

NEWSLETTER



Issue 3 Winter 2011



CHARLES
RENNIE
MACKINTOSH
SOCIETY™



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www.crmsociety.com www.mackintoshchurch.com

Cover image: Scotland Street School



Yarn Cake Event

We have been very busy over the last few months with a number of successful events. In September we hosted an exhibition displaying the winners of the Comic Con Creative Design Award. Doors Open weekend was a great success with over 400 visitors to the Church.

Our new style Mackintosh at the Grand Tours has been very successful and dates for next year are now on the website.

Last month we held our first Yarn Cake event, with over 300 keen knitters descending on the building. The Market Place in the Hall, felt like walking into Aladdin's Cave - glowing skeins of wondrous yarn on every side.

We also welcomed our second group of the year from the Friends of the Gamble House in California. We held a number of special events and dinners, including a group of architect students from Zurich.

We have a Special Volunteers Coffee Morning at The Mackintosh Church on Saturday 21 January 2012. To register your interest please complete the booking form.

We were saddened to hear that Donald Taffner and Margaret Davidson have died. An obituary will appear in the next Journal.

We also wish Patricia Douglas a full recovery from her recent illness.

Save a Tree! Save a Stamp! Use Email!

Our requests for electronic newsletters are growing. We would like to establish an e-mail list for all members interested in receiving news electronically. You can help us save the planet and reduce the cost of our mailings for newsletters and events.

Please let us have your email address on your membership renewal forms or send an email to members@crmsociety.com



Margaret: auction latest

On 25 October a long lost watercolour on vellum by Margaret Macdonald Mackintosh was sold by Christie's of London for £115,250.

Macdonald exhibited *The Silver Apples of the Moon* in 1912 at the 33rd Annual Exhibition of The Royal Scottish Societies of Watercolours and subsequently in 1913 at the 52nd Exhibition Royal Glasgow Institute of the Fine Arts, but after that there are no records of its exhibition history nor ownership. The work was priced at the first exhibition for £55 but probably did not sell until the second exhibition where it was priced at £65. This year the watercolour was sold through Christie's by an Italian private collection.

The title and subject matter of this work was taken from the poem *The Song of Wandering Aengus* from William Butler Yeats 1899 collection, *The Wind Among the Reeds*. It was the ninth out of this collection of 37 poems celebrating Irish myths and legends. In this poem, Aengus, roaming through a hazel wood, catches a silver trout which metamorphoses into “a glimmering



© Christie's

girl With apple blossom in her hair Who called me by my name and ran And faded through the brightening air”. Aengus then wanders in search of his lost love, “I will find out where she has gone And kiss her lips and take her hands; And walk among the long dappled grass, And pluck till time and times are done The silver apples of the moon, The golden apples of the sun”.

The Glasgow Boys Kelvingrove Art Gallery & Museum

There is now a new permanent gallery dedicated entirely to works by the group of painters known as the Glasgow Boys at Kelvingrove. Last summer the temporary touring exhibition *Pioneering Painters: The Glasgow Boys 1880-1900* was seen by more than 243,000 visitors to both Kelvingrove and the subsequent smaller exhibition at the Royal Academy in London. This new display of more than 60 paintings was opened on 27 October by Lord McFarlane of Bearsden, chairman of the Glasgow Boys exhibition committee and former board member of Glasgow Life.

This is the most comprehensive display of Glasgow Museums' pictures by the Boys ever, showing works by all the major figures such as Guthrie, Walton, Henry, and Hornel, as well as some superb examples by artists who are not so well known including Nairn, Mann, and Roche. Featured paintings include favourites such as *The Druids - Bringing in the Mistletoe* by Henry and Hornel. Every type of subject the Glasgow Boys tackled, and every painting style they adopted – from realism to symbolism to their mature styles – is featured. Anyone interested in the Boys will now be able to see an unrivalled display of their art in their home city of Glasgow, both at Kelvingrove and the Hunterian.



