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NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART & DESIGN,
DESIGN FACILITY, CRAFT DEPARTMENT
(GLASS)

CHARLES RENNIE MACKINTOSH

*"Mackintosh's Achievements in the early
years of the Twentieth Century."*

By Vicki Rothschild

Submitted to The Faculty of History of
Art and Design and Complimentary
Studies in Candidacy for The Degree of
Batchelor of Design, 1996.

NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART & DESIGN
1931 IN FACILITY, CRAFT IS A REMAIN
(CLASS)

CHARLES RENNIE MACINTOSH

"Macintosh's Architectural Works in the
Years of the Twentieth Century"

by Victor Kohnschke

Submitted to the Faculty of History of
Art and Design and Complimentary
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Bachelor of Design, 1990.

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My sincere thanks to my thesis tutor Nikki Gordon-Bowe,
for her help and advice in writing this thesis.

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INTRODUCTION

1996 was the centennial anniversary of the Glasgow School of Art (Fig.1), an ideal opportunity for the city to acknowledge the college's architect and interior designer Charles Rennie Mackintosh. The celebrations included a retrospective show of his architecture, furniture (Fig.2), textile designs, landscape painting (Fig.3), watercolours and botanical drawings at the McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow, which is now continuing at the Metropolitan Museum in New York; a retrospective of the work and influence of Fra Newberry, Mackintosh's mentor at the Glasgow School of Art; and, last but not least, the opening of the House for an Art Lover in Bellahouston Park.

Furniture was borrowed from private collectors around the world; a video tour of Mackintosh's most famous residence, The Hill House, was commissioned and architectural designer Brian Gallagher of Glasgow spent years building scale models of exacting fidelity.

The history of art in the twentieth century is strewn with examples of artists whose work and fame have been lost or shunned as tastes and styles have passed them by, only to be rediscovered and relished by a later generation. Such is the case with Glasgow's most famous designer Charles Rennie Mackintosh. At the turn of the century he impressed the continent with innovative designs, but at home his legacy was ignored. It is only now, nearly a hundred years on, that the city is beginning to make up for past neglect.

In addition to small models and floor plans, the exhibits includes a reassembled room - The Ladies' Luncheon Room from Miss Catherine Cranston's Ingram Tea

INTRODUCTION

1900 was the centenary of the Glasgow School of Art (Fig. 1), an ideal opportunity for the city to acknowledge the college's architect and designer, Charles Rennie Mackintosh. The celebration included a retrospective show of his architectural, furniture (Fig. 2), textile designs, landscape paintings (Fig. 3), watercolours and botanical drawings at the McEwan Gallery, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow, which is now contained at the Metropolitan Museum in New York. Mackintosh's mentor at the Glasgow School of Art and last but not least, the opening of the House for an Art Lover in Bellahouston Park.

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In addition to small models and floor plans, the exhibit includes a reassembled room - The Ladies' Dressing Room from Miss Catherine Gordon's 1900-1901



FIGURE 1

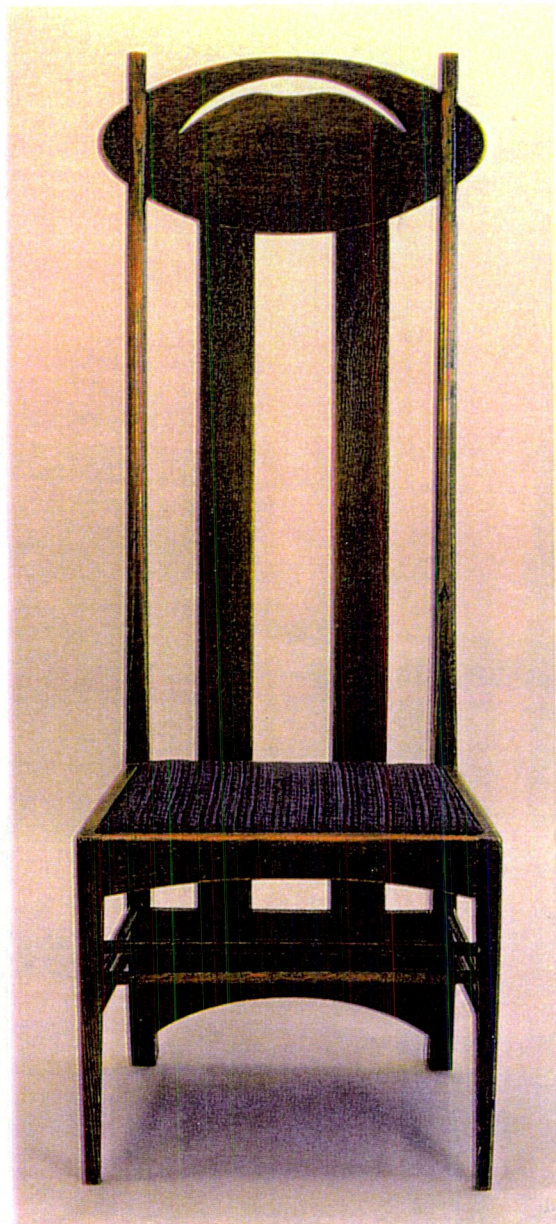


FIGURE 2

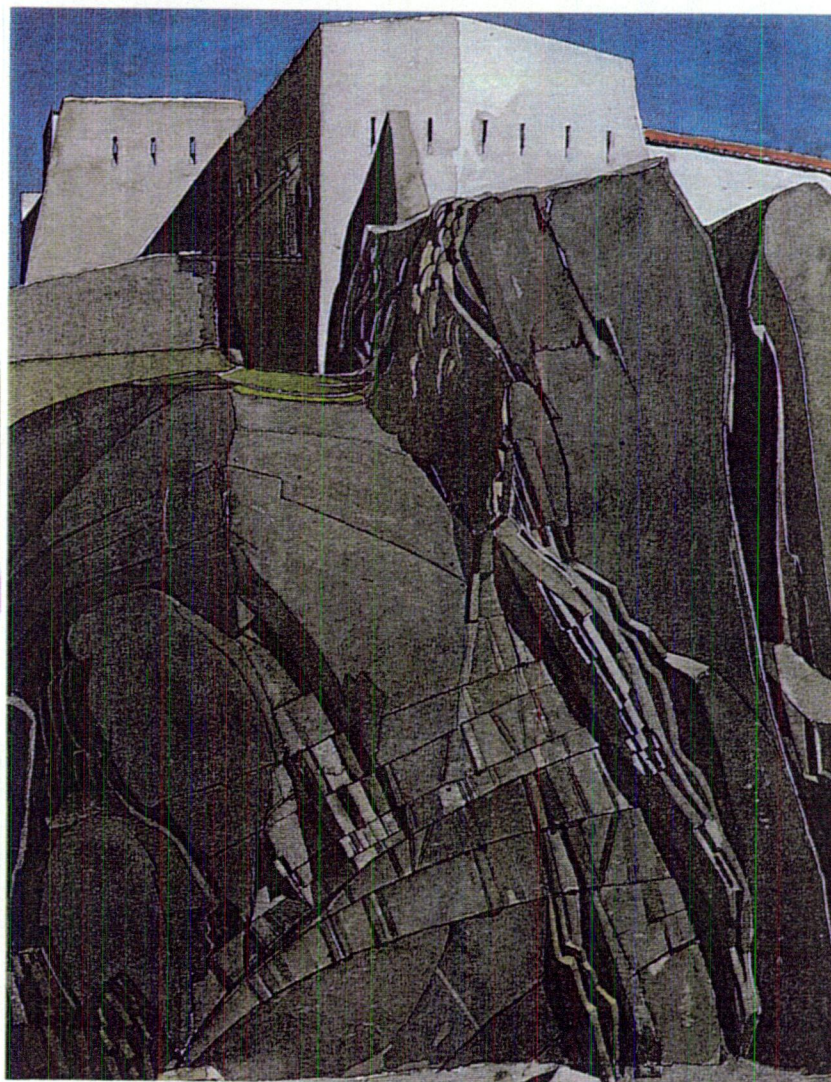


FIGURE 3

Rooms in Glasgow, that showed the Mackintosh touch on everything from windows, room dividers, doors, murals, and a stairway to tables, chairs, lamps, umbrella stands and menus. Among larger pieces, created for residential clients, included in the exhibition were a pristine white four-poster bed, double armoires with curving doors, writing tables and a free-standing mirror.

Mackintosh was born in Glasgow in 1886 and died in relative obscurity in London in 1928. His contemporaries, all born within the decade of (1863-73), represent a bridge, in architecture and design, between the nineteenth century and the arrival of the twentieth century. In that decade were born M.H.Baillie Scott (1865-1946), Talwin Morris (1865-1912), J.M.Olbrich (1865-1908), C.R.Ashbee (1863-1942), Henry Van De Velde (1863-1957), Edwin Lutyens (1869-1944), Adolf Loos (1870-1933), Josef Hoffmann (1870-1955) and Eliel Saarinen (1873-1915).

During his life time, Mackintosh was considered to be one of a generation of imaginative and idealistic young architects and designers whose desire to create a new national architecture, for example (Gaudi in Spain, Otto wagner in Vienna, Guimard and Horta in France and Belgium, Frank Lloyd Wright in America) was wide enough spread to be thought of as a new international movement. His ambitions were to develop the traditions of Scottish architecture and reinterpret them so they could be adapted for a new style of building suited for modern society. He believed that the techniques, materials and decorative forms which had been developed by his architectural ancestors in Scotland over the centuries could still be used in the twentieth century. He argued against the disregard of the traditional Vernacular style

Rooms were arranged for the exhibition, everything from windows, room, vision, and a way to tables, chairs, and a way to the door. Among larger pieces created for the exhibition were a painting of a four-poster bed, double armchair with canopy, and a free-standing mirror.

Mackintosh was born in Glasgow in 1868 and died in London in 1928. His relative obscurity in the decade of (1868-1928) represented a bridge in architecture and design between the nineteenth century and the arrival of the twentieth century. In that decade were born M.H. Baillie-Lyall (1868-1946), Edwin Lutyens (1869-1944), Adolf Loos (1869-1940), Josef Hoffmann (1870-1956), and Eileen Gray (1872-1965).

During his life time, Mackintosh was considered as one of a generation of imaginative and innovative young architects and designers whose designs for new buildings, for example, in Glasgow, Vienna, and Paris in the early 1900s, were a new kind of architecture. Mackintosh was a pioneer in the use of the word "architectural" to describe his work. He believed that the traditional architectural forms which had been developed in the nineteenth century in Scotland were still being used in the twentieth century. He argued that the language of the traditional forms was still being used in the twentieth century.

in favour of imported international styles - such as Gothic or Classical.

Mackintosh's career was blossoming at the turn of the century. He worked in a booming industrial city which allowed him plenty of opportunities; commissions for a variety of buildings (such as churches, schools and residential homes), the availability of new technological advances, a skilled work force and access to ethnographical as well as archaeological data.

Glasgow was a 'modern' city even by European standards, and its residents were optimistic of what lay ahead in the future. Mackintosh was part of this enthusiastic and energetic generation: Through the medium of architecture and design, he was tentively hanging on to the real past -Scottish Baronial architecture- and pushing it towards an ideal the future. By linking different threads from the past and with the present he was able to establish a new whole; his architectural heritage was as much interpreting the writings of Ruskin and Morris, as it was the ideas of progressive theorists like Voysey, Sedding, Lethaby, Japanese art and other concepts that stemed directly from his own imagination.

Like other adventurous architects of the early twentieth century, such as Marcel Breuer and Frank Lloyd Wright, Mackintosh began nearly simultaneously to design all the elements within a building, including decorative arts, furnishings, light fixtures and landscaping. Almost all of his buildings are sited in and around Glasgow and most are limited to his productive years between 1896-1909. From 1909 to his death in 1928, the majority of his work can be considered only complementary or secondary to his earlier principal architectural forms of expression. Although Mackintosh is considered first and foremost an architect, he was also a painter, and an interior designer (furniture, lights, textiles). In his book entitled

in the early 19th century, the Glasgow School of Architecture was founded by James Gillespie Graham.

Mackintosh's career was blossoming at the time of the 1901 Glasgow Exhibition. He worked in a booming industrial city which allowed him plenty of opportunities; commissions for a variety of buildings (such as churches, schools, and residential homes); the availability of new architectural advances; a skilled work force and access to ethnographical as well as archaeological data. Glasgow was a 'modern' city even by 1901 standards, and its residents were optimistic of what the future held. Mackintosh was part of an enthusiastic and energetic generation through the middle of architecture and design, he was tentatively hanging on to the real past - Scottish domestic architecture - and pushing it towards an ideal the future. By looking at the past and with the present, he was able to establish a new whole; his architectural heritage was as much interpreting the writings of James Watt as it was the ideas of progressive thought like Fourier, Sedding, Behning, Japanese art and craft concepts that stemmed directly from his own imagination.

Like other adventurous architects of the late nineteenth century, such as Marcel Breuer and Frank Lloyd Wright, Mackintosh began nearly simultaneously to design all the elements within a building, including decorative details, lighting, fixtures and landscaping. Although all of his buildings are sited in and around Glasgow, his work was limited to his productive years between 1901 and 1909. From 1909 to his death in 1928, the majority of his work can be considered only complementary or secondary to his earlier principal architectural work of expression. Although Mackintosh is considered first and foremost an architect, he was also a painter, and an interior designer (interiors: glass, textiles). In his book, Mackintosh

C.R.Mackintosh Anthony Jones writes that he was an architect,

"but one who sought in its varied expressions a holistic vision that would integrate and unify all the arts under the maternal cloak of architecture.....in the dynamic, yet whole known in German as the gesamkunstswerk -a total work of art."
(Anthony Jones, 1990, pg 15)

This thesis is a re-examination of Mackintosh's ideas and expressions both in his architectural and interior design work. I have concentrated my discussions in particular on Mackintosh's greatest domestic building the Hill House, as it lucidly demonstrates the unique characteristics of his architectural approach and it establishes a precedent for his concept of the ideal modern living environment. Hopefully, by highlighting his achievements in the early years of the twentieth century, I can figure out what makes him so relevant today in 1997 and analyse what I, as a design student, can learn from his work.

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CHAPTER I

CHAPTER 1

Charles Rennie Mackintosh had a relatively short career as an architect. Most of his major commissions were executed between 1896 and 1906; these include two institutional buildings in Glasgow - The School of Art (begun in 1897), and Scotland Street School (1904-6), a small number of private houses (notably the Hill House, Helensburgh, (1902-4) and Windyhill, Kilmacolm, (1900-1), a church, commercial buildings and a series of interiors for different clients.

He was born in Glasgow and in 1884 he started work at the office of John Hutchinson, 107 St Vincent Street, as an apprentice. The city was thriving with industry, it had become one of the richest cities in Britain, on a par with London and Manchester. Most of this wealth was derived from coal mining and iron ore in Lanarkshire, railways, chemicals, heavy engineering and, specifically, ship building. Between 1870 and 1913, Clydeside ship builders continuously produced a third of the total British tonnage.

The city's power lay in the hands of the wealthy merchant middle classes. It considered itself to be a modern city and they wanted to excel themselves culturally as well as economically. The arts were a perfect vehicle for this; the middle classes became patrons, promoting a busy collection of dealers, exhibitions and galleries. Glasgow soon became known internationally as a centre of excellence in the arts, particularly the visual arts. It was home to such international dealers as Alexander Reid, William Burrell, who extensively collected medieval decorative art, oriental ceramics and Impressionist paintings. Alexander Thomson, the internationally acclaimed architect, and the 'Glasgow Boys', whose paintings, influenced by France, Holland and Japan, were beginning to enjoy a reputation

James Rennie Mackintosh had a fine taste for
colour and architecture. Most of his major houses
were executed between 1886 and 1906. These include
residential buildings in Glasgow - The Lighthouse
(1891-92), Scotland Street School (1894-95),
a small number of private houses, notably The Hill House
(1902-03), Windhill (1903-04), Kilmoriton (1904-05),
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in Europe. The city had gained its own identity apart from England. It was no longer insular in size or structure, in fact, Glasgow considered itself to be European (Fig.4).

While working as an apprentice with Hutchinson, Mackintosh enrolled in evening classes on the advice of the chief assistant; he also attended a formal course of study in architecture and building. His education was that of a typical late Victorian architect, sketching from models or historic ornaments, and practising general drawing skills. He had an extremely successful school career, being awarded a number of School prizes in 1885, 1886, 1888, two National Institute prizes in 1887, The Institute Bronze Medal in 1888, and one of the Queen's prizes in 1889.

On the completion of his apprenticeship in 1889, he switched to the office of Honeyman and Keppie, continuing both to follow his course of study and to win awards. In 1890, he was awarded the Design Prize and the 'Greek' Thomson Travelling Scholarship of the Glasgow Institute of Architects, in addition to several School of Art prizes, and, in 1889, the Silver Medal of the Kensington Institute was awarded to him for his project for a Science and Art Museum (Fig.5). Finally, he won a gold medal in 1892 to top his hatrick.

