

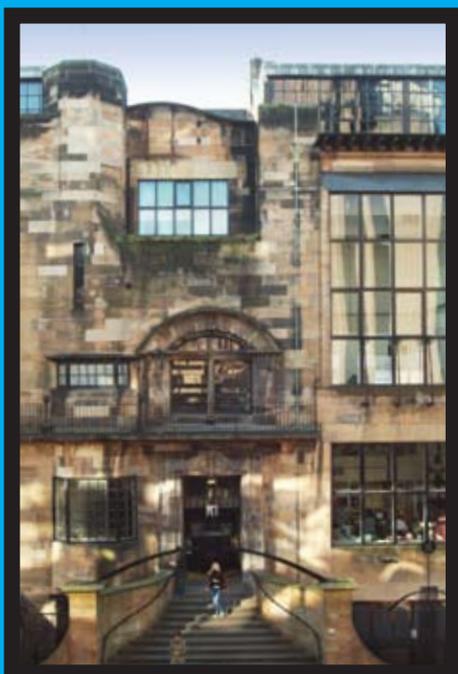
Mackintosh and Glasgow

Walking Tours

Welcome to the new series of downloadable walking tours developed by the Mackintosh Heritage Group. These will introduce you to Mackintosh's architectural heritage and the wider architectural riches of Glasgow, a city described by John Betjeman as the finest Victorian city in the world.



Glasgow Style and Modernity



Second City



The West End



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Glasgow Style and Modernity

From Central Station to the School of Art.
This walk takes approximately 1½ hours.

This walk will look at some of the remarkable architecture in Glasgow created in the years around 1900 when the city was transforming itself into the self-proclaimed 'Second City of the Empire'. Glasgow, like many other cities at the time, encouraged the development of a progressive modern architecture characterised by a distinctive decorative style.

Elsewhere, this is known as art nouveau, Jugendstil or stile Liberty, but here it is now best described as "Glasgow Style". Its most famous exponent was, of course, Charles Rennie Mackintosh, but distinctive buildings were also designed by his friend James Salmon junior, known as the "Wee Troot".

Other architects in the city, like James Miller, were influenced by this manner. In addition there was a separate modern school in the city associated with Sir John James Burnet and his sometime partner J.A. Campbell which was influenced by architecture in both Paris and the United States. Particular and yet international, the remarkable buildings of both schools link fin de siècle Glasgow with what was happening in Paris and Brussels, Barcelona and Chicago, Budapest and Riga.

Opening hours are provided for those buildings that are open to the public. These were correct at the time of writing, but you are recommended to check current times to avoid disappointment. Occasionally unforeseen building works may restrict viewing.