Mackintosh Symposium

Concern is growing about the condition and long-term future of a number of the Mackintosh buildings. A one-day symposium is being organised by the Society in partnership with the Mackintosh Heritage Group. **Mackintosh: Building the Future** will take place on Friday 3 February 2012 at The Lighthouse. Details of speakers to the event and how to register interest are shown on the website. We invite all Society members to attend and contribute to the proceedings and help make our voice stronger.

Time to stop the rot

At the 2011 AGM, Stuart Robertson, Director of the Society, gave an overview on the state of the Mackintosh buildings in Glasgow. The earlier part of the year had seen a flurry of newspaper articles commenting on the poor maintenance of some of Mackintosh's most important works. The media interest created debate and raised public awareness of the issues.

More chillingly Stuart highlighted that after a survey of Glasgow's A-listed buildings was completed in autumn 2010, Martyrs' School, Queen Margaret Medical College, Craigie Hall and Dunglass Castle were all put on the Buildings at Risk Register for Scotland. Scotland Street School was sliding towards being put onto the Register due to its condition.

Established in 1990, the Register is maintained by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) on behalf of Historic Scotland, the executive agency of the Scottish Government charged with safeguarding the nation's historic environment and promoting its understanding and enjoyment on behalf of Scottish Ministers. The criteria for inclusion is that a listed – or sometimes unlisted – building meets one or more of the following criteria: it is vacant with no identified new use, it is suffering from

neglect and/or poor maintenance or from structural problems, it is fire damaged, unsecured and open to the elements or it is threatened with demolition.

Martyrs' has found a new occupier and the former Queen Margaret Medical College is now owned by the Royal Bank of Scotland. Craigie Hall remains at low risk on the register during its period of sale, but Dunglass Castle in Bowling, the former home to both Talwin Morris and the Macdonald family, remains at high risk due to its poor condition.

More internationally significant Mackintosh buildings have their own set of issues:

The Hill House

The Hill House has suffered long established damp problems, threatening the historic interior fittings, furnishings and decoration. In 2010, owners The National Trust for Scotland (NTS) commissioned Historic Scotland to carry out a thermal survey of problematic areas of the interior and exterior. The findings from the thermal survey are going to be used by the NTS to help establish an appropriate repair and maintenance strategy for the property. As Mackintosh's commission at The Hill House embraced all aspects of its design, including much of the internal decoration and furniture, any future strategy will have to balance how best the aesthetics of his exterior are preserved, while also considering how this impacts the ongoing management of the interiors.

The Willow Tea Rooms

The Willow Tea Rooms in Sauchiehall Street is in a particularly bad condition with unchecked decay and water ingress. Anne Mulhern, who runs it, said she was embarrassed to show tourists around. However having said that this summer the tea rooms were picked as one of ten iconic sights – an 'Art Nouveau Icon' - to see in Glasgow by The Lonely Planet guide.



Harling decay at The Hill House

Scotland Street School

The Society still has concerns about the condition of Scotland Street School, which is being allowed to deteriorate with no planned holistic maintenance programme in place. The playground at the rear is in a deplorable state, not helped by the derelict Howden's buildings and the empty wasteground surrounding all three sides. A conservation survey was commissioned by Glasgow Museums in 2008 and some isolated repairs and clearing of vegetation has recently taken place.

Mackintosh is not alone. The Register's recent survey in the city has highlighted that the Glasgow area has the largest number of poorly maintained buildings in Scotland. The RCAHMS are trying to bring in some form of MOT system to try to counter this problem.

The Society is keen to be involved to champion a positive way forward for Mackintosh and Glasgow's unique architectural heritage. Because it is not all bad news: good work can and has been done – most recently at The Mackintosh Church at Queen's Cross and at the Glasgow School of Art. Both have received vital conservation and restoration work made achievable through major grant-funded programmes. This needs to continue. It is imperative we do not lose any more of Glasgow's architecture treasures. Failure to take action amounts to a massive blow to the city's Victorian heritage.