John Honeyman had started his own practice in 1854 and had a reputation as an authority on medieval architecture, having made comprehensive studies of such buildings throughout Britain. He worked on the first phase of the renovation of Glasgow Cathedral, restored the cathedrals of Iona and Brechin as well as Linlithgow church, and designed several other churches, in Perth,

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FIGURE 4

DESIGN FOR
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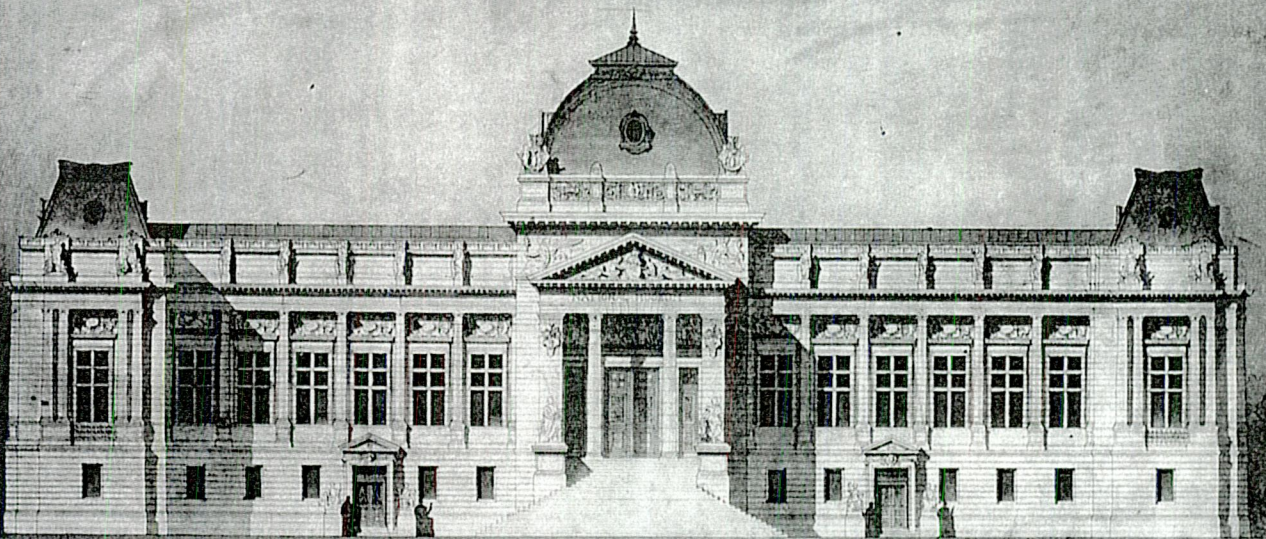


FIGURE 5

Greenock and Edinburgh. Other individual commissions worth noting are the Ca d'Oro at 41-55 Gordon Street, with upper floors by J.G. Gillespie, Craigie Hall in Dumbreck, Barony North Church on Cathedral Square and Westbourne Free Church of Scotland, in Kelvinside. Honeyman was also a founding member of three important societies - The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, formed by William Morris in 1877, The Glasgow Institution of Architects and the Glasgow Archaeological Society. This must have been inspiring for Mackintosh and probably encouraged him to gain a greater knowledge of restoration and historic buildings, particularly of the 13th-14th centuries.

John Keppie, who was near enough in age to Mackintosh, had studied in The Glasgow School of Art and had gained experience working with Campbell and James Sellers. He showed a strong Beaux Arts orientation and he and Mackintosh seem to have become quite close friends during their time working together.

Mackintosh's Italian tour, which he took in 1890 after winning his scholarship, would have increased his status in the office of Honeyman & Keppie. Over the next few years he became very ambitious; his submissions for a number of competitions, which he completed in his own time, gained him a reputation - (e.g. his Chapter House of 1891 in an Italian Renaissance style, and his Railway Terminus of 1892 (Fig.6). One of his earliest designs, which he worked in conjunction with Honeyman and Keppie in a competition was for The Glasgow Art Galleries (Fig.7). It was admired by the critics, but viewed with suspicion as Mackintosh was considered to be a novice. The designs owe a lot to his Victorian training, being altogether conservative, yet the panels of foliage and decorative figures suggest the beginnings of his interest in line and imagery.

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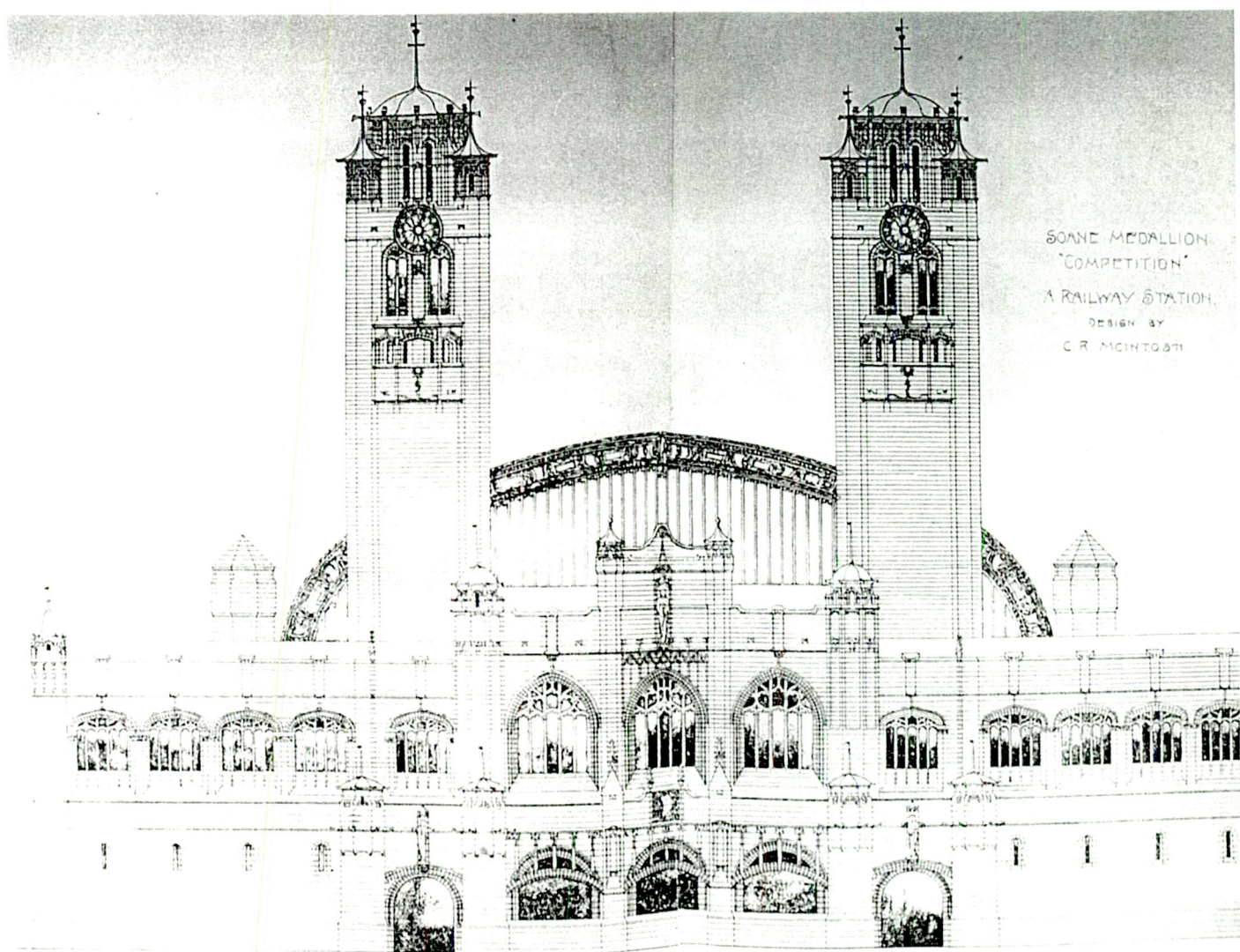


FIGURE 6

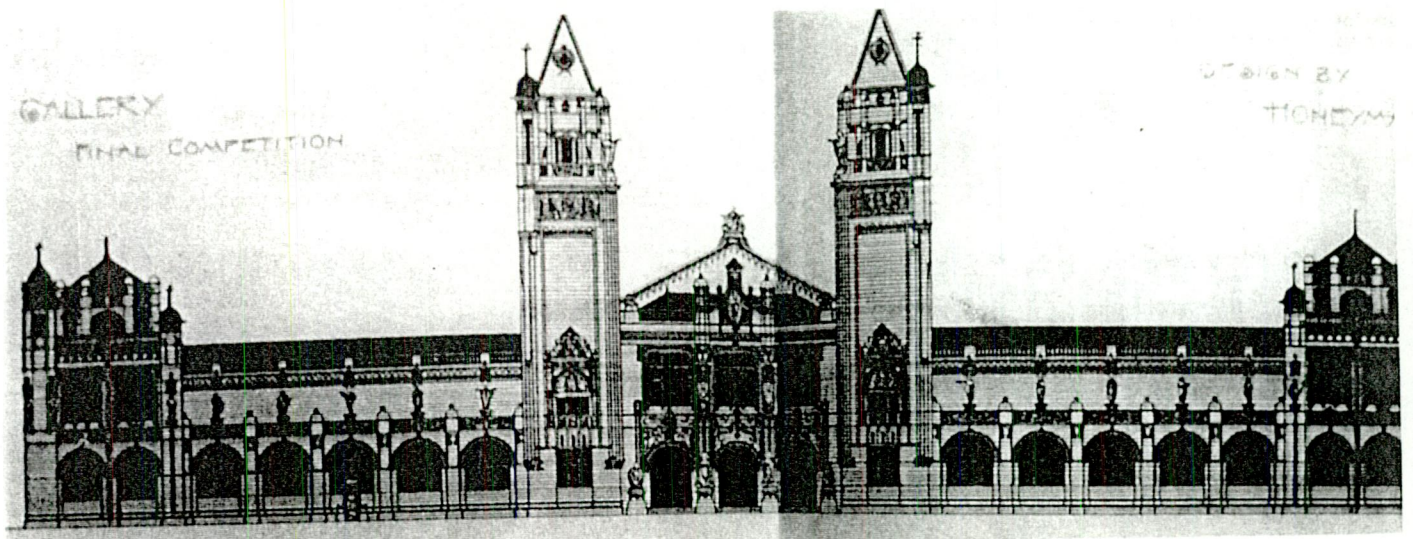


FIGURE 7

Mackintosh was also noted for the lectures he gave in the Glasgow School of Art. Alan Crawford remarks that they were "Clumsily expressed and painfully dependent on published writings,"

nevertheless, they apparently gave a clear insight into what motivated his work.

"He lectured about his Italian tour, once on 'Elizabethan' Architecture, and twice on 'Architecture'. In the second 'Architecture' lecture, delivered in February 1893, he pinned his colours to the mast of the English Free Style:_'I am glad to think that now there are men such as Norman Shaw - John Bentley - John Belcher, Mr Bodley Leonard Stokes and the late John Sedding....Men who more and more are feeling themselves from correct antiquitarian detail ...We must clothe modern ideas with modern dress - adorn our designs with living fancy'

(Alan Crawford, 1995, pg 21)

The architecture of nineteenth century Glasgow was extremely consistent. It was almost completely built of stone, a buff sandstone at first and then, from about 1890, a deep plum red sandstone mined in Ayrshire and Dumfriesshire. Throughout the 1800's it remained a classical city. Perhaps one of the most famous architects to work in Glasgow was Alexander Thomson, whose work spanned from warehouses to churches (Fig.8), all executed with pillars and pediments taken from Greece and Egypt.

'Greek' Thomson, as he became known, died in 1875, and it was around this time that the popularity of classical architecture began to fade in Glasgow. The city's buildings were becoming less coherent and new styles which displayed a greater freedom were taking over from the traditional. A prime example would be the Central

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He lectured about his Italian tour in 1893. In the second 'Architectural' lecture delivered in February 1893, he pinned his colours to the mast of the English Free Style: "I am glad to think that now there are men such as Norman Shaw - John Bentley - John Belcher, Mr Bodley, Leonard Stokes and the late John Gedding... Men who more and more are feeling themselves from correct antiquarian detail... We must choose modern ideas with modern dress - adorn our designs with living fancy."

(Alan Crawford, 1995, pg 21)

The architecture of nineteenth century Glasgow was extremely consistent. It was almost completely built of stone, a buff sandstone at first and then from about 1850, a deep plum red sandstone mined in Ayrshire and Dumfriesshire. Throughout the 1800's it remained classical city. Perhaps one of the most famous architects to work in Glasgow was Alexander Thomson, whose work spanned from warehouses to churches (1848-1906), all executed with skill and elegance taken from Greece and Egypt.

Greek Thomson, as he became known, died in 1872, and it was around this time that the popularity of classical architecture began to fade in Glasgow. The city's buildings were becoming less coherent and new styles which displayed a greater freedom were taking over from the classical. A prime example would be the Glasgow



FIGURE 8

Hotel built between 1879-84 and designed by Rowand Anderson (Fig.9). This is a building which displayed a new liberty in its design, with a diverse range of sources. The erection of the hotel was an indication of progressive architecture in the 1890's.

Although Glasgow had a diverse range of architecture that was independent of the rest of Britain, it was still influenced by growing trends in London - such as German and Flemish Renaissance, Gothic and later Baroque. The English country houses of the 16th and 18th centuries were inspiration for a whole new generation of designers. Their late Victorian styles were known as 'Old English' or 'Queen Anne', or more particularly 'The Free Style', the main participants in its development being Norman Shaw, John Sedding, Philip Webb and C.F.Voysey.

In Scotland the traditional Baronial Style (Fig.10), taken from ancestral Scottish homes and castles of the 16th and 17th centuries, manifested similar ideals, however with a more potent nationalist impetus. Following the example of his English contemporaries, Mackintosh aspired to create a scottish architecture in the mould of the Free Style.

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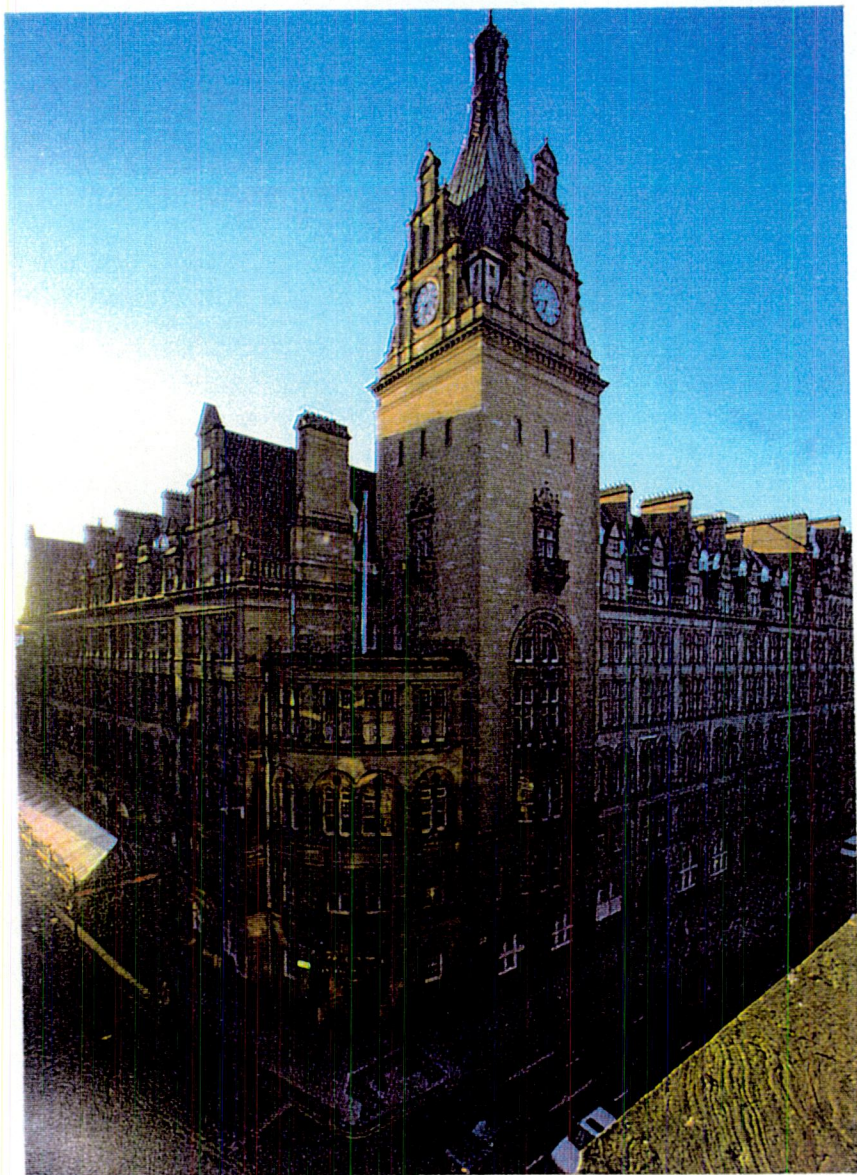


FIGURE 9



FIGURE 10

CHAPTER I I

CHAPTER 11

Charles Rennie Mackintosh's architectural approach can be associated with both traditional Scottish architecture, and with the processes of departure from tradition introduced by the architects of the European Avant Gardes that followed him, for example Josef Hoffman and Kolo Moser.

Mackintosh desired to create a national architecture using characteristics of the Scottish Baronial style found in the ancestral homes and castles of Scotland. However, he did not want to merely imitate ancient buildings, he intended to make the style conform to modern requirements.

Glasgow was a growing metropolis with new buildings being erected every day. Glaswegian architects were obsessed with the Antique, like many of their counterparts in Victorian Britain - reviving styles from ancient Greece, Egypt, Rome, The Renaissance, Gothic and Medieval. There was a particular penchant for Greek architecture led by Alexander Thomson (1817-75), who became famous for his bizarre churches, designed from strange interpretations of Athenian temples.

Mackintosh could not accept Historicism as a source of inspiration. He refused to blindly imitate the structures and symbols of ancient temples, which he deemed as foreign in spirit. He did not understand why architects did not use their own native culture as a well-spring for ideas.

Mackintosh's reading of the works of Ruskin and Pugin as part of his course at The Glasgow School of Art substantiated for him an inward will to create a 'new language', one free from the dogmas of historicism. The writings of these men and others such as William Morris

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Mackintosh's reading of the works of Ruskin and Pugin as part of his course at the Glasgow School of Art substantiated for him an inward will to create a new language, one free from the dogmas of historicism. The writings of these men and others such as William Morris

and W.R.Lethaby, were also the foundation on which the English School based itself.

The English Free Style Movement is best explained in a book entitled Das Englische Haus, published, in 1904, in Berlin and written by Herman Muthesius. He was the cultural and technical attache in England for the German Embassy between 1896-1903, which gave him the opportunity of investigating the new developments in British architecture and design education. The book is an incredible undertaking, that documents the revolution in English domestic architecture between 1840-1900. It includes every significant example of architecture built during this period. He was an avid admirer of the British Style, praising its utility and simplicity, and feeling that it represented in every way a higher form of life. These qualities he considered to be stepping stones to a new European style in

" The remarkable spectacle of a new departure in the tectonic arts that had originated in England and spread across the whole field of our European cultures."

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friend of Muthesius and was considered by him to be the leader in contemporary architecture at that time. This opinion was not unique; J.M.Brydon, a British architect and writer in the Architectural Association Notes in 1901, was quoted as saying:

" There are no more beautiful, comfortable and well planned modern hames in the world than are to be found in this England of ours, and none so characteristic of the country in which they were built, an artistic result which we owe in the main to the genius and influence of Mr. Norman Shaw."

