

M212 Room setting for the Architecture and Craft of the New Style exhibition, Moscow

Introduction

Mackintosh designed furniture and wall decoration for a room at the *Architecture and Craft of the New Style* exhibition in Moscow. Works by Margaret Macdonald were also exhibited.

Authorship: Photographs of the exhibited room were published under Mackintosh's name in the Russian art journal *Mir Iskusstva* in 1903. ¹

Status: Temporary

Chronology

1900

November – December: Russian construction workers arrive in Glasgow to begin work on timber buildings designed by Fedor Shekhtel. ¹

1901

2 May – 9 November: Shekhtel's buildings on display at the Glasgow International Exhibition in Kelvingrove Park. ²

1902

22 December: Opening of the exhibition *Architecture and Craft of the New Style* in Moscow. ³

1903

c. 31 January: Moscow exhibition closes. ⁴

Two photographs of Mackintosh's room are published in Russian arts journal *Mir iskusstva*. ⁵

Description

Background

In the winter of 1902–3 a room designed by Mackintosh featured in the exhibition *Architecture and Craft of the New Style* in Moscow. The exhibition was organised primarily by a young Russian architect, Ivan Fomin. He was an employee of the Russian architect, Fedor Shekhtel (1859–1926), who had designed the Russian village at the Glasgow International Exhibition, in 1901. The intention of the Moscow exhibition was to show emerging Russian work juxtaposed with that of western European architects and artists working in the 'new style'. Fomin was supported by a committee of artists and architects who were familiar with the work of western European architects and artists and who had also become dissatisfied with the conservative and inward-looking establishment organisation, the Moscow Architectural Society. ¹

A major patron of the exhibition was Grand Duchess Elizaveta Fedorovna, sister of Grand Duke Ernst Ludwig of Hessen who had founded the artists' colony at the Mathildenhöhe, Darmstadt in 1899. This connection accounts for the participation of Darmstadt-based architect Joseph Maria Olbrich and artist Hans Christiansen. ² Czech architect Jan Kotěra, who, like Olbrich, had trained with Otto Wagner in Vienna, was also among the non-Russian exhibitors. ³

Mackintosh's invitation to participate is thought to have come directly from Moscow, probably from Shekhtel, who would have been familiar with Mackintosh's work as a result of his visits to Glasgow the previous year. However, there is no evidence that Mackintosh and Shekhtel actually met in 1901. ⁴ The involvement of Olbrich may have been significant for Mackintosh's participation: Olbrich and Mackintosh had met in Vienna in 1900 and again at Turin earlier in 1902, and Olbrich had been on the jury for the House for an Art Lover competition in 1901. Mackintosh does not appear to have travelled to Moscow and instead sent examples of his work from Glasgow.

Design

The exhibition was held in a building at the corner of Petrovka Street and Stoleshnikov Lane in north-central Moscow. ⁵ The layout of the exhibition space is not clear from surviving photographs and it is not known whether Mackintosh contributed to the layout of the space in which his work was displayed.

The room was almost square with an entrance archway in one wall and two blind windows in the opposite wall. The arch had curious cyma recta profile

capitals in the jambs and was flanked by two chairs closely related to the hall chairs at Windyhill. ⁶ The design and decoration of the room recalled the exhibition rooms at Vienna in 1900 and Turin earlier in 1902 with their white panelling and carefully positioned furniture. The walls were panelled to frieze-rail height with a projecting shelf and dark-coloured paper above. Along the side walls were three free-standing, tapering square columns each with decorative glass electric-light shades near the top. Panels with stencilled figures in silver and pink hung either side of the columns. The chairs, cabinets and tables were mainly existing works, shown at the earlier exhibitions or made for recent private clients in Glasgow and Vienna; only the small round table was new. ⁷

Reviews of the exhibition (see below) refer to work by Margaret Macdonald. It may be that the unidentified framed work hung to the left of the archway and set within a border of squares (apparently painted or stencilled directly onto the wall) was hers. It seems likely that a corresponding piece would have hung on the other side of the arch.



Reception

The Moscow exhibition does not appear to have received any coverage in western European arts journals, while the Russian and Muscovite architectural and art press seem largely to have concentrated on their own designers and artists, and the development of the new style. ⁸ One critic, M. Mikhaylov, writing in *Iskusstvo Stroitel'noe i Dekorativnoe* (Building and Decorative Art), provided a rare review of the work of the foreign participants. His article was titled 'Ist zu wienerisch' (Is too Viennese), taken apparently from the comments of Josef Maria Olbrich, who was apparently surprised at the reaction to the Viennese work. In his comments, Mikhaylov appears to have included the Mackintoshes' work under the umbrella of Vienna. ⁹

