M191 Competition design for a House for an Art Lover

Introduction

This ideal design for a large house was prepared for a competition organised by German publisher Alexander Koch. Despite the constraints of the competition conditions, it was Mackintosh's most ambitious domestic project.

Authorship: Mackintosh designed the architecture and interiors. Margaret Macdonald designed decorative panels. The designs were published under Mackintosh's name in 1902, and the panels attributed to Macdonald. The published competition results attributed the scheme to Mackintosh and Macdonald jointly, reflecting the conditions which expressly requested the collaboration of an 'architect and an applied artist of modern taste'. 1

Status: Unbuilt; a house based on Mackintosh's design was constructed in Bellahouston Park, Glasgow, in 1989–96

Chronology

1900
December: An 'ideas competition' for a 'mansion for an art lover' is announced in the German applied arts journal Innendekoration, published by Alexander Koch in Darmstadt. 1

1901
25 March: Competition closing date. 2
16–17 May: Adjudication takes place in Darmstadt. 3
July: Competition results and analysis published in Innendekoration. 4

1902
Designs by M. H. Baillie Scott, Mackintosh, and Viennese architect Leopold Bauer are published in portfolio format. 5
10 May – 11 November: Mackintosh's portfolio is exhibited at the International Exhibition of Modern Decorative Art in Turin.

1903
January: Portfolios by Mackintosh and Baillie Scott are reviewed in the Russian journal Zodchii (The Architect). 6

1904
September: Portfolios are reviewed in the British Architect and American Architect and Building News. 7

1907
Six plates exhibited at the <i>International Exhibition of Architectural Drawings</i>, Pittsburgh Architectural Club (758) and (759)

1989
An initiative to build a 'House for an Art Lover' in Glasgow's Bellahouston Park, based on Mackintosh's drawings, is announced. 8

1990
By Autumn the exterior is largely complete. Work halted due to recession. 9

1996
26 October: House for an Art Lover opens. 10

Description

This design was entered in the 'ideas competition ... for the purpose of obtaining artistically original designs for a grand residence for an art lover' ('behufs Erlangung von künstlerisch-eigenartigen Entwürfen für ein herrschaftliches Wohnhaus eines Kunst-Freundes'), announced by German architecture and decorative arts publisher Alexander Koch in December 1900. 1 It seems likely that the Mackintoshes learned of the competition while visiting Vienna in October–December 1900 to participate in the Eighth Exhibition of the Vienna Secession. 2
In the published results, the scheme submitted under the alias 'Der Vogel' (The Bird) was attributed to Mackintosh and Margaret Macdonald jointly. However, in 1902, when three competitions' designs were published, the drawings were attributed to Mackintosh and the gesso panels of various sizes on walls and inset into furniture in several rooms to Macdonald.

The Competition

The competition and conditions were announced in the December 1900 issue of Koch's journal, Innendekoration, where it was stated that 'the contest may find particular support among our younger, reform-minded architects'. The full-page notice gave particulars of the parkland site and the dimensions and layout of rooms, as well as materials and budget. The type, dimensions and materials of drawings to be submitted were also specified, and the adjudicators named.

Although described as an 'ideas competition', the conditions included a clause concerning the possible construction of the successful entry. The importance of providing designs of a 'thoroughly modern character' and furnishings and fittings displaying 'the modern tendency' in both technical and aesthetic respects was emphasised. However, it was made clear that the character of the home should not be one of limited grandeur, rather of a refined family dwelling. The competition was open to domestic and overseas subscribers to Koch's journals Innendekoration and Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration. Designs were to be submitted anonymously under an alias by 25 March 1901. As if addressing the Mackintoshes directly, the conditions stated that collaboration between an architect and an applied artist of modern tastes was not only permitted but explicitly desired.

Competitors did not have to respond to the wishes of an actual client: the 'Kunst-Freund' was simply an archetypal admirer of the arts. This profile was reflected in the provision of particular rooms on the ground floor: a reception room which was also to function as a music room; a study in which to display an artist of modern tastes was not only permitted but explicitly desired. Although described as an 'ideas competition', the conditions included a clause concerning the possible construction of the successful entry. The importance of providing designs of a 'thoroughly modern character' and furnishings and fittings displaying 'the modern tendency' in both technical and aesthetic respects was emphasised. However, it was made clear that the character of the home should not be one of limited grandeur, rather of a refined family dwelling. The competition was open to domestic and overseas subscribers to Koch's journals Innendekoration and Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration. Designs were to be submitted anonymously under an alias by 25 March 1901. As if addressing the Mackintoshes directly, the conditions stated that collaboration between an architect and an applied artist of modern tastes was not only permitted but explicitly desired.

