, and artists as a place where practitioners of the fine and applied arts could meet on an equal footing. The first Master of the Guild was the sculptor, George Blackall Simonds and fellow early members were Edward Onslow Ford and Hamo Thornycroft who would soon become leading figures of the 'New Sculpture' movement.[5] The Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society evolved from The Guild and held its first exhibition at The New Gallery on Regent Street in 1888 with Voysey exhibiting only five pieces. Four were designs for fabric or wallpaper but one was a framed photograph of the Carlyle memorial, clearly demonstrating Voysey's desire to position himself as more than a designer of pattern.

3
St. John the Baptist, Healaugh: detail of the late Norman south doorway.

A second portrait sculpture (now lost) is recorded in an 1887 entry in Voysey's 'Black Book' the year before his first building, The Cottage in Bishop's Itchington near Warwick, was erected. This was a commission to execute a *"portrait model for tablet in clay and casting"* of John Charles Holder (1838-1923), a successful Midlands brewer for whom Voysey would also design a beer bottle label. One must assume that as with the Carlyle memorial, this work was a naturalistic portrait however, 'realism' would prove to be rare in Voysey's sculptural oeuvre. Most of his work from the 1890s onwards features much simplification and stylisation – often including caricature - and demonstrates the profound influence of the sculpture of the Middle Ages, something Voysey was exposed to at an early age.

In 1864, at the age of seven, his father became vicar of Healaugh in the East Riding of Yorkshire, a church well-appointed with a dizzying array of carved medieval decoration including many grotesque heads (figure 3). As Voysey was educated at home and lead a relatively solitary life in this isolated village, their effect on



4
Design for an Organ Case for The Quarto Imperial Club, March 6, 1891 (RIBA Collections)

his developing visual imagination must have been considerable. Writing in later life it is very evident that Voysey understood and valued the close relationship in previous centuries between artistic execution and a belief in a higher power: *"we are induced to feel that mediaeval men did their work as if it were a form of worship, whereas the modern workers as if it were a competing form of play, hoping it may please and pay."* [6]

In 1890, Voysey joined The Quarto Imperial Club (QIC), a loose association of young architects including his friends Walter Cave and Charles Spooner. The group met frequently but at somewhat irregular intervals finally dissolving in July 1897. A set agenda for every meeting was followed with a theme (e.g., 'furniture', 'window treatment', 'wallpaper' etc.) being decided in advance. The members would bring with them a single sheet of 'Quarto Imperial' (a quarter-sheet of Imperial paper) on which they had executed a

design is response to the given theme. One member of the club was tasked with delivering a lecture on the meeting's theme to those assembled and following that, the individual designs were shared, scrutinised, and discussed. These designs were retained by the club for future reference and were compiled in two velum-bound volumes with Voysey executing the cover design of the second.[7] Several of Voysey's designs for the club contain sculptural elements including two featuring carved angels: a 'design for an organ case'

5
Design for a Carved Newel for The Quarto Imperial Club, November 1, 1892 (RIBA Collections)

of 1891 (figure 4) and a 'design for a rood screen' of 1893. Most of the designs contained in the QIC volumes were never intended for execution but it seems likely that the 'carved newel post design' (figure 5) that Voysey contributed to the November 1892 meeting had been installed as part of his 1889 re-design of the showrooms of the wallpaper manufacturers Essex & Co..[8] The bearded, caricatured figure is most likely to be Walter Richard Essex, the owner of the

company and is one of the earliest examples of Voysey's propensity to gently poke fun at his clients through the inclusion of caricatures or grotesque profiles.[9]

From the outset of his architectural career, sculptural elements would often feature in the overall scheme. The austere and striking Bedford Park tower house designed in 1890-91 for the portrait painter J W Forster featured caricatures of the client as decorative corbels supporting the mantel of the chimney piece.[10] The 1892 Hans Road townhouses in Knightsbridge, designed for the Liberal MP Archibald Grove, were initially conceived with sculpted decorations above each entrance porch. As executed, these elements were moved within the open entrance porches, with the sculptor Conrad Dressler (who Voysey knew through the Art Workers' Guild) creating two ceramic, high-relief plaques, one symbolic of night, the other of day. Within the year Dressler had commissioned Voysey to design a row of four studios for him at Glebe Place, Chelsea but sadly, the project never came to fruition. Concurrent to Hans Road, Voysey was also working on designs for another large terrace of townhouses for Lord Wentworth's estate at Swan Walk, Chelsea. The final design of this unexecuted project was later published in The British Architect and shows how the run of casement windows which ran the full width of the second storey of each, were to be enlivened by the addition of a sculpted 'medieval' figure in a niche.[11]