More information:

<http://www.buildingsatrisk.org.uk>

http://www.scotsman.com/news/life_of_grime_for_mackintosh_gems_outcry_as_world_famous_architect_s_buildings_are_hit_by_damp_and_decay_1_1649749



Interview with Stuart Robertson, Director

Ten Years ago in February 2001, Stuart Robertson took over as Director of the Charles Rennie Mackintosh Society. He is the third person to hold the post, succeeding both Patricia Douglas and David Mullane. Much has changed in ten years. Alison Brown asked Stuart to reflect over the challenges and successes of his tenure so far.

Looking back over the last ten years Stuart feels that Mackintosh's creativity and potential has been increasingly recognised by Glasgow since the turn of the millennium. "When I arrived 'Mackintosh' was prevalent, I feel a truer presentation of Mackintosh has been achieved over these years; for example both VisitScotland and the Glasgow City Marketing Bureau have used Mackintosh as part of their design branding and for the promotion of the City". Political support has grown; in 2003 and 2008 Scottish Enterprise was extremely helpful in supporting the Society and Mackintosh Heritage Group (which until 2010 Stuart chaired) learn from the practices of the architecture rich tourism cities of Barcelona and Chicago in order to promote Mackintosh and Glasgow to a wider, international, audience. The results of these 'learning journeys' have been excellent: leading to two successful Mackintosh Festivals, the first in 2006 the second for The Homecoming programme of 2009. Other initiatives that Stuart is particularly proud of that sprung from these programmes include The Mackintosh Trail Ticket – the day ticket for visitors to the city to get the most out of their Mackintosh experience and *The Amazing Mr Mackintosh*, a comic book recounting Mackintosh's life and work. Both have been outright successes.

Before coming to the Society, Stuart had been well established in conference production and event management; his client list including Renault and the UK Government. However many may not know



that his background is industrial design: he worked as a naval architect in the Design Office for Scott Lithgow in Greenock, one of the oldest shipyards in the world. His projects included the design and sea trials for navy and merchant ships. In 1980 he moved to Berkshire to work for a Canadian civil engineering consultants, but when the UK shipbuilding industry began to decline Stuart decided to move into other areas of creative interest: photography and early computer graphics, eventually leading him into event management.

Loving the potential of technology, Stuart has worked hard to bring the Society up to speed in the decade of digital revolution. Improved internal administrative systems and the establishment of the Mackintosh Society and Queen's Cross at the top of the Google rankings is a priority. He has evolved the Society website into an accessible Mackintosh portal with the help of funding initiatives from Scottish Enterprise and support from the Mackintosh Heritage Group. Over the last two years he's not been scared to take the



Interview with Stuart Robertson, Director

website promoting the Church – crucial for event bookings and fundraising – into the territory of broadband and the latest online technologies. On 7 June 2008 Google celebrated Mackintosh's 140th birthday by allocating him the coveted title banner on their home page. It is estimated that it was seen by more than 20 million people. To Stuart this demonstrates the amazing power and potential of the internet.

Stuart is passionate about the potential that The Mackintosh Church has to offer both the Society and City. "I feel the Church is a unique hands-on building to visit, like Scotland Street School, people can touch things; here they can make a tactile, magical connection to Mackintosh." When he arrived at the Society, the Church was not very accessible to the general public, there was no obvious entrance: "I saw the opening up of the front door as the first step to making the Church accessible to the community and people coming by". The Church last had an active congregation in 1976, and had become run down. Over the last 30 years the Society has brought the building back to life. From 2002-4 the Society Council initiated a project to have the main door on Garscube Road opened up and rebranding Queen's Cross as 'The Mackintosh Church' to give it a strong marketable identity. This coupled with the major restoration and conservation work of the building undertaken with Heritage Lottery Funding in 2006 - during Pamela Robertson's time as Chair. This has all helped the Church to become an attractive venue for weddings, events and conferences. And a great space for the Society's own events. Stuart is most proud of the themed evenings such as Kara Wilson's performance of *Tamara Limpeka* in 2005 and *Kimono Mackintosh* in 2007. But there is further potential: "my own knowledge has improved, I've learnt more about the Church and its community, I think this side of its history is under-researched; much more can be done."