The Mackintosh Design

The whereabouts of Mackintosh's original drawings are not known: his design is known only from the portfolio of lithograph reproductions published by Koch in 1902 (see below). These comprise two perspectives, from the N.W. and S.E. plans of the ground and first floors; N., S., E. and W. elevations; and five coloured interior elevations and three interior perspectives.

Exterior

Mackintosh's design shows an essentially rectangular building of three storeys. It is roughcast, and its white walls are without mouldings. Visual interest is provided by the arrangement of the windows and by the massing of the simple, geometric volumes: the cubic porch, the apsidal stair tower; the first-floor bow of the breakfast room; and the two great chimney stacks at the E. end. The windows are mostly small and irregularly spaced, but a group of unusually long windows next to the porch lights the double-height hall, while another group overlooking the terrace and garden signals the dining room and music room.

The competition conditions required architectural details such as door and window surrounds, cornices and mouldings to be sandstone (ornament could be in either sandstone or stucco.) Accordingly, the facades are enlivened by sandstone details including relief carvings of botanical derivation.
The House for an Art Lover also recalls Mackintosh's 1899–1900 'ideal' designs for an artist's house and studio in the country and a town house and studio for an artist, particularly the decorative carving on the N. and S. elevations of the town house.

Interior

The small porch opens into the double-height hall with tall windows to the N. and a gallery on the S. with timber balustrading like that of the gallery at Queen's Cross Church. Stained glass and a coloured frieze relieve the dark panelling. The stairs are open to the hall on the E. side. On the N. side is the dark-panelled dining room with barrel-vaulted ceiling. As prescribed in the competition conditions, a movable wall allows it to be combined with the hall when entertaining. The panelling here has figurative decoration, and there is a coloured overmantel of botanical forms.

S. of the hall are the reception and music rooms, divided by the movable partition required by the competition conditions.

These rooms are white-painted with touches of blue, green, and pink under a barrel-vaulted ceiling. Six narrow, full-height bow windows, recalling windows in the original board room at the Glasgow School of Art (later converted to a studio), overlook the terrace and garden. Tapering columns in front of the windows recall the Mackintoshes' exhibit in Vienna. There are matching columns along the opposite wall. At the E. end of the reception room is a fireplace similar to that in the Mackintoshes' Mains Street drawing room. A piano with a delicate timber superstructure fills the W. wall of the music room, a development perhaps from Mackintosh's 1898 organ case for Craigie Hall. It is flanked by panels designed by Macdonald.

Corridors lead E. and W. from the hall, described in German on the drawings as 'galleries'. To the W. are the S.-facing breakfast room, servery and back stairs connecting to the basement kitchen and ancillary rooms, and the nursery suite on the first floor. The E. corridor leads to the most important private rooms: the secluded gentleman's room (described in the conditions as providing space for the display of art works), the gentleman's office, and the ladies' oval withdrawing room with bow window. Mackintosh regularly made use of the oval to represent femininity, and he returned to this form when designing the ladies' rest room at the Ingram Street Tea Rooms ten years later.

The first floor is reached from the hall via the apsidal stair tower, as at Windyhill, and is divided into separate suites. To the E. is the S.-facing master bedroom with dressing room and bathroom. Along the S. side, reached directly from the balcony overlooking the hall, is a group of interconnected guest bedrooms with a sitting room and bathrooms. At the W. end is the nursery suite with rooms for a nanny or governess, children's bedrooms and a 'daughters' living room. On a mezzanine on the back stair is a W.-facing breakfast room. On the top floor is a playroom with distinctive lamp standards shaped like trees, and a gesso panel by Macdonald – according to Muthesius, the awakening of Sleeping Beauty – on the wall above the fireplace. Mackintosh reused the arrangement of children's play and school room two years later in the attic of The Hill House.

Publication

In early 1902 Alexander Koch's Darmstadt publishing house produced Meister der Innen-Kunst: Haus eine Kunstfreundes, three portfolios of full-colour lithographs of Baillie Scott's, Mackintosh's and Leopold Bauer's designs. The first printing was by Emil Hochdanz of Stuttgart; there was a second in 1903 by W. Collin of Berlin. An English edition by H. Grevel & Son, London, followed in 1904.

