



M029 Student design for a science and art museum

Introduction

Mackintosh designed a French neo-classical-style science and art museum with columned facades, corner pavilions, mansard roofs and extensive sculptural decoration. In 1890 the design was submitted to the British Institution Scholarship fund competition, and in 1891 to the South Kensington Department of Science and Art National Competition, where it was awarded a silver medal.

Authorship: Mackintosh is named as designer in contemporary press reports.

Status: Unbuilt

Chronology

1890

February: The trustees of the British Institution Scholarship fund announce their intention to select five scholars (two in painting, and one each in architecture, sculpture and engraving) and to award scholarships of £50 tenable for two years. The announcement includes conditions of qualification. ¹

6 August: At a meeting of the trustees, the recipients of the two painting scholarships and that in sculpture are agreed. The scholarships in architecture and engraving are not awarded. ²

31 October: Mackintosh's British Institution Scholarship competition entry, a design for a museum of science and art, is published in the *British Architect*. ³

1891

Mackintosh's designs for a museum of science and art and a public hall are each awarded a silver medal in the annual South Kensington Department of Science and Art National Competition. ⁴

Description

Competitions

This design was produced when Mackintosh was an evening student at the Glasgow School of Art, while working as assistant for John Honeyman & Keppie. In 1890 it was entered in the British Institution Scholarship fund competition, and in 1891 in the annual National Competition of the South Kensington Department of Science and Art in London. ¹

The British Institution Scholarship fund was formed from the remaining capital of the British Institution, which had been disbanded in 1870. The Institution had been established in 1805 to encourage the exhibition and sale of work by British artists, and mounted two annual exhibitions at its gallery in Pall Mall, London, one showing old masters and the other contemporary works. ² The fund's 13 trustees included leading artists and Royal Academicians Sir (later Lord) Frederic Leighton and Lawrence Alma Tadema; Thomas Armstrong, director of fine art at the Department of Science and Art, South Kensington; Augustus Franks of the British Museum; Sir James Linton, president of the Royal Institute of Painters in Watercolour; and further representatives from the Royal Academy and the Royal Scottish Academy; Dr Henry Boyd, principal of Hertford College, Oxford; and John Henry Middleton, director of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. ³

The British Institution Scholarship fund competition was first held in 1890. The trustees intended to elect five scholars – two in painting, and one each in architecture, sculpture and engraving – who would be awarded scholarships of £50 each, tenable for two years. Candidates were to be aged between 17 and 23 years on 1 July 1890, and, for the architecture scholarship, they must have reached the high standard of winning 'Gold Medals, or Scholarships, or money prizes of the minimum value of £10 in any Art School in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland'. ⁴

In the second half of the 19th century, teaching in British art schools followed a curriculum laid down by the Department of Art and Science in London, a centralised scheme known from the Department's location as the 'South Kensington System'. The Department's annual National Competition displayed student work from art schools and classes across the country, attracting several thousand entries every year. Prize-winning entries were exhibited at the South Kensington Museum.

Design

Mackintosh's front elevation, plan and cross section present a symmetrical building arranged over three floors – piano nobile, attic and basement – on a

rectangular plan with an elaborate central entrance and corner pavilions.⁵ This arrangement echoes the layout of museums built across Europe during the 19th century.⁶ Its French neo-classical style – pedimented entrance and corner pavilions, columns set between windows, bold cornice and mansard roofs – are indicative of the prevailing Beaux-Arts influence on design and education in Glasgow. Mackintosh would have come into direct contact with this influence through John James Burnet, one of his teachers at the Glasgow School of Art, and his employer John Keppie. Both men had studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. The Grecian neo-classical figurative sculpture and other decorative details reflect 19th-century taste in Glasgow for this style of ornament.⁷

Exhibition spaces are ranged around the four sides of the building with a narrow, rectangular court in the centre. This contains the stair hall, which links the two long sides. Galleries for science are located on the piano nobile to the front and two sides of the building; art galleries are in the top-lit attic spaces above. The rear range is a double-height gallery with glazed roof, intended, as the inscription on the drawing states, for 'general objects of science and art'. This gallery is entered at either end from doors at first-floor level, from which stairs descend to the ground floor. The section suggests that the rear elevation is windowless, with a row of detached columns. The basement, at the front of the building, provides storage and has direct access from outside via pedimented doorways at ground level on either side of the main entrance.

