

# THE FIVE AIMS

by John Ruskin

Knowledge of Ruskin's five aims, briefly summarized here, can aid artists in clarifying their intentions.

**Power** – Ruskin uses the word POWER in reference to the artist's technical prowess, and the time and exertion expended in producing the work. Included in that prowess is the ability to create elaborate ornamentation, decoration and a high degree of finish.

**Imitation** – In the category of IMITATION, Ruskin refers to illusion, which delights us in its deceptive ability to look “real.”

**Truth** – There are two kinds of artistic TRUTH: 1) Moral truth, the truthful representation of emotion, impression and thought; and 2) material truth, the truthful representation of material things. Ruskin asserts that moral truth is by far the more important of the two.

**Beauty** – SIMPLE BEAUTY is a sensation of perfection that bypasses the intellect, in the same way that we receive sensual pleasure from the scent of a rose. Ruskin differentiates *Simple Beauty* and *Ideal Beauty*, which he calls *Relation*.

**Relation** – The artistic idea of RELATION goes a step beyond *Truth*, *Beauty*, *Power* and *Imitation*, into a realm that requires intellect. This is art that produces expression, sentiment and character.