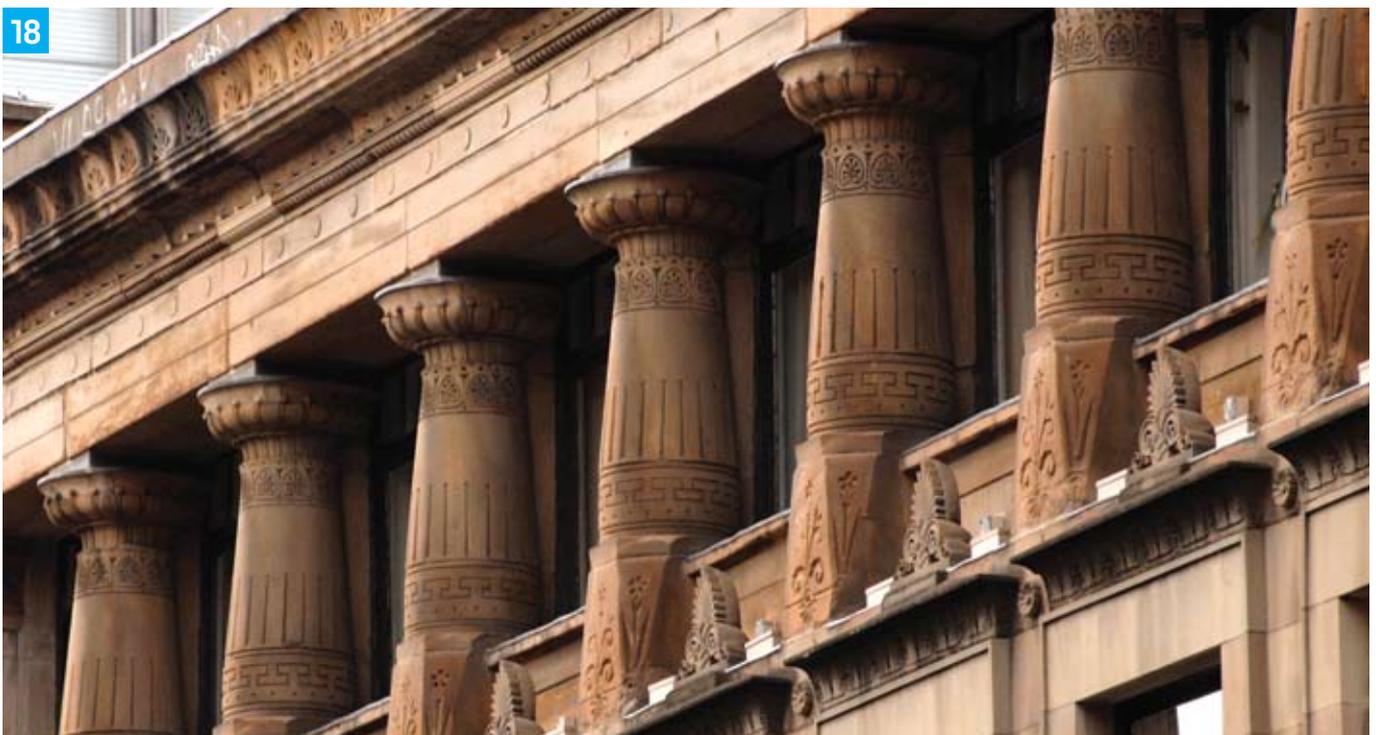
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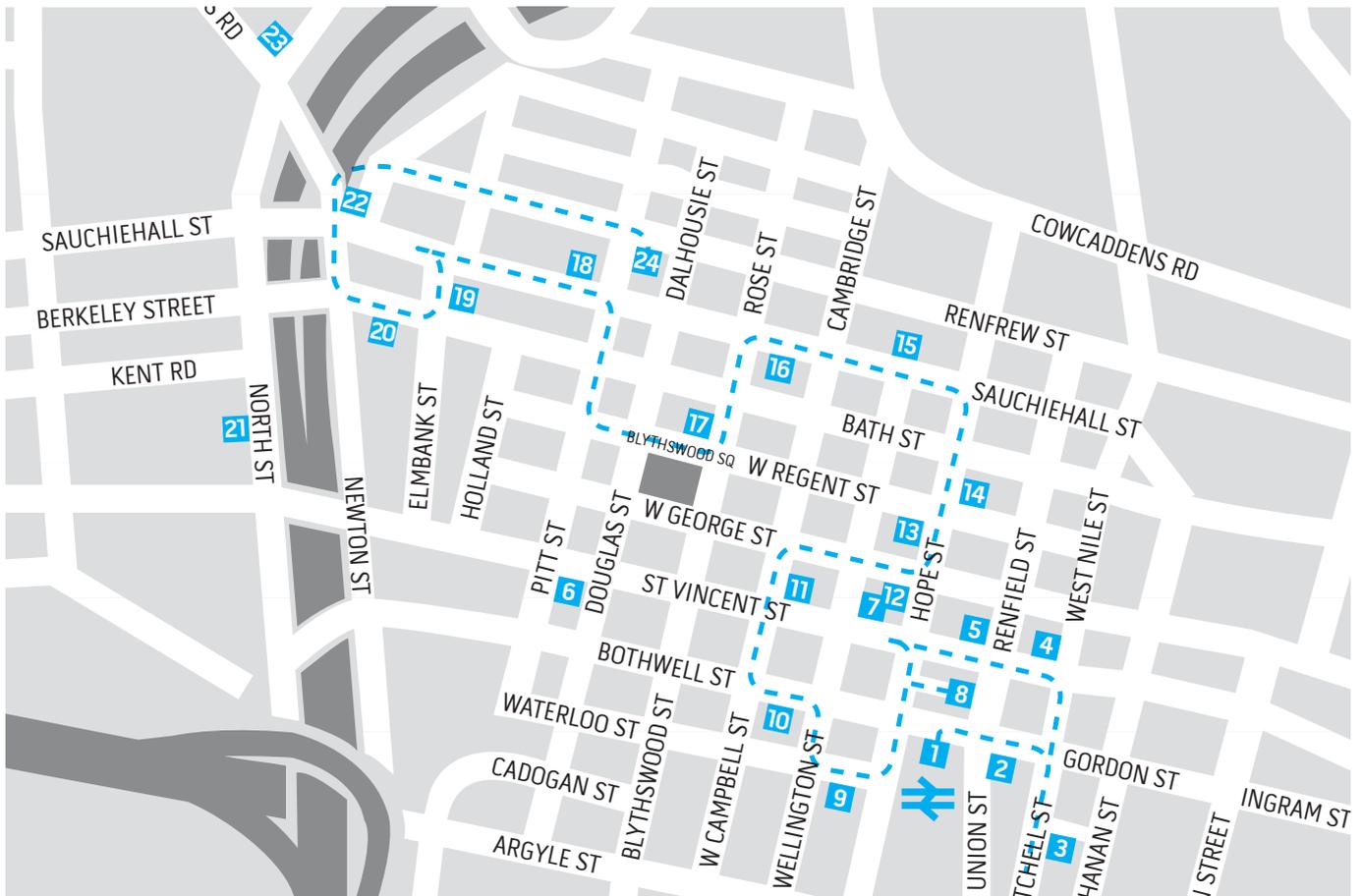
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1 The walk begins at **Central Station**, whose spacious top-lit concourse is today perhaps the real centre of the city. The terminus of the main line from London Euston, the station was greatly extended by the Caledonian Railway in 1899-1906.

