

Josef Hoffmann, Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Glasgow-Vienna connections

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Architect and designer, Josef Hoffmann (1870–1956), visited Glasgow in December 1902. He and his colleague, Felicien Myrbach, head of the Austrian School of Applied Arts in Vienna, where Hoffmann was professor of architecture from 1899, travelled to Glasgow as part of a study tour of art schools in England and Scotland on behalf of the Austrian ministry of education.

Hoffmann's stay in Glasgow lasted two days and the two men were apparently delighted by one another, having met on at least two previous occasions, at the 8th Vienna Secession Exhibition in late 1900 and in Turin in April 1902 during the International Exhibition of Modern Decorative. Mackintosh and Margaret Macdonald mentioned their appreciation of friendships with Austrian and German colleagues in several letters to their friends, Hermann Muthesius, cultural and technical attaché to the German embassy in London 1896–1903 and his wife, artist and dress reformer, Anna Trippenbach. Muthesius facilitated much of the Mackintoshes' European activities and visits

Mackintosh was held in great esteem by Hoffmann and his Viennese collaborators and supporters. Businessman and patron of avant-garde art and design in Vienna, Fritz Waerndorfer, visited the Mackintoshes in Glasgow in 1900 and 1902, and invited them to contribute a music room to his Vienna home. Letters between Waerndorfer and Hoffmann in 1902 and 1903 show that they sought Mackintosh's advice and support on the founding of their guild of designers and craftspeople based on a British model, such as C. R. Ashbee's Guild of Handicraft in London. The Wiener Werkstätte was founded on 9 June 1903 with Hoffmann and painter and designer, Koloman Moser, as its chief designers, with Waerndorfer as financier and commercial director.

Hoffmann's work in the first decade of the 20th century, including the textile designs on display here at The Glasgow Guild, would have been known to Glasgow designers, architects, artists and the public with modern tastes via journals such as the *Studio* and perhaps the German *Dekorative Kunst*, *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration* and *Innendekoration*. However, neither Hoffmann's nor Wiener Werkstätte work appears to have been exhibited in Glasgow at this time. Local cabinetmaker Wylie and Lochhead had its own team of avant garde designers, including John Ednie, George Logan and E. A. Taylor, to create Glasgow Style interiors and furnishings. The Wylie and Lochhead department store on Buchanan Street was known to also sell examples of what could be described as more conventional European and English furniture; Viennese design may have been too modern for their more general retail bourgeoisie clientele. If any early 20th century Viennese work was bought by Glasgow or Scottish art lovers at that time, it still remains to be discovered by the detective skills of present or future researchers, curators, collectors or furniture-restorers.

Find out more!

Pamela Robertson, Joseph Sharples and Nicky Imrie, *Mackintosh Architecture: Context, Making and Meaning*, University of Glasgow, 2014 <http://www.mackintosh-architecture.gla.ac.uk>

Please see in particular: the catalogue entries M188, M191, M201 and M208; the biographies of Hermann Muthesius and Fritz Waerndorfer; and the bibliographies of all of these entries.

Wiener Werkstätte Archive, Austrian Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna (MAK)

http://www.mak.at/en/collection/mak_collection/wiener_werkstaette_archive

Roger Billcliffe, *Charles Rennie Mackintosh: The Complete Furniture, Furniture Drawings and Interior Designs*, Moffat, Dumfriesshire: Cameron & Hollis, 4th edition, 2009

Hanna Egger, Pamela Robertson, Manfred Trummer and Peter Vergo, *Ein moderner Nachmittag. A Thoroughly Modern Afternoon*, Vienna: Böhlau, 2000

Peter Noever, ed., *Der Preis der Schönheit. 100 Jahre Wiener Werkstätte*, MAK, Vienna and Hatje Cantz Verlag, Ostfildern-Ruit, Germany, 2003

Werner Schweiger, *Wiener Werkstätte: Design in Vienna 1903–1932*, translated by Alexander Lieven, London: Thames & Hudson, 1984