How the works of Charles Rennie Mackintosh, in Hill House and the Willow Tea Rooms are viewed through the changing ideas of fashion and style in comparison to the works of Brian Clarke in the Beaverbrook Spa. How they relate to space and place, and how they used changing technology to enhance the way stained glass is used in architecture.

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MA Craft Studies Coexistent Perspectives ADAA7000 Space and Place

Abstract

Looking at the stained glass of Mackintosh and Clarke and how this is integrated into their architectural practice. Specifically studying The Hill House and Willow Tea Rooms in Glasgow and the Beaverbrook Spa in Leatherhead Surrey, and how these works complement the architecture and use of the buildings through the focus of space and place.

As the two practitioners worked on these projects over 100 years apart, fashion and social norms have changed the perspective of what is appropriate to the buildings and how they are used. Technology has advanced and allowed changes within the art of stained glass to utilise new materials and technological innovation. At the turn of the twentieth century stained glass was a static installation and was not expected to change whilst the building it was in remained standing. Stained glass has recently become moveable and is no longer a permanent fixture

How the works of Charles Rennie Mackintosh, in Hill House and the Willow Tea Rooms are viewed through the changing ideas of fashion and style in comparison to the works of Brian Clarke in the Beaverbrook Spa. How they relate to space and place, and how they used changing technology to enhance the way stained glass is used in architecture.

Ever since the 11th century stained glass has been an integral part of the church, allowing God's light to shine into the church and onto the congregation. The stained glass of the windows told many of the bible stories for the illiterate masses, and as in the east window of York Cathedral places God at the top of the window, above all.

Glass was made by the Egyptians and the Romans and was possibly first stained for use in jewellery and mosaics. Making large sheets of plain glass has only been possible for the last 75 years by floating molten glass on a bed of molten tin. This is known as float glass and is very clear and of constant thickness. Until then glass was made in various ways and flattened on iron plates, but the glass then required polishing, an expensive addition to the manufacturing costs. However it is the texture and varying depth of stained glass that gives it such magnificence, and the old ways of producing it are required for its character - bubbles, striations, opacity and surface pattern.

Initially glass could only be made in small pieces and needed leading to hold it in place. Even clear glass needed to be formed into windows this way, creating mullioned windows. Only the rich could afford windows.

During the middle ages stained glass in churches was at its height of popularity, and the workers were extremely capable and produced some magnificent artworks that would be hard if not impossible to produce now. Many churches and cathedrals were being built throughout Europe at this time and the skills of the stained glass workers were unsurpassed. Buildings became ever greater and more decorative and the stained glass gave an aura of wonder and grandeur to the edifice.

Between the late nineteenth century and the first world war the rich and upper middle class were eager to show off their wealth. Stained glass could be a method of exhibiting their affluence. Stained glass panels were placed in windows and doors of houses and large stained glass windows added to churches in memory of family members. Thus stained glass became popular once more. Mackintosh made use of stained glass in many of his buildings. (Raguin, VC 2008 p252 -269)

Charles Rennie MacKintosh 1868 - 1928

> "The influence of the continental Art Nouveau was more apparent in the work of Charles Rennie Mackintosh than in London or England as a whole…..Mackintosh was an architect of genius, a highly original tallent which extended to the designing of every detail of the buildings in which he was involved. In some cases this involved stained glass and Mackintosh's contribution to the medium, although normally on an exceedingly small scale, was important for its originality" (Reyntiens, P p147)

Mackintosh was a Scottish architect,designer and artist, who worked at the forefront of the Glasgow style art movement, and worked within the art nouveau and secession art styles. He was influenced by the arts and crafts movement and Japanese art, creating his own distinct version of Art Nouveau.

At sixteen Mackintosh took up an apprenticeship with the John Hutchinson Architects firm in Glasgow and also attended art school and architectural classes to increase his knowledge and skills. At the Glasgow art school he met with many like minded artists who formed 'the group of four' which led to the Glasgow style of art. One of these, Margaret Macdonald became his wife, and collaborated with him on many of his projects.