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Shaw and his partner, Eden Nesfield (1835-1888), overwhelmed the British architectural world with their achievements, such as Swan House (1876) in Chelsea and New Zealand Chambers, (1873) Leadenhall Street, London (Fig.11):

" Shaw's office became the centre to which many of the most progressive architects of the day gravitated."

(Thomas Howarth, 1952, Pg. 242)

The nearest rival to Shaw in the domestic field was Philip Webb. He had been born in Oxford in 1831 and Howarth argues that

" He was the first architect since The Renaissance to select materials with real sensibility to colour, texture and surface."

(Thomas Howarth, 1952, pg. 241)

Red House, near Bexley Heath (1860) was considered by Muthesius to be the single most important nineteenth century achievement in domestic design. It was designed by Webb for William Morris and Muthesius recognised this as the first adherent of Arts and Crafts premises. This

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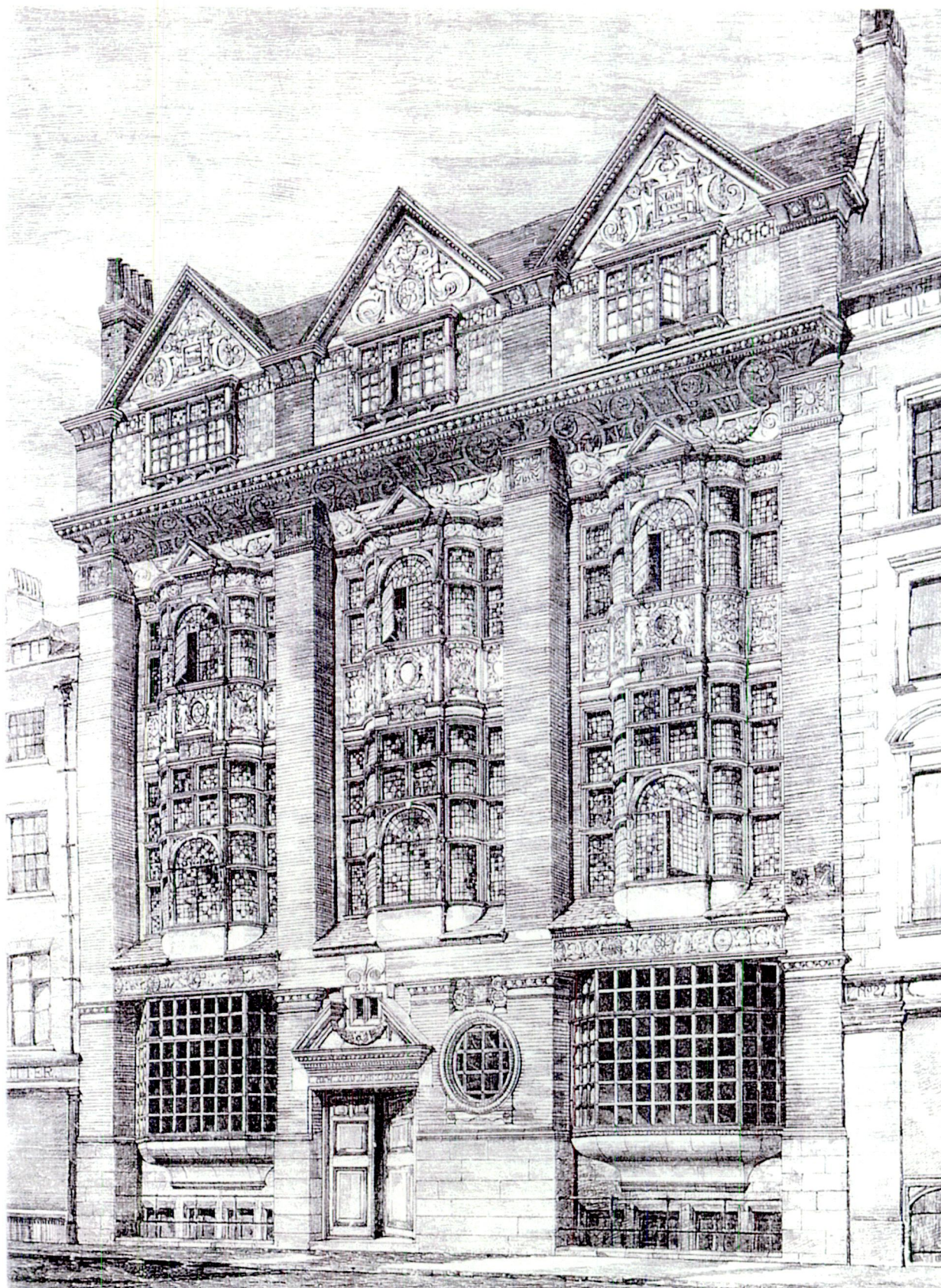


FIGURE 11

may seem ill-defined in architectural terms, but it was the first time in which contemporary architecture and craft were entirely integrated. Everything was considered - texture, orientation, the use of colour and native materials. It showed a great deal of innovation and independence but ultimately, it was a revolt by Morris against what he saw as the greatest evil of the Nineteenth Century - industry.

William Morris was an inspirational designer whose contribution to the development of English design is immeasurable. His carpets, wallpapers, chintzes and furnishings are still highly regarded for simplicity of form, quality of workmanship and exquisite colouring. All of these characteristics are even more admirable considering they were executed in an age largely given over to vulgar commercialism, when new machinery meant that craftsmanship was being replaced by industry. Without any artistic input, industrial art was largely becoming crude, vulgar and overloaded with ornament.

Morris was a socialist and believed that it was possible to reform the applied arts (Fig.12). He founded the famous firm of craftsmen - Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., Fine Art Workmen in Painting, Carving, Furniture and The Metals - in 1861. Howarth writes:

Morris was an indefatigable worker and a militant propagandist, and there were few contemporary designers not profoundly influenced by his teachings. The Morris 'movement' grew into a general revival of the handicrafts, with, as one of its most interesting manifestations, the emergence of numerous societies or guilds - The Century Guild established by A.H.Mackmurdo in 1882 and The Art Workers Guild, 1884, for example."

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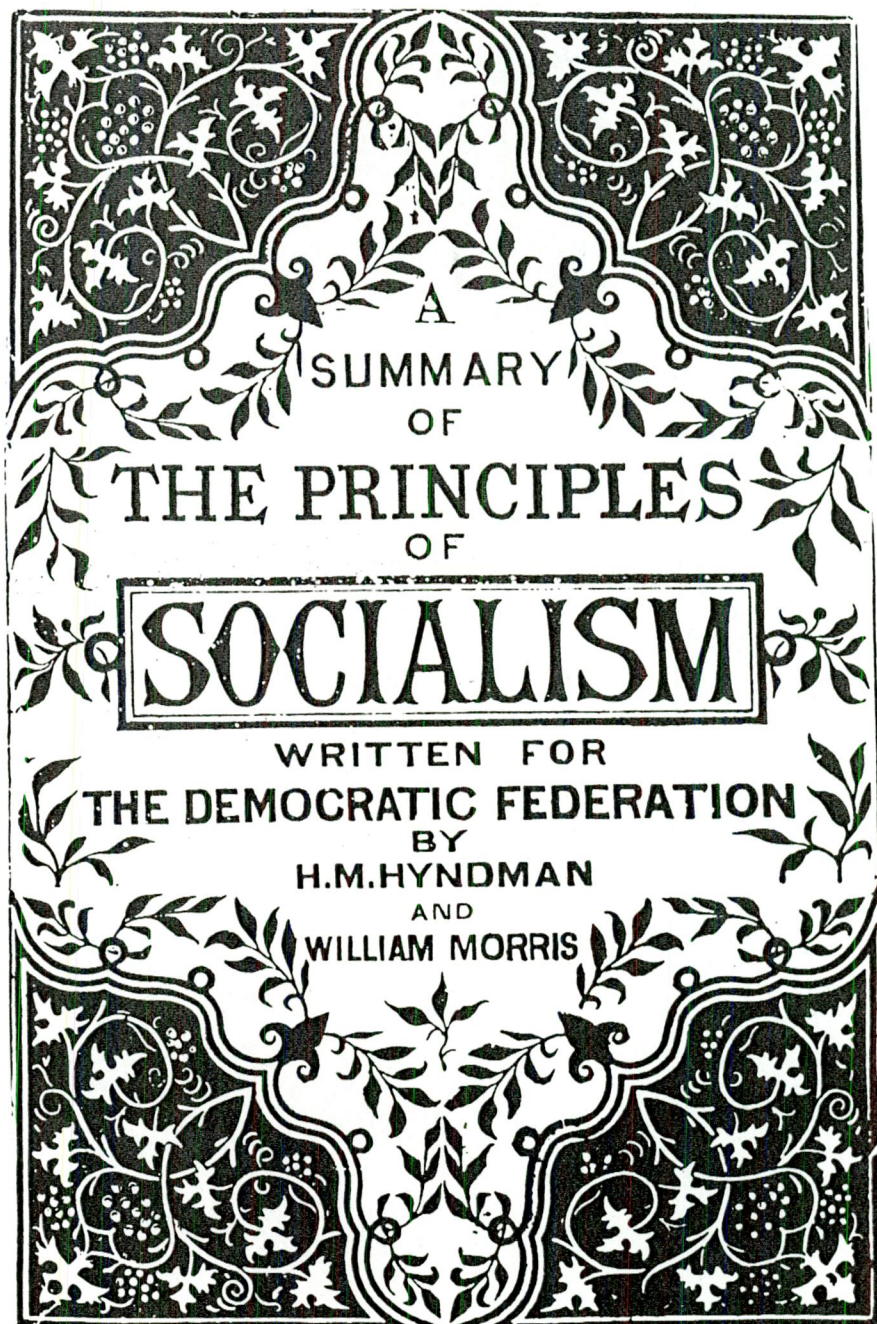


FIGURE 12

Morris wanted to return art and craftsmanship back to the people, to regain its respect and the joy of making crafts. Red house was an example of how this could be accomplished; Every detail was meticulously handcrafted. It was indebted to the Middle Ages, a celebration of a time when the artist was a craftsman. it was simple and harmonious, qualities that Morris's medieval predecessors would have approved of.

The teachings of John Ruskin were the well-spring from which the young Morris gathered his socialist theories. In his book The Seven Lamps of Architecture published in 1849 Ruskin talks about the 'lamp of truth'. 'Truth' in making by hand, and making by hand is making with joy. Ruskin saw that these were the two great advantages of the Middle Ages had. Nikolaus Pesvner's book Pioneers of Modern Design, published in 1936, claims that John Ruskin owed a debt

"just a little too emphatically denied to Pugin, that brilliant designer and pamphleteer who in the years between 1836 and 1851 had fought violently and relentlessly for catholicism, for Gothic forms as the only christian forms and also for honesty and truthfulness in design and manufacturing."

(Nikolaus Pesvner, 1936, Pg.23)

Pugin's book, True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture (1830), outlines the 'two great rules for design':

" that there should be no features about a building which are not necessary for convenience, construction or propriety "

and " that all ornament should consist of the essential construction of a building."

(quoted in Nikolaus Pesvner, 1936, pg.24)

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Pevsner's book, True Principles of Painting (1933) outlines the two great reasons for design. That there should be no features about a building which are not necessary for convenience or protection or propriety. And that all ornament should consist of essential construction of a building. (Nikolaus Pevsner, 1936, p. 14)

Red House remains a pillar for the Morrisian Arts and Crafts Movement. However Muthesius recognised that this movement had little to do with the English Free Style. The theories of Morris, Ruskin and Pugin are the supporting structure behind the next generation of architects - C.F.Voysey, C.R.Ashbee, M.H.Baillie Scott, W.R.Lethaby and C.R.Mackintosh - that we see a new style emerging.

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CHAPTER I I I

CHAPTER III

Though his Hill house (Fig.13) is only part of a large curriculum of work, it nevertheless lucidly demonstrates the unique characteristics of Mackintosh's architectural approach and clearly reveals both his methods and his aspirations. The exterior shows his desire for a 'Scottish architecture', for a building free from the historicist dogma, reflecting the native vernacular of Scotland where windows could respond to internal need rather than external construction.

In 1902 Walter Blackie a successful publisher from Glasgow, commissioned Mackintosh, on the recommendations of Talwin Morris, his art manager at Blackie & Co., to design his family home. His site was at the top edge of Helensburgh, with a view of the Clyde Estuary to the South. This was a popular retreat from the grime and pollution of Glasgow's inner city. It was not Mackintosh's first domestic commission but it was the first on a scale which could allow him to demonstrate what his new and total approach to architecture and interior design might offer. The resulting building, which was completed in 1904, is now considered to be the finest example of his residential architecture.

The simple, window-pierced, harled walls give the feeling of a Scottish house in a Scottish landscape (Fig.14). However the subtle manipulation of dormers, gables and chimneys, composed to particularize each facade, creates a feeling of abstraction, of modernity even.

He may have studied the harled cottages and estate buildings at Fortingall, Perthshire, designed by James Maclaren and his successors Dunn and Watson in 1889-92 in an austere and angular version of the Scottish vernacular (Fig.15).

Towards the end of the century, following the lead of the English School, there was a serious attempt by the

...the Bill Jones... it is only...
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...the... of...
...approach and... reveals...
...and his... The... shows...
...for a... for a...
...the... the...
...of Scotland where...
...need... then... of...

In 1901 Walter Blackie a...
...commissioned...
...of... art manager...
...his family... his...
...with a view of the...
...This was a popular...
...of Glasgow's...
...his first domestic...
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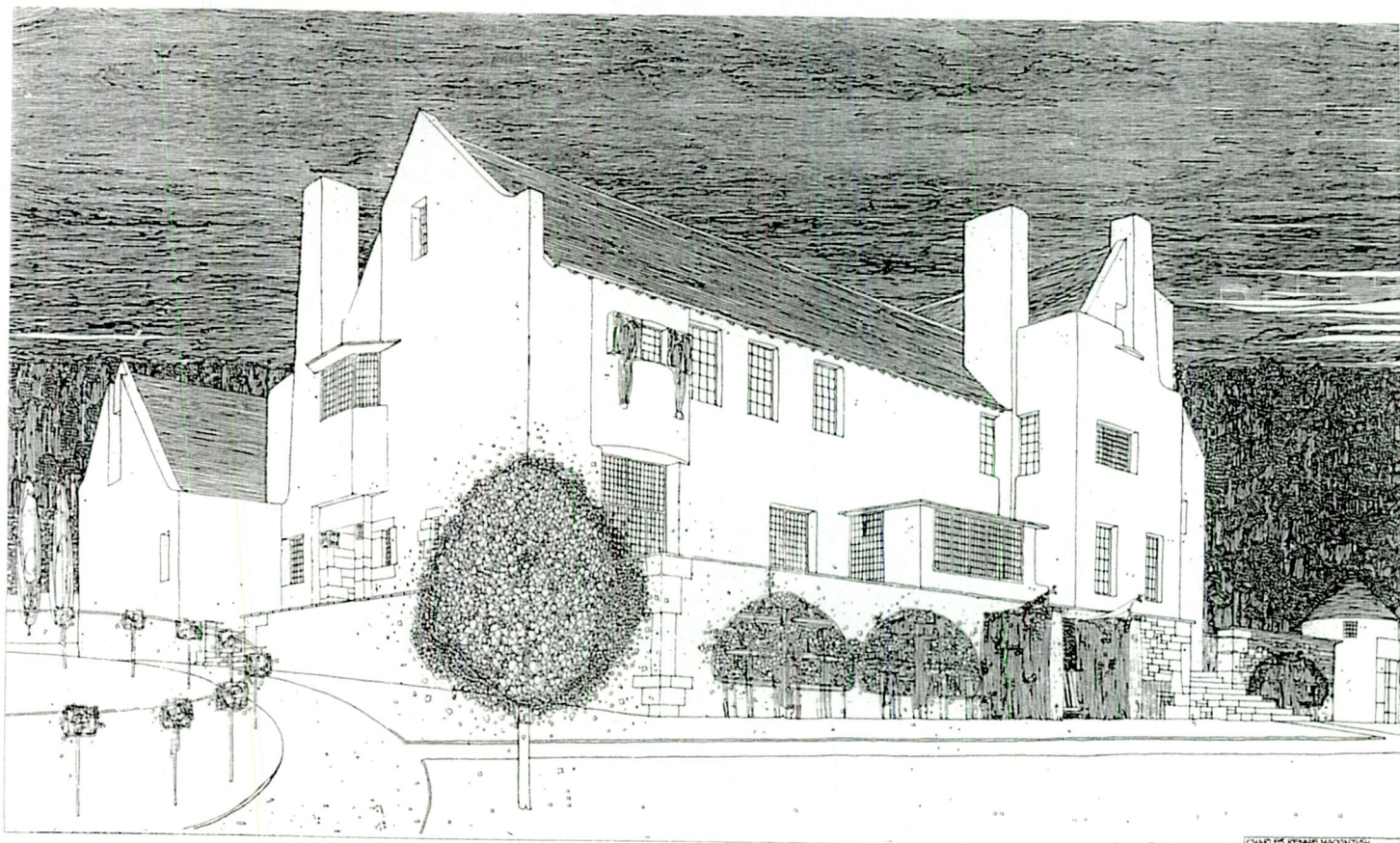


FIGURE 13



FIGURE 14



FIGURE 15

Scots to revive the Scottish vernacular and old traditional buildings. The founder of this Movement was Sir Rowand Anderson (1834-1921) and his influence broadened when his pupil Sir Robert Lorimer (1864-1929) returned to Scotland in 1892(his harled cottages at Colinton, near Edinburgh were built in the 1890's (Fig.16). Thomas Howarth argues that both men adopted Scottish forms - crow gables, angle turrets, dormers and the like - to create a modernized traditional style. However,

"Their positive contribution to architectural development is questionable. Sir John Stirling Maxwell, in discussing Lorimer's work, has laid his finger on the crux of the matter, for he says: '....his (Lorimer's) houses are so completely saturated with the spirit of the old.' This contradiction is apparent in the work of both men, and however harmoniously contrived, their domestic buildings by and large are revivalist in the spirit and the letter.'