Perhaps the best example of political support for Mackintosh in this last decade is Glasgow's World Heritage Status bid for The Hill House and The Glasgow School of Art. Stuart participates in the steering group to develop the bid and sees it as a valuable experience. "Even though our initial bid to UNESCO was unsuccessful, we will continue with a revised bid. Our achievements so far can be built upon, and the benefit is that it promotes Mackintosh to a wider audience."

Stuart believes none of this could have happened without the support of Council, staff, volunteers and of course members.

What does Stuart see as the future for the Society and Mackintosh? Succinctly answered this includes: fundraising, fresh blood, volunteer development and the enthusiasm to capture new audiences. "Between 2002 and 2005 I took a stand at the Destinations Travel Show in London to promote Mackintosh; it was really successful in lifting people's perception of Glasgow. You are effectively being a Missionary to promote Mackintosh. Glasgow has lifted its profile and this often in parallel with Mackintosh. Over this time things have been event driven: the 1989 Garden Festival, the 1990 Year of Culture, the UK City of Architecture & Design in 1999, the 2006 Mackintosh Festival. The evaluation from all of these show that Mackintosh contributes significantly to Glasgow's economy."

But one thing is paramount in Stuart's mind above all else. "The condition and preservation of Mackintosh's buildings are now the key point for the future. There is no point having good marketing if the product is not up to scratch. Mackintosh is as important to Glasgow's tourism as castles are to the rest of Scotland."

Interview by Alison Brown - Glasgow Museums



Horse: Wintersong

The Mackintosh Church

Saturday 3 December 2011 7.30pm

An intimate evening of carefully selected Horse classics, entwined with new songs from her forthcoming, 9th album... all of this captured in the glorious surroundings of the iconic Mackintosh Church. Horse McDonald is a unique talent. She has been described as "an artist who wouldn't have been out of place on the stax or motown labels in their heyday." Often called 'The Voice', she has an amazing pedigree, is utterly unique, and continues to astonish.

Tickets £17.50 available from The Mackintosh Church and the Horse website.

<http://www.randan.org/wintersong.shtml>

Study Tour: Isle of Man

Thursday 19 to Monday 23 April 2012

Our four day tour will include access to the Archibald Knox archive at the Manx Museum, an exclusive view of a private collection of Knox's stunning silverware and watercolours and a trip to the ancient Monastic site of Maughold with Celtic Crosses designed by Knox. The weekend will also include a tour of the work of H M Baillie Scott on the island.

See Website and Study Tour leaflet for more information and costs.

Les Sirènes Christmas Concert

The Mackintosh Church

Friday 16 December 2011

Les Sirènes will bring in Christmas with style in the intimate venue of the Mackintosh Church. The Choir will perform Britten's well loved "Ceremony of Carols" with harpist Charlotte Sager and add some festive cheer with well known Christmas music and traditional carols. The perfect concert to get into the festive spirit; so take a break from the shopping, sit back, relax and enjoy beautiful music by candlelight in this unique building.

Tickets cost £6.00 (£4.00 Conc) and are available via Royal Conservatoire of Scotland <https://boxoffice.rcs.ac.uk>

Tel: 0141 332 5057 <http://www.sirenes.co.uk>

Members' Christmas Lunch

The Mackintosh Church

Friday 9 December 12.30 for 1.00pm

Our Christmas Lunch this year is a delicious hot buffet with wine, coffee and petit fours. A time to catch up with friends old and new and relax during this busy time of year!

Tickets cost £25.00 from CRM Society

Volunteers Wanted

We are looking for Volunteers to cover a range of tasks at The Mackintosh Church. For more information, call 0141 946 6600 or e-mail volunteer@crmsociety.com

*Thanks for all your support and Best Wishes for 2012
from everyone at CRM Society*

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