Mikhaylov was clearly unsettled by the Mackintoshes' room and wrote: 'I do not understand for whom the white drawing room by Charles and Margaret Mackintosh was created. It reminds one of an operating theatre in a clinic, or a design for a Moscow hairdressers. Staying on in it was very wearisome; everyone fled from it, from those dreadful straight lines, from the lifelessness and hygienicness. I do not believe it was created without a precisely planned symbolism. Presumably the white colour speaks of desires that have run riot.' ¹⁰

He appears to have been disturbed still further by Macdonald's work, describing her 'drawn panels' as 'languorous' with 'a refined sensuality, ... a subtle sense of voluptuousness, not a heavy one, but one that induces hysterics and stupor'. 'Her ... figures ... with eyes wearied from sweet bliss, are so positioned that the viewer clearly feels a masked carnal act of madness being assimilated by the imagination.' He felt that the women she 'celebrates [are] almost cut off from the Earth and its physical delights ..., their bodies never having tasted embraces but always in pleasurable anticipation of them.' He concluded that 'Mrs Mackintosh's drawings are a page from a sexual psycho-pathology narrated in the language of wood, metal, colours and line. How far has humanity fled!' ¹¹

Mikhaylov's allusions to physical and mental illness as well as to sexuality suggest he felt the Mackintoshes' affinities with Viennese work went beyond the purely visual and that he regarded both the Mackintoshes' and Viennese work as unhealthy and thoroughly disreputable. It was certainly alien to him, for when he turned to German artist Hans Christiansen of Darmstadt, he described his work as 'healthy, moderate, almost traditional, not transitory in that incompleteness which our confused and powerless times seem to see and to achieve', and closest to that of his countrymen. ¹²

The review in *Zodchii* (The Architect) highlighted the participation of Olbrich and Mackintosh among the otherwise almost exclusively Muscovite exhibitors and considered their 'modest rooms ... especially interesting'. It continued, 'Olbrich is very well known due to the publications the *Architect* and *Innen-Dekoration*, Mackintosh ... due to *Studio*, *Academy Architecture* and *Die Kunst*. Therefore, there is no need to further recall their masterpieces ... that made them world famous among other architects.' The article went on to describe Olbrich's room, the work of the Darmstadt artists' colony more generally, and the town's connections with Russia. ¹³

Photographs of the exhibition were also published in *Mir iskusstva* (World of Art), which included two views of Mackintosh's room. ¹⁴

People

Clients:

- 'New Style Architecture and Art Industry' exhibition

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 M212 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 M212 has been extracted from the job books:

Documents

Images



Exterior of Mackintosh room, *Mir Iskusstva*, 1903, no. 3, p. 116



Interior of Mackintosh room, *Mir Iskusstva*, 1903, no. 3, p. 117

Bibliography

Published

- Roger Billcliffe, *Charles Rennie Mackintosh: The Complete Furniture, Furniture Drawings and Interior Designs*, Moffat, Dumfriesshire: Cameron & Hollis, 4th edn, 2009, pp. 148–9
- William Craft Brumfield, *The Origins of Modernism in Russian Architecture*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991
- Alan Crawford, *Charles Rennie Mackintosh*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1995, p. 132–3
- Catherine Cooke, 'Feodor Shekhtel: An Architect and his Clients in Turn-of-Century Moscow', *Architectural Association Files*, 1984, pp. 5–31
- Catherine Cooke, 'Shekhtel in Kelvingrove and Mackintosh on the Petrovka: Two Russo-Scottish Exhibitions at the Turn of the Century', *Scottish Slavonic Review*, 10, 1988, pp. 177–204
- A. Dmitriev, 'Vpechatleniya ot vystavki "arkhitektury i khudozhestvennoy promyshlennosti novogo stilya" v Moskve' (Impressions on the exhibition of "New Style Architecture and Art Industry" in Moscow), *Zodchii*, 1903, no. 9, pp. 113–15
- M. Mikhaylov, 'Ist zu wienerisch', *Iskusstvo Stroitel'noe i Dekorativnoe*, 1903, nos 1–2, pp. 12–24
- *Mir Iskusstva*, 1903, no. 3, pp. 97–120

Notes:

1: *Mir Iskusstva*, 1903, no. 3, pp. 116–17.

2: Catherine Cooke, 'Shekhtel in Kelvingrove and Mackintosh on the Petrovka: Two Russo-Scottish Exhibitions at the Turn of the Century', *Scottish Slavonic Review*, 10, 1988, pp. 185–6, nn. 18–22.

3: Catherine Cooke, 'Shekhtel in Kelvingrove and Mackintosh on the Petrovka: Two Russo-Scottish Exhibitions at the Turn of the Century', *Scottish Slavonic Review*, 10, 1988, pp. 185–9.

4: Catherine Cooke, 'Shekhtel in Kelvingrove and Mackintosh on the Petrovka: Two Russo-Scottish Exhibitions at the Turn of the Century', *Scottish Slavonic Review*, 10, 1988, p. 199.

5: Catherine Cooke, 'Shekhtel in Kelvingrove and Mackintosh on the Petrovka: Two Russo-Scottish Exhibitions at the Turn of the Century', *Scottish Slavonic Review*, 10, 1988, p. 199.

