

# M056 Competition design for Glasgow Art Galleries (Ionic)

## Introduction

John Honeyman & Keppie produced three competition designs for a new art gallery and museum building in Kelvingrove Park. One design was in a severe Ionic classical style; the second was French Renaissance-inspired, with four towers and a busy roofline; the third was also French Renaissance, with a large dome. It has previously been said that the Ionic and domed designs were submitted in the preliminary round of the competition, while the second design with the towers was produced for the final round. However, contemporary reports and the organising committee's minutes show that all three designs were submitted in the preliminary round. The Ionic and towered designs were among six short-listed, and they advanced unchanged to the final adjudication.

**Authorship:** The classical design was probably John Honeyman's; it recalls his earlier, more modest, design for Paisley Free Library and Museum. Reports on the competition believed this design to be Honeyman's work, and in the publication *Who's Who in Glasgow in 1909*, one of the firm's two shortlisted designs was attributed to Honeyman. <sup>1</sup> The draughtsmanship and style of the sculptural details is thought suggestive of Mackintosh's work. <sup>2</sup>

**Status:** Unbuilt

## Chronology

### 1891

February: The 1888 International Exhibition Association established the 'Association for the Promotion of Art and Music in the City of Glasgow', to be 'devoted to the erection of Art Galleries, a Museum, a Concert Hall and, if practicable, a School of Painting and Design'. <sup>1</sup>

7 August: The buildings sub-committee of the Association reports on a fact-finding mission to London art galleries and museum. Arrangements for the building competition are set out. A two-stage competition is agreed, and London architect Alfred Waterhouse is appointed assessor. <sup>2</sup>

31 August: Final adjustments are made to the draft competition conditions before advertisements are placed in the architectural and general press. <sup>3</sup>

4 September: Competition announced in the *British Architect*. <sup>4</sup>

1 December: Closing date for preliminary round of competition. <sup>5</sup>

7 – 10 December: Adjudication of preliminary competition: six designs, including two by John Honeyman & Keppie, are selected to advance to the final round. <sup>6</sup>

18 December: Results of the first round of the competition announced in the *British Architect*. <sup>7</sup> Conditions for the final round issued to competing architects. <sup>8</sup>

### 1892

5 – 13 April: The executive committee consider Waterhouse's final report and agrees to award the first prize and building contract to London architects Simpson & Milner Allen. <sup>9</sup>

### 1893

A perspective view and a detail drawing of one of John Honeyman & Keppie's short-listed designs are exhibited at the Royal Scottish Academy (351 and 500).

John Honeyman & Keppie's 'domed design' is exhibited at the Glasgow Institute of the Fine Arts (845). <sup>10</sup>

### 1894

One of John Honeyman & Keppie's competition designs is exhibited at the Royal Scottish Academy (515).

### 1897

10 September: Foundation stone of new Art Gallery and Museum laid by the Duke and Duchess of York. <sup>11</sup>

### 1898

One of John Honeyman & Keppie's competition designs is exhibited at the Royal Glasgow Institute of the Fine Arts (281).

### 1901

## Description

### Background to the competition

In early 1891 Glasgow's 1888 International Exhibition Association established an Association for the Promotion for Art and Music in the City of Glasgow. The aim of this new organisation was to build 'Art Galleries, a Museum, a Concert Hall and, if practicable, a School of Painting and Design' for the city. A surplus from the 1888 Exhibition of £46,000 would contribute to the construction of the new building, while the new Association's executive committee, which included representatives of Glasgow Corporation, was to raise additional funds amounting to £92,000. The new building would be constructed in Kelvingrove Park, site of the 1888 Exhibition, to replace and greatly expand the existing gallery in Kelvingrove House. <sup>1</sup>

During the summer, the new Association's buildings sub-committee undertook a fact-finding mission to art galleries and museums in London, and its findings were reported in early August. The following month the format of the competition was arranged and Alfred Waterhouse was appointed assessor. It was described as a 'double competition', comprising preliminary and final rounds, with separate conditions to be issued for each round. The competition was announced in early September in the *British Architect*, among other journals. <sup>2</sup>