Mackintosh designed the cover for his own portfolio and added the missing interior perspectives which had disqualified him from the competition, making fourteen plates in all. The portfolios were exhibited for sale at the International Exhibition of Modern Decorative Art, which opened in Turin in April 1902.

Introduction by Hermann Muthesius

Each portfolio was prefaced by an essay, in Mackintosh's case written by Hermann Muthesius. Muthesius described the emergence of a new style of art and design in Scotland that had grown out of the dominant Arts and Crafts Movement of the 1890s, but had parallels with continental European developments: the Scots had brought a new perspective to the English goals of interior design and decoration, just like their continental contemporaries, conceiving of the house as a whole, and regarding the room as a unified work of art. Such had been Mackintosh's impact that Glasgow was close to having its own regional style.

Muthesius characterised the House for an Art Lover as 'informed by a curious influence divergent from everything that is familiar. ... Its undisturbed mass rises upwards without any grouping of the walls, the effect of which is sought in the uninterrupted solitude of the surfaces. As a result there is something peculiar, almost spooky about the composition.' He drew attention to the 'apparently accidental arrangement of the windows set deeply into holes in the wall, and the structural elements soaring tensely upwards, often in pairs so as to emphasise the motif. The existence of just a few areas of ornament served to 'emphasise as keenly as possible the desired effect of the tension, silence, mystery and grandeur'.

As for the interior, Mackintosh's 'curious character' and his 'ability to express most acutely the evocative and mysterious development of the rooms' was encountered most powerfully in the juxtaposition of the simple and regular forms of the woodwork and furniture with the 'fantastical' figurative decoration of
With regard to the children's playroom, Muthesius explained that in an English house – presumably in contrast to Germany – 'the care of children has been developed to the highest level of perfection'. Thus a room for children 'ought to be large and comfortable, well lit and well heated'; and its design should be 'attractive from a child's point of view.'

Muthesius argued that Mackintosh's 'taut, constricted and austere' style might be 'almost excessive in character', but it had emerged to 'counter multiplicity and vagueness in the decorative arts during the previous decade'. In Mackintosh's work, 'it is the straight line, and in particular the vertical, which is crucial; it has been elevated to a principle and its effect is enhanced by repetition'. The style, he felt, was 'almost excessive in character. ... The Glasgow line is to a great extent autonomous and breathes personality. And more: it has a contagious effect ... its influence stretches far on to the continent and certainly as far as Vienna, where it has found fertile ground.' For Muthesius, Mackintosh was one of the few genuinely original creative spirits of the 'new movement'.

Critical Reception

The portfolio attracted immediate coverage in the German-language arts press. A short article by the editors of Innendekoration – including Koch himself – described it as bringing Mackintosh closer to the general German audience, while noting that 'wholehearted acknowledgement' of the 'art of this distinct spirit' is 'still some distance off'. Plate 14, the interior perspective of the dining room, was reproduced full-size and in colour, which the editor believed would prove 'very informative to anyone interested in Mackintosh ... and attract some new supporters'.

Georg Fuchs, writing in Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration about the work of Mackintosh and the Glasgow School at the Turin International Exhibition, where the portfolio was on sale, was more sceptical. He described the House for an Art Lover as 'the most curious episode of the most remarkable and strangest architecture and interiors'. He then quoted at length from Muthesius' introductory essay.

The British Architect was also sceptical: 'We must confess that the feeling uppermost in one's mind after a first inspection of this book is largely one of amusement, not, however, unmixed with regard for the genuine ability which characterises it.' Mackintosh's scheme was 'one of the latest evidences of his originality', but he seemed to have 'developed his exceptional talents along more purely decorative lines [and] we feel as though he were losing something of the surety in matters architectural which he once evidenced'. Nevertheless, his exterior was praised for its 'plain square masses of wall with capital proportions of solids and voids and untroubled by mouldings, cornices, architraves, and practically no enrichment'. The interiors were more perplexing.

It is impossible to pretend to form a judgement of what would be the result from execution from such extremely conventional drawings, which tell little or nothing about ceilings or projections. The drawing and colour are alike refined, but the veritable nightmares of figures and the squirming lines somehow suggest disorder and terror. There are admirable features as, for instance, the curved window recesses, but the outstanding posts with flowers growing out of them! – well, we feel sure it will all lead to something! If we were sure the imitation which it engenders would not be very dreadful we could look upon such originality with equanimity, for so able an artist will surely work out his own salvation. 'A New Folio on Houses', British Architect, 16 September 1904, p. 201. The American Architect and Building News singled out Mackintosh's scheme for review, describing it as the most interesting of the three portfolios.

