

M331 Designs for street lighting standards

Introduction

These belong to a group of speculative designs made by Mackintosh for the town planner Patrick Geddes. They may be connected with Geddes's work in India.

Authorship: One of the drawings is inscribed with Mackintosh's name, and all three are unmistakably in his hand.

Status: Unbuilt

Chronology

1915

12–31 July: Summer Meeting held at King's College, London, co-organised by Patrick Geddes. ¹ Mackintosh is given temporary work by Geddes, which involves drawing unspecified plans and elevations. ²

5 August: Mackintosh writes to William Davidson that he has been attending Geddes's lectures and expects to stay with him until the end of the month. ³

Description

These six designs for street lighting standards belong to a group of drawings by Mackintosh in the archive of the Scottish sociologist, philosopher and town planner Patrick Geddes. The others are for a war memorial and a fountain. ¹ A pair of related drawings in The Hunterian, University of Glasgow, show two buildings in an arcaded street. ² The Hunterian drawings may have been made to illustrate Geddes's town planning proposals for Lucknow, and the other designs may also relate to his work in India.

Like all Mackintosh's drawings for Geddes, the lighting standard designs appear to have been made for exhibition or demonstration purposes, and they do not contain enough information to be used as working drawings. Materials are not indicated, but they were presumably intended to be made of cast iron. As far as is known, Mackintosh had not previously worked with this material, and the designs do not take account of its intrinsic strengths and limitations.

Two of the lighting columns have decoration based on triangles, the new motif that would dominate Mackintosh's interior decorative work at 78 Derngate in 1916–17. The branches of the column with four globes have details derived from Chinese furniture, used earlier by Mackintosh in the Chinese Room of 1911 at Miss Cranston's Ingram Street tea rooms, and also for a settle at 78 Derngate. ³ The remaining standards mostly use grids of squares, following on from the hat stands Mackintosh had designed for the Room de Luxe at the Willow Tea Rooms in 1904 and the standard lamp of 1905 for The Hill House. ⁴ Comparison with the wrought-iron lamp at Skelmorlie Church shows how far Mackintosh had moved away from his curvilinear Art Nouveau metalwork of the mid 1890s. ⁵



In the early 1990s, lighting standards based on one of Mackintosh's designs were manufactured by Strathclyde Regional Council and installed beside several Mackintosh buildings, including the Glasgow School of Art and The Hill House. Translating Mackintosh's drawing into three dimensions revealed the impracticality of the design, which could only be carried out using a combination of casting and welding. ⁶

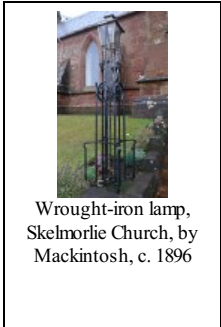
People

Clients:

- Patrick Geddes

Documents

Images



Bibliography

Published

- Ian Ballantine, 'Not up to standard!', *Charles Rennie Mackintosh Society Newsletter*, 57, Winter 1991–2, pp. 9–10
- James S. McGrath, 'Mackintosh Drawings in the University of Strathclyde', *Charles Rennie Mackintosh Society Newsletter*, 50, Winter 1988–9, pp. 9–11
- James S. McGrath, 'Geddes and Mackintosh', *Charles Rennie Mackintosh Society Newsletter*, 53, Spring 1990, p. 5

Notes:

- 1: Glasgow, Strathclyde University Archives: T-GED 3/12/18.
- 2: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: letter from Philip Mairet to Murray Grigor, 2 March 1967, GLAHA 52373.
- 3: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: letter from Mackintosh to William Davidson, 5 August 1915, GLAHA 52538, GLAHA 52536.
- 4: Glasgow, Strathclyde University Archives: T-GED 22/1/1413.1, T-GED 22/1/1413.2.
- 5: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: GLAHA 41282 (M329-001), GLAHA 41283 (M329-002).
- 6: Roger Billcliffe, *Charles Rennie Mackintosh: The Complete Furniture, Furniture Drawings and Interior Designs*, Moffat, Dumfriesshire: Cameron & Hollis, 4th edn, 2009, pp. 263–4, 277–8.
- 7: Roger Billcliffe, *Charles Rennie Mackintosh: The Complete Furniture, Furniture Drawings and Interior Designs*, Moffat, Dumfriesshire: Cameron & Hollis, 4th edn, 2009, pp. 192–3, 223.
- 8: Aonghus MacKechnie, 'CRM on Clydeside?', *Charles Rennie Mackintosh Society Newsletter*, 33, Autumn 1982.
- 9: Ian Ballantine, 'Not up to standard!', *Charles Rennie Mackintosh Society Newsletter*, 57, Winter 1991–2, pp. 9–10.

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