After completing his apprenticeship he joined the architectural firm of Honeyman and Keppie, where he took part in many projects through the first half of the 1890s. By the second half of the decade he was undertaking projects of his own and later became a partner in the firm.

Some of his most famous projects were for Miss Cranston and her Tea Rooms. He decorated the walls for the Buchanan Street rooms, designed the furniture for the Argyle Street rooms and the extension for the Ingram street rooms. But in 1902 he was given free range with the design for the Willow Tea Rooms where he designed everything inside and out. He later went on to redesign the interior of Miss Cranston's own home.

Mackintosh developed the use of stained glass in his own style, taking ideas from Louis Comfort Tiffany who developed 'Favrile' glass, and a method of joining glass by means of copper tape and solder that gave more emphasis to the glass and less to the leadwork. This also allowed glass to be fixed at any angle or orientation giving a much freer design. Favrile glass was rich in texture, colour and shading and gave a luxurious glow to the glass, and enhanced the design furthermore, giving it a completely different look to that of church stained glass.

(Britanica - Tiffany)

Fig 1. Detail of stained glass mirror at The Willow Tea Rooms

MacKintosh designed Hill House for the Blackie family; they had become acquainted through a mutual friend (Talwyn Morris). Walter Blackie was the chief executive of the Blackie publishing house and made only basic requirements of the design, grey roughcast on the walls and a slate roof. Within reason MacKintosh had free rein.

Mackintosh believed that 'a building should fulfil the purpose for which it was designed' (Hackney, F&I. 1998 p59) and the internal design was submitted for the Blackie's approval before he designed the outside structure. This accounts for the somewhat odd positioning of some of the windows when viewed from the outside.

Hill House was designed as 'a dwelling house' and bears the hallmarks of Mackintosh's precise clean lines with every detail complimentary to the rest. Decorated in tasteful pastel shades that work together to form a peaceful relaxed aura. The stained glass work is secondary to the main decoration adding pops of colour here and there. The study, hall and landing are finished in dark wood with touches of colour in the carpets and soft furnishings which gives a more masculine feel to the space complimenting the more open lighter, feminine feel to the drawing room and master bedroom. The lights in the drawing room are decorated with roses, originally there were ceiling lights but these were later replaced with the wall lights. Lighting gave it a new avenue for decoration and mackintosh used stained glass to decorate lampshades and ornate nooks and crannies which would glow in reflected light. The lights in the drawing room were sparsely decorated with simple statement stained glass roses, as were the curtains and wallpaper, creating a complete decorative theme to the room. The lights in the hall, dining room and landing were decorated with stained glass as were the upper windows of the hall and landing. Many other small touches of stained glass were added to doors, alcoves, mirrors and Mrs Blackie's writing desk, with its glass and metal back panel.