Voysey and his family moved to St John's Wood in 1891, an area of London favoured by many leading artists and sculptors. The St John's Wood Arts Club was instigated in 1895; Voysey being a founding member along with his friend from the Art Workers' Guild, the sculptor Edward Onslow Ford. Another sculptor neighbour and a fellow member of both the Art Workers' Guild and the Arts & Crafts Exhibition Society, was George Frampton who was rapidly establishing an international reputation as a leader of the 'New Sculpture' movement. Both these sculptors were associate members of the Royal Academy and in April 1895, Voysey was nominated for membership by Onslow Ford, seconded by Frampton. Unfortunately, the application by secret ballot was unsuccessful but as both his sponsors were sculptors, it would be fascinating to know if Voysey's application was made on the basis of his activities as a sculptor, an architect, or both?

By the latter half of the 1890s Voysey's reputation as an architect was rapidly becoming established and he was busy undertaking commissions for many of the iconic houses that would make his name. More specialised buildings were also designed, including studios in St John's Wood for George Frampton and fellow sculptor George Blackall Simonds, first Master of the Art Workers' Guild.[12] Even during this, his busiest period as an architect, Voysey continued to actively pursue opportunities as a designer of both pattern and furniture and even more remarkably, he continued to

model and sculpt.
The fifth exhibition of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society in 1896, held at ¬-The New Gallery, Regent Street featured Voysey designed tiles in low relief exhibited by Pilkingtons. A review of the exhibition in *The Studio* reveals that the tiles were not only designed by Voysey but also modelled by him.[13] He also found the time to provide designs for a hanging bookcase, topped by carved finials of a medieval scholar, to the Home Arts & Industries Association for execution by members of their many woodworking classes. These carved figures (figure 6) feature in enlarged detail on the design drawing and are accompanied by an emphatic instruction to those carving them: *"These figures to be very squarely cut + not at all realistic in detail."*

His first cast bronze sculpture 'in the round' was exhibited at the 1899 Arts and Crafts Exhibition, recorded in the catalogue as follows: "Finial for Newel-Post. Designed and exhibited by C.F.A. Voysey. Executed by Henry Pegram." Aymer Vallance, reviewing the

6
Detail of a design for a Hanging Bookcase for The Home Arts & Industries Association, pre-1896

exhibition in The Studio explains the circumstances of its execution: The 'seated figure' in bronze, representing a man writing, is one which Mr. Voysey designed on paper and began to model in wax with his own hand, but subsequently, owing to pressure of other business, had to abandon. Mr. Pegram then undertook to carry out the work. It was originally intended to form the finial of an oak newel, of which the pedestal shown should represent the upper portion.[14]

Examples of the cast (figure 7) do remain in situ in at least two Voysey houses (figure 28) with the figure variously interpreted as

7
Bronze Figure for Newel-Post, designed by Voysey and sculpted by Henry Pegram, 1899 (Private Collection)

a portrait of his ancestor John Wesley or perhaps, an idealised self-portrait of the architect. The latter interpretation may be supported by an inscription hand-written on the rear of the design when it was re-drawn and reproduced as a greetings card in 1928:

> *Trying hard to write with fervour all I would be as a server*
> *But failing so, what can I do for you dear friend?*
> *What can I pay, with naught but love to give away?[15]*

During the same year, Voysey was working on a commission to supply fitted bookcases to Ashburnham House at Westminster School and sought to include a pair of bronze, scholar figures as an

integral part of the design.[16] Although the only surviving example bears the signature of the sculptor William Reynolds-Stephens it seems likely that, as with the figure for the newel post, the original was modelled in wax by Voysey, with Reynolds-Stephens brought in to see it executed in bronze (figure 8).