(Thomas Howarth, 1952, pg 94-95)

Howarth goes on to point out that although Mackintosh's work retains traditional characteristics, it undeniably belongs to the twentieth century, 'and the observer is not left in doubt for a moment how much is old, how much is new.' Mackintosh's structures are a continuing development of traditional features rather than an imitation, and for the most part arise naturally from a simple plan.

"His facades, usually plain with little surface modelling, are pierced by small rhythmically disposed windows. He favoured an L-shaped plan, itself a traditional form, which gave him a dominant, sweeping roof with an unbroken ridge, and on the main elevation at least, an uninterrupted eaves line. His roofs invariably terminated in a

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FIGURE 16

gable which, whenever possible, embodied a sturdy chimney stack. The ubiquitous crow-stepped gable, a legacy, it is said from a less opulent age when dressed copings were a luxury, does not appear in any of his executed work. At both the Hill House and Windyhill identifiable motives of a traditional character are rare, and the link with the past is expressed in the form and spirit of the buildings, not by the use of antiquarian detail.'

(Thomas Howarth, 1952, pg 94)

The plan for the Hill House (Fig.17) was a simple 'L' shape, with a roughly rectangular hall and the principal rooms ranged along the south front overlooking the Clyde. Mackintosh paid close attention to the site and orientation of the house, it was important to him that the building's composition was in tune with the landscape. When designing the Hill House, the garden was arranged to the architect's instructions and was composed in a subtle patterned square motif.

Before submitting the preliminary sketches to Mr. Blackie, Mackintosh insisted on spending some time with his family to ascertain what kind of routine and tastes they had. Internal details and plans were drawn first. After these had been given the go ahead, finally the elevations would be executed.

Mackintosh employed a typical Scottish newel staircase as an important plan element:

"The two-storey range contains most of the family rooms, The three-storey cross-wing contains the dining room, guest bedroom and an attic bedroom. And a parallel three-storey range, pivoted around a very Scottish stair tower, contains the service wing and children's rooms."

(Alan Crawford, 1995, pg 104)

The windows are arranged asymmetrically and are of

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HOUSE AT HELENSBURGH
FOR W. W. BLACKIE ESQ.

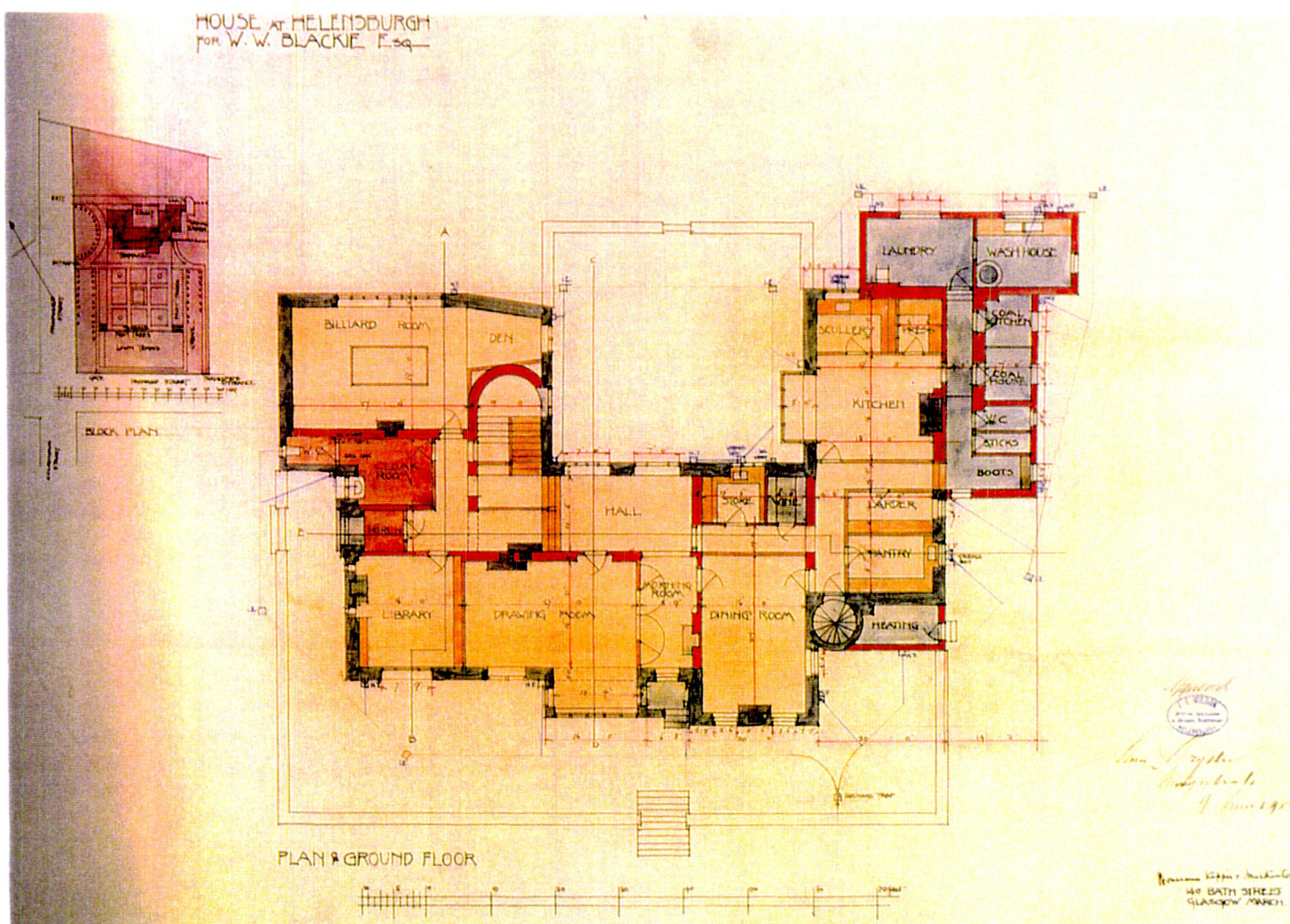


FIGURE 17

varying size, type (sash, casement, fixed), materials, and glazing pattern. The library window at the west end has a particularly deep reveal, over which the wall swells out in a segmental curve pierced by a tiny window. Thomas Howarth gives an interesting explanation for these small inset windows; he writes that Mackintosh considered

"a sense of enclosure, of warmth and security was the most desirable attribute of any dwelling. The house was primarily a place of shelter and refuge, in, but not of, the landscape.'

(Thomas Howarth, 1952, pg103)

This is definitely a very traditional viewpoint and in stark contrast to later developments in the Modern Movement whose doctrines promoted the elimination of solid wall as a restricting element in house design. Instead, glass was used to link the interior world of a building with the natural garden of the exterior. However Mackintosh's approach, to conform to traditional practice, definitely seems more rational considering the Scottish climate.

Other windows in the Hill House move away from tradition completely; in an almost reckless way he uses square, vertical and horizontal openings in close proximity, diverging from traditional proportions (Fig.18). This just illustrates how freely he draws on tradition, rejecting certain details, introducing new ideas of his own invention, or moulding old forms to suit his purpose, more often than not, with significant success.

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FIGURE 18

CHAPTER IV

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The influence and understanding of the arts of Japan was essential to the development of Mackintosh's work. While he derived sources from his own Scottish traditional architecture background, he undoubtedly looked to one other source, and was deeply moved by the extraneous civilisation of Japan. He was not the only artist to feel this way, for the influence of the Japanese arts in Britain and especially in Glasgow is well documented. While Voysey, Beardsley, Whistler, and their Arts and Crafts associates had all responded to the incentives of Japan, in Glasgow there were a number of occasions for the young Mackintosh and his friends to have first hand contact with Japanese culture in various exhibitions of 1878, 1882, 1889, and 1893. Glasgow-born Christopher Dresser lectured in the city on the arts of the Orient and had visited Japan in 1889. Japanese prints and artifacts were extremely popular and readily available in Glasgow. The library of The Art School, The City Libraries and The Art Gallery and Museum all had books and objects for study. The wealthy merchant classes loved to travel, this constant traffic between continents consequently enhanced the city's ethnographic and archaeological collections. There was a Japanese pavilion at The 1901 International Exhibition in Glasgow, and two warships commissioned by the Japanese Imperial Navy, the Chyoda and the Sazanami, were built in Glasgow yards in 1890 and 1898. This interest in Japan was so strong that it motivated the painters George Henry and E.A.Hornel to spend almost a year there (1893-94), and on their return they gave lectures and shows which gained a tremendous amount of favourable media attention. Among other articles on oriental arts, The Studio published in 1887 one on Ikebana (flower arranging). This must have been a fascinating subject for Mackintosh. The testament to this can be seen in the beautiful brambly compositions that are used in many of his domestic interiors. In fact Mackintosh's own flat at 120 Main Street (Fig.19) was

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FIGURE 19

living proof of his interest in Japan. One can see from photographs of the living room a varied collection of Japanese artifacts and prints.

Mackintosh did not look at the arts of Japan superficially; for him they were not just a subject for imitation. Instead, he researched and comprehended the symbolic and the spiritual meaning in Japanese art, and in them discovered a new, historically, unimpeded source on which to draw for inspiration. Though there are many examples in his work which show his Japanese influence, a favoured his early watercolour Part seen, Part imagined (Fig.20), showing a standing female figure among stylized flowers, gives an effect very Japanese in style: and she like the figures in Miss Catherine Cranston's The Buchanan Street Tea Rooms (Fig.21), appears to be wearing a kimono.

Although Mackintosh never personally went to Japan, many architectural details in his glossary of motifs came from remodelling and manipulating Japanese themes. For example, the crutch-like T support in traditional Japanese roofs is perhaps recollected in the rainwater-gathering boxes at the head of the downspouts on his School of Art building (1897-99). Anthony Jones (London 1990) suggests that the circular metal "animal/shield" forms of The School's fence correspond to Kamon or mon, the family crests of the Japanese (Fig.22). He also says that,

"the piercing through of planes in the furniture and timber-work recall the Oriental Sukashi procedure, and the large cabinet called 'The Toy Chest' of 1901 from Windyhill undoubtedly reveals how Mackintosh could transmute a form originating in one medium to another entirely different- a fabric kimono becomes a three dimensional wooden construction as a piece of furniture' (Fig.23).

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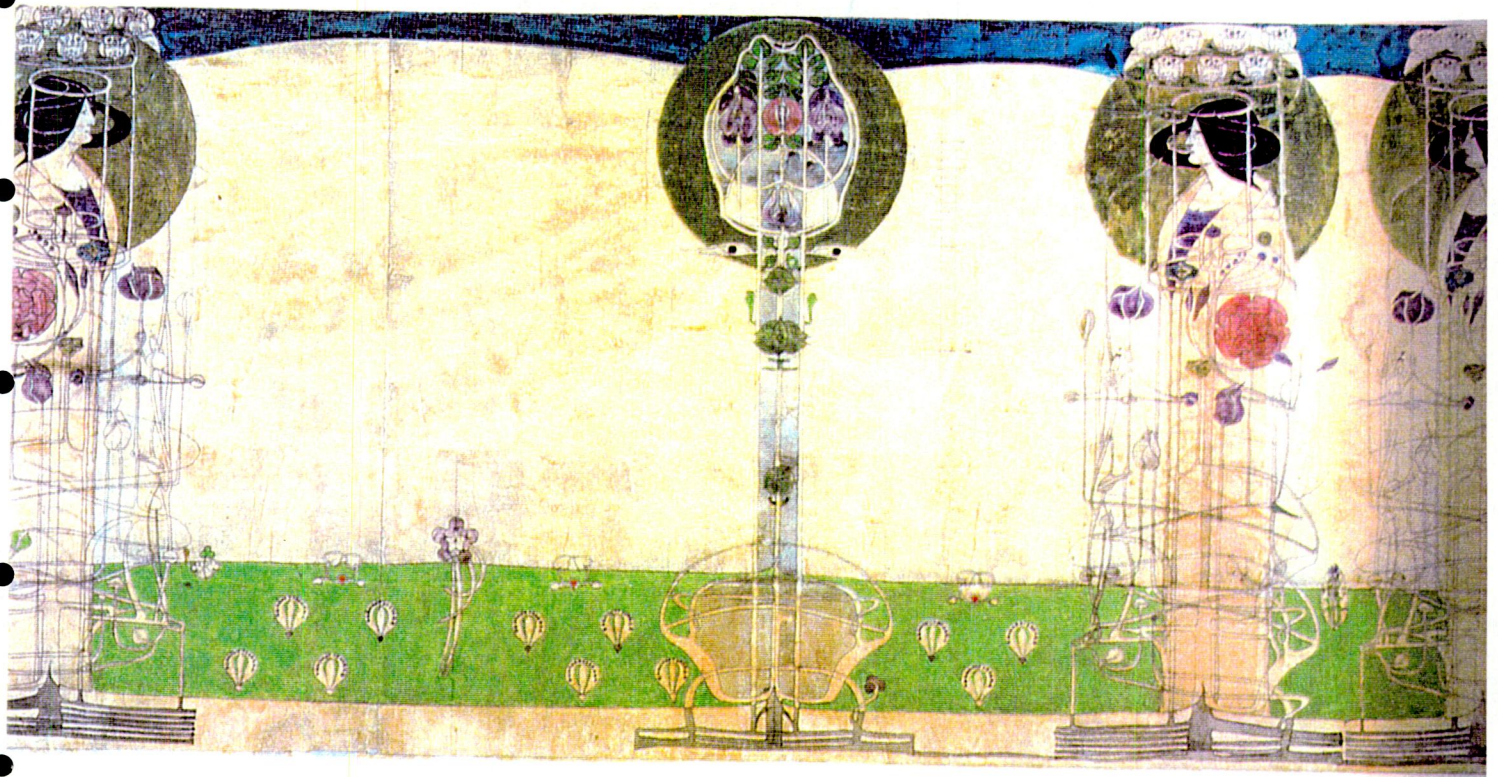


FIGURE 20



FIGURE 21



FIGURE 22

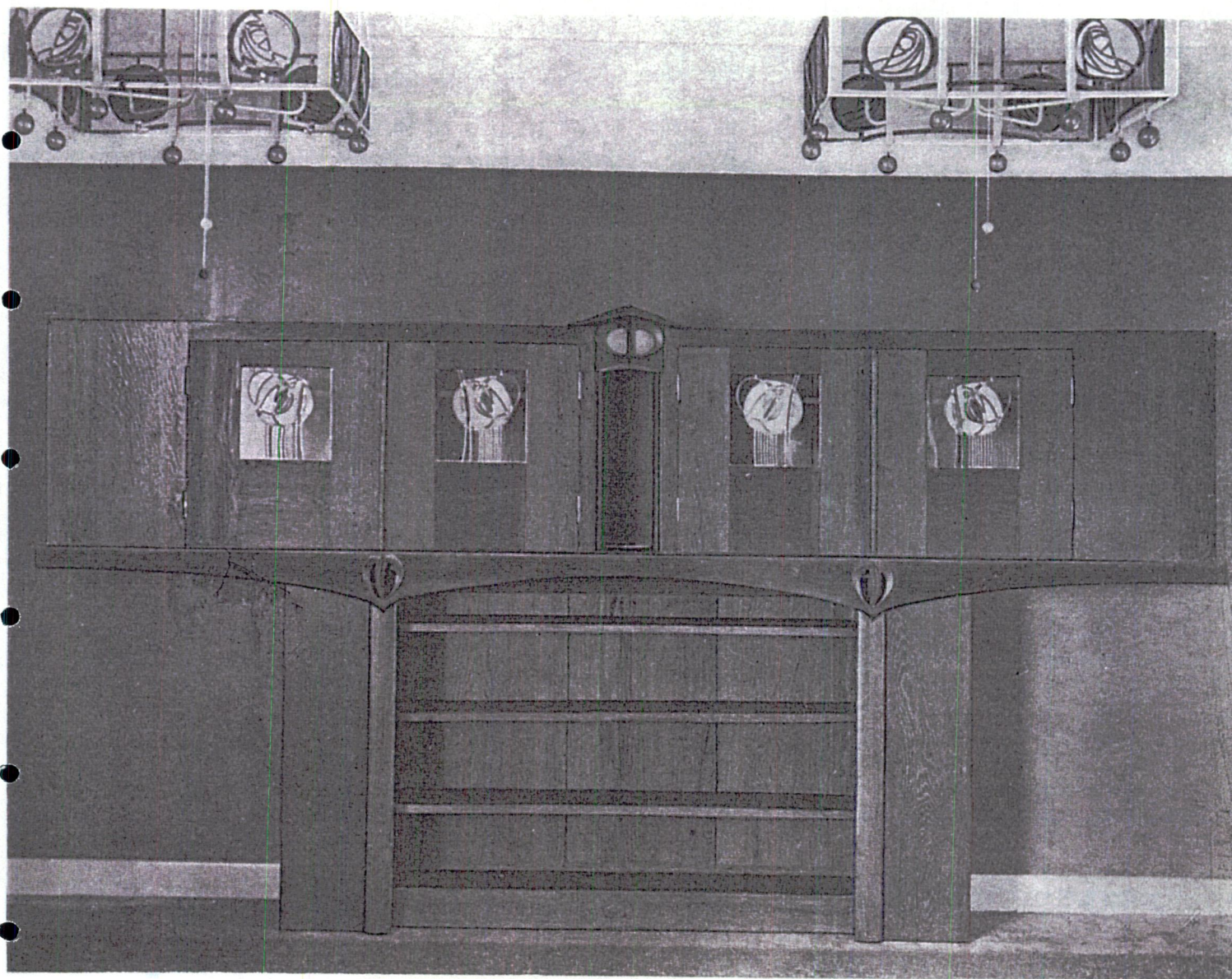


FIGURE 23

(Anthony Jones, 1990, Pg.39)

Mackintosh studied the traditional craft of Japanese joinery for decorative purposes in his own buildings. Alan Crawford gives a related description of the roof timbers in Martyr's Public School, Parson Street (1895-7),

"the trusses over the stairs are pegged in the style of Japanese timber framing, which Mackintosh may have learnt about from Edward S. Morse's Japanese Homes and their surroundings (1886). And while the hall rafters seem to rest on paired brackets which read as part of a continuous roof system, perhaps beams projecting from the next door rooms, the brackets are actually little bits of wood about 18 inches long, tacked into an equally flimsy upright; the continuity is only apparent. Mackintosh was not interested in structural techniques, but was fascinated by their appearance."

