

Analytic Study of Mackintosh's Design Works (HILL HOUSE 1902-1903)

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Abstract: As design is a unit that has integration, composition, and homogenous distribution between the artwork's elements, including simple and complicated units that contain internal interactions, the researchers are to conduct an analysis of Mackintosh's work through his output in internal design, as well as his other works in the furniture domain. The analysis is done in a summarized and simple yet scientific manner where it studies and describes an important aspect in our artistic lives and that is the basis of design and composition. This allows the gustatory skills to be extended in quality and quantity, logically redirecting visions towards the aspects of beauty that exist in life and nature. Additionally, it is to describe the way of inspecting and discovering the secrets of this beauty as well as its impact on the artistic and applicable work, assisting the awareness of art and improving gustatory. Furthermore, this planned scientific information may simply improve understanding the secrets of artworks and their complete form in design and dynamic internal system, which is the composition that sets the border and elements of the design. This is an essential point for researchers of all sorts of art, as well as for enthusiasts and beginning artists, where the artist, illustrator, or designer pictures the world through the direct descriptions such as lining, shapes, sizes, colors, and others that shall be discussed in this research.

Keywords: Mackintosh's Design Works, Hill House, Integration, Composition, Homogenous Distribution.

1 INTRODUCTION

Hill's House is about half an hour's walk from Helensburgh Station and is owned by Walter Blackie who commissioned Charles Rennie Mackintosh to design it.

Today, the house is owned by one of the national bodies which maintain it and allow the opportunity for the public to view it. Due to this, very few furniture pieces have been lost or modified. And on this basis, the essence of Mackintosh's interior design has been preserved. This house offers the opportunity to take a look at the standard of middle-class lifestyle at the beginning of the twentieth century.

"Hill House"^[1] is the name of the home which was built on top of a small hill, so a large area of it overlooks the estuary of River Clyde, which supports industry in Glasgow. Through the distance extending from the outside entrance to the house's front door, you can see a distant view of the river behind the green planes and a rose garden in the South (Photo 1).

What was going on in Blackie's mind when he commissioned Mackintosh to design this building? In fact, its purpose was not to host guests, but to spend weekends with his family in this house, which is the main objective of constructing Hill House in the suburbs. So the general character of this house differs from urban homes.

Before starting the design process, Mackintosh took every opportunity to spend time with the Blackie family, which allowed him to acquaint himself with their living habits. Blackie had added some modifications to Mackintosh's design, adding a billiard room for entertainment. However, due to budgetary reasons, it was not built and economy was put into account while preparing the other rooms, unlike the bedroom and entrance hall.

In fact, lattice designs are considered some of Mackintosh's favourite, and may have been derived from a Japanese style which was popular among Art Nouveau artists and designers.

At the entrance, we find that the library is located on the right and the planned billiard room was to be built on the left; after a small number of upward stairway steps, the entrance hall extends in front of us (photo2). A lattice design of fine taste (purple in colour among the basic grey weave of the stairway carpet). The ceiling lights appear as inverted paper lamps and are square in shape. It is also noted that the purple roses are stencilled on the walls.



Photo (1) General view of Hill House 1902-1903



(photo2).

^[1] Junichi Shimonomura “Art Nouveau” Residential Masterpieces Architecture 1892 -1911

The general visualization of these straight interior parts where latticework was primarily used demonstrate the difference between the works of Mackintosh and Gaudi, and the works of Horta. Taking into consideration the favourite aspects in Mackintosh's designs, it seems closer in style to Art Deco, not Art Nouveau ^[1]. After leaving the calm atmosphere of the entrance hall and entering the living room, which is painted bright white, directly opposite to the living room entrance, a soft light infiltrates from the prominent window which faces the south and is used as a sun parlour (Photo 3).



Photo (3) Sun parlour of Hill House

On the left side, there is a piano corner. Moreover, it is noticeable that the area surrounding the fireplace, which occupies about half of the living room space, is also decorated with a lattice design and furnished using warm colours which induces further feeling of warmth.

The fireplace finishes reveal the extreme precision by which the designer is characterized, in which he used hemispherical shapes inlaid with pieces of mirrors, facing a background of the black tile mosaic (Photo 4).



Photo (4) The fireplace is inside a circular cavity, increasing the sense of warmth and containment

^[1] Junichi Shimonomura "Art Nouveau" Residential Masterpieces Architecture 1892-1911

As though desiring to increase the warmth of the fireplace, Mackintosh hollowed the wall to create a small cave. Mackintosh renovated three separate areas in the living room with three different views: the “sun parlour” which is used in the afternoon, the “fireplace” used in the evening or during family gatherings, and the “piano corner” where he lowered the roof and built a mini theatre.