2 Exit via the main entrance (signed to Gordon Street) and right into Gordon Street, which is lined with several stone Victorian commercial buildings. One of the most distinctive is the **Ca' D'oro** on the right at the corner of Union Street. Its facades, inspired by Renaissance Venetian palaces, are in fact constructed of cast-iron. This former furniture warehouse was designed in 1872 by Mackintosh's future employer, John Honeyman. It is now occupied by a supermarket and other retail outlets.

3 Cross Union Street and continue along Gordon Street. Second right into Mitchell Street, whose narrow winding length is dominated by the extraordinary red sandstone water-tower on the corner of the former **Glasgow Herald Building**,

now **The Lighthouse**. Built in 1893-95 and designed by the firm of Honeyman & Keppie, this tall building has strange details, naturalistic and yet somehow symbolic, which proclaim it an early work by the firm's new young assistant, C.R. Mackintosh.

The building housed the production of the Glasgow Herald newspaper and commercial warehousing. It has two external elevations of red sandstone. The style is the Scottish Baroque manner conventional for such late 19th-century urban buildings, but in Mackintosh's hands none of the details is strictly conventional.

Games are played, as with the windows on the staircase bay in the centre of the Mitchell Street elevation, above the original entrance at no. 68: each window is different in its detailing and projections; mouldings are proud of the wall plane on one level, recessed on the next. Window shapes vary overall; some are vertical, some horizontal in proportion; and the higher the building rises the more the

architectural forms seem to have a slight flavour of the art nouveau, especially above the strong cornice.

This is particularly true of the corner with its oversailing water tower, which can seem to resemble a poppy-head. The tower was a necessary precaution against the threat of fire. The utilitarian interior of the Herald building was not remarkable and, in 1998-99 was converted and partially rebuilt by Glasgow architects, Page & Park as The Lighthouse: Scotland's Centre for Architecture, Design and the City. The centre contains a Mackintosh information centre and the water-tower now provides a vantage point giving spectacular views of the cityscape.