(Alan Crawford, 1995, Pg.30)

Another example of Japanese joinery can be seen in the main entrance staircase he designed for the Glasgow School of Art (Fig.24). In the catalogue published for Mackintosh's retrospective exhibition (Wendy Kaplan (Ed.), New York, 1996), Mark Girouard gives a vivid account of how the timber balustrade in The School is constructed:

"In two places the timbers in the staircase landing are extended to join up with newels extended vertically from the staircases below; but instead of the junction butting up against the vertical, the horizontals are, as it were, split in two, joined on either side of the vertical, and carried on to project beyond it. Variations of this device, which are said to derive from Japanese joinery, were to become common in Mackintosh's work, in both wood and

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FIGURE 24

metal."

(Wendy Kaplan(Ed.), chapter 5, 1996, Pg.165)

Japanese architecture revealed to him- as to his contemporary Frank Lloyd Wright- that beyond the picturesque and the Arts and Crafts there could be a truly non-historical style based only on space and a direct use of materials. Andrew Macmillan makes a thoughtful insight into the work of Mackintosh and Wright:

"It is interesting that only Mackintosh and Wright grasped the essence of space in the Japanese print, the use of interlocking ground and figure, rather than the line, which both increasingly rejected in their development. The Europeans, Horta, Guimard and H.C.Van Der Velde stressed the value of the line and merely distorted the building form, producing a more whimsical, personal ornament and short lived architecture'.

(quoted from Patrick Nuttgens, 1988, pg 30)

Macmillan goes on to explain what qualities Mackintosh and Wright exploited in Japanese art:

" The Japanese approach to the use of void, of negative ground in the prints (the amor vacui as Madsen calls it), the use of flat bright colour and, in particular. the exploitation of the material in the artistic act (if transformation were sympathetic to concepts of modern living, and [perhaps particularly to modern ideas of hygiene. an increasing use of glass, and the enjoyment by the urbanite of the pleasures of nature, sunshine and greenery."

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While continental architects were also stimulated by the discovery of a consistent art style which owed nothing to any historical European tradition, Mackintosh and Wright grasped its essential trait and saw the art forms for what they were in terms of making and representing space. Here the influence of John Ruskin, Philip Webb and Norman Shaw and others in Britain and America had clearly set the scene for a deeper understanding and appreciation of what the study of Japan revealed.

Frank Lloyd Wright's influences were Henry Hobson Richardson, while Mackintosh began by imitating Voysey (who in turn was emulating Webb). He would have seen reproductions of Voysey's works and drawings in The Studio. Voysey recognised that the qualities inherent in Japanese art could be translated to create a refreshing interior, in a departure from the cluttered darkness of the standard Victorian room. He exercised this in his own house, The Orchard (Fig.25), at Chorleywood, Hertfordshire in 1900, which displayed a new simplicity and lightness, with white painted woodwork, the intense purity of the blue tiles, contrasts of uprights and horizontals, especially the balustrade of the staircase and the clean, solid furniture.

Mackintosh obviously began by imitating Voysey. However as discussed in the last chapter, he was an architect in a great industrial city where he saw the advantages of the machine. Thus, while Voysey remained in the domain of the Arts and Crafts, Mackintosh's architecture and interior design rose to international stature and influenced the subsequent development of modern architecture in Europe.

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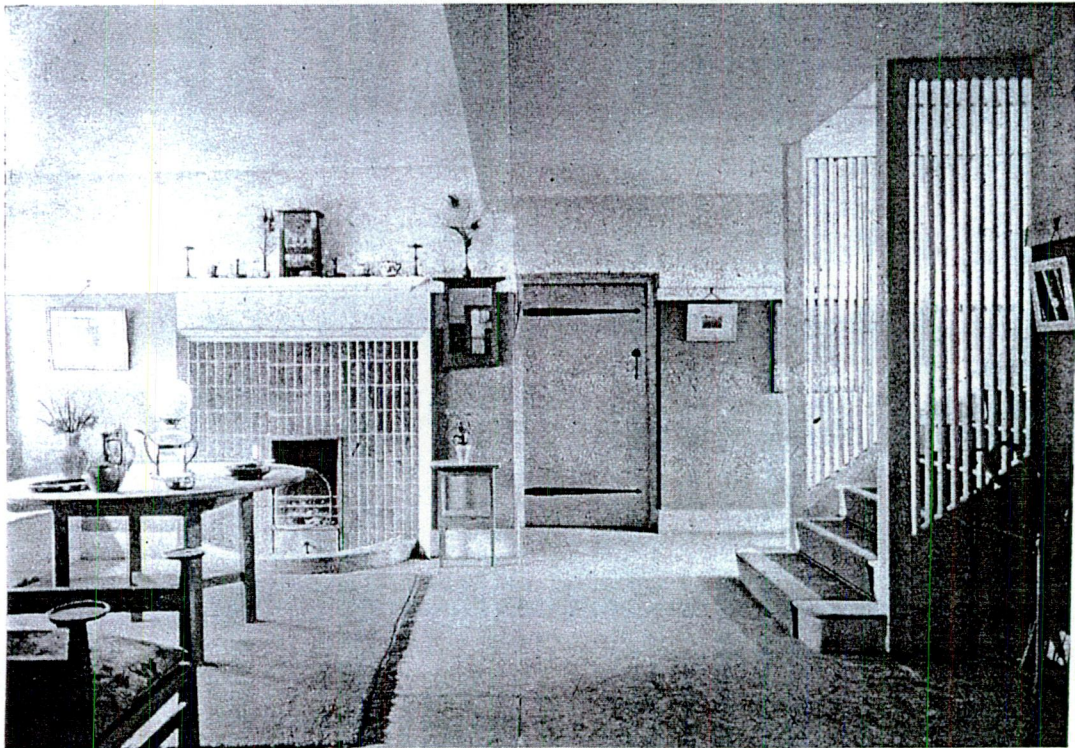


FIGURE 25

CHAPTER V

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During his period studying in The Glasgow School of Art, Mackintosh formed a life long friendship with Herbert McNair (1868-1955), they were both working in the offices of Honeyman & Keppie. At that time The School was considered to be quite a liberal environment compared with the rigorous order of Victorian society. Francis Newberry was appointed by the governors of the School in 1885. Newberry was a young and enthusiastic new headmaster who, at the age of thirty-one, was practically Mackintosh's contemporary. He was particularly interested in The Arts and Crafts Movement and was renowned as an educator who promoted creative individuality. In 1891 Two sisters, Frances (1873-1921) and Margaret (1865-1933) MacDonald entered The School. In Thomas Howarth's research he discussed with Herbert McNair how he, Mackintosh and the MacDonald sisters first met:

" He insists that they were not aware of the MacDonald's presence until Newberry drew attention to the similarity of their work at a criticism. This was confirmed by the headmaster himself, who, having recognised the affinity of the four students, decided that they must be brought together; It was at his suggestion that they decided to join forces and work with remarkable success. They were at once christened 'The Four', an appellation which they retained for many years'.

(Thomas Howarth, 1952, Pg.25)

A mutual interest for poetry, the celtic world, mysticism, symbolism and a shared idealism, bonded these students together. In 1899 Herbert MacNair married Frances and Mackintosh followed a year later by marrying her sister Margaret (Fig.26).

The Four were chiefly concerned with developing the architectural interior as a Gesamtkunstwerk-a total work

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FIGURE 26

of art. The concept of the unified artistic interior was not, however, a Glaswegian discovery. Its appearance in the city was a reflection of the developments taking place on the continent and in the in the work of English Arts and Crafts architects such as that of C.F.A.Voysey and M.H.Ballie Scott. More specifically, this concept can be associated with one of Mackintosh's first interior commissions that was designed in 1896 by George Walton for the Buchanan Street and Argyle Street tea rooms (Fig.27).

George Walton had been a student in the Glasgow School of Art taking painting classes in the evening. He was the younger brother of E.A.Walton one of the famous 'Glasgow Boys' Unfortunately George was not a gifted painter. Nevertheless, he showed exceptional talents in other areas: an ability for pattern making, a wonderful sense of colour and a natural skill for handling form. Being in close connection with the Glasgow Boys (Joseph Crawhall, James Guthrie and J.Whitelaw Hamilton), George Walton would have had an insight into the trends and feelings of the artistic community during this time:

" The Aesthetic Movement had made the practise of decorative design culturally respectable and even desirable. The Glasgow Boys who had been searching for a fresh means of expression, rather than a new theoretical framework, and a loose adoption of the 'Art for Art sake' doctrines of James McNeill Whistler and Oscar Wilde in London suited them well, freed them to search for beauty and decorative qualities unhindered by the Victorian yoke of moralistic sentiment."

(Karen moon, 1993 ,pg18)

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FIGURE 27

Glasgow Morris's glass, 'Queen Anne' style fireplaces and Godwin furniture. Walton could see that there was a growing demand in Glasgow from the wealthy middle classes for contemporary works of art, particularly decorative designs. So, in 1888, George Walton opened his own premises 'Ecclesiastical and House decorators', at 152 Wellington Street. Whatever Walton's reasons for setting up as a decorator, they were proved right. Although his company initially specialized in paper hanging and painting, they produced increasingly unified interiors through-out the 1890's. By 1896 his reputation was such that it was to him that Miss Cranston turned when she came to furnish her ambitious new tea rooms in Buchanan Street.

Having greater experience than the younger Mackintosh, Catherine Cranston initially employed Walton as the chief designer in her Tea Room commissions. He was entirely responsible for the decoration and furnishings of Buchanan Street, while Mackintosh was limited to producing wall decorations. Nevertheless Mackintosh must have benefited from Walton's instruction. These tea rooms were the first instances in which the concept of the interior as a work of art would have been seen in a public domain. The designs by Walton alone showed what could be accomplished by allowing a single individual control over every detail of the design. By demonstrating this, the Buchanan Street and Argyle Street tea room interiors were an appetizer for the tea rooms designed completely by Mackintosh at Ingram Street and for Willow Tea Rooms (Fig.28). By 1900 Mackintosh had executed his first domestic interior commissions, beginning with a bedroom at Westdel, Glasgow for the publisher Robert Maclehose (1898). This was the first example of Mackintosh's white interiors, and from it grew other, increasingly elegant rooms, including those at the Mackintosh Mains street flat. 1900 was also the year in

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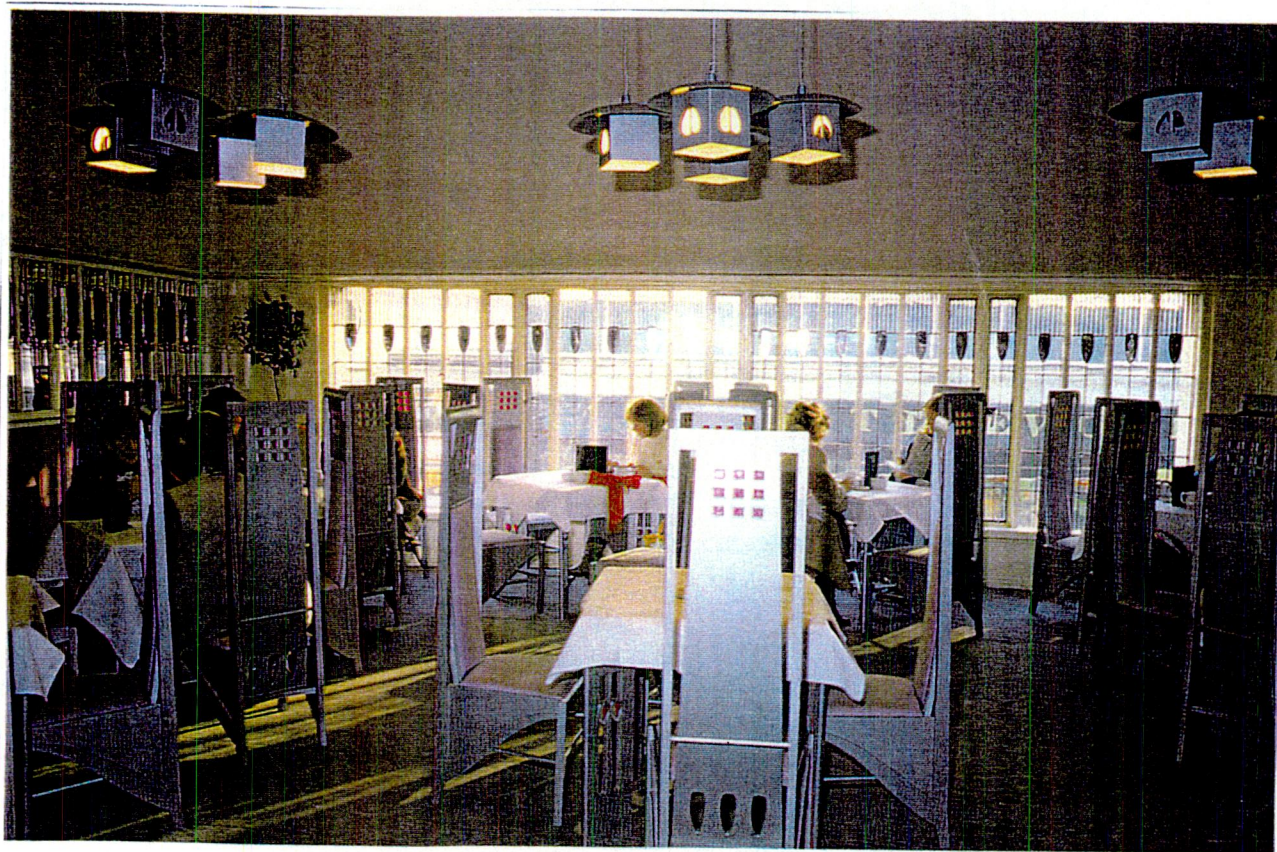


FIGURE 28

which Windyhill was commissioned by William Davidson, at Kilmacolm in Renfrewshire.

Before 1900 Mackintosh's work would only have been known in Europe through the medium of The Studio. Its editor, Gleeson White was one of his most potent supporters: Unlike most of the critics in London, who / The Glasgow school of Art 'The Spook' School, he praised the Glasgow 'Four' for their distinctive character and their independence from The English Arts and Crafts Movement. In 1897, White published the first of two articles entitled 'Some Glasgow Designers and Their Work'. It was devoted completely to Mackintosh and the MacDonald sisters; the second article was about J.H. McNair and Talwin Morris, printed in September of the same year. These publications were a vital stepping stone for The 'Four'. The Studio was one of the most dynamic journals of the day, with a wide continental circulation, and the attention of all the most progressive and revolutionary elements in the European art world. Now they were focused on Scotland, and in particular on Mackintosh, whom Gleeson White pinpointed as the leader of the Glasgow Style. The talents of 'The Four' were quickly picked up by continental journals. Alexander Koch, in the November issue of his periodical Dekorative Kunst (1898) (Fig.29) wrote a beneficial and well illustrated article on the Scottish designers. This was the first time that work by The Four had been reviewed in Europe and not long after that they became heralded as the leaders in a new art movement.

Throughout the nineteenth century the Industrial Revolution had given birth to a whole new social structure in Europe, where the aristocracy was being replaced by a wealthy merchant middle class. As is human nature, they wanted to emulate the rich by designing

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Künstlerische Kostüme · Porzellane · Fotogr. Porträts · Buchgewerbe.



DEUTSCHE KUNST UND DEKORATION

VERLAG
ALEX
KOCH
DARMSTADT

V. JAHRG. HEFT 3.

MAI 1902.

EINZELPREIS M. 2.⁵⁰.

FIGURE 29

their surroundings to show off their superior economic social status. Their homes were made to create an illusion of luxury and opulent life style, even if this was sometimes non-existent. The formal repertory of nineteenth century historic styles made it possible to accomplish such illusions by providing the means of furnishing in a style reminiscent of those previously only accessible to a higher stratum of society. The luxury that had been essential, but which the middle class could not afford, was superficially achieved at the expense of the materials used. Cheap imitations and man-made ornament brought about a decline in taste:

"During the 1890's, Europe's younger generation of artists became aware of this and began to seek a new, contemporary style. Vienna was particularly influenced by William Morris's socio-political ideas that had spread from England, among them an equation of beauty with utility and the demand for simplicity and genuineness. Vienna now began to identify itself with the last period when objects created by man had expressed a wholly integrated stylistic taste, and it sought to retrace its steps to a time when suitable formal solutions had been found to the demands for functional and useful objects that came from the pressures of daily life. Such an integration of object and purpose seemed to have been accomplished by the penultimate generation, that of the artists' grandparents, the p e r i o d officially and retrospectively recognised by 1900, among other distinct styles, as Biedermeier."