The decorative forms used by the designer ... are sui generis, wholly non-architectural, so far as historical precedent is concerned, but all rather based on the Japanese treatment of demoniac pipedreams; and yet there is a simplicity and rhythm which, combined with the low harmonies of the coloration, must produce a very simple and charming effect, to be noted with pleasure when you chance to see it in some other fellow's house during an afternoon's call but you question seriously whether you would like to live with it daily for months and years. It is fanciful, capricious and not a little weird, but it is not Cosby and comfortable. The treatment decoratively speaking goes admirably – and perhaps the author would hold to be acknowledging that he has accomplished – with the furniture designed for the use of the people who are to live amid these singular surroundings. But one cannot but believe that these high straight-backed chairs, made entirely out of flat boards, will, after a few weeks' use, be pushed up against the side wall of the dining room, while less ascetic chairs than these – which would excellently serve a barmecidal feast – take their places. 'Books and Reviews', American Architect and Building News, 24 September 1904, pp. 103–4. The Mackintosh and Baillie Scott Meister der Innen-Kunst portfolios were reviewed in the Russian journal Zodchi (The Architect) in early 1903.

The second artist, Charles Rennie Mackintosh, a Scot, has drawn the attention of the artistic world to his work when he represented the Scottish section at the exhibition in Turin in 1902. He is currently not only the most interesting and original artist in England [sic], but, perhaps, in the whole of Europe. His works prove the originality and freshness of his ideas. He has been, and still is, the most original contemporary artist. His works appeared in England only eight years ago. In the beginning, he was misunderstood and even mocked. However, now Mackintosh and his like-minded artists such as Herbert MacNair and Margaret MacDonald Mackintosh are accepted as founders of the whole school of young gifted Scottish artists who work in applied art. These Glaswegians could be singled out from other similar English and European artistic groups as they represent an entirely independent, original school that could be compared with Belgian and Austrian artistic schools.

An artist by trade, Mackintosh, nevertheless devotes himself entirely to applied art and is currently working in a large co-operative of architects in Glasgow. His drawings are full of true poetry and win over everyone with ascetic simplicity and even over-simplification. His rooms are high, light and spacious. They are not as cosy as the low-ceiled rooms of Voysey and Morris with their ledges, balconies, discreet bays and fireplace inglenooks. Mackintosh's rooms are not grand. Strange, odd ornaments on the walls, high but light furniture, greyish fog-like carpets and wall-paper; the light brass of electrical fittings have an incredibly peaceful effect upon us; at the same time they excite us with a strange sense of something not fully comprehended. 'Bibliographia: Meister der Innenkunst', Zodchi, 16 January 1903, no. 3, pp. 40–1.

House for an Art Lover, Bellahouston Park, Glasgow

Between 1989 and 1996, a team of architects, designers, contractors and craftsmen used Mackintosh's 1901 competition design to build a 'House for an Art Lover' in Glasgow's Bellahouston Park. With only the published portfolio of fourteen plates and a number of preliminary drawings for interior fittings and furniture, much interpretation and invention was required in order to create a functioning building. Since opening, the house has served as a visitor attraction and a venue for conferences, weddings and arts events.
People

Other:
- Alexander Koch
- Hermann Muthesius
- M. H. Baillie Scott
- Leopold Bauer

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 M191 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 M191 has been extracted from the job books:

Documents

Images
Leopold Bauer, House for an Art Lover competition entry, perspective of children's and guests' rooms, lithograph, 1901–2

Leopold Bauer, House for an Art Lover competition entry, perspective of drawing room, lithograph, 1901–2