4 Back up Mitchell Lane, crossing over into West Nile Street, then left at the traffic lights into St Vincent Street. This part of the street is lined with an impressive collection of Late Victorian and early 20th-century commercial buildings. On the north side, the striking white building at no's 86 – 94, is the former

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premises of **Northern Assurance** by James A. Campbell, a building of 1908-09 with a pronounced vertical emphasis. Its angularity, with canted bays rising into towers, might seem to anticipate the Art Deco of two decades later.

The front of the building is faced in white Portland stone – the first building in Glasgow to use this alien material – but at the rear the steel frame is clad in glazed white brick. As with many commercial buildings of this period, it is worth going round to the narrow lane, St Mary's, at the back to see how the architect brought as much light into the interior by having simple canted bays and large steel casement windows.

5 A little further west along St Vincent Street, on the corner of Renfield Street, is the huge building for the **Union Bank** (now the Bank of Scotland) designed by James Miller's assistant Richard Gunn. Built in 1924-27 with its giant Ionic order and oversailing cornice, it looks as if it were imported whole from Detroit or Chicago. The design, indeed, was based on that of the Guaranty Trust Building in New York. It has nothing whatever to do with the Glasgow Style, but it is worth noticing as a refined example of the monumental American Classicism which replaced the local manner as an ideal of modernity.

6 In the distance, at the top of the hill, on the south side of St Vincent Street, can be seen the distinctive outline of Alexander 'Greek' Thomson's **St Vincent Street Church** of 1857-68.

7 Continue along St Vincent Street, again on the north side, to one of the finest products of the modern-minded Glasgow Style at its most inventive and original. Just past the junction with Hope Street at 144 St Vincent Street is **St Vincent Chambers**, better known as the **Hatrack**, by James Salmon junior of the firm of Salmon, Son & Gillespie. Built in 1898-99, it is one of the most truly original buildings in Glasgow and a brilliant solution to the problem of getting light into a commercial building on a confined site.



The plot on which Salmon had to build is narrow and deep, so he adopted a "dumb-bell" shaped plan with narrow internal light wells to allow light to reach the interior. It is, however, the gravity-defying façade which impresses most, for it appears to be more glass than wall. But whereas a modern glass elevation is usually flat, and tedious, Salmon's is richly sculptural. A central recess is flanked by two projecting canted bays which rise almost the whole height of the building, while the recessed upper floor is polygonal.

Above that rises a tall concave roof with dormer windows, all enhanced with weird pinnacles – inspiring the affectionate nickname of "The Hatrack" for the building. The red sandstone stonework was reduced to a minimum – an effect achieved by hanging the whole façade on beams cantilevered out from the steel frame

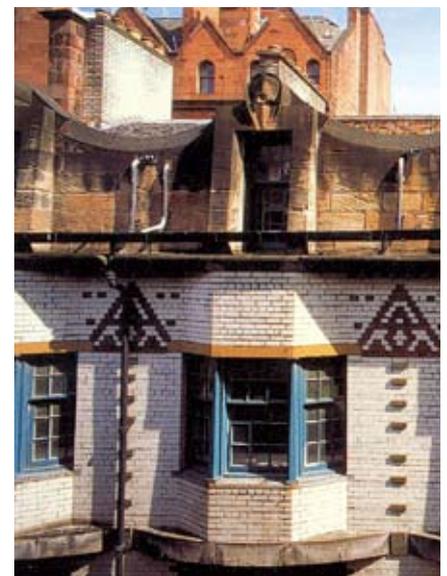
What little stone there is, however, is made interesting and decorative with thin cornices, mannered concavities and ornament in which Baroque details are metamorphosed into what can only be called art nouveau. This sculptural and plastic treatment of the stone makes Salmon's masterpiece more comparable with contemporary Art Nouveau architecture on the Continent; as Salmon's biographer, Raymond O'Donnell, has noted, the building "is more reminiscent of the flowing Art Nouveau compositions of Henri Van de Velde, Victor Horta,

Hector Guimard and Antoni Gaudi than the starker Glasgow Style work of C.R. Mackintosh..."

Everywhere the detail is inventive and enjoyable, especially around the entrance which is surmounted by a little oriel window – balancing a longer one on the opposite bay – filled with stained-glass attributed to Oscar Paterson. Sadly the original mullioned windows have been replaced with large single panes. Just how extraordinary The Hatrack was, and is, can be seen by looking at its exactly contemporary neighbour to the right, designed by Burnet, Boston & Carruthers: a decent building with a jolly corner turret but somehow staid and dull by comparison.