(Patrick Nuttgens, 1988, Pg.114)

In 1897 the Viennese Secession was founded, including among its members such artists as Otto Wagner, Joseph Hoffmann (Fig.30), Koloman Moser (Fig.31), Arthur

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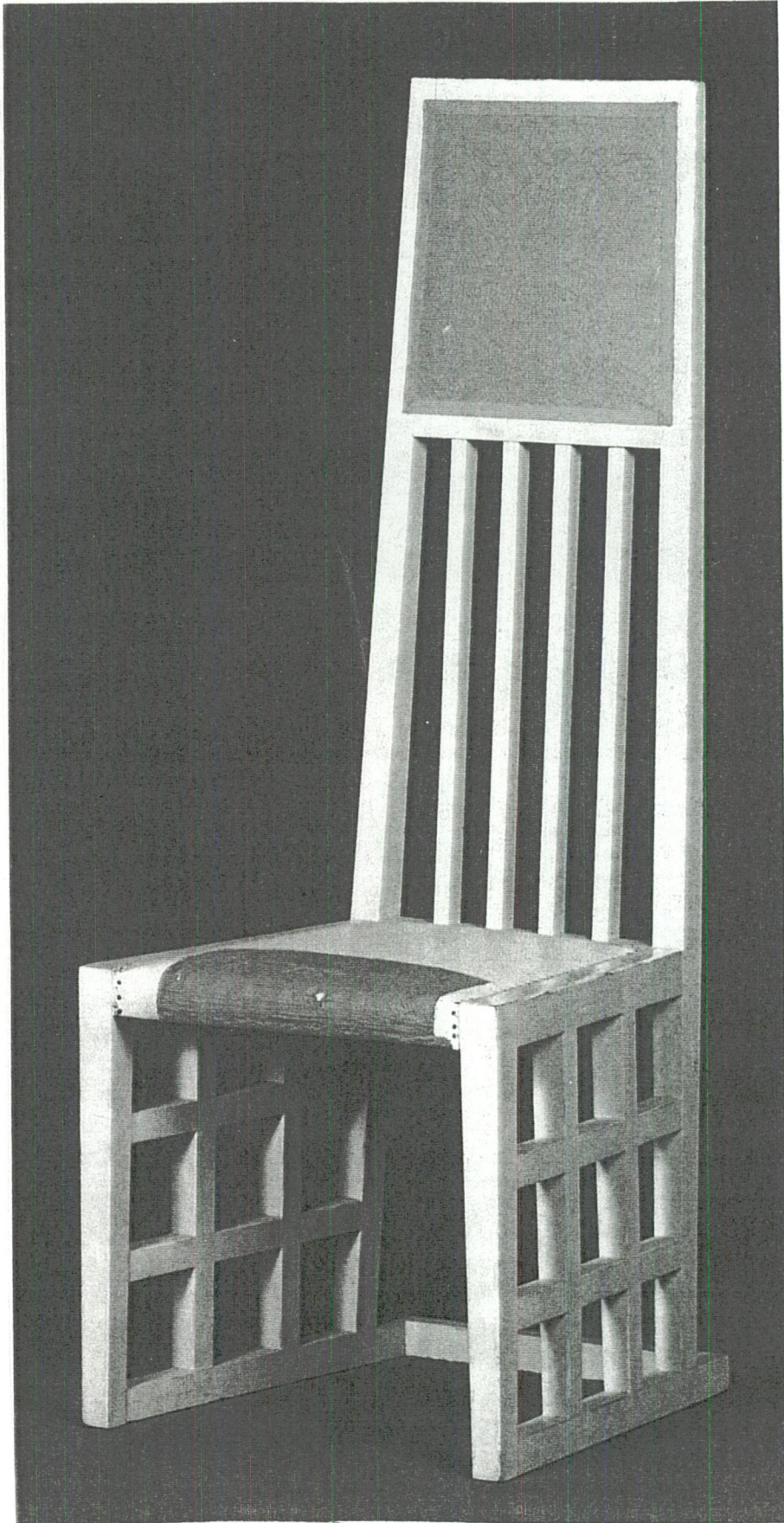


FIGURE 30

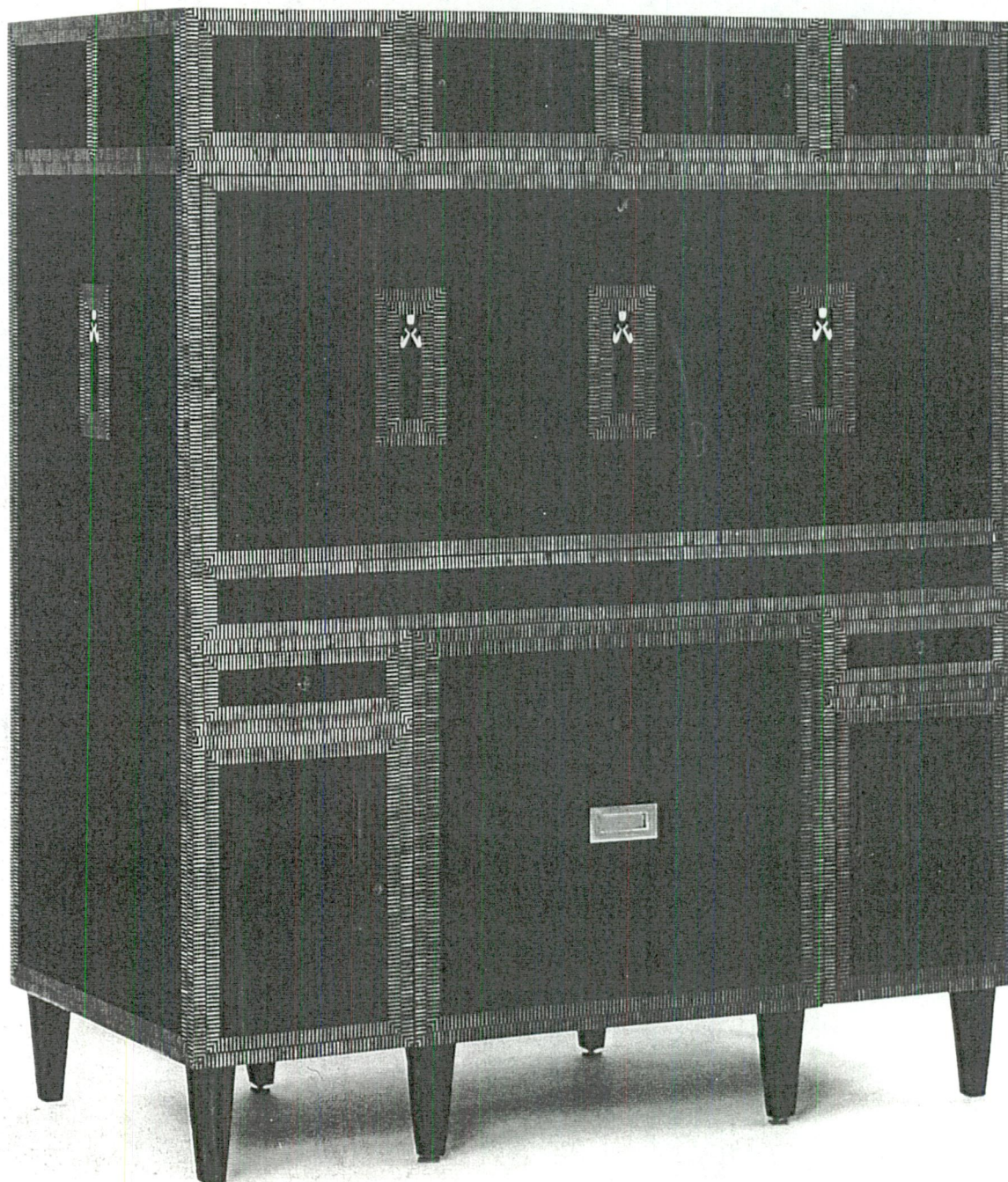


FIGURE 31

Strasser, and Joseph Olbrich. They recognised in Vienna that a new spirit of the times demanded new forms, which not only had to be striking and imaginative, but also suitable for people's practical needs as and such new technical achievements as the telephone, electric light, and gas. In a lecture given to his students at the Viennese Academy in 1894, Otto Wagner stated:

" Everything modern, created now, must be suitable for modern materials and the demands of contemporary life, if it is to be suitable for modern man; it must put our very own better, democratic, self-reliant and keenly aware philosophy into concrete form and show awareness of the colossal technical and scientific achievements as well as the pervasive practical nature of mankind surely this goes without saying! "

(Patrick Nuttgens, 1988, pg 114)

On seeing reviews of the Scottish designers' work, the Viennese Secessionists felt an affinity with their work and they invited them individually to furnish and decorate an entire room at the 8th Secessionist Exhibition in Vienna. This was followed by exhibitions in Moscow, Berlin, Darmstadt, Dresden, Cologne and Budapest, each time receiving wide coverage in the press which increased their fame and influence abroad. Thomas Howarth writes in his biography of Mackintosh that:

" Vienna welcomed the Scottish artists. It is said that students met them at the station on their arrival and drew them through the city in a flower-decked carriage. Here for the first time Mackintosh felt that his work was properly understood and appreciated; and met and argued long into the night with some of the most progressive designers and architects in Europe, and found himself to be one with them."

(Thomas Howarth, 1952, pg 154)

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(Thomas Howarth, 1981, pg 134)

He goes on to argue that Mackintosh's work was the defining impetus behind the Viennese Movement, spurring a mass of decorative work and furniture design that was an imitation to some degree of his own. For example, the use of decorative squares, which became a leitmotif of Viennese design in the early twentieth century, was learned from Mackintosh.

However, Alan Crawford contradicts this claim as an exaggeration. He gives an account of specific instances of the Mackintoshs' influence in Vienna after 1900:

" In 1901 Anton Popischil Jr exhibited a high backed chair like the Argyle Street ones; in 1902 Kolo Moser created a room-setting for the fifteenth Secession exhibition closely modelled on the Mackintosh's; Gustav Klimt's work with its flattened, dreaming figures may owe something to the Mackintosh's gesso panels; and some of Hoffmann's furniture is close to Mackintosh's, including some pieces made by the Wiener Werkstatte, the luxury craft workshop which he set up with Moser in 1903."

But, as mentioned before, he carries on

" from 1900, the general direction of progressive Viennese design had been away from the structural curves of German Jugendstil towards simple but sophisticated rectilinear forms, and in furniture towards a dark and sober treatment increasingly influenced by early nineteenth century Biedermeier designs. The process was complete by about 1903. Neither Mackintosh nor the Scottish exhibit of 1900 altered or affected this development."

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The similarities between, for example, Hoffmann and Mackintosh, are striking. However, there is no evidence

to show that either party imitated the other. It is a plausible assumption that, in fact, each designer worked independently, and having a common admiration for English work - particularly C.F.Voysey and Baillie Scott- and being motivated by similar ideals, arrived at similar conclusions.

In 1901 The Zeitschrift für Innendekoration promoted an international competition for aHauseinesKunstfreundes, being organised by Alexander Koch, the conditions of which were published in the December issue of Innen-Dekoration. It was a commission to design a large country house for an art lover. The house was to be a work of art in itself and lucidly modern in design. There were to be twelve judges, including Hans Christiansen, Henry Van De Velde, Otto Wagner and Koch. Thirty-six entries were received and the judges made it clear that they were disappointed by the results. They reported that without the Anglo-Saxon entrants (Mackintosh, Baillie Scott), the competition would have been very poor. Unfortunately, Mackintosh's and MacDonalds' design (Figs.32&33) could not be considered for the prizes as they forgot to include the all-important interior perspectives. Nevertheless, a special purchase prize was awarded to them. The second prize was allotted to Baillie Scott, whose interiors were spectacular, although the exterior was not considered to be modern enough.

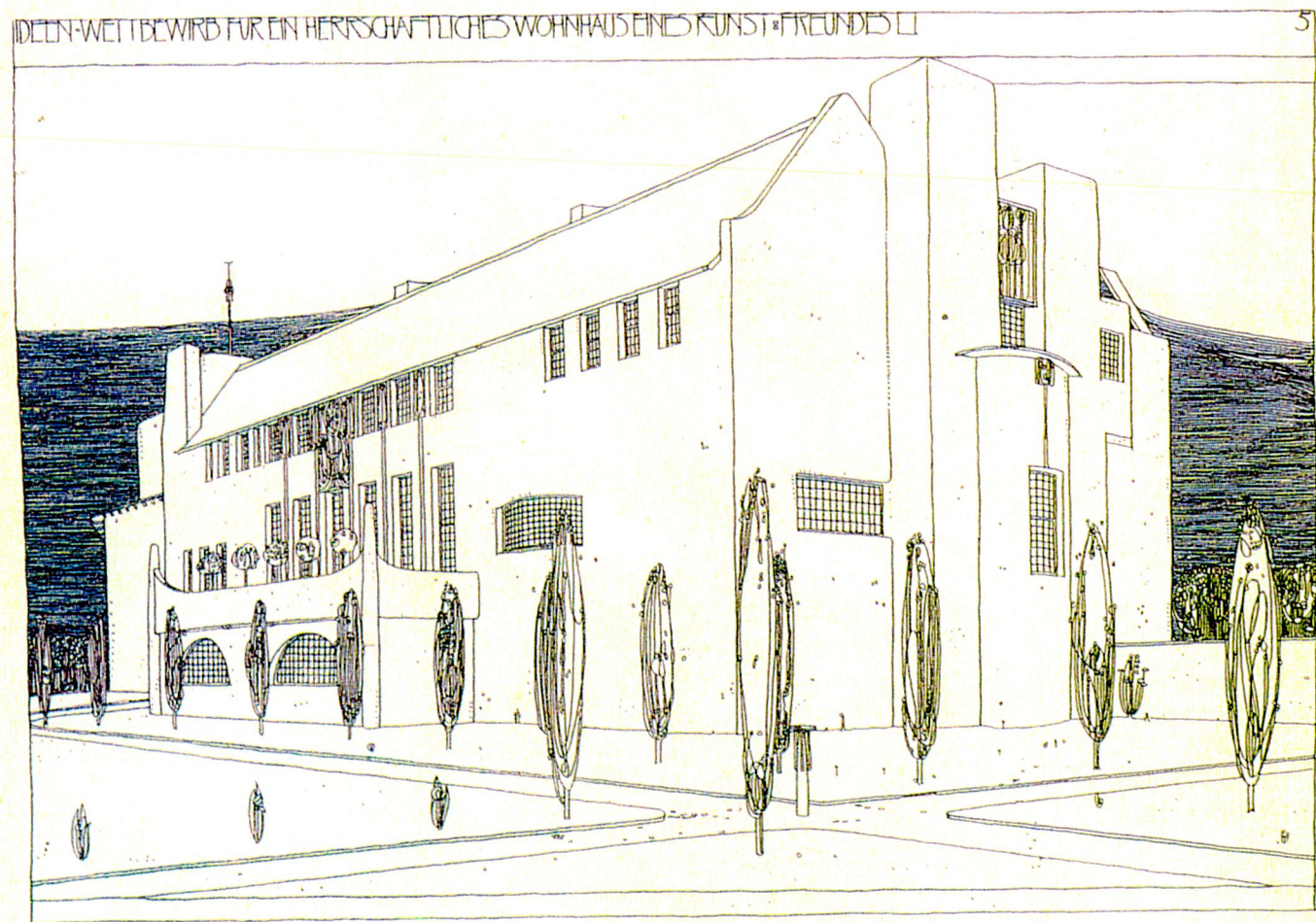
Attractive portfolios of the Haus eines Kunstfreundes designs by Baillie Scott, Mackintosh and Leopold Bauer (Fig.34) (third prize winner) were published in 1902 and were displayed in Koch's booth at the International Exposition of Modern Decorative Art in Turin that year.

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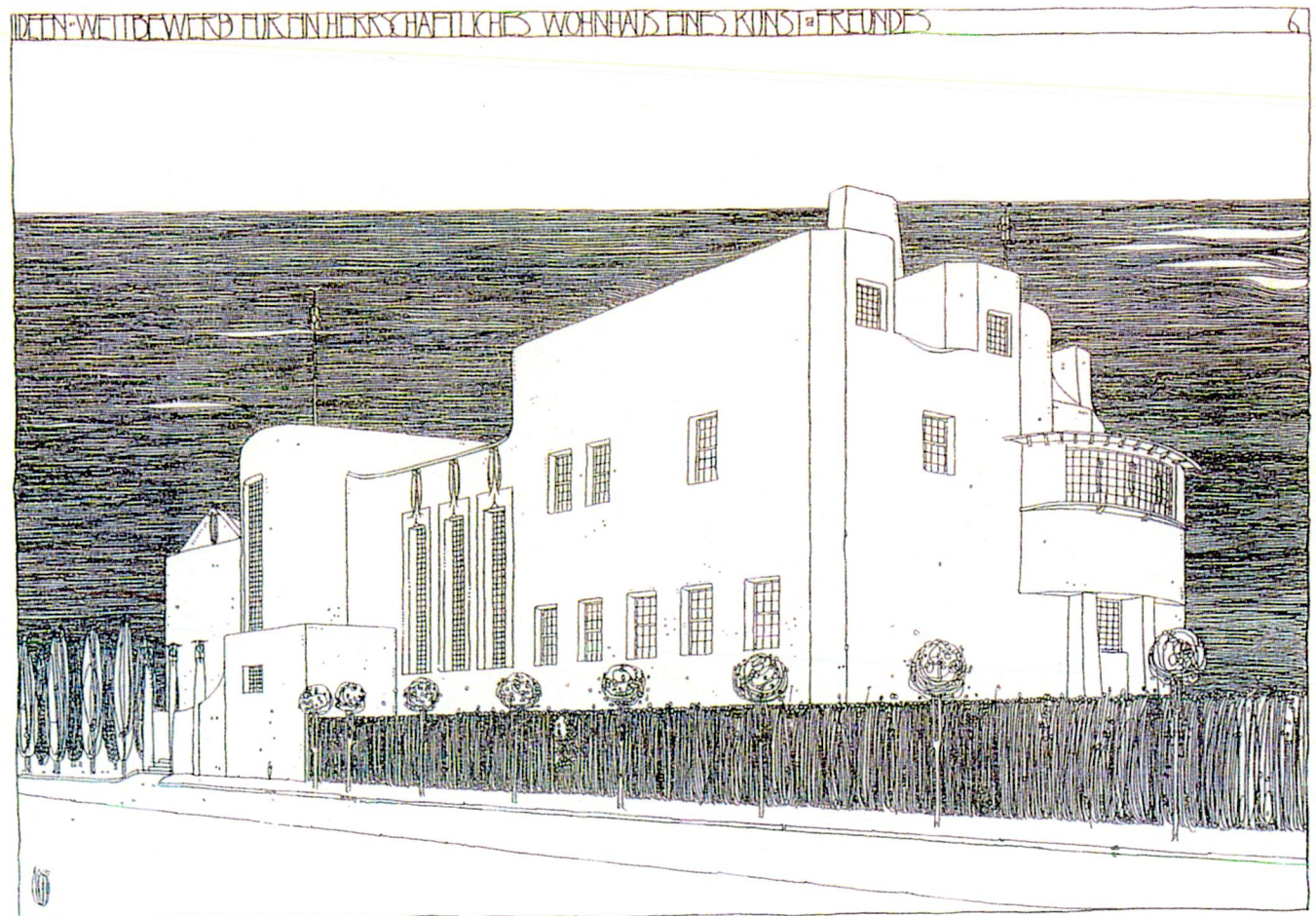
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FIGURE 32



C. R. MACKINTOSH GLASGOW HAUS EINES KUNST-FREUNDEN
VERLAGS-ANSTALT: ALEXANDER KOGH DARMSTADT - TAFEL V.

FIGURE 33



G. R. H. KINTOSH. GLASGOW. HAUS EINES KUNSTFREUNDES
VERLAGS-ANSTALT, ALEXANDER KOCH-DARMSTADT - TAFEL VI

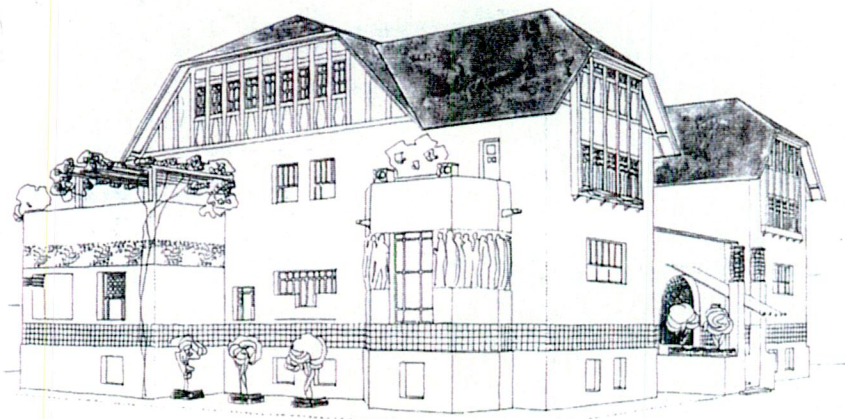


FIGURE 34

In March of 1902, Dekorative Kunst published an article by Herman Muthesius, giving a significant account of Mackintosh's work. He started by pointing out the importance of William Morris and the English School as the foundation stones of the new movement in art. However, he also recognised the fact that all further developments had seised with the death of Morris in 1896. He believed that the baton had now been handed over to the Scots (Mackintosh and his group) whose work corresponded to the European Movement. In his book Das Englische Haus, he perceptively^(r) noted of 'The Four's' work that:

" The central aim of these members is the room as a work of art, as a unified organic whole, embracing colour, form and atmosphere. Starting from the notion they develop not only the room but the whole house, the sole purpose of the exterior of which is to enclose the rooms, their central concern, without laying any claim to an artistic appearance itself. Nevertheless Mackintosh with his strong architectonic sense sees to it that proper architectonic values are maintained here too; and his ground-plans are models of practicality and comfortable, convenient planning.'