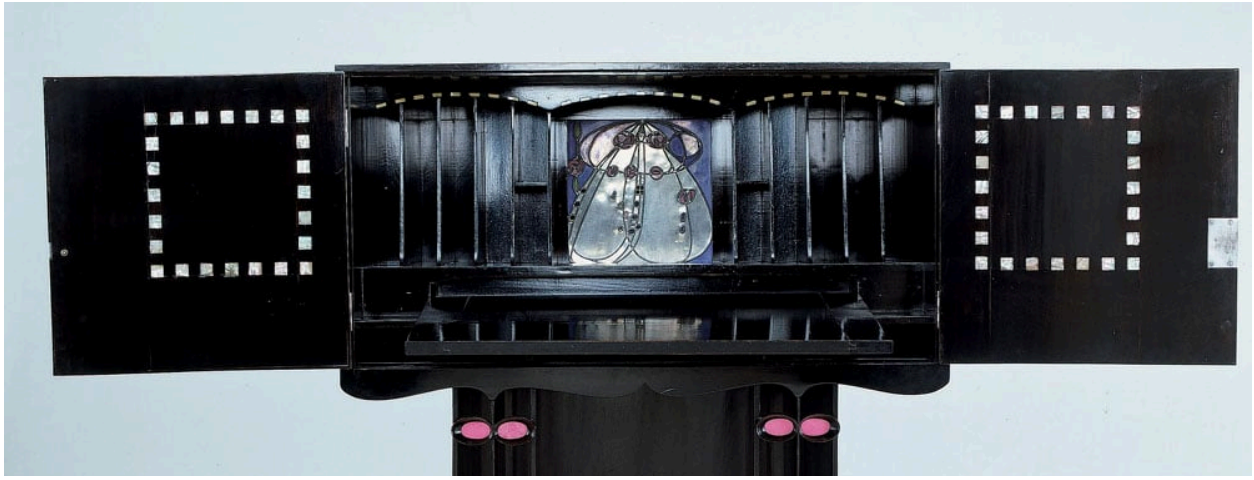

Fig 2 Mrs Blackies writing desk.

Whilst the stained glass is only a part of the whole ensemble the detail of lights and other embellishments gives the house a feeling of continuity. All the fittings and furniture have a similar range of colours and hues, lines of symmetry follow from the walls to the carpet on the floor to the windows and curtains. In today's world it might well be deemed bland and boring, however following on from William Morris' wall to wall exuberantly patterned wallpapers and curtains it could be seen as yet another turn in the flow of fashion.

Fig 3. Hill House Drawing Room.

Walter Blackie, his wife and one of the daughters, Agnes lived in the house until Walter's death. Whilst the family had a reduced income in later times, Walter could not bear to leave the house he loved. For the last few years they had lived mainly in the dining room as it was smaller and cheaper to keep warm than the drawing room. (nts p10-19) (Hackney p55- 69) (Kerr p6-27)

MacKintosh was feted for his work for the Eighth Vienna Secession 1900, where he won first prize for his design of a room and furniture. He was driven around the city and festooned with flowers, he later stated that this was the high point of his career. However the fashion changed, World War I broke out and he fell on hard times. The fact that he had close relationships with Austria and the continent made him undesirable in some eyes and he and his wife moved to London and then to the south of France and was largely forgotten. (Kerr p16+26-27)

Over the years his achievements slowly became recognised once more and by the 1990's he was once again fashionable. Miss Cranston's Willow Tea Rooms have recently been reconstructed and the plans for 'The House for an Art Lover' drawn up for a competition in 1901 were finally fulfilled 1989-96, and is now a great tourist attraction and is used as a conference and exhibition centre. Some of his more iconic designs, the rose, leaves, plus ovals and squares combined have been used in glass window hangings, mirrors and other objects d'art for sale. Glasgow has now become a centre for art appreciation, especially that of Mackintosh, one of its most famous sons.

> 'The complete building is the final aim of the visual artist. Their noblest function was once the decoration of buildings.' (Clarke, B.1979 p14)

<u>Sir Brian Clarke 1953 - present</u>

> "There is a world that can only be seen through stained glass. It is like no other. The medium is thought to have been at its zenith in the middle ages - though the medievals had the advantage of gothic architecture to respond to. I want to surpass the middle ages, not equal them. Surpass them with the new and irresistible: volumetric, spatial colour, transporting post-industrial godless man to the edge of ecstasy." (Clarke, B. 2018 Back cover)

Clarke was born in Oldham and is very proud of his working class roots. Whilst still in primary school he went on a school visit to York Minster and was mesmerised by the great east window. The

gothic edifice had a huge influence on him and probably instigated his lifelong connection with stained glass.