8 Back to the street corner and right down Hope Street. On the left, the free-standing building at no.106-108 is the former premises of the Scottish Temperance League, later taken over by the Daily Record newspaper, a cheerful Franco-Flemish building of 1893-94 by Salmon's partner, J. Gaff Gillespie. But what lies immediately behind, around the corner in Renfield Lane, is much more interesting and original.

Here, in 1901-04, the **Daily Record** built a newspaper printing office designed in 1900 by Honeyman & Keppie but clearly the work of the firm's ambitious assistant, Charles Rennie Mackintosh. The problem



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was the usual one: how to get light into a building placed in a narrow dark lane. So Mackintosh faced the elevation in glazed white brick and, so as not to cast shadow, recessed the sandstone segmental arches and abstracted mouldings on the ground floor, its self-conscious exaggerated use of classical forms making a fascinating essay in Mannerist Classicism.

Even at his most utilitarian, Mackintosh remained a Romantic, for, between the modern-looking canted window bays, green glazed bricks pick out a pattern of the "Tree of Life" while the top floor on the higher part of the building, with its concave parapets and art nouveau detailing, is made of stone.

Continue along Renfield Lane and look back to see a wonderfully dramatic view of this too little known utilitarian masterpiece. The towering upper floors, with their unusual stonework, make it irresistibly reminiscent of a castle. In Mackintosh's imagination, Scottish castles were never far away.

9 Go back to Hope Street, turn left, past Rowand Anderson's Central Hotel of 1882-84, then right into Waterloo Street where, on the left, is the red sandstone **Waterloo Chambers** of 1898-1900: one of two inventive commercial buildings designed by John James Burnet just before the turn of the century (the other is Atlantic Chambers just around the corner at 43-47 Hope Street).

Burnet also applied his resourceful mind to the problem of designing tall commercial buildings that did not resemble elongated houses or palaces, but whereas Mackintosh and Salmon may have looked across the Border and across the Channel for inspiration, Burnet looked to the United States – which he had visited in 1896. The front of Waterloo Chambers is a symmetrical but highly unusual Classical composition in which canted bays, Baroque doorcases, a giant order, an eaves gallery and bold sculptural Classical details are combined in a way that plays games with wall planes and illusions of structure. The figurative sculpture is by McGilvray & Ferris, Glasgow.



10 Right into Wellington Street then left into Bothwell Street. The large red sandstone block on the left (opposite David Barclay's grand Central Thread Agency offices of 1891-1901) is **Mercantile Chambers** of 1896-98 by James Salmon of Salmon, Son & Gillespie. When built, this early steel-framed office building was one of the largest in the city. The ground floor arcade and the two tall gables make the building vaguely reminiscent of Northern Europe and the Hanseatic ports, but its actual composition could only be Glaswegian, and it was surely influenced by Mackintosh's Glasgow Herald building.

There are canted bays, playful Baroque detail and carefully placed decorative sculpture. Notice the inscription which references the tree, bird, fish and bell of Glasgow's coat of arms and the central figure of Mercury. Mercury and the figurative sculptures, from left, of Prosperity, Prudence, Industry and Fortune, were modelled by Francis Derwent Wood. A contemporary architectural journal thought it had "the merit of daring originality", but what – from a modernist perspective, was even more original was (again) the rear of the building in Bothwell Lane. Here you will see Salmon designed a severely functional elevation – the first of its kind in Glasgow – with canted bays of glazing (separated vertically by lead panels) separated by simple brick piers.

11 Right into West Campbell Street and walk uphill to the north. On the corner of St Vincent Street the handsome blonde sandstone block is the former **North British & Mercantile Building** of 1926-29 (now Royal Sun Alliance). This was the last building in the city by that great Glaswegian, Sir John James Burnet. It is severe and Classical, but something of the spirit of fin de siècle Glasgow survives in the way the corner chimney leaps up through the cornice. The sculpture at the St Vincent Street entrance shows St Andrew (Archibald Dawson, by 1930), flanked by a Seafarer's Wife (left) and a Seafarer (right) (Mortimer Willison & Graham, 1953).