(Quoted from Patrick Nuttgens, 1988, pg 29)

In the summer of 1902 the Italian government held an International Exhibition of Modern Decorative Art in Turin. There was a large Scottish contingent, including 'The Four' organized by Francis Newberry. Mackintosh exhibited an interior called The Rose Boudoir (Fig.35) which included two large gesso panels by Margaret called Heart of the Rose and The White Rose and the Red Rose. They also showed a polished, extremely elegant black writing table inset with gesso panels entitled The Dreaming Rose and The Awakened Rose, which was bought by Fritz Warndorfer, a rich Viennese businessman and avid

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FIGURE 35

supporter of the Secession and the Wiener Werkstatte.
This purchase led to another commission for Mackintosh
when Warndorfer asked him to design the interior of a
music room in his house, Carl-Ludwigstrasse 45 (Fig.36).
This was a busy time for Mackintosh, while he and
Margaret were working on Warndorfer's music room they
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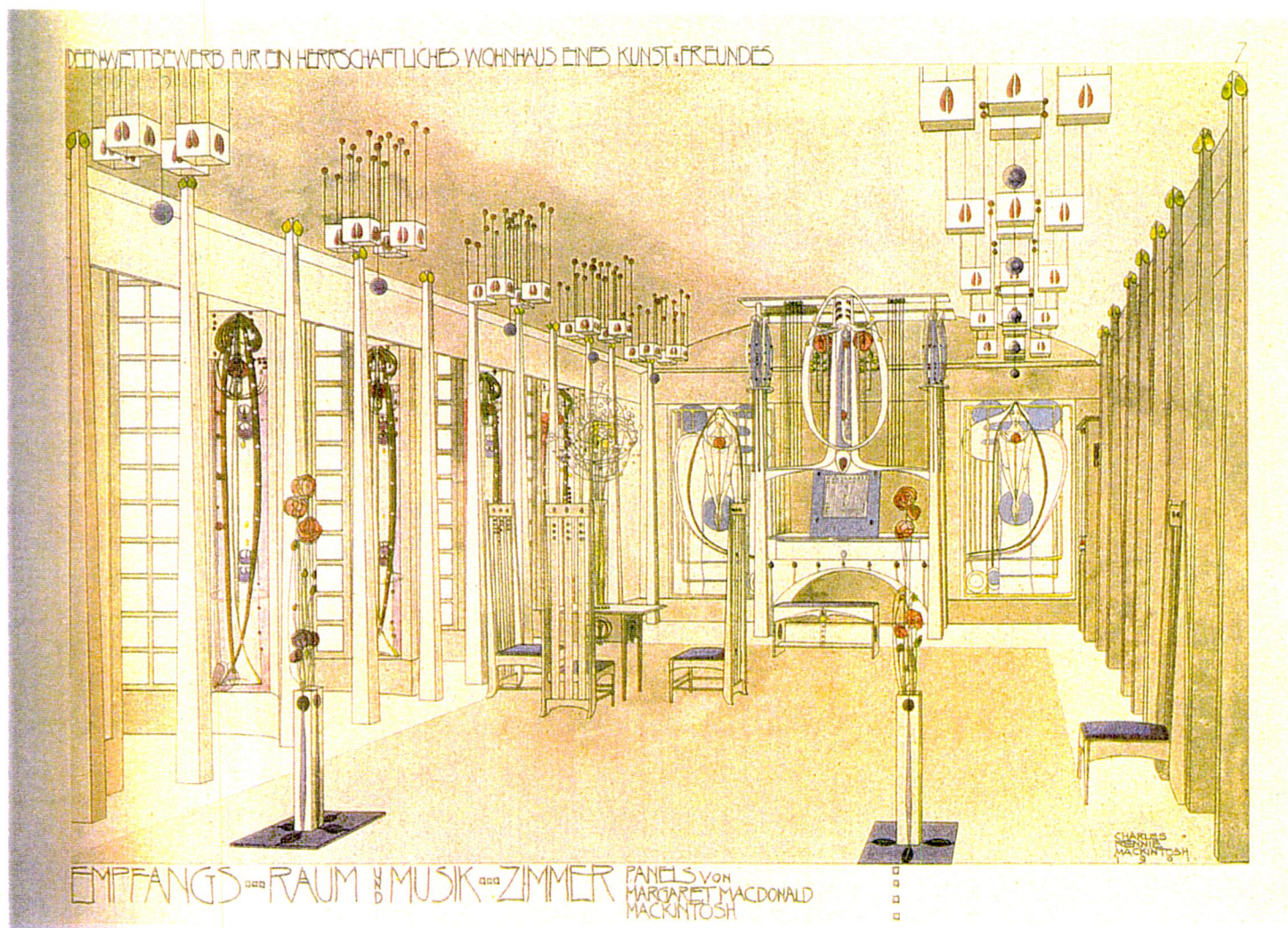


FIGURE 36

CHAPTER VI

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Mackintosh, above all else, was an artist. His paintings of the mid to late 1890's are significant in suggesting an early interest in painting. This is not surprising considering Mackintosh's friends at the time were comprised principally of student painters from the Glasgow School of Art- the self-styled 'immortals', Katherine Cameron, Jessie Keppie, Margaret and Frances MacDonald, Janet Aiken, Herbert McNair and Agnes Raeburn. Painting was a popular and lively subject in the city, the home of the 'Glasgow Boys' a group of local artists who were acclaimed in Europe and America in the 1890's. This expanding metropolis was full of art dealers, studios and galleries.

Under the enthusiastic administration of Francis Newbery The Glasgow School of Art was a breeding ground for talented artists. As mentioned in the last chapter, The Four (Mackintosh, MacNair, and the MacDonald sisters) had a mutual interest in poetry, the celtic world, symbolism and mysticism. These preoccupations were not unique to The Four, they were shared by other students who were equally intrigued by new ideas and new expressions. In a similar vain to The Four they read contemporary books and periodicals, saw exhibitions and heard visiting speakers - William Morris and Christopher Dresser both lectured in Glasgow. The library at the School was well stocked with recent texts on art and design, for example - Owen Jones The Grammar of Ornament; Dresser's Japan: Its Architecture, Art and Art Manufacturers; W.R.Lethaby's Architecture, Mysticism and Myth. It also contained:

"The periodicals that revealed and debated the newest works and contested issues of the day. Jones and Dresser, and Patrick Geddes' magazine The Evergreen, were all concerned with the idea of art derived from organic forms and the Geddes

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Under the enthusiastic administration of Thomas Newbery the Glasgow School of Art was a breeding ground for talented artists. As mentioned in the last chapter, The Four (MacKintosh, MacNeill, and the MacDonalds) also had a mutual interest in poetry, the Celtic world, symbolism and mysticism. These preoccupations were not unique to The Four; they were shared by other students who were equally intrigued by new ideas and new expressions. In a similar vein to The Four they read contemporary books and periodicals, saw exhibitions and heard visiting speakers - William Morris and Christopher Dresser both lectured in Glasgow. The library at the School was well stocked with recent texts on art and design, for example - Owen Jones The Grammar of Ornament, Dresser's Japan: Its Architecture, Art and Art Manufactures, W.R. Lethaby's Architectural Mysticism and Myth. It also contained:

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publications with the inspiration of Celtic forms, 'the melancholy power of nature', and suggested links between the Celtic traditions of Scotland's past and the present day."

(Anthony Jones, 1990, Pg.16)

The Glasgow Style, which was indisputably lead by The Four, had a glossary of motifs concentrating on the stylization of forms derived from organic motifs, and mixed attenuated skeletal human figures with leaves, flowers, peacocks, butterflies and roses. Their work was executed in a number of different media ranging over textiles, metalwork, stained glass, embroidery, silversmithing, furniture, ceramics and illustration. Newberry promoted an Art-craft revival.

In 1894 Mackintosh submitted a water colour to Lucy Raeburn for her college publication Magazine. Only four issues survive today; they contain fairy tales, drawings, and commentaries by The Immortals. The watercolour was called Cabbages in an Orchard (Fig.37) and is Mackintosh's first experimentation with symbolic content and decorative stylisation- obviously influenced by his close friends- McNair and the MacDonald sisters, as well as the wider example of Fin de Siecle artists such as the Belgian Carlos Schwabe and the Dutch Jan Toorop.

" The eerie drawings of Jan Toorop (1859-1928), whose The Three Brides (1893) chronicled an allegorical battle between Good and Evil, which contained emaciated and sinister female figures said to have been a significant influence on 'The Four', especially on the development of the work of Frances and Margaret."

(Anthony Jones, 1990, Pg.19)

Mackintosh was well aware of contemporary developments and issues in painting throughout Europe. In

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(Anthony Jones, 1990, p.18)

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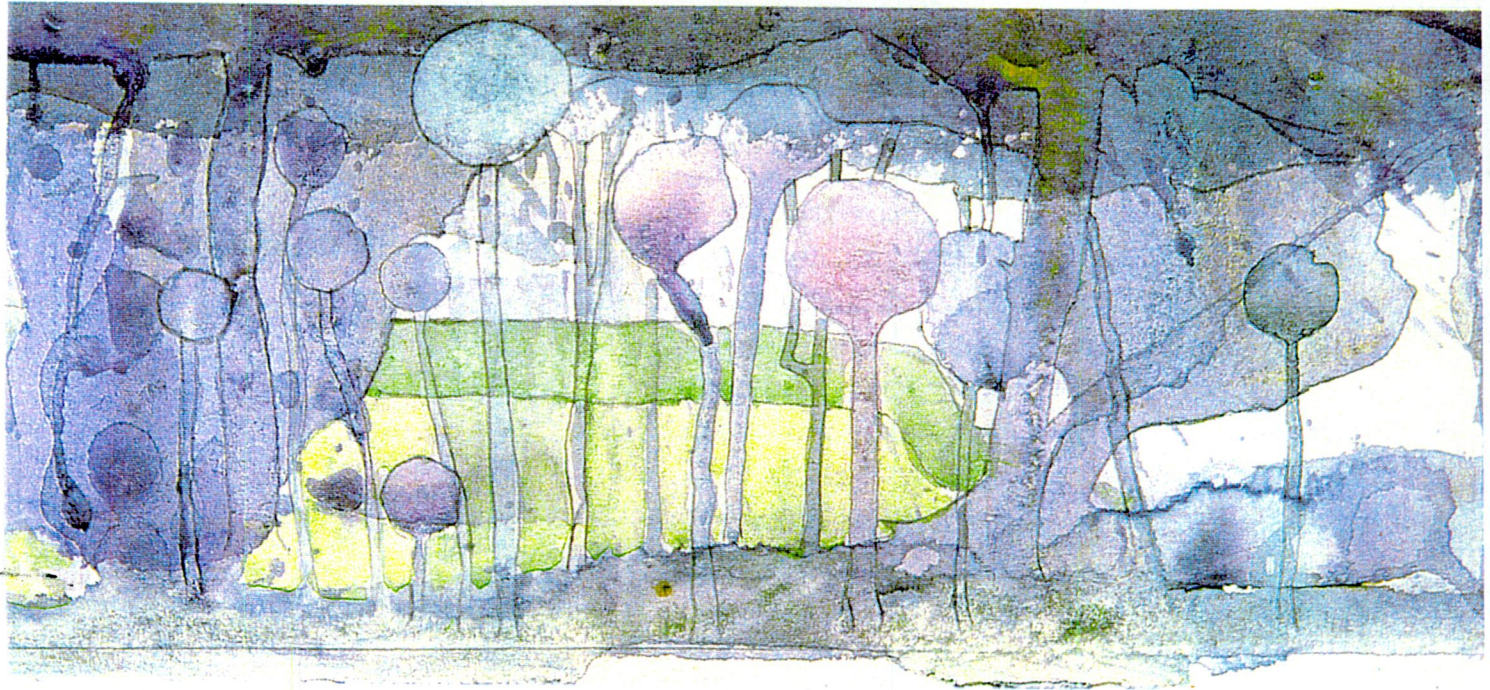


FIGURE 37

1897 he (Honeyman & Keppie) won a competition to design the new building for the Glasgow School of Art, principally under the recommendations of Newbery. While executing this commission, he would have come into contact with the Belgian Symbolist painter Jean Delville, a fellow employee of the Headmaster. Delville was teaching painting at The School and was known to be a close associate of Edouard Schure, whose book The Great Initiates (1889) is considered to be a classic of Neo-Occultism:

" Jean Delville's appointment as professor of painting in 1901 was an ideological signal aligning The School with the resurgence of philosophical and artistic idealism."

(David Brett, 1992, pg.120)

The graphic art of the Glasgow Four, notably such paintings as Mackintosh's Tree of Influence (Fig.38) (1895) confirms the influence of theosophy and spiritualism in the Glasgow School of Art.

Delville saw symbolism as the way forward to a new form of art, that encompasses ideas:

" The time has arrived when genius will no longer be unconscious, the genius of the idealist will, we boldly prophesy, be superunconscious." and " This new age will `shortly upon the dial of the revolving centuries mark the hour of a universal redemption in the province of thought [in which] art will break free of nationality."

(David Brett, 1992, Pg.122)

We know from a lecture that Mackintosh gave in 1893 on 'Architecture' that he was already preoccupied with symbolism at this time. It was to students at the Glasgow School of Art, and by all accounts, it was substantially direct plagiarism from W.R.Lethaby's book Architecture,

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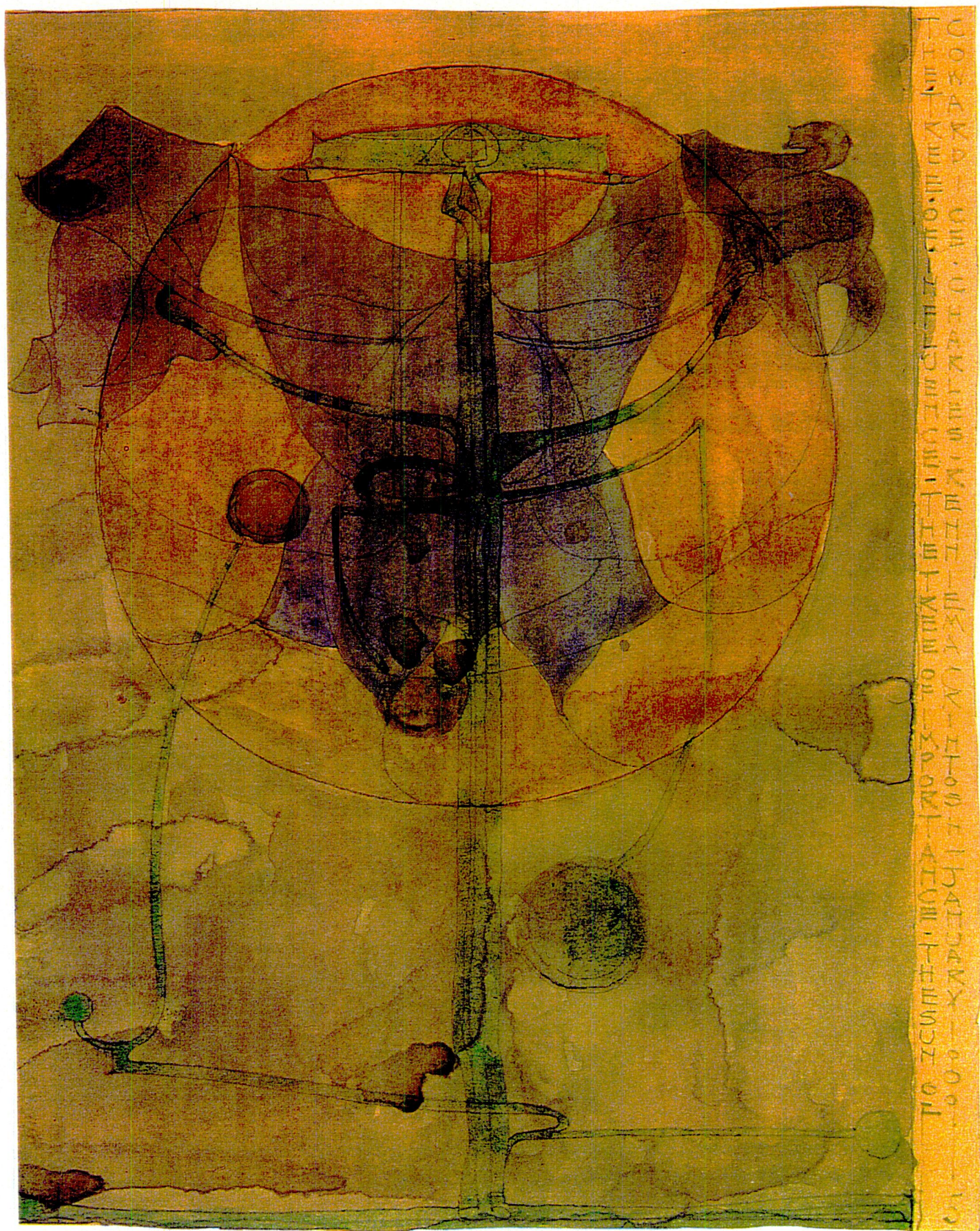


FIGURE 38

Mysticism and Myth, published in 1891.