Clarke was always interested in art and had early potential as an artist, he won a scholarship to Oldham school of arts and crafts where he learned basic skills in technical and artistic practice. He later attended art colleges in Burnley, North Devon and Bideford. In North Devon college he spent two years learning the skills of stained glass work and architecture. This gave him the ability to work with stained glass and he has made some glass works himself but now purely designs the work. John Piper, a close friend for the last fifteen years of Piper's life, warned him to 'beware the danger of trimming his original gift' (Clarke, B. 1994 p7) meaning stick to the designing and leave the glass work to the professionals. He does however oversee the work and pick out the specific glass textures and colours for each of his works. The glass he uses and the professionals who make the glassworks are all in Germany which is now the main centre for stained glass.

Clarke's main influence in glass has been Johannes Schreiter who he met along with Jochem Poensgen and Ludwig Schaffrath on his trip to Germany to study contemporary stained glass in 1973 after he won the Winston Churchill Prize and used this to travel to Europe and America. He has also been influenced by the Art Nouveau and constructivist movements and the art of Piet Mondrian and Kasimir Malevich (Beazley, M. 1997 p106 - 111). Much of his work is influenced by nature.

Clarke is always painting and making collages, some of which may be turned into glass, tapestry, mosaics or stage designs. He has recently started working with ceramics and sculpture. He has made works that are totally transparent and then totally opaque using metal decorated with lead lines.

> 'First I eliminated the lead and then I eliminated the glass'
> (Clarke, B. 2018 p26)

Clarke stated 'If the art of stained glass was to have any value in contemporary art it had to change' (Heni - The Art of Light), and within his lifetime he was fortunate to experience radical changes through technology that allowed this change. Modern buildings require windows to be far larger than traditional leaded windows could provide safely. Therefore for stained glass to be integral within tower blocks and skyscrapers new methods of producing stained glass were needed. Lamination and CAD printing on glass allowed for this.

Laminated glass was developed in Holland in the mid twentieth century, but has since been improved by the use of silicone adhesives and forms a strong permanent window. The addition of stained glass within the laminate allows for the production of huge lead free windows that are both decorative and functional. They can provide a screen between areas and prevent people walking into glass doors or windows.

Clark has worked alongside many famous architects. He designed work for Zaha Hadid but this was not commissioned. However, they remained firm friends. Another friend, Sir Norman Foster, and Clarke designed the terminal building for Stansted airport but the designs were not used. They later designed the extension for the terminal, a glass tower and glass walls which were incorporated into the seating area. However a few years later the tower was removed to allow greater flow of visitors and the glass walls removed a few years after that for security reasons. Initially they were stored in Sotherbys but were then moved and their whereabouts are now unknown.

(Moor, A. 1997 All - Clarke, B. 1994, p6-11 Clarke, B. 1979 p3-26)

The Beaverbrook hotel was the home of Lord Beaverbrook and during WWII was used as the base for the department of aircraft production of which he was chief. The hotel's logo is the spitfire and there is a model of one by the main entrance to the hotel. There is a gatekeeper who will not admit anyone who has not got a reservation and there is a minimum spend taken from a credit card whilst making the reservation. The car park is hidden away behind a hillock and is full of Range Rovers and Jaguars - it is most definitely exclusive. From the terrace of the main hotel there is only one building visible in the rolling hills around, a white house used by the Russians during the war to spy on the war work there. However there is a continual hum from the M25 just the other side of the northern ridge of hills.

The spa is magical, Clarke designed a building that is visually stunning, the ceilings are decorated with oak leaf patterned stained glass in varying colours depending on the area, sending down ripples of colour onto the walls and floor. The ceiling of the reception area is part stained glass and part clear giving some natural daylight to the area, but dappling it with colour. The pattern on the glass screen behind the reception desk matches the pattern on the receptionist's scarf.