By the turn of the twentieth century, Voysey's reputation as both an architect and designer were established and lucrative, 'exclusive' contracts had been entered into with various wallpaper, textile, and carpet producers. Unsurprisingly, metalwork manufacturers were also eager to execute and market Voysey designs although no contract of exclusivity would be signed. Instead, the architect providing a variety of designs to companies such as William Bainbridge Reynolds; Thomas Elsley; George Wright; and Longden & Co. The latter three firms all produced Voysey designed cast iron fireplaces, many featuring birds modelled in low relief. How involved Voysey was with the creation of the master moulds is unclear and many could well have been factory made interpretations of two-dimensional drawings. However, in the case of the fireplace (figure 9) manufactured by George Wright Ltd. shortly before 1903, which features detailed and beautifully modelled ravens in a ploughed field, one can detect the hand of the designer at work.

Birds had featured prominently in Voysey's pattern design for well over a decade and were a subject with which he had a great affinity, sketching them frequently throughout his career and so

their appearance within the medium of metal should be of no surprise. Although their individual character traits and appearance were obviously appealing to him, birds also played a central role in Voysey's highly idiosyncratic, symbolic iconography. In later life he wrote that: *"Birds, like men, walk erect, and they also soar into the sky and so symbolise aspiration and spiritual activity."* With specific reference to ravens he observes their "supposed wonderful sagacity" but also notes that *"the eagle which is the highest flyer and the furthest seer stands for aspiration, and revelation, the heavenwards quest, which in other words, is true philosophy."*[17]

8
Bronze Figure of a Scholar, designed by Voysey and modelled for casting by William Reynolds-Stephens, 1899 (Westminster

9
Detail of fireplace modelled by Voysey and manufactured by George Wright Ltd, c.1903

10
Falcon and Eagle paperweights photographed alongside The Architect's Devil and Figure for a Newel-Post, c.1907

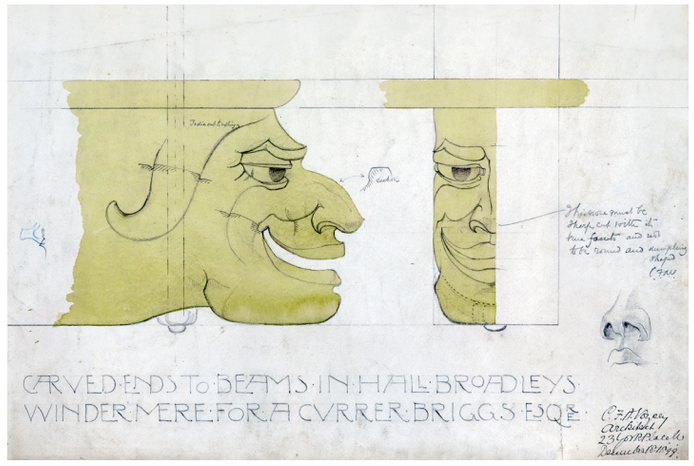
11
Cast-lead jardinière manufactured by Thomas Elsley & Company, c.1900

Three-dimensional birds, sculpted 'in the round' were also incorporated into various fireside accessories to complement the relief decoration of the fireplaces. These were executed by Thomas Elsley's, Portland Metal Works and would feature in a lavishly illustrated catalogue: *Designs by CFA Voysey Architect,* issued c.1905-06 containing over seventy individual designs for metalwork. The majority of these designs were first revealed to the public in 1903 at the 7th Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society Exhibition, with a striking fire-iron stand and ensuite fire screen widely illustrated in contemporary journals.[18] Both of these pieces were topped with falcon finials which, in terms of erect pose and style of execution, are reminiscent of Ancient Egyptian depictions of Horus the god of kingship and the sky. This model was later re-used as a bronze paperweight alongside a delicately modelled figure of an eagle, perched atop an elevated sphere (figure 10) which was created in 1907 for use in the offices of The Essex & Suffolk Equitable Insurance Company at Broad Street, London.