In the preliminary round, entrants were to submit sketch plans only. From these, no fewer than five entries would be short-listed for the final round, in which plans, elevations and sections would be submitted. An honorarium of £100 would be paid to each of the short-listed architects. <sup>3</sup> The draft conditions stipulated that the new building should consist of a concert hall, picture galleries, a museum and a school of design; that it should have two floors plus basement, with the possibility of being easily extended or built in separate blocks; and that the concert hall should give access to the museum on the ground floor and the galleries above. The extent of wall and floor space for the galleries was specified, and the budget was not to exceed £120,000. The conditions also recommended the inclusion of two quadrangles to increase space for the museum and admit more light. Unknown, but apparently minor, revisions were made to the conditions before publication. <sup>4</sup>

### Competition results

The results of the preliminary round were announced in the *British Architect* on 18 December 1891. Waterhouse selected six designs to advance to the final round. Two of these were by John Honeyman & Keppie, an outcome which gave rise to some controversy (see 'Reception' below). The other successful architects were Malcolm Stark & Rowntree of Glasgow; Thomas Manly Deane of Sir Thomas N. Dean & Son, Dublin; Treadwell & Martin of London; and John W. Simpson & E. J. Milner Allen of London. <sup>5</sup>

Although the contest was described at the outset as a double competition, and fresh conditions were issued, it seems that the second round simply gave the six short-listed architects the opportunity to revise their original designs in light of the newly issued conditions. In reviews published following the announcement of the final result, the six designs were sometimes referred to using the numbers given to them in the preliminary round, strongly suggesting that no new designs were submitted. <sup>6</sup>

Simpson & Milner Allen were awarded first prize, and following some revision their design was built between 1892 and 1901. <sup>7</sup> The executive committee's acceptance of Waterhouse's choice for first place was not unanimous, however: minutes show that city councillor Shearer dissented, favouring one of John Honeyman & Keppie's designs. <sup>8</sup>

### Design

John Honeyman & Keppie submitted a total of three designs. Two of these were short-listed: one in a severe Ionic classical style; the second a French Renaissance design, with four towers and a busy roofline. A third was also a French Renaissance design, with a large dome and was described in a review of the post-competition exhibition of sketch designs submitted in the preliminary round. <sup>9</sup>

The design numbered 40 in the preliminary round was described as 'Classic in character, severely treated on the exterior'. <sup>10</sup> The monumental, symmetrical building had a higher central N.–S. block containing the top-lit concert hall, as prescribed in the competition conditions, with an Ionic S. portico. Long ranges stretched E. and W. with engaged Ionic colonnades, and continuous friezes of sculpture. The E. side contained the museum on the ground floor and art galleries above. On the W., the ground floor housed administration and the art school – a modest series of rooms simply arranged on the W. elevation – with additional galleries on the first floor. <sup>11</sup>

When this design was published in the *Builder*, the accompanying text expressed the belief that it was Honeyman's work. <sup>12</sup> This is supported by comparison with Honeyman's similarly Greek Ionic, though much more modest, design for Paisley Free Library and Museum of 1871. The draughtsmanship of the friezes and sculpture adorning the building is attributed to Mackintosh. His slightly later design for an invitation for the Glasgow School of Art Club has similarly posed figures whose faces are also only described in outline. <sup>13</sup>



### Reception

There was extensive coverage of the competition in the architectural press. All six selected designs from the first round were published in the months

immediately following the competition and, interestingly, John Honeyman & Keppie's third design was also reproduced, in December 1892, apparently the only non-short-listed design to be illustrated. <sup>14</sup>

The *Builder* devoted its lead articles on 23 and 30 April 1892 to the competition's final results and the exhibition of almost all the designs submitted in the preliminary round. <sup>15</sup> John Honeyman & Keppie's two short-listed designs were discussed together: 'the plans bear a family likeness, but the elevations are as dissimilar as possible.' According to the *Builder*, the central hall was 'managed with much greater skill in one plan than in the other', but there was in both a 'lack of directness in planning, doubtless increased by the mistaken exigencies of accommodating the art school, but which could not fail to detract from the monumental character of the building'. The art school was ultimately excluded from the built design and a separate, new building constructed for the existing municipal School of Art. The article continued with discussion of the elevations and general suitability for the site.