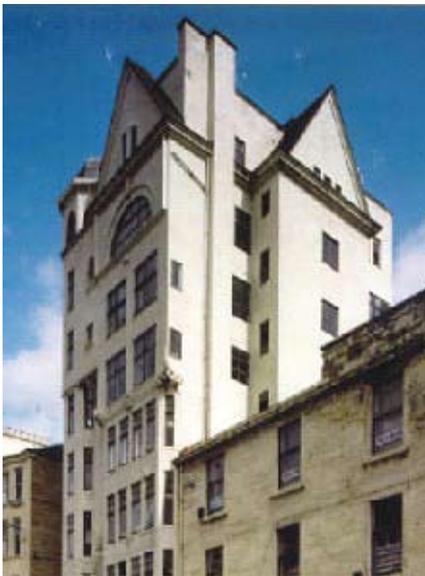
12 Further up the hill then right into West George Street, passing more modestly-scaled early 19th-century blocks, originally housing but now mainly offices. On the right at the corner with Hope Street, **169-175 West George Street** is a great cliff-like mass of red sandstone is a block of speculative offices designed by Burnet's former partner, John A. Campbell, and built in 1902-03. Although the detail is comparatively conventional, the overall composition is very dramatic, with plain walls and gently canted bays rising five stories before bursting out into balconies, domes, arches and obelisks. On its sloping site, this powerful building is somehow reminiscent of American cities of a century ago.

13 Turn left up Hope Street. On the left, on the corner of West Regent Street, is a mid-19th-century corner house that was enlarged and altered as offices in 1900-04 by the younger James Salmon. In addition to bay windows and a steep roof, he added extraordinary beaten copper decorative panels, now darkened, to the West Regent Street elevation. These are in characteristic Glasgow style, and present versions of the city's coat of arms and other Scottish symbols.

14 Salmon's second highly innovative building stands diagonally opposite, a little further up Hope Street. **Lion Chambers** was built in 1904-07 as a block of lawyers' offices with artists' studios

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above (the client was a lawyer and a member of the Glasgow Art Club). Tall and narrow, and vaguely castle-like with its corner turret and corbelled-out upper stories, Lion Chambers has, in fact, the distinction of being one of the earliest buildings in Britain entirely constructed of reinforced concrete. Because the site, on the corner of Bath Lane, was so small and confined, Salmon & Gillespie decided to use this novel form of construction to save space – and because it did not require the erection of external scaffolding.



The structure is carried by 21 narrow internal columns, with the floors cantilevered out. This allowed the external walls to be non-load bearing screens and they are astonishingly thin – only 2 centimetres thick. Reinforced concrete construction also allowed the windows to be of varying sizes. The architects did not attempt to imitate a stone or brick building; on the other hand, they seem not to have found a need to find a new form of expression. In a lecture on decorating steel and reinforced concrete structures, Salmon suggested adapting elements of “the Scottish style... the old rough-cast castle” – just as his friend Mackintosh was doing at the Glasgow School of Art.

Lion Chambers is, however, hard to categorise stylistically. There are large semi-circular windows and triangular pediments at an upper level and there

is ornament – a coat of arms and corbel heads (wearing wigs and legal dress) – cast in situ in concrete while the north elevation in Bath Lane is another of Salmon’s functional essays with tiers of metal-framed bay windows to let in as much light as possible. Like many pioneering buildings, Lion Chambers has suffered from its own daring. It is now vacant and shrouded in protective mesh because of fears about the decay of this early experiment in reinforced concrete.

15 A little further north is Sauchiehall Street – from the Celtic old Scots for “boggy place full of willows”. This eastern end of this famous long shopping street was once lined with grand and rumbustuous Victorian and Edwardian department stores but it suffered grievously from crass redevelopment in the 1960s and 1970s. To the left, on the north side of the street, is one proud survivor: the façade of the former premises of the department store, **Cumming & Smith**, of 1891-95 designed by H.& D. Barclay.

