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***Professional Pursuits: Women and the American Arts and Crafts Movement*. Catherine W. Zipf. Knoxville, Tennessee: University of Tennessee Press, 2007; x +230; photographs; ISBN 1-57233-601-3; $39.95US (paper).**

Professional Pursuits elaborates two primary premises: that the American Arts and Crafts movement created a "middle ground" between professional and domestic occupations that allowed middle- and upper-class women extraordinary, yet socially acceptable, access to skills training and economic opportunity; and that women were not only part of but "in many ways were the movement" in the United States (12), having adopted the aesthetic and ethos almost two decades before the emergence of more famous practitioners like Gustav Stickley and Elbert Hubbard. Staging in each chapter the interplay of these premises, Zipf introduces five lesser-known but highly accomplished female artists - an architect, potter, weaver, editor, and writer - as "Case Studies" of women who found in Arts and Crafts ways to circumvent the challenges confronting Progressive-era women driven by desire or necessity into careers. At the beginning of each chapter, Zipf outlines the professional impediments that compounded social pressures in discouraging women from "professional pursuits," including barriers to acquiring credentials and protecting intellectual property. On the whole, Zipf undertakes an important act of revision. Hers is a welcome, even necessary, contribution to the study of the American Arts and Crafts movement, laying the groundwork for fuller understandings of its development, its players, and its impact on a generation straddling the Victorian and Modern eras.

While *Professional Pursuits* makes a persuasive case for reexamining the complementarities of Progressive-era women's work and the American Arts and Crafts movement, important aspects of the argument advanced are less than fully convincing. Primary among these is Zipf's contention that "the extensive participation of women in the American Arts and Crafts movement had important ramifications for the fight for political rights," and particularly for suffrage (162). The material presented does not support this assertion. Partly a function of limited data - Zipf asserts that few records exist to determine even the number of women involved in Arts and Crafts - the gap is widened by the case study mode employed by the author and its reliance on reasonable extrapolation. Little evidence is marshaled to demonstrate that the five artisans profiled were especially interested in gender issues (Candace Thurber Wheeler is the exception) or that they consciously sought the advancement of other women; none is shown to have explicitly supported suffrage or other women's rights. The weight of Zipf's argument for the artisans' impact seems to hinge on the idea that in meeting success in trades often closed to women, the five modeled expanded (i.e., proto-feminist) possibilities for others. Much firmer grounds, however, are required to bolster the text's far-reaching claims regarding the political significance of women's participation in Arts and Crafts.

Exacerbating the problem is the book's casual treatment of the American Arts and Crafts movement itself. Scattered throughout *Professional Pursuits* are references to "Arts and Crafts objects," "principles," and "lifestyle," but in no one place does Zipf provide a sustained exploration of the movement's characteristics or aims. What were its aesthetic, ethical, and ideological contours and - most importantly - how were they articulated in an American context? Despite the elisions here, historians have long emphasized fundamental differences between American and British Arts and Crafts, as each instantiation responded to its specific socio-economic context. Direct examination of the Arts and Crafts movement and its location in American life and culture may have structured a more effective framing of the contributions of the women, who, Zipf asserts, were most responsible for carrying its banner.

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