Not only was Mackintosh interested in the science of building but he also had a poetic insight into the existential nature of buildings. He believed in the mythical and symbolic nature of architecture, a subject that W.R.Lethaby spent his life writing about. In his book he outlines his three principles of architecture:

" The similar needs and desires of men; secondly, on the side of structure, the necessities imposed by materials, and the physical laws of their erection and combination, and thirdly on the side of style, nature."

(W.R.Lethaby, 1974, introduction)

So what exactly does Lethaby mean by 'nature'. He argued that nature is the source behind all architectural decoration, known as 'style'. Architecture is "inextricably bound up with a people's thoughts about God and the universe."

Lethaby realised that at the inner heart of all ancient buildings, such as the Greek temples or the Egyptian tombs, are wonder, magic and symbolism. He wrote that "modern architecture, to be real, must not be a mere envelope without contents", it must have "an intelligible, rational and egalitarian symbolism."

(W.R.Lethaby, 1974, pg.7)

Although Lethaby spent his life attempting to explain himself, he attempted few visualizations of his own ideas. This is probably why it was difficult for his peers to come to terms with him as a theorist. He was best known for his written articles on the science of building and his role in many design and architectural organisations. Mackintosh must have read his book and understood the concepts that he was trying to explain.

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Taking this into consideration, perhaps Mackintosh's buildings can be seen as an attempt to work out in visual terms many of the ideas and beliefs with which Lethaby was engaged. Commissions such as Hill House in Helensburgh certainly conform to Lethaby's description of the future:

" What, then will this art of the future be ? The message will still be of nature and man, of order and beauty but all will be sweetness, simplicity, freedom, confidence and light; The other is past, and well it is, for its aim was to crush life: The new, the future, is to aid life and train it; so that beauty may flow into the soul like a breeze."

(W.R.Lethaby, 1974, introduction)

Lethaby's writings showed Mackintosh that, in order to create a new modern architecture, he must build architecture that enshrines a modern ideology - symbols that relate to his generation, to his beliefs and the universe around him. By doing so, this architecture becomes art.

So what was the contents in Mackintosh's buildings and what symbolism did he use to express his ideals ? For the purposes of this thesis I would like to restrict my analysis to the 'white' master-bedroom in the Hill House at Helensburgh. The house in general establishes a precedent for the Mackintoshes' concept of their ideal modern living environment. The drawing rooms and bedrooms, considered as being for the purpose of relaxation, would be white. The hallways (Fig.39) and areas for more serious concerns like the dining room and library, would be dark. Every detail from furniture to light fittings, would be harmonised with their settings.

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FIGURE 39

One enters from a dark hallway into the master bedroom. The opalescent glass squares used in the door, glow like gems with the light from behind, and heighten our expectation of what is inside. As the door opens, the whiteness is so intense that it pulls you into a world of purity and comfort, a heavenly place. In 1905 a french critic, E.B.Kalas, gave his interpretation describing the room's 'virginal beauty' as an escape from the dirt and pollution of Glasgow city.

Thomas Howarth obviously agrees with this idea but expands on it by saying:

" There can be little doubt also that the contrast between life in the grey, northern, industrial city of Glasgow and the extrovert vitality of Italian cities made a deep impression on the young architect. It may be that the whiteness and elegance of the living spaces he was to create later were inspired by the memory of spiritual freedom engendered by the white, flower-decked walls of Italy - and it was to the Mediterranean world that he returned to paint towards the end of his life."

(Thomas Howarth, quoted in Patrick Nuttgens, 1988, pg39)

Howarth argues that Mackintosh wanted to achieve two things in his use of white - to create an oasis from the dirt and grim of Glasgow, but also to establish a place for spiritual freedom. 1900 was a time when moral codes and ethics were strictly upheld. It was common knowledge that Mackintosh had broken his engagement with Jessie Keppie to marry Margaret MacDonald. This was not an easy thing to do at the turn of the century as it was considered a breach of promise. It was especially difficult for Mackintosh as his fiancée was the sister of his boss John Keppie. His marriage to Margaret shows two very important facets of his personality: one, that he was intensely in love with his wife and secondly, that he

the entrance from a dark hallway into the bedroom. The opalescent glass apertures used in the door glow like gems with the light from within, and heighten our expectation of what is inside. As the door opens, the whiteness is so intense that it pulls you into a world of purity and comfort, a heavenly place. In 1905 a French critic, E.B. Lalauze, gave his interpretation describing the room's 'virginal beauty' as an escape from the dirt and pollution of Glasgow city.

Thomas Howard obviously agrees with this idea and expands on it by saying:

"There can be little doubt also that the contrast between life in the grey, northern, industrial city of Glasgow and the exuberant vitality of Italian cities made a deep impression on the young architect. It may be that the whiteness and elegance of the living spaces he was to create later were inspired by the memory of spiritual freedom expandered by the white, flower-decked walls of Italy - and it was to the Mediterranean world that he returned to paint towards the end of his life." (Thomas Howard, quoted in Patrick Nutter, 1971)

(p.33)

Howard argues that Mackintosh wanted to achieve this in his use of white - to create an oasis from the dirt and grim of Glasgow, but also to establish a place for spiritual freedom. 1900 was a time when moral codes and ethics were strictly upheld. It was common knowledge that Mackintosh had broken his engagement with Jessie Kepple to marry Margaret Macdonald. This was not an easy thing to do at the turn of the century as it was considered a breach of promise. It was especially difficult for Mackintosh as his fiancée was the sister of his best friend John Kepple. His marriage to Margaret shows a very important facet of his personality: one that was intensely in love with his wife and secondly, that

could disregard the morals and standards that Victorian society insisted upon him.

Both of these traits are vital to the ideology behind Mackintosh's work. The Hill House interiors were executed during the early years of the Mackintoshes marriage and in Alan Crawford's words:

" It is as if Margaret MacDonald took him by the hand and they went inside together.....the associations of the 'interior' include inwardness, sexual intimacy and the decoration of a house."

(Alan Crawford, C.R.Mackintosh 1995, pg.66)

Thomas Howarth voiced his opinion of Margaret MacDonald, arguing that:

" She, however unwittingly, was responsible for limiting her husband's vision."

(Thomas Howarth, 1952, pg.145)

This seems a very dismissive comment to make about a person whose decorative arts have such a strong presence in Mackintosh's work. I prefer to take the view of Patrick Geddes in his book The Evolution of Sex (1889), who presented;

" companionable love and cooperation as the highest manifestation of the evolutionary process, according to the principle of 'equal' but differently gendered opposites, integrated to form a unity of impression. This idea was also central to the theosophical thought of W.B.Yeats, a committed theosophist who felt that society was entering one of those rare periods characterised by the unity of spiritual and material existence and by the interpenetration of the sexes, which would find expression in a bisexual art that had the expression of each partner without voiding the identity of the other."

(Timothy Neat, 1994, Pg.45)

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At a glance the room seems to be quite an irregular

shape, but this was carefully planned by Mackintosh. The area is carefully divided in two parts, with the bed contained under a low barrel ceiling (Fig.40). On each side of the bed small insets are lined with deep purple tesserae in black leading. The enclosing vault travels from wardrobes on one side to the exterior wall on the other, this wall has one tiny window with thick curving interior shutters, each with three pink glass squares in them.

" Here the Whole thickness of the protective bedroom wall seems scooped dangerously thin; it is a riskily exposed moment in this womblike place."

(Wendy Kaplan(Ed.), The Hill House, 1996, Pg.186)

Mackintosh intended for this vault to be separate from the rest of the room.

The main section of the room is divided into two spaces. One is the dressing area (Fig.41), with its central feature being the full length, smooth, white mirror. This is matched with two ivory white wardrobes, with a botanical pattern executed in milky pink insets and silver handles.

The other cosy space is around the fire place by the door (Fig.42). There is a high backed double seat placed in between the wall and the wardrobe. John McKean discusses how:

"in the use of naturally coloured materials - the pewter water jug, the untreated fabrics, the mirror glass, the enamel and pinkish tiles, and the naked polished sheet-steel fire surround- and with the widespread ivory white lacquer, the effect is innovative, daring, and bright, with a mood of more or less open eroticism."

(Wendy Kaplan(Ed.), The Hill House, 1996, Pg.188)

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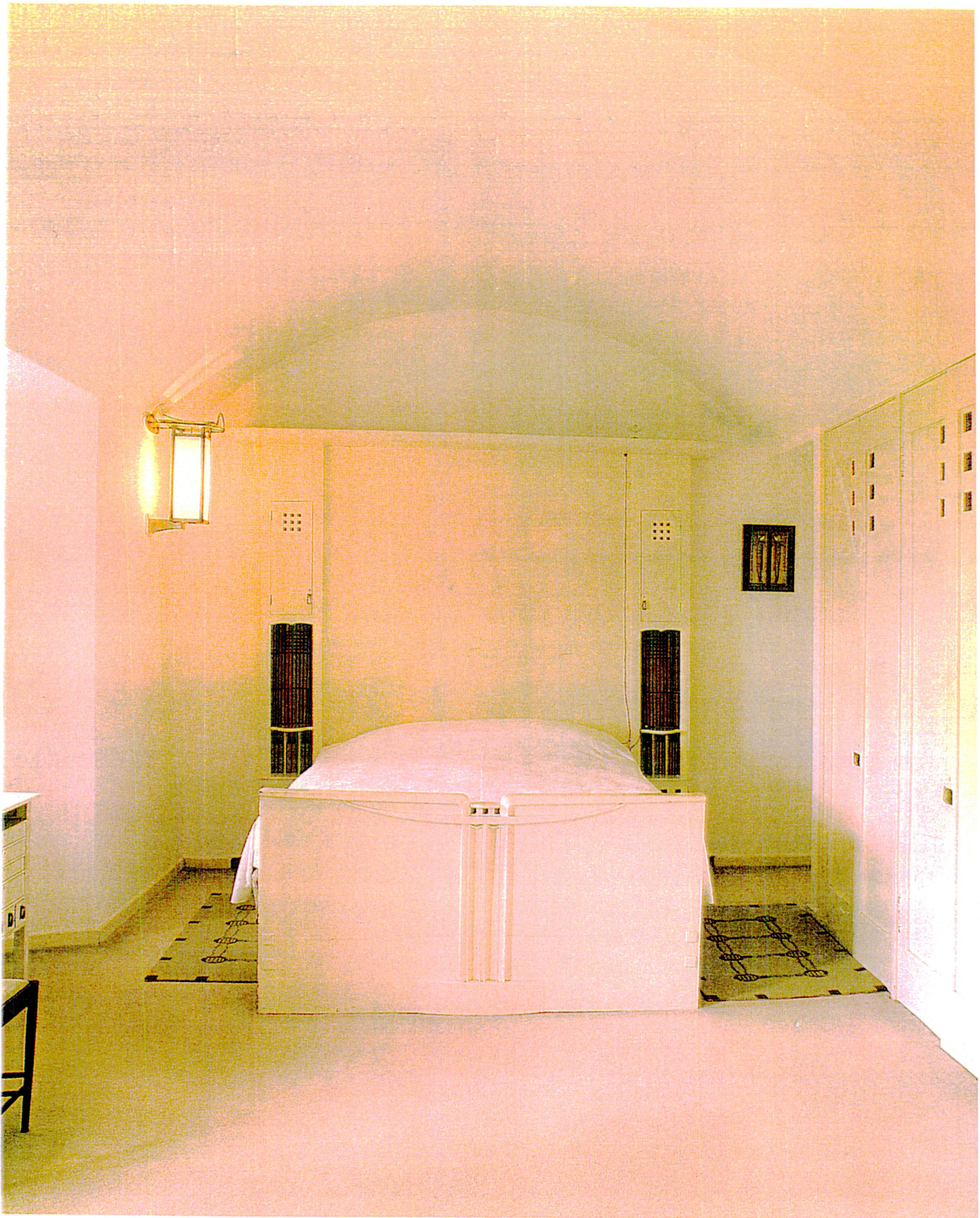


FIGURE 40



FIGURE 41



FIGURE 42

In an essay entitled The Erotization of Domestic Space: A mirror by Charles Rennie Mackintosh, David Brett puts forward the argument that the Mackintoshes white interiors in the Hill House are in fact an expression of;

"an asocial, ahistorical, antitraditional eruption of erotized selfhood."

The room exudes femininity, softness and intimacy so that:

"The attenuated forms of the high backed chairs, the impractical perfectionism of the whiteness tend, in the sensitive observer, to enforce behaviour full of body consciousness.....the sleek surfaces, the relation of roughness to smoothness, of decorative motif to plainness, of large forms to small forms, and angularity to swelling entasis, all speak discreetly of the human body."

(The Journal of Decorative Arts and Propaganda Arts\Fall 1988 no.10)

The work of the Mackintoshes "marks the inward extension of the domestic to include an eroticized and fantastic privacy."

(David Brett, 1992, pg.129)

These sexual undertones that are suggested in Mackintosh's interiors were completely opposed to the Victorian idealism of domesticity. It is this more than anything, that sets the Glasgow Style apart from the Arts and Crafts Movement. The English School was mainly concerned with realizing concepts of domesticity, craft and architecture that were, supposedly pre-industrial:

"It reasserted, both in its moral tone and in its imagery, late eighteenth century ruralism and the evangelical belief that, in William Cowper's line in 'The Task'(1785) 'God made the country, and man made the town'."

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The Arts and Craft Movement designed their private spaces with as much practicality as their public ones. Though their intimate interiors such as the bedroom were often pretty and feminine they were completed with the same sensibility and honesty as the rest of the building. Mackintosh on the other hand treated his exteriors entirely separately from his interiors. The outside of the Hill House gives, to the public, the appearance of a traditional domestic dwelling. However the interior which is protected within this shell, delves into a private sphere in which Mackintosh rejects practicality and the Victorian ideology of domesticity. Instead he concentrates on images of intimacy and eroticizim:

" Wooden furniture is abstractly curvaceous, smoothly feminine, and thickly lacquered in ivory white - an extreme contrast to the structural clarity of stained timber in the library. The bedroom has an overall sleekness; it is all sensual surface, which you are induced to touch and caress - curves, sharpness, and extreme subtlety of form. With the material and the carpentry obscured by the absence of a workman's touch, surfaces become ambiguous, forms blur, and our hands instinctively stretch out to run over surfaces."

(Wendy Kaplan (Ed.), The Hill House, 1996, Pg124)

David Brett feels that this innovation is at the centre of Mackintosh's modernism. Not only was he employing modern building techniques, materials and resources, but he was also, in the words of W.R.Lethaby, "enshrining modern ideology", which appealed to the modern consumer:

" This dynamization, linked to utilitarian rationality and colossal technology and sanctioned

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Wooden furniture is abstractly carved, smoothly finished and thickly lacquered in its white and extreme contrast to the structure. The use of stained timber in the library, the bedroom has an overall sleekness; it is all seamless surfaces which you are induced to touch and caress. The sharpness and extreme subtlety of form, the material and the carefully chosen light, the absence of a workman's touch, surfaces polished and smooth, forms blue, and our minds instinctively attracted out to run over surfaces.

Woodward, John (Ed.), The Hall House, 1905 (1984).

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This dynamism, linked to utilitarian rationality and technical technology and aesthetic

by a devalued subjective idealism, is the pre-condition of a successful consumer capitalism."
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CONCLUSION

During his short career, Charles Rennie Mackintosh achieved what no other architect in Britain could, to create a new style of building, free from the dogmas of historicism, determined by use and responsive to context. Through the use of new technologies - sheet glass, concrete, gas, heat, electricity and plumbing - Mackintosh produced a total environment for modern living.

However, He never achieved recognition in his native land, instead, Mackintosh's legacy was ignored. So why now, in 1997, is his work being re-acclaimed, and what relevance does he have to practising artists and crafts people today ?

Of course I can really only answer for myself, but as a student of craft\design, I have learned three important lessons from Mackintosh.

First, His work is an example of how to utilize the machine successfully. While we are in college, we spend four years mastering our craft, be it glass, metal work or ceramics. However, at the same time we hopefully become accomplished designers. Why not use this skill to design for Industry ? It is possible to remain a practising craftsman but why not simultaneously utilize the knowledge that you have gained about your material and apply it to industrial design ? Contemporary design in glass for example, is particularly strong in Germany, Scandinavia and the Czechoslovakian Republic.

Secondly, if nothing else, Mackintosh has opened up my horizons to the possibilities of using multiple materials from mosaic, metals and textiles, to stained glass and plaster. It is difficult to see beyond the

CONCLUSION

During his short career, Charles Kenneth Mackintosh achieved what no other architect in Britain was able to achieve: a new style of building, free from the dogmatic restrictions of traditional architecture, determined by use and responsive to contemporary life. The use of new technologies - sheet glass, concrete, gas, heat, electricity and plumbing - Mackintosh produced a total environment for modern living.

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Secondly, in nothing else, Mackintosh has opened up new horizons to the possibilities of using multiple materials from mosaic, metals and textiles, to stained glass and plaster. It is difficult to see beyond the

material that one specializes in during college but it is vital to remember that our design skills can be applied to whatever materials we want. For example, Mackintosh's use of glass, as a decorative feature in wooden furniture, is an exciting combination.

Lastly, and perhaps the most poignant lesson I learnt from Mackintosh is how to attain a "truth" in your designs. His sources are taken from nature and show the versatility of even a simple rose motif. His designs were elegant and aesthetically pleasing, simple forms, colours and textures create a purity, which make them timeless. The proof of their attraction can be seen in the countless reproductions of Mackintosh's work produced each year. His designs now seem as fresh and exciting as they were when they first appeared in 1900 at the 8th Secessionist exhibition in Vienna.

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