6: *Mir Iskusstva*, no. 3, March 1903, pp. 116–17.

7: Crucial to non-Russian speakers' understanding of this exhibition is Catherine Cooke's 'Shekhtel in Kelvingrove and Mackintosh on the Petrovka: Two Russo-Scottish Exhibitions at the Turn of the Century', *Scottish Slavonic Review*, 10, 1988, pp. 196, 200. The description below draws significantly on Cooke's article.

8: A. Dmitriev, 'Vpechatleniya ot vystavki "arkhitektury i khudozhestvennoy promyshlennosti novogo stilya" v Moskve' (Impressions on the exhibition of 'New Style Architecture and Art Industry' in Moscow), *Zodchii*, 1903, no. 9, p. 113. Translation from Russian courtesy of University of Glasgow Language Centre.

9: Catherine Cooke, 'Shekhtel in Kelvingrove and Mackintosh on the Petrovka: Two Russo-Scottish Exhibitions at the Turn of the Century', *Scottish Slavonic Review*, 10, 1988, p. 196.

10: Roger Billcliffe, *Charles Rennie Mackintosh: The Complete Furniture, Furniture Drawings and Interior Designs*, Moffat, Dumfriesshire: Cameron & Hollis, 4th edn, 2009, p. 148; Catherine Cooke, 'Shekhtel in Kelvingrove and Mackintosh on the Petrovka: Two Russo-Scottish Exhibitions at the Turn of the Century', *Scottish Slavonic Review*, 10, 1988, p. 195.

- 11:** A. Dmitriev, 'Vpechatleniya ot vystavki "arkhitektury i khudozhestvennoy promyshlennosti novogo stilya" v Moskve' (Impressions on the exhibition of 'New Style Architecture and Art Industry' in Moscow), *Zodchii*, 1903, no. 9, p. 113. Translation from Russian courtesy of University of Glasgow Language Centre.
- 12:** Roger Billcliffe, *Charles Rennie Mackintosh: The Complete Furniture, Furniture Drawings and Interior Designs*, Moffat, Dumfriesshire: Cameron & Hollis, 4th edn, 2009, p. 148.
- 13:** See Roger Billcliffe, *Charles Rennie Mackintosh: The Complete Furniture, Furniture Drawings and Interior Designs*, Moffat, Dumfriesshire: Cameron & Hollis, 4th edn, 2009, p. 148.
- 14:** Catherine Cooke, 'Shekhtel in Kelvingrove and Mackintosh on the Petrovka: Two Russo-Scottish Exhibitions at the Turn of the Century', *Scottish Slavonic Review*, 10, 1988, p. 201.
- 15:** Catherine Cooke, 'Shekhtel in Kelvingrove and Mackintosh on the Petrovka: Two Russo-Scottish Exhibitions at the Turn of the Century', *Scottish Slavonic Review*, 10, 1988, p. 201, quoting from M. Mikhaylov, 'Ist zu wienerisch', *Iskusstvo Stroitel'noe i Dekorativnoe*, 1903, nos 1–2, pp. 12–24.
- 16:** Catherine Cooke, 'Shekhtel in Kelvingrove and Mackintosh on the Petrovka: Two Russo-Scottish Exhibitions at the Turn of the Century', *Scottish Slavonic Review*, 10, 1988, p. 202, quoting from M. Mikhaylov, 'Ist zu wienerisch', *Iskusstvo Stroitel'noe i Dekorativnoe*, 1903, 1–2, p. 18.
- 17:** Catherine Cooke, 'Shekhtel in Kelvingrove and Mackintosh on the Petrovka: Two Russo-Scottish Exhibitions at the Turn of the Century', *Scottish Slavonic Review*, 10, 1988, p. 201, quoting from M. Mikhaylov, 'Ist zu wienerisch', *Iskusstvo Stroitel'noe i Dekorativnoe*, 1903, 1–2, pp. 12–24.
- 18:** 'Shekhtel in Kelvingrove and Mackintosh on the Petrovka: Two Russo-Scottish Exhibitions at the Turn of the Century', *Scottish Slavonic Review*, 10, 1988, p. 202, quoting from M. Mikhaylov, 'Ist zu wienerisch', *Iskusstvo Stroitel'noe i Dekorativnoe*, 1903, 1–2, p. 18.
- 19:** A. Dmitriev, 'Vpechatleniya ot vystavki "arkhitektury i khudozhestvennoy promyshlennosti novogo stilya" v Moskve' (Impressions on the exhibition of 'New Style Architecture and Art Industry' in Moscow), *Zodchii*, 1903, no. 9, pp. 113–15. Translation from Russian courtesy of University of Glasgow Language Centre.
- 20:** *Mir Iskusstva*, 1903, no. 3, pp. 97–120.

Mackintosh Architecture: Context, Making and Meaning

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