Reception

Mackintosh was not awarded the British Institution Scholarship for architecture. The trustees considered his work 'good, but he had not unfortunately the necessary qualification'.⁸ The *British Architect* was puzzled as to why Mackintosh had not succeeded when it published his design on 31 October 1890, deeming his design 'admirable'. It believed the design would have 'succeeded in winning for its author the ... scholarship had it been judged eligible, but whether it was ineligible through its having been the only design received, or from some other cause, we have not ascertained.' The journal was however pleased to report Mackintosh's success in the Alexander Thomson Travelling Studentship competition in Glasgow.⁹ The situation is explained in a report of the annual meeting of the Glasgow School of Art published in the *Glasgow Herald* in February 1891: 'Mr Charles McIntosh has been successful ... in having his works accepted for the Royal [sic] Institution Scholarship in architecture. Being the sole competitor in the kingdom the scholarship was withheld.'¹⁰

At the 1891 National Competition at the Department of Science and Art in London, Mackintosh won two of the 74 silver medals awarded that year. One of these was for the museum design, the other for the public hall design which had won him the Thomson Studentship a year earlier.¹¹ The museum design was also exhibited at the Glasgow Institute of the Fine Arts in 1891.¹²

People

Job Book

The job books of Honeyman & Keppie (later Honeyman, Keppie & Mackintosh) are now held by The Hunterian, University of Glasgow and include four volumes related to the Mackintosh period. The books were used by the firm to keep a project-by-project, day-by-day record of contractors, suppliers and expenditure. The name of a project and/or client is usually at the top of the left-hand page, followed by information about tradesmen who tendered. The name of the measurer (quantity surveyor) is usually at the top of the right-hand page, followed by information about payments to contractors and suppliers. All of the data for M029 is entered in the tables below.

Page numbering is not consistent in the job books. Sometimes a single number refers to a double-page spread and sometimes each page is individually numbered. Here, each image of a double-page spread is identified by the number given at the top of the left-hand page. (Images of all of the pages from the four job books can be found at [Browse Job Books](#), [Visit Book and Cash Book](#).)

The following information about M029 has been extracted from the job books:

Documents

Bibliography

Published

- Thomas Howarth, *Charles Rennie Mackintosh and the Modern Movement*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 2nd edn, 1977, p. 11
- David Walker, 'Mackintosh on Architecture', in Pamela Robertson, ed., *Charles Rennie Mackintosh: The Architectural Papers*, Wendlebury, Oxon: White Cockade in association with the Hunterian Art Gallery, 1990, p. 153
- David Walker, 'The Glasgow Years', in Wendy Kaplan, *Charles Rennie Mackintosh*, New York and London: Abbeville Press, 1996, pp. 123–5
- *Academy*, 37, 8 February 1890, p. 2
- *Academy*, 38, 16 August 1890, p. 121
- *Art Journal*, October 1890, p. 294
- *British Architect*, 34, 31 October 1890, pp. 320, 326–7

Notes:

- 1:** *Academy*, 37, 8 February 1890, p. ii.

- 2: *Academy*, 38, 16 August 1890, p. 121; *Art Journal*, October 1890, p. 294.
- 3: *British Architect*, 34, 31 October 1890, pp. 320, 326–7.
- 4: Mackintosh was also awarded two 'third or highest grade prizes' for further work. It is not known at this time what these two works were. *Glasgow Herald*, 24 August 1891, p. 8.
- 5: *British Architect*, 34, 31 October 1890, p. 320; *Glasgow Herald*, 24 August 1891, p. 8.
- 6: Edward Mogg, *Mogg's New Picture of London; or, Strangers' Guide to the British Metropolis*, 11th edn, London: E. Mogg, 1848, p. 170.
- 7: *Art Journal*, October 1890, p. 294.
- 8: Conditions for the painting, sculpture and engraving scholarships were similar. *Academy*, 8 February 1890, p. 2.
- 9: A print of the three drawings reproduced in the *British Architect*, 34, 31 October 1890, pp. 326–7, is held at the The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: GLAHA 41959 (M029-002). Mackintosh's original elevation in pen and wash on paper is also in The Hunterian collection. Attached to its bottom right corner is a fragment of a label for one of the student competitions in which the drawing was entered. The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: GLAHA 52584 (M029-001).
- 10: Nikolaus Pevsner, *A History of Building Types*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1976, pp. 121–6.
- 11: David Walker, 'Mackintosh on Architecture', in Pamela Robertson, ed., *Charles Rennie Mackintosh: The Architectural Papers*, Wendlebury, Oxon: White Cockade in association with the Hunterian Art Gallery, 1990, p. 153; David Walker, 'The Glasgow Years', in Wendy Kaplan, *Charles Rennie Mackintosh*, New York and London: Abbeville Press, 1996, p. 123; 'John James Burnet', *Dictionary of Scottish Architects, 1840–1980*, www.scottisharchitects.org.uk [accessed on 11 January 2012].
- 12: *Art Journal*, October 1890, p. 294.
- 13: 'British Institution Scholarship. Design by Chas. R. McIntosh, Glasgow', *British Architect*, 34, 31 October 1890, p. 320.
- 14: *Glasgow Herald*, 4 February 1891, p. 4.
- 15: Mackintosh's friend, John Quinton Pringle, was awarded one of only six gold medals presented in 1891 for his 'chalk drawings of figures from the nude'. *Glasgow Herald*, 27 July 1891, p. 8.
- 16: Royal Glasgow Institute of the Fine Arts, 1891 (775).

Mackintosh Architecture: Context, Making and Meaning

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