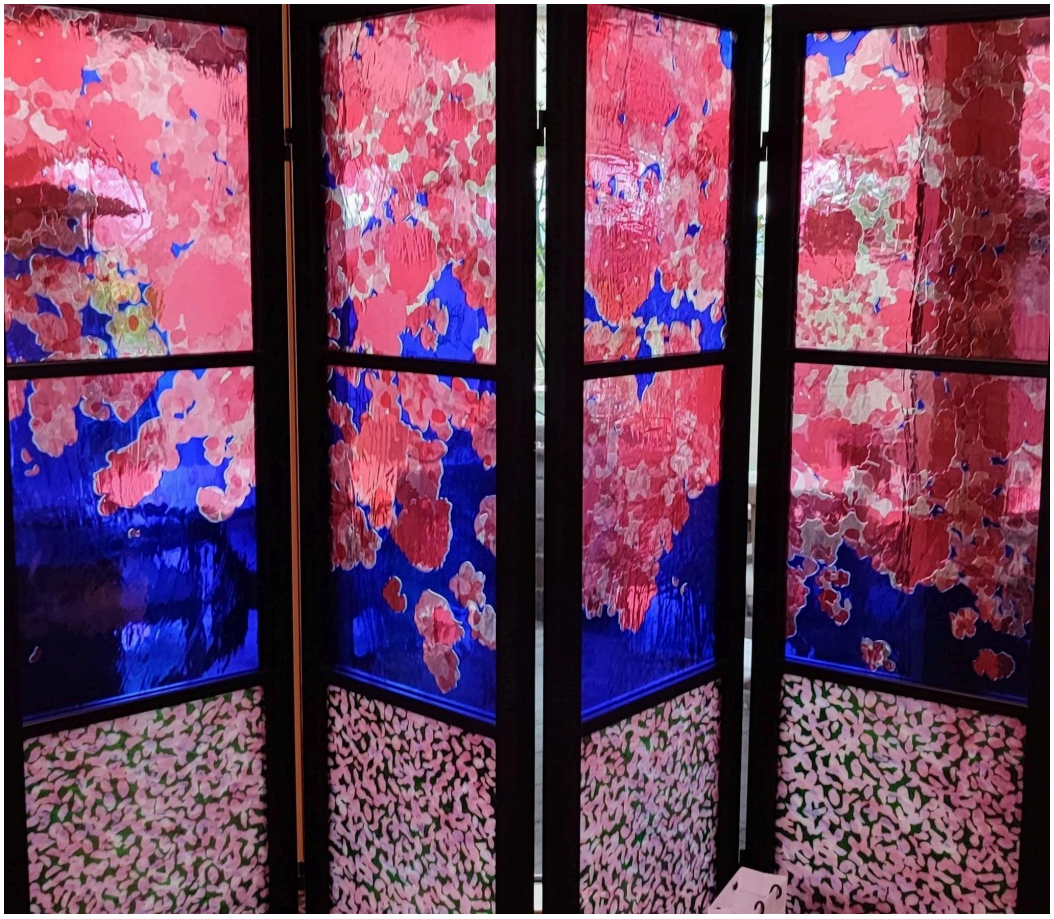

Fig 4. Glass screen behind reception desk in the spa

(Cherry Blossom - Brian Clarke)

Going through into the main spa area the walls are decorated with backlit stained glass panels of flower shapes and the ceilings are decorated with oak leaved stained glass with minimal clear space, giving a warm glow to the whole area. The colours of the glass change to denote the area they are leading into. There are stained glass skylights in each of the treatment rooms, giving the participant an interesting vision whilst undergoing treatment. The passageway leading to the swimming pool and changing areas are tiled in green and deep blue with scarlet ceramic handrails. Scarlet poppies adorn areas of tile representing the war time use of the buildings. It is truly a work of art. However, the only downside is that most people will have little chance of the pleasure of seeing it. (Beaverbrook website)