Of the elevations the finer is attached to the poorer plan. It is a scholarly design of quiet dignity, strictly Classic throughout. It is, however, open to the objection of being quite unsuited to the site. To have Sir George Gilbert Scott's Gothic University on the hill-top (flattened to receive it), dominating a strictly Ionic Art-gallery on the plain below, would have been a strange inversion of national order in architecture ... The central hall in this design is most disappointing; instead of the Classic dignity of the exterior, we have a most commonplace concert-hall, quite unworthy of the building, with disjointed architectural decoration, and an ugly ceiling; the whole has little dignity and less interest. Messrs. Honeyman & Keppie's second design is the exact converse; the hall is far superior (in spite of its railway-station roof), with arcaded gallery on both floors; it is far less a concert-room and much more a central hall to the building, both in plan and design. The exterior elevations on the other hand are a most curious medley of architecture, full of unexpected "features", for the most part out of place. In spite of considerable dignity in general design, the exterior is robbed of its unity and marred by these ill-studied features and a certain trickiness. *Builder*, 62, 23 April 1892, pp. 317–18.

Two months later, the *Builder* published the 'Classic' design:

Though this design was formally sent in as Messrs Honeyman & Keppie's, we believe that practically it represents Mr Honeyman's idea of the treatment of the problem, and as such is an interesting example of the taste and predilections of the older Classic school of Glasgow architects, among whom Mr Honeyman has long held an honoured position. The design is at variance with recent architectural proclivities, but it is a fine and dignified building in itself, and, if erected, might possibly have commanded more permanent appreciation than some public buildings which are more in accordance with the latest architectural fashions. *Builder*, 62, 25 June 1892, p. 502; pp. 513–16.

Like many 19th-century architectural contests, the competition itself came in for heavy criticism in the professional press. On the announcement of the results of the preliminary round, the *British Architect* called into question the inclusion of two designs by one practice:

It seems almost a pity that when it was found that two of the designs were sent in by one firm, the best of the rejected designs was not brought in, and its author included amongst the chosen six competitors for the final. This would not have been at all an out of the way proceeding, seeing there were over fifty designs still left to choose from, and such a course could not have failed also to have given satisfaction to the competitors. We make this suggestion on the assumption that Messrs. Honeyman & Keppie will only send one design in the final. This point will probably be determined in the conditions of the competition, but it seems to complicate matters when competitors are allowed to submit more than one design. *British Architect*, 36, 18 Dec 1891, p. 450.

The following week after receiving further information, the journal modified its stand by adding, 'If both designs are positively going to the poll, ... we do not for a moment argue that Messrs. Honeyman & Keppie ought to lose the advantage they are honourably entitled to of having two strings to their bow. So far it has not led to any very great difficulties, but unless it is specifically stated to the contrary, we presume it would be open to the competitors in the Glasgow final, other than Messrs. Honeyman & Keppie, to send in alternative designs.' <sup>19</sup>

The *Builder* attacked the competition conditions:

It is abundantly evident that the committee's unfortunate instructions, or, rather, lack of explicit definition, as to the central hall, have completely misled the majority of the competitors, who have most naturally interpreted it as a concert-hall. That this, the crucial feature of the whole design, should have been left so vague and ill-defined in the original instructions is the most unsatisfactory point about the competition ... The first and foremost duty of a committee is to issue precise and definite instructions, in common fairness to competitors. In the present instance nearly all have misinterpreted the principal requirement, and many of the designs have been thrown out in consequence. Either the committee did or did not know their own minds; if they did, they should have given unmistakable expression to their wishes; if they did not, they should have said so plainly, and left the competitors a free hand. *Builder*, 62, 30 April 1892, pp. 335–6.

