

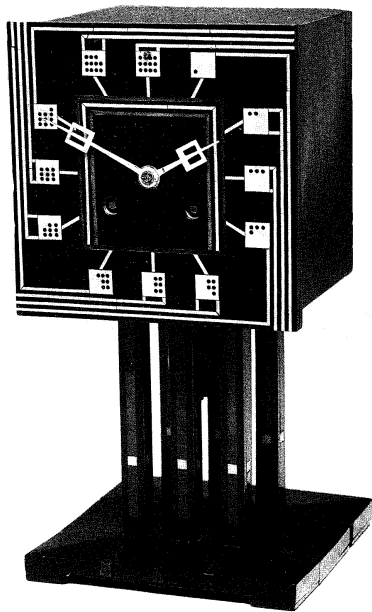
CHARLES RENNIE MACKINTOSH

1868 - 1928



Charles Rennie Mackintosh is perhaps the most famous Scottish architect and designer.

Although he is tremendously popular today he never really enjoyed popular success in Scotland or Britain during his life time.



However he did not work in a vacuum, and was part of a group of architects and designers, including his wife Margaret, working in what has become known as “The Glasgow Style”.

His individual contribution to the development of architecture and design was recognised by the avant-garde in Europe.

He is well known for designing every aspect of an architectural project from light and window fittings to clocks and cutlery. Compared to other major architects he did not produce a large body of work, fortunately most of what he did produce may still be seen today.

In order to escape from the overbearing influence of the classical past, he drew on a wide variety of sources: geometry, the natural world, Scottish Baronial architecture, Celtic and Japanese artforms. In his time the recycling of traditional forms was in line with current trends: it is still very familiar today and probably accounts for his populist appeal. Reproducing Mackintosh artworks has become a huge industry.

The visual impact of his work is very obvious. The effects of light and shade, the use of “male and female” shapes and subtle colour variations all help to create stunning visual effects. This may be seen in properties such as Scotland Street School, The Hill House, Cranston’s Tea Rooms and his masterpiece, Glasgow School of Art.

His furniture was always designed for a specific location. Individual pieces may appear somewhat unusual on their own but when viewed in the correct context they are always at one with their surroundings. Mackintosh eventually gave up the struggle to be a successful architect and moved to the south of France in order to attempt to develop a new career as a water colour artist.

THE HILL HOUSE



The Hill House in Helensburgh was built between 1902 and 1904 and was Mackintosh's most important domestic work.

It was built for the publisher Walter Blackie and has commanding views over the River Clyde.

The use of traditional grey slate for the roof and harling on the walls gives the outside of the building a definite Scottish "feel". On the other hand the interior with its Japanese influences provides a varied and rich contrast and Mackintosh's masterly use of colour, texture and light combine to create a dwelling which is unique.



Many of his favourite themes and motifs are to be found in the Hill House.

Although the exterior of the building hints at a Scottish origin the entrance hall with its strong verticals and horizontals integrates many of the current stylistic movements with those of the past.

Arts and Crafts jostles with Art Nouveau, Japanese rhythms add life to the old baronial hall, everything controlled and held together by the designer's overwhelming obedience to pure architectural geometries.

All the rooms are designed with function in mind but retain this mixture of old and new. Upstairs in the main bedroom modern elegance in furniture and fittings combines with traditional Scottish expectations. A vaulted ceiling embraces and enfolds a large white bed carved to represent forms abstracted from nature. The contrast of curves, cool whites and warm pinks with the angularity of the darkest brown ladder back chairs is pronounced. Integration is paramount to success: stencilled wall pattern echo the rose motif used elsewhere in the house.



It may be hard to imagine living in a house where every space, shape and item of furniture has been carefully considered but Mackintosh firmly believed that the Hill House was for living in.

"Here is a house. It is not an Italian Villa, an English Mansion House, a Swiss Chalet, or a Scotch Castle. . . It is a Dwelling House" C. R. Mackintosh