It is notable that roses are Mackintosh’s general decorative item. He used different rose shapes to decorate the curtains, the library and its background, stencils on walls, chapeau lamp shades, and wall lights (Photo 5). In fact, Mackintosh preferred roses to all other types of flowers^[1].

As for the second floor, there is a bedroom painted a light beige colour, split into two main partitions. The first one is around the bed, which contains a circular vault ceiling, whereas the second area is used for sitting and conversing next to the fireplace.



Photo (5)

A model showing Mackintosh’s usage of natural elements

The area surrounding the fireplace forms a hollowed space that has an emplaced sofa and is surrounded by flowers drawn on the room’s walls, adding an aesthetic touch and creating an atmosphere of purity, in addition to warmth. The room features a rare piece of furniture found between the two wardrobes, the most famous designed by Mackintosh: a chair with unusual proportions, having a small seat, and a very high back (Photo 6). The chair was designed specifically for this room^[2]. When we observe the room’s design, we can see that the design of the roses is of High-level design. In addition, he used these models in many designs, which shows that Mackintosh aimed to represent nature in a direct manner.

Many artists from the modern school of Art Nouveau have attempted to express nature in their designs in a direct manner. This leads to the belief that Mackintosh wished for people to live in places that are closer to nature. In fact, the effect of sun light, seasonal changes, rustling trees, and the interior of Hill House are considered wealth reflecting exterior nature.

^[1] Eugene Grasset “Art Nouveau Floral Designs” Taschen -1994

^[2] Previous Reference.

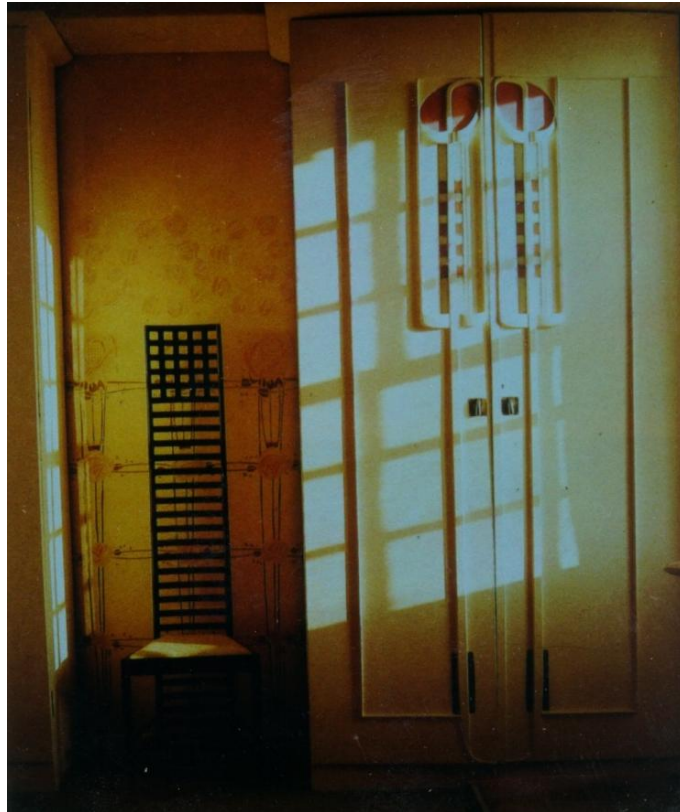


Photo (6)

A confirmation of the space between the two wardrobes, where a ladder-back chair ending in lattice was placed, and the background wall is decorated with an abstract rose
-Symbolism in Mackintosh's works-

2 ARCHITECTURAL FORM



Photo (7) Facade (the entrance had thick boundary wall so that it looks more like a cave)

The designer's concept was to construct the building in a vertical manner as though heading to the sky, which is a spiritual idea that many architects followed in the 20th and early 19th century.

The design's first impression is that it is of a religious building –a church- because the designer has added pyramid towers that taper upwards, agreeing with the trussed roof design to confirm the vertical orientation of the design.

The designer introduced an excellent dialogue between the smooth and inverted surfaces and the cold blocks with the hard surface (Photo 7).

The openings distribution around the architectural atmosphere had a great design value as the elements assured the balance in the design.

The design also introduced architectural relationships, which are good, in linear intersections between blocks and different surfaces.

3 INTERIOR DESIGN

The designer innovated uniquely in this building by employing some decorative elements in a primary way to solve the interior planes, relying on their repetition to achieve the concept of unity within variety. In this building, he executed shapely dialogue between the two different toned areas by using the concept of contrasting dark and light colours (Photo 8).