16 Further along the street as it slowly rises, on the left hand side, is another survivor from that period but very different in character. The oddly asymmetrical pale rendered façade with a gentle bowed projection is that of the former **Willow Tea Rooms** – the most celebrated of the distinctive Glasgow restaurants run by Miss Kate Cranston.

That remarkable woman was C.R. Mackintosh’s greatest and most loyal patron, and in Sauchiehall Street, in 1903, she gave him the opportunity to create one of his most tantalising and seductive interiors. Mackintosh transformed the exterior of the building she had bought to make it different from its mid-19th-century stone neighbours (not wholly satisfactorily, it must be said), but it was inside that his genius for organising space and for integrating a non-historical manner of decoration was fully displayed. Contemporary Glasgow was full of tea rooms and restaurants, but Miss Cranston’s stood out for their unusual decorative style.

Working closely with his wife, Margaret Macdonald, Mackintosh made the Willow Tea Rooms a “gesamtkunstwerk” – a complete work of art – in which the colour, decoration, furniture, hangings and even the waitresses’ uniforms were part of one vision. It was the ultimate expression of the Glasgow Style: a sort of fantasy in which tea could be taken.

In a series of interconnected spaces – most light and feminine, some with darker woodwork – an Art Nouveau character was given by the distinctive furniture and the plaster relief friezes and decorative glazing derived from the theme of the willow.

Kate Cranston sold the restaurant in 1919 and over the following half-century most of the interiors were spoiled or destroyed although the Room de Luxe on the first floor, with its wide decorative window facing Sauchiehall Street survived largely intact. In 1979-80 some of the other lost interiors together with the ground floor frontage were restored or recreated by Mackintosh’s old firm, now called Keppie, Henderson & Partners. It now houses a jeweller’s and operates in part as a tea room.



17 Continue along Sauchiehall Street, then first left into Blythswood Street and continue onto handsome Blythswood Square (1823-29), passing at 120 the site of the first marital home of Mackintosh

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and Margaret Macdonald – a first-floor apartment – now rebuilt as Mackintosh House. On the north side of the square, No.5 has a distinctive and delicate Glasgow Style doorcase: this was the entrance to the former **Lady Artists' Club** and was designed by Mackintosh in 1908.

18 Continue along the north side of the square into West Regent Street, then right into Pitt Street and on to Sauchiehall Street. On the north side of Sauchiehall Street is **Grecian Buildings**, a block of commercial offices with shops below built in 1867-68 and designed by Alexander 'Greek' Thomson.

This corner block, with its imaginative combination of Greek and Egyptian elements, now houses the Centre For Contemporary Arts. If you stand opposite the Centre you will have the only view left in Glasgow of buildings by the two greatest and most original designers the city produced can be seen together. Beyond and above, at the top of the steep, pedestrian-defying, 20% gradient slope of Scott Street, rises the castle-like mass of Charles Rennie Mackintosh's supreme masterpiece, the **Glasgow School Of Art**. The towering, stone side elevation, with its tall oriel windows lighting the library, was the last part to be completed, in 1909, but what is most visible from below is the wide south-facing rear elevation, artfully asymmetrical, enlivened by a range of



different window designs and all harled, or rough-cast, like an old Scottish castle – indeed like Fyvie Castle which probably inspired this remarkable elevation.

But we do not climb up to the School of Art yet but are saving that treat until last. Continue west along Sauchiehall Street, then left into Elmbank Street, at the Beresford (striking Art Deco former hotel of 1937-39 by Weddel & Inglis).

19 On the corner of Bath Street, is the **Griffin Bar**, formerly the King's Arms. The interior of this public house, of 1903-04 by William Reid, was spoiled in the 1960s but its jolly Glasgow Style exterior, with a range of etched decorative windows in inventive Art Nouveau timber frames, survives intact.

20 Right into Bath Street, past the **King's Theatre** of 1901-04 by the doyen of theatre architects, the London-based Frank Matcham. Then on until Bath Street ends in the urban desolation created when the M8 motorway was smashed through the city in 1965-72 dividing the city centre from the West End.