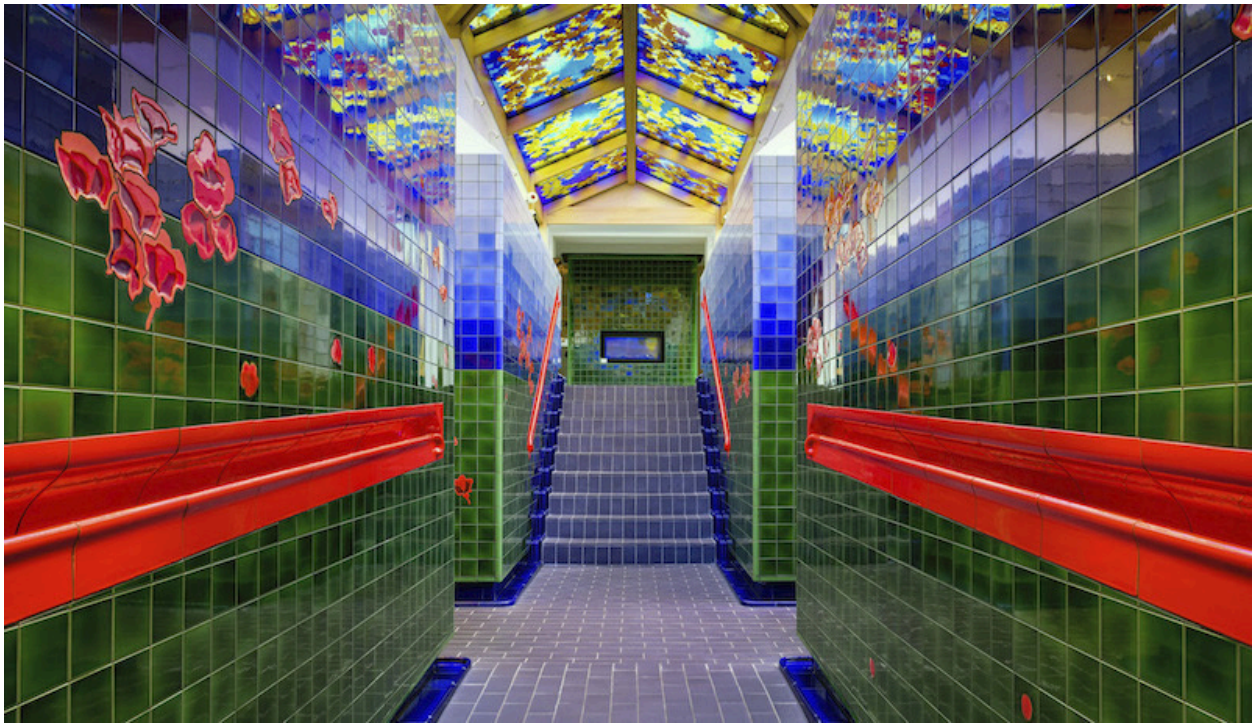

Fig 5. Main thoroughfare Beaverbrook Spa

Probably the greatest problem with most stained glass work is that it is static, housed within buildings that may or may not have public access. Clarke has taken to making many of his art works in screen form, mostly with four folds with three themed panels on each fold as in the one pictured behind reception. With the colour and texture of the glass they form amazing works of art that could be used in a multitude of settings. He has also created huge friezes, each section interlocking with the next so that they can be moved. Also there are stained glass panels varying in size from roughly A3 to human sized pieces mounted on plinths. (Clarke, B 2018 p7-8)

Fig 6. Large and small plinths - The Art of light exhibition Newport Street Gallery London

Clarke has also used Computer Aided Design (CAD) to print his designs onto glass with glass frit which is then fired to seal the pattern to the glass. He has developed a type of pointillism that prints dots onto three separate sheets of glass that are then laminated together to form a 3D effect which is best viewed from a distance. Up close it can be hard to distinguish the shapes and patterns within the glass.

Mackintosh received a huge accolade when he won the prestigious art prize in Vienna. He is quoted as saying that this was the greatest day of his life. However, fate in the shape of the first world war, changing fashion and Miss Cranston selling her tea rooms after the death of her husband, led to his fortunes plummeting. He began drinking, whether this was due to his declining popularity or caused it is debatable, but he died poor and forgotten.