Two other Elsley produced pieces featuring sculpted birds are worthy of note: a small, brass fire screen and a lead jardiniere on stand. The small eagle finials which perch around the fire screen, playfully warming their backs against the fire, are precursors to the later Essex & Suffolk eagle paperweight. The lead jardiniere (figure 11) is an altogether more 'Gothic' conception, featuring four aggressively styled eagle's heads as decorative handles.

Voysey continued to employ sculpture within his architectural projects, probably the most well-known use being at Broad Leys overlooking Lake Windermere. Here, the double height hall features a pair of grotesque, caricature heads (figure 12), most likely modelled on the owner, Arthur Currer Briggs, carved into the beam ends that

12
Carved beam-end featuring a caricature head, Broad Leys, Lake Windermere, 1898-1900



13
Voysey's detail drawings and annotations for the Broad Leys carved beam-end (RIBA Collections)

support an elevated corridor. The drawing of this detail survives at the RIBA, showing a side and front view and a few detailed instructions to the carver including: *"This nose must be sharp cut with its true fascets [sic] and not to be round and dumpling shaped C.F.A.V."*[19]

An ambitious but unexecuted 1901 scheme for a new grammar school at Lincoln would have featured a pair of life-size, carved stone scholar figures (probably an enlargement of the Westminster School bookcase figures) sited high on pinnacles at the apex of each gable of the assembly hall.[20]

Sculptural elements would also feature in one of Voysey's greatest interior schemes, the 1906 remodelling of Garden Corner on the Thames embankment in Chelsea, for the MP, Emslie John Horniman. The servant's staircase retains six, identical, carved oak newel posts featuring a caricature of a four-faced head. Voysey

14
Mr Looking Fourways, carved oak newel, 1906 (© Victoria and Albert Museum, London)

had a sample carved to show his client, an object he subsequently retained for used as a hat stand (figure 14). An inscription on the reverse of a photograph which includes this item records in Voysey's own hand an explanatory note: *'Newel Post for an M.P. / Mr. Looking fourways'!*[21] Elsewhere in the house, cast bronze falcons, identical to those used earlier on fireplace accessories manufactured by Thomas Elsley, serve as decorative finials on the four-poster bed designed for the Horniman's master bedroom.[22]

As work on Garden Corner progressed, Voysey commenced work on Littleholme, Guildford a home for his friend and the builder of many of his houses, George Müntzer. This project involved elaborate, hard landscaped gardens which were embellished with Voysey designs including a lead gargoyle and, as a focal point to the double staircase that descends to the lawn, an extraordinary, carved stone figure (figure 15) of a crouching devil, later revealed to be the designer's own 'cast-out devil'.[23] Voysey's 'Expense Book' charts its creation and execution which commenced with a small version in clay or more likely, the relatively new modelling material of Plasticine. By July 1907 the maquette was complete and was sent to T & E Nicholls of 28 Wincott Street, Kennington Road, London. This was a long-established and well-respected firm of architectural sculptors, established by Thomas Nicholls Sr. in the 1850s. The elder Nicholls had worked for William Burges at Cardiff Castle however, by the late 1890s his sons Thomas and Edward had taken over the company. The original maquette modelled by Voysey was used by the Nicholls brothers to sculpt the much larger, stone version for Littleholme but while it was at their workshop Voysey had them produce a handful of actual size replicas in electrotyped copper. One of these was entered into the following year's Royal Academy Exhibition: unfortunately for Voysey, it was rejected.

15
Devil, sculpted in stone for Littleholme, Guildford by T & E Nicholls, 1907

By the end of the first decade of the new century, Voysey's reactionary response to the widespread adoption of the Classical Revival within the architectural profession had been to adopt overtly 'gothic' elements within his work be it architecture, furniture, commercial art, or pattern design. Sculpture would be no different and a 1909 commission, to design a house for a quarry owner, proved the perfect opportunity to revisit the Tudor past he admired so much. Thomas Sturge Cotterell's quarry was near Bath, and he tasked Voysey with creating a building that would act as both a showcase of the quarry's stone and the skill of its masons. Cotterell, a keen antiquarian asked Voysey to design a building that would remind him of his undergraduate days at Merton College, Oxford. Lodge Style, as the house is called, is built around an open courtyard creating a building with the feel of a college quadrangle. It is unequivocally, the required 'essay in stone' demanded by Cotterell with the brief extending to the interior where the walls are of exposed, highly finished stone. The skill of the Bath & Portland Stone Firms Ltd. stonemasons was also showcased in three architectural sculptures placed prominently