21 On the other side of the chasm is the **Mitchell Library**, an imposing Edwardian Baroque building of 1906-11 by William B. Whitie surmounted by a great copper dome. The library houses one of Europe's major reference libraries and a highly important collection of architectural drawings documenting the city's growth. But we turn right and go north, back to Sauchiehall Street, passing under the remnant of an abandoned motorway development.

22 On the curved corner, urbanity is maintained by **Charing Cross Mansions**, an ebullient red sandstone apartment block, reminiscent of Paris and built in 1889-91 by the Beaux-Arts trained J.J. Burnet.

23 Continuing north along St George's Road, **St George's Mansions** of 1900-01 by Burnet & Boston across the motorway clearance promises the resumption of proper urban architecture

to the west. But we turn right, and east, into Renfrew Street, climbing slowly up Garnethill.

24 And just beyond the unwelcome intrusion of the Bourdon Building of the early 1970s by Keppie, Henderson & Partners, arrogantly straddling the street, is the original building of the **Glasgow School of Art** designed by Mackintosh.



So much has been written about this world-famous building that it is difficult to summarise its importance. A major monument of that phase in the city's architecture around 1900 whose outward expression can be loosely categorised as the Glasgow Style, this quirky, eclectic subtly detailed building suddenly seemed old-fashioned by the time it was completed in 1909.

Later it began to be interpreted as a pioneering work of the Modern Movement in architecture, but now it is clear that Mackintosh was looking to Scotland's past, as well as to England, for inspiration. At once Art Nouveau and Arts and Crafts, Classical, Tudor and modern, this comfortably functional building displays Mackintosh's genius for making something new and distinctive out of a wide variety of sources. The eastern end elevation rising from the slope of Dalhousie Street can be seen as a Scottish castle, revelling in the sublime power of stone surfaces, while

the corresponding west elevation facing Scott Street, as later redesigned, is in a streamlined, towering Tudor style. The big studio windows along the principal facing Renfrew Street might be Elizabethan in inspiration, but clever asymmetry is introduced, especially around the central entrance where Classical elements are reinterpreted with the decorative wilfulness of Art Nouveau.

The interior has too many subtleties and idiosyncrasies to describe here, suffice to say that it culminates in the extraordinary double-height library. The competition for a new building for the School of Art was held in 1896 and won by Honeyman & Keppie, although it is clear that the building is wholly the work of the firm's then assistant, Charles Rennie Mackintosh. The eastern half, together with the central entrance hall, was built in 1898-99. Mackintosh later redesigned the western elevation with its tall windows lighting the library before the western half was commenced in 1907. And when it was completed two years later, Mackintosh's career in Glasgow was almost over, for no more complete buildings were constructed to his designs. Mercifully, changes in architectural fashions did not affect the School of Art and today, over a century later, this celebrated Glasgow monument stands virtually as Mackintosh designed it.



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The Tour:

Charles Rennie Mackintosh Society, Stuart Robertson 8
DRS Graphics, Glasgow City Council 7, 10, 17, 18
Glasgow City Heritage Trust 14
The Glasgow School of Art 24

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Glossary

Bay: repetitive façade unit; projecting unit of façade

Canted: the edge of a corner of wood, stone etc. that is bevelled or angled off, usually at 45 degrees

Cantilever: a horizontal projection such as a balcony or beam, supported at one end only

Console: projecting ornament or bracket

Corbel: block of stone projecting from a wall, providing support for a feature

Cornice: horizontal moulded or otherwise decorated projection which crowns the part to which it is affixed e.g. door, wall, window

Dormer window: window projecting from roof

Gable: vertical triangular portion of the end of a building with a pitched roof, from the level of the cornice or eaves to the ridge of the roof

Ionic: a Greek order of architecture distinguished by a plan concave moulding of the shaft and a capital with spiral volutes

Moulding: a plain or curved narrow surface, either sunk or projecting, used for decoration to frame features such as windows or doors

Mullion: vertical member dividing a window

Order: classical arrangement of column and structurally related elements

Oriel: bay window that projects without direct support from below

Pediment: a triangular feature over a door or window

Pier: vertical solid support, generally rectangular in shape

For further information see James Stevens Curl, 'A Dictionary of Architecture and Landscape Architecture', Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006