Clarke has fared much better, rising in stature almost from the start of his career, to being knighted in the new years honours list this year for his services to art. He has been labelled as the ‘rock star of stained glass’ (Heni Talk), perhaps for his friendships with dignitaries and the rich and famous.

Mackintosh however has had a resurgence in popularity and is recognised now for the great artist he was. The plans for his house for an art lover have been fulfilled to great acclaim and Miss Cranston's

Willow Tea Rooms have been reestablished in exact detail using photographs and plans available. Both these and Hill house are great attractions to visitors to Scotland and Mackintosh aficionados. Whilst Clarke is not a household name, he has had the opportunity to become better known with a recent showing of his latest work at the Damien Hirst Gallery in London 'A Great Light'.

Mackintosh was constrained by the technology of the age and was only able to make smaller pieces of multi coloured glass using the Tiffany process. He also used a restricted colour palette as he wished everything to form a cohesive style. Clarke however strives to produce large sections of glass that pop with clashes of colours and large patterns that can easily be recognised in glass ceilings, screens and windows . Clarke has designed some of the largest pieces of architectural glass ever produced.

Space and Place

A space can be measured, it has a certain volume and definite dimensions, but a place has meaning. A place is a sum of the interactions and experiences within that space, it can 'create a third space where people can choose to get together, socialise and engage with others' (Oldenberg 1999). 'Thirdspace, then, is the experience of life in the first space mediated through the secondspace expectations'

> 'Space may be said to embrace a multitude of intersections, each with its assigned location…… In reality, social space 'incorporates' social actions.' (Lefebvre, H. 1991 p33).

Thus it may be seen that both Mackintosh and Clarke have used the space within their buildings to make each room a place for a specific use and decorated and furnished them appropriately for each of their uses.

Soja suggests the firstspace is the 'real space', this perhaps could be Rachel Whiteread's 'Study for a house 1993' where she filled a house due to be demolished with cement leaving a solid representation of the inner living space of the house as the void.

Secondspace is the imagined representational space, this perhaps could be a showhouse on a newly built estate showing a beautifully decorated and tastefully furnished house without the clutter and everyday detritus of real life.

Thirdspace creates 'a fully lived space' - the experience of life in the firstspace mediated through secondspace expectations. (lecture notes Space and Place)

Art can have a dramatic influence on a place: both Hill House and Beaverbrook Spa are enhanced by the addition of the art within. The contrast of an everyday house to Hill House, and a council-run

leisure centre to the Beaverbrook Spa is stark. Additions of artistic decorations seem to provide a life to the building that is intrinsic with its use. Both manage to provide the opulence that the building required without turning them into museums.

> Gilles Deleuze states 'that not only does every kind of space team with life, but that space itself is alive'..... And advises us 'to become sensitive to the vivacity of space and to create new spaces and new ways of being'' (Hubbard, P. et al. 2004 p106)

Both Mackintosh and Clarke seem to have the ability to create these new spaces.

> 'This space is lived rather than conceived and it is a representational space rather than a representation of space' (Lefebvre, H. 1991 p236)

Of the two artists Clarke's work is undoubtedly brash and 'in your face' whereas Mackintosh's work is more quiet and understated, offering a more tranquil atmosphere which would be far more appropriate in a house. However they are both extremely artistic and appropriate for their setting and eras, albeit in very different ways. Both are extremely interested in nature.

In other works of Mackintosh, such as in the willow tea rooms, his stained glass work is far more vibrant and exuberant, as was intended for a place where the great and good of Glasgow would be seen. In Victorian times, genteel ladies would meet in tea rooms and gentlemen in billiard rooms, as was befitting their status. The places they met would need to fit their standing in society and the tea and billiard rooms fitted that criteria well. Hill house was specifically for living in and as such needed a less extravagant form of decoration.