near the entrance of the building. A small, kneeling angel (figure 16) remains in situ, but two other pieces (figure 17) are now lost. A wonderfully bizarre pig's head gargoyle once drained water from the small, two-storey tower and adjacent to this, on top of a buttress, stood a near life-size sculpture of a medieval King. This was probably intended to represent Edward I, the monarch whose figure is prominently sited on the gatehouse of Merton College. Earlier in the year Voysey had read a paper titled "Ideas in things" at the Carpenters' Company on 24th February. It gave him the opportunity to expound on his belief in symbolism and its relationship to style in sculpture, noting we may use some of a building's budget to:

> *"...devote to one spot of sculpture, one point of pre-eminent interest in which we might suggest some merriment like the old grotesques. If, however, we use figure sculpture, let it not be a gentleman without his hat, or a lady with nothing on. For in this climate such exhibitions only excite our pity and discomforting sympathies. Hence the severe convention that the old workers always adopted. If the material selected to represent our merry thought is handled with due regard to its intrinsic nature, we shall be helped to feel that the image is only stone or wood or lead, or whatever it be, invested with ideas - in short, a symbol, the idea of which so dominates that our pity is not aroused. The more materialistic our minds, the more realistic our art. Realistic rendering of material qualities should only be allowed so far as is absolutely necessary for the force of spiritual expression."[24]*

16
Kneeling Angel, Lodge Style, Combe Down, Bath, 1909 (photo by John Trotter)

17
Lodge Style, Combe Down, Bath, shortly after completion in 1909

18
Bronze eagle, originally designed as a finial, 1909

19
Bas-relief angel, Atkinson's shop, London, 1911 (RIBA Collections)

20
The Royal Warrant on Atkinson's shop front, London, 1911

The same year Voysey created yet another sculpted bird (an eagle), designed to be displayed as a set of six finials on an elaborate oak dresser designed for an old client, Miss McKay of Birkenhead.[25] A few were also produced with an integral base (figure 18) to act as freestanding sculptures and/or paperweights. All would have been cast for Voysey by his long-standing metalwork manufacturer, William Bainbridge Reyolds, at his foundry in Clapham.

The apogee of Voysey's executed forays into Tudor architectural styling is arguably the 1911, remodelling, of Atkinson's perfume shop on Old Bond Street, London. Designed to be visually at odds with its neighbours, the austere, fortress-like exterior was enlivened by sculptural detail, designed by Voysey and executed by T and E Nicholls. Small, bas-relief figures of angels, appropriately enough swinging censers (figure 19), were placed between each of the arched windows on the Burlington Gardens elevation. The main entrance on Old Bond Street was surmounted by a large, deeply carved and coloured Royal Warrant shield (figure 20). This was positively received by an anonymous reviewer in The British Architect who states: *"Over the doorway in Bond Street is a coat-of-arms in stone, evidently carefully detailed by the architect, for it is a bit of really good architectural carving."*[26] Four years later Voysey added a large mosaic to the north west corner of the building. This too was praised by a reviewer from the same magazine who also complemented the heraldic carving: *"Mr. Voysey has enriched the entrance of Messrs. Atkinson's building with unusually excellent carving and colour, and we could wish our shopkeepers would emulate this good example."*[27] Good example or not, all of

Voysey's work would be swept away only twelve years later when the building was once again drastically re-modelled, this time by E Vincent Harris.

A reduced, coloured plaster version of the warrant crest (also executed by Nicholls) was exhibited internationally, first at the Exposition Universelle et Internationale in Ghent in 1913 and the following year at the exhibition of British Arts and Crafts organised by the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society in Paris. At Ghent the plaster was joined by other examples of Voysey's sculpture: the 'Mr Looking Fourways' newel post and one of the electrotype 'Devil' casts.