The article also questioned the appropriateness to Glasgow of the winning design, suggesting perhaps the authorship of a local correspondent: 'the award has been given to a design that embodies, skilfully enough, the latest "London fashion". The commercial capital of the North, grey, grimy, and damp, yet palatial Glasgow, has an architectural character of its own that its well worth studying. It is a pity that the new Art Galleries will hardly be in keeping with this character.' <sup>21</sup>

## 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 M056 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 M056 has been extracted from the job books:

## Documents

## Images



## Bibliography

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- Pamela Robertson, 'Mackintosh and Italy', in Pamela Robertson, ed., *Charles Rennie Mackintosh: The Architectural Papers*, Wendlebury, Oxon: White Cockade in association with the Hunterian Art Gallery, 1990, pp. 65–88
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- *British Architect*, 36, 18 December 1891, p. 450; 25 December 1891, p. 506; 37, 22 April 1892, pp. 296, 298–9; 10 June 1892, pp. 426, 430–1; 38, 8 July 1892, pp. 23, 26; 26 August, pp. 148, 154–5; 2 September 1892, pp. 168, 174–5; 2 December 1892, pp. 406, 411
- *Builder*, 62, 23 April 1892, pp. 317–18; 30 April 1892, pp. 335–6; 25 June 1892, pp. 502, 513–16
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### Notes:

- 1: *Builder*, 62, 25 June 1892, p. 502; pp. 513–16; George Eyre-Todd, *Who's Who in Glasgow in 1909*, Glasgow: Gray & Gowans Ltd, 1909, p. 91.
- 2: David Walker, 'The Early Works of Charles Rennie Mackintosh', in Nikolaus Pevsner and J. M. Richards, eds, *The Anti-Rationalists*, London: Architectural Press, 1973, pp. 117–18.
- 3: Glasgow City Archives Collection: Association for the Promotion of Art and Music in the City of Glasgow, executive committee minutes, D-TU 1/9, 2 February 1891.
- 4: Glasgow City Archives Collection: Association for the Promotion of Art and Music in the City of Glasgow, executive committee minutes, D-TU 1/9, 7 August 1891.
- 5: Glasgow City Archives Collection: Association for the Promotion of Art and Music in the City of Glasgow, executive committee minutes, D-TU 1/9, 31 August 1891.
- 6: *British Architect*, 36, 4 September 1891, p. 171.
- 7: Glasgow City Archives Collection: Association for the Promotion of Art and Music in the City of Glasgow, executive committee minutes, D-TU 1/9, 30 November 1891.

- 8:** Glasgow City Archives Collection: Association for the Promotion of Art and Music in the City of Glasgow, executive committee minutes, D-TU 1/9, 30 November 1891; Assessor's Report, 10 December 1891.
- 9:** *British Architect*, 36, 18 December 1891, p. 450.
- 10:** Glasgow City Archives Collection: Association for the Promotion of Art and Music in the City of Glasgow, executive committee minutes, D-TU 1/9, 18 December 1891.
- 11:** Glasgow City Archives Collection: Association for the Promotion of Art and Music in the City of Glasgow, executive committee minutes, D-TU 1/9, 5 and 13 April 1892.
- 12:** *Glasgow Herald*, 18 February 1893, p. 4.
- 13:** *Glasgow Herald*, 11 September 1897, p. 9.
- 14:** 'Glasgow International Exhibition', *Glasgow Herald*, 3 May 1901, p. 11.
- 15:** Glasgow City Archives Collection: Association for the Promotion of Art and Music in the City of Glasgow, executive committee minutes, D-TU 1/9, 2 February 1891; Perilla Kinchin and Juliet Kinchin, *Glasgow's Great Exhibitions: 1888, 1901, 1911, 1938, 1988*, Wendlebury, Oxon: White Cockade, 1988, pp. 55–7.
- 16:** Glasgow City Archives Collection: Association for the Promotion of Art and Music in the City of Glasgow, executive committee minutes, D-TU 1/9; *British Architect*, 36, 4 September 1891, p. 171.
- 17:** Glasgow City Archives Collection: Association for the Promotion of Art and Music in the City of Glasgow, executive committee minutes, D-TU 1/9, 7 August 1891.
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- 20:** *British Architect*, 37, 22 April 1892, pp. 296, 298–9; *Builder*, 62, 23 April 1892, p. 317–18.
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- 33:** *British Architect*, 36, 25 December 1891, p. 506.
- 34:** *Builder*, 62, 30 April 1892, pp. 335–6.
- 35:** *Builder*, 62, 30 April 1892, p. 336.

# Mackintosh Architecture: Context, Making and Meaning

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