Photo (8)

The entrance hall: Hill House

Design Elements: -**▪ (1-3) Shape: -**

The design solutions for interior space in this building presented frank relations between different planes and affirmed the sharp vertical cross-section between planes and space defining angles.

The designer added what resembles a (covering) which combines all the openings related to human usage and their borders with a constant horizontal line and breaking the (something) repetitive and consecutive vertical divisions/partitions topped by decorative compositions in gold on a dark floor separated by vertical rectangular spaces to vitalize the design.

▪ (2-3) Mass and Space: -

The designer did not exaggerate in the volume relations in the interior space as he employed the concepts of mass and space without making up its derivative elements that are central to the building. He also added some superficial solutions to different walls.

▪ (3-3) Standard: -

The designer respected the human standard greatly in most of the coloured components of the interior space by placing veil at the top of the main wall combining all the design elements relating to humans which confirms the regard for the human standard photo (9)



Photo (9)

The main entrance to Hill House

▪ **(4-3) Surface textures: -**

The designer utilized the principle of surface textures in its comprehensive concept, not limited to the difference in the nature of the material and its texture but relying primarily on the colour and decorative contrast between the different used elements between a colour space and another –repetitive decorative units –defining planes with dark colours –light floors, stressing the concept of contrast in design.

▪ **(5-3) Colour: -**

As previously mentioned, the designer relied on the dialogue between light and dark and did not overuse colours but limited their usage in an architectural concept that affirms values of form and composition, using similar and repetitive decorative compositions for some his designs and breaking monotony.

▪ **(6-3) Shade and Light: -**

Resulting from the usage of palpable values in design as well light and dark in colours are contrasts that confirm the areas of shade and light which work to bring out mass and space (negative and positive). Furthermore, the usage of dark linear planes defined the borders of the light planes, giving rise to form relations and enhanced beauty.

▪ **(7-3) Style: -**

The designer's approach in this building differs from the previous one -the Art School building –, as he added a decorative dimension to the interior composition and using colour boldly, in spite of not deviating from the traditional idea of abstraction even in the decorative units, giving the characteristics of the art nouveau style, whom the designer is categorized under.

▪ **(8-3) Ratio and proportion: -**

The designer created varied relations in composing planes, affirming the values of ratio and proportion and its relation with the rest of the design elements. The designer added an additional aesthetic dimension by designing and distributing pieces of fixed and movable pieces of furniture, their exterior lines affirming the aesthetic relation with the large plane in addition to the proportionality of its construction elements between them.



Photo (10)

Hill's House main bedroom in the 2nd floor

Showing the unity of the bed inside the vault and the wardrobes is part of the interior architecture for the space.



Photo (11)

The area surrounding the fireplace in the master bedroom, with a hollowed space in an installed sofa next to the fireplace, surrounded by flowers drawn on the room's walls which giving an aesthetic touch and creating an atmosphere of purity and warmth

4 CONCLUSIONS

- 1 - Charles Rennie Mackintosh was one of the leading architects that uses the new art style in Great Britain. He illustrated the new art style "Art Nouveau" through presenting the role of the elegant straight lining.
- 2 - Mackintosh achieved ecological dimensions in his designs in the shape and content, where he designed his works affected by concepts and inspirations of the environment.
- 3 - Mackintosh used traditional architectural and design ingredients in all of his architectural designs, and he included them in a special design form according to his design philosophy.
- 4 - Mackintosh confirmed the linear and volumetric relation in his architectural works that reflect the philosophy dimensions of his thoughts, where we can find links to the sky and to infinity, which are deep relative concepts.
- 5 - In his internal design works, Mackintosh confirmed the idea of color opposition between light and dark colors.
- 6 - A modern design can be found due to the usage of clear lining in his design works, where he departed from details in them.
- 7 - The designer created his architectural elements through a method where the design basis and the relative beauty relations are employed, inspired by the golden values of the design.
- 8 - Mackintosh mainly relied in his designs on dealing with surfaces in a simplified method that is based on the proportionality between the various components of the shape.



- 9 - Ensuring the fundamental of shading and lighting through negativity and positivity in his design works.
- 10 - The designer ensured respecting the humanitarian measures within the design space of his works.
- 11 - The designer employed the concept of surface touches in its comprehensive definition, as it was not limited to the difference between the material nature and the surface, but also and fundamentally to the color and embossing contrast between the various elements.
- 12 - The designer added an artistic embossing dimension in the internal space of his works.
- 13 - His designing impression can be noticed, which is considered a modern form where traditional European styles (Greek and Roman) is mixed with the modern style.

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