21
Four angels singing grace, carved oak by William Aumonier & Son, London, 1912

During the years leading to the First World War, Voysey's architectural commissions had reduced to barely a trickle. To maintain any semblance of financial stability he was forced to seek out commercial opportunities for his graphic, wallpaper and textile designs and sculpture would also feature in this mix. Two, late commissions for furniture featured carved angels, one a wardrobe (now lost) featuring six, inset, panels carved in low relief and a simple serving table, decorated at each corner with four carved oak figures 'in the round' depicting angels singing grace. The level of woodcarving skill required by Voysey for their execution was beyond that of his usual cabinet makers and so they were made by the specialist ecclesiastical carving firm of William Aumonier of Tottenham Court Road. Once executed (figure 21), these were fixed to cabinet work manufactured by his favoured, London cabinet maker, F C Nielsen. A later re-drawing of the four figures contains this specific instruction to the carver: *"These angels to be carved in English oak & not to look either male or female."* The reason is revealed in a 1930, published review by Voysey of two exhibition where he observes: *"...that the*

ancients, when representing angels in illuminations, stained glass, embroidery, wall decoration and other crafts, always showed them without any definite indication of sex; while the modern designer invariably makes his angels feminine, of the barmaid type, forgetting that man in his most exalted moods is divorced from the lusts of the flesh for the time being. He does not associate a buxom female of a beefsteak complexion with the angelic state." [28]

Various references to casts of 'angel figures' and 'gilded angel panels' feature in Voysey's 'Expenses Book' at this time, likely indicating an attempt by the architect to reproduce these unique, carved wooden sculptures on a small-scale, commercial basis.

22
Bronze, self-portrait medallion to celebrate his sixtieth year, 1916 (© Victoria and Albert Museum, London)

Voysey's strangest sculpture, almost expressionist in style, a larger than life-size hand clutching a heart, dates to 1915 (see figure 26). This was almost certainly designed for the wallpaper manufacturers Arthur Sanderson & Sons as it is a three-dimensional rendition of the company logo also designed by Voysey. In the architect's arcane language of symbols this represents the 'tenacity of friendship'.[29] The following year found Voysey engaged in the production of a small, realistic, self-portrait bronze medallion (figure 22), likely a self-commemoration of his sixtieth year and perhaps intended for exhibition at the Royal Academy annual exhibition where it was eventually shown in 1919. This being the first time Voysey's work was displayed outside of the Academy's 'Architecture Room'. Now in the collection of the V&A, the medallion forms part of a small group, accompanied by plasticine models, negative moulds and a plaster model which all reflect the various stages involved in the production of the final cast bronze. Proud to be not only the designer but also the sculptor, the reverse is inscribed in Voysey's own hand; *'CFA Voysey Invt. et fecit 1916'*.

The years following the ending of hostilities in 1918 saw Voysey receive several commissions relating to the design of war memorials. He was invited to exhibit a design for a memorial window at the 'War Memorials Exhibition', held at the Royal Academy during October and November 1919 and shortly afterwards was invited to design a war memorial at Malvern Wells, Worcestershire. The timing of the commission is probably coincidental as Voysey had recently commenced work on the design of a cottage for Major G A Porter, a wealthy local landowner. Haslington Cottage (now called Cobb Nash) is located a few hundred yards from the site of the war memorial. The design Voysey produced is both austere and solemn, comprising a free-standing column of Portland stone with capital, above an octagonal base, all featuring concave sides. The capital is carved with a decorative leaf design and is surmounted by a carved, stone pelican feeding its young. The 'Pelican in its Piety' – the bird plucking at its own breast to feed its young – was an appropriate motif, symbolising as it does, self-sacrificing love. Voysey had previously used the device as a bookplate, designed before 1907 for a relative, Annesley Voysey.[30]

Ever the perfectionist, to fully familiarise himself with his subject, Voysey took himself off to London Zoo on Christmas Eve to make drawings from life of pelicans. By January 1920 work could commenced on modelling the sculpture. The 'Expenses Book' records multiple purchases of Plasticene and modelling tools and a scaled-down maquette (figure 23) was duly completed. The original intention was to have the pelican executed in gilt bronze on a marble base, but one suspects cost became an issue as the final version was executed entirely in Portland stone. Voysey was obviously very proud of his Plasticine maquette and by October had plaster casts made which were sent to Thomas Elsley for casting in bronze. The final bronze was accepted for exhibition at the Royal Academy in 1921 along with the design drawings for a wall-mounted memorial for York Minster.