Bibliography

Published

- Hermann Muthesius, 'Mackintosh's Kunst-Prinzip', in Meister der Innen-Kunst: Charles Rennie Mackintosh, Glasgow: Haus eine Kunstfreundes, Darmstadt: Koch Verlag, 1902, pp. 1–3
- Graham Roxburgh, Building the Dream: The Realisation of Charles Rennie Mackintosh's House for an Art Lover, Graham Roxburgh, 2006
- Daniel Robbins, 'Art Lover's House', Charles Rennie Mackintosh Society Newsletter, 54, Autumn 1990, p. 3
- Frank Arnell Walker, 'House for an Art Lover to build or not to build', Charles Rennie Mackintosh Society Newsletter, 70, Autumn 1996, p. 4
- Books and Reviews, American Architect and Building News, 24 September 1904, pp. 103–4
- 'A New Folio on Houses', British Architect, 62, 16 September 1904, p. 201
- Glasgow Herald, 22 February 1989
- 'Grosses Preis-Ausschreiben der "Innen-Dekoration" für Entwürfe zu einem Herrschafts-Haus eines Kunstfreundes', Innendekoration, 11, 1900, p. 200
- 'Ideen-Wettbewerb behufs Erlangung von künstlerisch-eigenartigen Entwürfen für ein herrschaftliches Wohnhaus eines Kunst-Freundes', Innendekoration, 11, 1900, advertisement supplement, p. 91
- 'Entscheidung des Wettbewerbes zur Erlangung von Entwürfen für ein herrschaftliches Wohnhaus eines Kunstfreundes', Innendekoration, 12, 1901, pp. 109–13
- Sunday Times, 21 October 1990, section 7, pp. 12–13
- Sunday Times, 13 October 1996, Ecosse section, p. 11
- 'Bibliographia: Meister der Innenkunst', Zodchii, 1903, no. 3, pp. 40–1

Unpublished


Notes:

1: Innendekoration, 11, 1900, p. 200; advertisement supplement, p. 91.

200. Further particulars and conditions were given in the advertising section of the journal.


5: 'Entscheidung des Wettbewerbes zur Erlangung von Entwürfen für ein herrschaftliches Wohnhaus eines Kunstfreundes' in *Innendekoration*, 12, 1901, p. 111.


12: *Innendekoration*, 11, 1900, p. 200; advertisement supplement, p. 91.


15: *Innendekoration*, 11, 1900, p. 200; advertisement supplement, p. 91.

16: The jury comprised architects and professors of architecture, government building officials and painters, including Hans Christiansen, Joseph Maria Olbrich, Henry van de Velde, Otto Wagner, Paul Wallot, and Alexander Koch himself. *Innendekoration*, 11, 1900, p. 200; advertisement supplement, p. 91.

17: *Innendekoration*, 11, 1900, p. 200; advertisement supplement, p. 91.

18: *Innendekoration*, 11, 1900, p. 200; advertisement supplement, p. 91.

19: *Innendekoration*, 11, 1900, p. 200; advertisement supplement, p. 91.

20: *Innendekoration*, 11, 1900, p. 200; advertisement supplement, p. 91.

21: Tilo Richter, 'House: Alexander Koch und sein Architekt Fritz August Breuhaus / House: Alexander Koch and his architect Fritz August Breuhaus', 120 Jahre AIT / 120 Years of AIT, Special Edition of *Architektur Innenarchitektur Technischer Ausbau / Architecture Interior Technical Solutions*, 2010, pp. 104–7. The artists' colony at Mathildenhöhe was established in 1899 under the patronage of Ernst Ludwig, Grand Duke of Hessen, and in 1901 an exhibition was held there for which houses for numerous artists and architects were constructed.


23: Five of the 13 original jury members were unable to attend the adjudication including Otto Wagner and Henry van de Velde. 'Entscheidung des Wettbewerbes zur Erlangung von Entwürfen für ein herrschaf. Wohnhaus eines Kunst-Freundes', *Innendekoration*, 12, 1901, pp. 109–13.


26: 'Entscheidung des Wettbewerbes zur Erlangung von Entwürfen für ein herrschaf. Wohnhaus eines Kunst-Freundes', *Innendekoration*, 12, 1901, p. 110; an example of the published portfolio of Baillie Scott's design is held at the Hunterian Art Gallery. The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: GLAHA 41907–41916; with introductory text by Hermann Muthesius, GLAHA 41927. The Hunterian also holds an almost complete portfolio of Leopold Bauer's design. The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: GLAHA 41917–GLAHA 41926.

28: The E. and W. elevation have been confused and mislabelled. *Innendekoration*, 11, 1900, advertisement supplement, p. 91.

29: 'Ideen-Wettbewerb ...', *Innendekoration*, 11, 1900, advertisement supplement, p. 91.


32: 'Ideen-Wettbewerb ...', *Innendekoration*, 11, 1900, advertisement supplement, p. 91.


34: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: GLAHA 41891 (M191-011).


47: 'A New Folio on Houses', *British Architect*, 16 September 1904, p. 201.