The Beaverbrook spa could well be the present day equivalent of the Victorian tea rooms. A place where ladies and gentlemen of a certain standing can meet, enjoy the facilities and show off their wealth

Clarke states 'I believe that art has a much bigger function to fulfil than to decorate the bourgeois drawing rooms and that is in public buildings.' (Heni Talk)

Sadly the quoted examples were created for the rich and not for the general public.'

> 'If there is such a thing as the history of space……then there is such a thing as a space characteristic of capitalism - that is, characteristic of a society which is run and dominated by the bourgeoisie' (lefebvre, H. 1991 p126)

Both Mackintosh and Clarke have designed art for public use: Scotland School and the Glasgow School of Art designed by Mackintosh, and covered walkways at the Spindles in Oldham, and the Victorian quarter in Leeds by Clarke. However it must be said that only the rich can afford great works of art to grace their own homes, and it is probably the rich willing to buy the services and products of each of these artists who paid their wages. In Glasgow and on the internet, a plethora of imitation Mackintosh

works can be obtained, testament to his renewed popularity, but as yet, Clarke's work has not become accessible to the masses. Perhaps this is why he is not so well known.

Conclusion

Many churches are closing due to dwindling congregations and are being repurposed into houses, businesses and even nightclubs. Where stained glass windows are not required they are mostly broken up and scrapped as they are very expensive to remove whole. Only windows of great historical value will be saved which means that many are lost forever.

Other stained glass artworks have had to be removed once they were no longer of use, such as the ones in Stansted airport. Perhaps this is why Clarke has begun to work on pieces that are smaller and more portable.

The spaces both Mackintosh and Clarke have created are almost a century apart and in that time fashions have changed a great deal as have the techniques available to the stained glass craftsman. Tea rooms were the socially acceptable place where ladies could meet without compromising their virtuosity, and a beautifully decorated tea room added a certain cachet for the rich and fashionable. Clarke's beautifully decorated spa is undoubtedly magnificent and, to be able to use it, the clientele must be equally rich and fashionable.

Whilst Mackintosh had been influenced by the arts and crafts movement, he avoided the overall wall to wall floweriness of the genre; he was undoubtedly inspired by nature and had a keen sense of how his house should look, rebuffing Mrs Blackie for putting the wrong colour flowers in the hall on one occasion. Some of his later paintings. whilst living as a recluse in France, are botanical studies and his landscapes have achieved critical acclaim.

Undoubtedly an excellent artist and architect he did not receive the respect he would have wished whilst he was alive. Indeed his work seen in England in 1896 was greeted with vitriol in direct contrast to the exaltation he received in Vienna in 1900. Perhaps Britain was just not ready for him. (Kerr, G. 2014 p12-21)

Clarke's spa is a statement piece. It wows the visitor as they first step into the foyer, the brash colours and complementary placings make a vibrant cacophony of colour and light with dappled shades of colour being thrown onto the walls and floor by sunlight. It is only the passageways and reception areas that are decorated thus. The treatment rooms have a more subtle, restful decoration with soft coloured stained glass skylights to look at when lying on the bed. The swimming pool is decorated with a softer blue tile with small light blue flowers dotted amongst them giving a quieter but still powerful effect. Thus giving the different parts of the spa decoration that suits the use of each area.

In this respect both Clarke and Mackintosh have used the stained glass and other decorations to suit each part of their buildings and each compliments the time and fashion of their inception. Whilst Clarke is not a well known artist in general terms, he is well renowned in art circles and his stained glass works sell for thousands, whilst his small collages sell for many hundreds.

> 'An activity which serves to generate consciousness: messages by virtue of space and of the interplay of reflections and mirages within it, are intrinsic to lived experience itself.' (Lefebvre, H. 1991 p184

Both Mackintosh and Clarke have indeed produced spaces that reflect and form mirages within them.

3,966 words.

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