As executed, the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry memorial, sited in the west aisle of the north transept is a simplified version of the initial concept which originally featured a mosaic of the pelican in her piety. Nonetheless, it remains an impressive achievement making good use of low-relief, sculptural elements and raised lettering (the whole cast in bronze). The dark mass of metal is relieved with inset gems, areas of colourful enamel and a border of mother of pearl. In terms of variety of materials, it must rank as

23
The Pelican in Her Piety, original Plasticine model for Malvern Wells War Memorial, 1920

one of Voysey's most exotic pieces. Once more the 'Expenses Book' reveals the stages the work went through and as at Malvern, Voysey commenced with hand-modelling the relief elements before the project was transferred to William Bainbridge Reynolds for casting in bronze, the whole process taking fourteen months from August 1920 to October 1921.

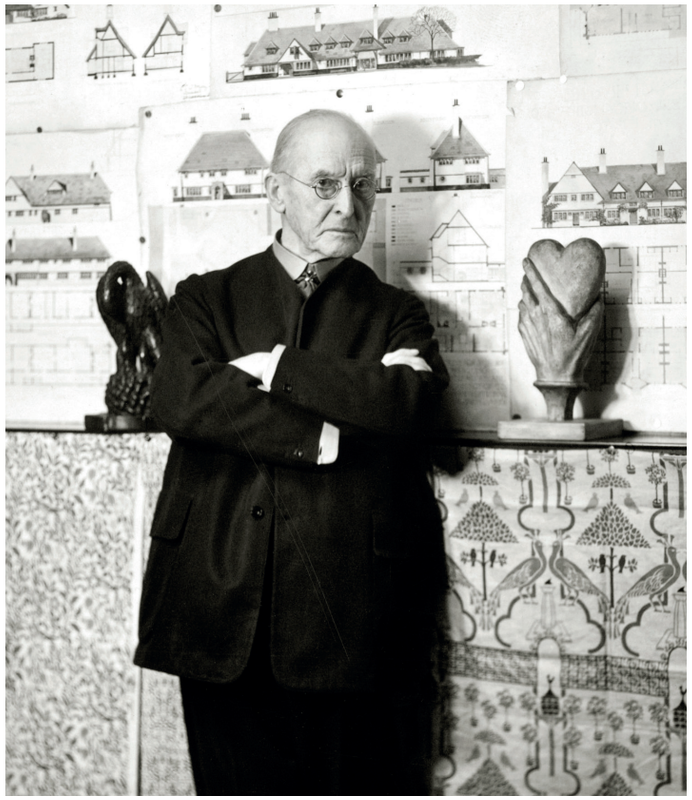
24
Bronze eagle for the tomb of Arnold Jacob Cohen Stuart, Hampstead Cemetery, 1921

A second, free-standing, stone memorial was executed in 1921 in this case a tomb to Arnold Jacob Cohen Stuart, a Dutch-born engineer who is best known for establishing the mathematical foundations of optimal tax structure. An altogether more medieval design than Malvern Wells, it features a squat tower within a kerbed plot which terminates in a 'crown' of crocketed pinnacles supporting flying buttresses attached to a central column. This column was originally topped with a striking gilt bronze, heraldic eagle (figure 24) taking flight. Unfortunately, the tomb has been subject to vandalism and only the bird's feet remain. The Expenses Book indicates that a freestanding, cast bronze version was executed shortly after completion of the commission by William Bainbridge Reynolds for one of Voysey's most loyal patrons, C T Burke owner of Holly Mount near Beaconsfield.

In the 1920s, with his architectural career virtually over, Voysey's 'Expenses Book' records a sporadic but continuing engagement with sculpture although most of the projects listed are now lost. In 1923 a cast of a cow was made – perhaps for a shop sign – and various heraldic plaques relating to the Herald's Office. Later in the decade in 1927, a relief panel – presumably in bronze - was designed for the Malay States Office and further casts of the 'Devil' were ordered from Bainbridge Reynolds. To celebrate his seventieth birthday Voysey created a second, bronze self-portrait medallion (figure 25). Identical in layout and lettering to that for his sixtieth birthday, upon close scrutiny the rendition of the head clearly reveals the passage of a decade on the architect's face. This medallion was exhibited the following year at the fourteenth Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society Exhibition held at the Royal Academy.

