

# M009 Student design for a Presbyterian Church

## Introduction

This student design was awarded a prize in the 1889 National Competition of Schools of Art.

**Authorship:** Mackintosh is named as author of the design in contemporary press reports.

**Status:** Unbuilt

## Chronology

### 1889

July–August: Mackintosh's design is awarded a book prize in the National Competition of Schools of Art and is exhibited at the South Kensington Museum, London. <sup>1</sup>

## Description

This design was produced while Mackintosh was still a student at the Glasgow School of Art. 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'. Students' work from all over the country was submitted to South Kensington each year in a National Competition. In 1889 Mackintosh's design for a Presbyterian church was awarded a book prize, and was exhibited along with other prize-winning drawings at the South Kensington Museum (now the Victoria and Albert Museum). <sup>1</sup>

Reviewing the exhibition, the *Building News* singled out Mackintosh's design for comment, comparing it favourably with a fellow student's treatment of the same subject: 'Another design by G. [sic] McIntosh, Glasgow, is picturesquely handled, has more originality, and is of brownish stone with red tile hipped roofs, which are made pleasing features in the design. The plan is transeptal, and better suited for a country service. A tower, the four rounded angles of which are carried up as pinnacles, supports a low, square, tiled roof, piquant in effect. The nave has at one end a large semicircular window. A Renaissance doorway is shown, and the whole is somewhat American in style.' <sup>2</sup> It seems from this description that exterior elevations were included in the exhibition, but only a sheet showing the cross section and plan survives. <sup>3</sup> The South Kensington examiners' report, subsequently quoted in the Annual Report of the Glasgow School of Art, noted that Mackintosh's 'projecting eaves' made his design 'well suited for a rainy climate'. It went on: 'The design though not quite satisfactory, is fresh and original, cleverly though roughly drawn and agreeably coloured, the shadows, however, being somewhat overdone.' <sup>4</sup>

Later in 1889, Mackintosh's drawings were awarded a class prize of £1 10s 0d at the Glasgow School of Art. The local architects who acted as examiners for this competition – William Leiper, J. J. Burnet and J. A. Campbell – considered Mackintosh's design 'full of artistic treatment but non-descript in style'. <sup>5</sup>

Mackintosh's design reflects the movement in late 19th-century Scottish Presbyterian church architecture away from galleried, pulpit-centred preaching boxes towards buildings which are more closely modelled on medieval examples and which show a new interest in the aesthetic and ceremonial aspects of worship. <sup>6</sup> There are no galleries; the communion table is positioned, altar-like, in a deep chancel, raised on three steps and separated from the long nave by an arch; and the pulpit stands on one side, with the organ in a recess on the other. Some of these features reappear ten years later in Mackintosh's design for Queen's Cross Church. Spatially, the most interesting detail is the passage linking the session house and vestry. It is treated like the ambulatory in a large medieval church such as Glasgow Cathedral, glimpsed through round-arched openings in the back wall of the chancel.

The style is a mixture of Romanesque (semicircular arches; squat, round columns) and Renaissance (the pedimented doorway to the session house). In comparing it with American architecture, the *Building News* was perhaps thinking of the work of H. H. Richardson (1838–1886). Richardson only designed one building in Britain – a studio-house in Hertfordshire for the painter Hubert von Herkomer – but his distinctive, Romanesque-derived designs, often combining rugged masonry with red-tiled roofs, were published in the British architectural press. His work featured in a paper on American architecture read before a meeting of the Glasgow Architectural Association in May 1889, with John Keppie in the chair. <sup>7</sup> A church by the American William Ralph Emerson – St Sylvia's, Mount Desert – in which an open porch and a tower with rounded angles are combined in much the same way as in Mackintosh's design, was illustrated in the *British Architect* in January 1889. <sup>8</sup>

## People

**Clients:**

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**Contractors:**

•  
**Other:**

•  
**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 M009 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 M009 has been extracted from the job books:

Job book: Page: NaN
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**Client:**

**Tenders:**

Contractor	Type	Date	Value	Accepted
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**Payments (trades):**

Name	Type	Payment out sum
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**Payments (suppliers):**

Name	Service
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**Documents**

**Images**

**Bibliography**

**Published**

- Thomas Howarth, *Charles Rennie Mackintosh and the Modern Movement*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 2nd edn, 1977, pp. 5–6
- *Annual Report of the Glasgow School of Art and Haldane Academy*, 1888–9
- *Building News*, 57, 2 August 1889, p. 135
- *Glasgow Herald*, 27 July 1889, p. 7

**Unpublished**

## Notes:

- 1: *Glasgow Herald*, 27 July 1889, p. 7; *Building News*, 57, 2 August 1889, p. 135.
- 2: *Glasgow Herald*, 27 July 1889, p. 7; *Building News*, 57, 2 August 1889, p. 135. In the same competition Mackintosh's fellow student Jessie Keppie, sister of John Keppie, was awarded a silver medal for a design for a Persian carpet.
- 3: *Building News*, 57, 2 August 1889, p. 135.
- 4: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: GLAHA 52320 (M009-001). The drawing is not signed, but it was in Mackintosh's possession at the time of his death.
- 5: *Annual Report of the Glasgow School of Art and Haldane Academy*, 1888–9, p. 13.
- 6: *Annual Report of the Glasgow School of Art and Haldane Academy*, 1888–9, p. 24.
- 7: Miles Glendinning, Ranald MacInnes, Aonghus MacKechnie, *A History of Scottish Architecture from the Renaissance to the Present Day*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996, pp. 299, 371–3.
- 8: *British Architect*, 31, 17 May 1889, p. 365.
- 9: *British Architect*, 31, 18 January 1889, p. 47.

## Mackintosh Architecture: Context, Making and Meaning

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