25
Bronze, self-portrait medallion to celebrate his seventieth year, 1927 (© Victoria and Albert Museum, London)

The end of Voysey's recorded activities as a sculptor coincide with a retrospective exhibition held in 1931 at the Batsford Gallery, hosted by *The Architectural Review*. A photograph taken to document the event (figure 26) shows Voysey posed defiantly in a gallery whose walls are totally obscured by the mass of his architectural drawings and lengths of printed fabric. However, prominently flanking him on either side are examples of his sculpture; the 'Hand and Heart' and the 'Pelican in Her Piety'. We can gain an insight into the value Voysey placed on his activities as a sculptor from a set of autobiographical notes compiled around this time.[31] Here, in a relatively short document of only two pages, Voysey is at pains to



26
Voysey at his 1931, Batsford Gallery retrospective exhibition flanked by his sculptures, Hand and Heart and The Pelican in Her Piety

proudly record that he has: *"exhibited many times in the Sculpture Room and Architectural Room of the Royal Academy."* Clearly flagging for posterity his 'establishment' validated credentials as both an architect and a sculptor, something that sets him apart from his contemporaries and illustrates the 'individuality' that was the watchword of his life.

Over his long career, Voysey enjoyed the friendship of many leading sculptors including Edward Onslow Ford RA; Conrad Dressler; Robert Anning Bell RA and Sir George Frampton RA. In his later years Voysey would spend his days at the Arts Club in Dover Street, sipping sherry and talking with his friends.[32] Voysey's portrait had been painted on a number of occasions, but it seems appropriate that the final portrait commission – appropriately enough for the Arts Club – should have been awarded to a sculptor, William Reid Dick RA (1878-1961). The resulting portrait bronze (figure 27), a powerful depiction of the seventy-seven-year-old architect was exhibited at the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1934. Thus, Voysey's final lifetime appearance within the Royal Academy was not in the 'Architecture Room' but the 'Sculpture Room', something one suspects that would have pleased him greatly.

27
Bronze portrait of CFA Voysey, by William Reid Dick RA, 1934

Notes

[1]
Voysey, CFA. The Value of Hidden Influences, as Disclosed in the Life of an Ordinary Man, 1931, Ref: RIBA VoC/4/6.
[2]
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[3]
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[4]
See: Hollis, R. 'Voysey: The Clubbable Man', The Orchard, No. 1, 2012, pp. 57-61.
[5]
The New Sculpture was a movement in late 19th-century British sculpture placing an emphasis on naturalistic poses and spiritual subject matter. It was widely and enthusiastically adopted by a generation of young sculptors and had become the leading style by the dawn of the twentieth century.
[6]
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[7]
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[8]
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[9]
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[10]
See: http://www.voysey.gotik-romanik.de > Executed Buildings > 1890-91 South Parade
[11]
See: http://www.voysey.gotik-romanik.de > Unexecuted Projects > 1891 Houses on Lord Wentworth's Estate
[12]
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[13]
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[14]
The Studio Vol. 18 Issue: 79, October 1899, p. 45.
[15]
RIBA SB/120VOY [895]
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[17]
Voysey, CFA. Symbolism in Design, 1930-32, RIBA SKB458/2.
[18]
Illustrated in: Livingstone, K., Donnelly, M. and Parry, L. C.F.A. Voysey Arts & Crafts Designer. London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 2016, p. 232.
[19]
RIBA SB/113VOY [138]5.
[20]
See: http://www.voysey.gotik-romanik.de > Unexecuted Projects > 1901 Design for Lincoln Grammar School
[21]
RIBA Photograph 41440/26
[22]
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[24]
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[25]
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[26]
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[27]
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[28]
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[29]
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[30]
Ibid.
[31]
RIBA VoC3/4
[32]
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28
The 'seated figure' in bronze, in situ, as a finial topping a typical Voysey design newel post in the main stair at White Cottage, London, 1903