

Collection Significance Report: Scottish Decorative Arts & Design: Furniture and Interiors

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About this Document

This document is extracted from a report by Glasgow Museums submitted to the Scottish Executive's Recognition Committee as part of its recognition scheme for non-national collections.

Overview

Furniture is the term for man-made objects constructed from a variety of materials, including wood, metals and plastic, and designed for practical use. Scotland had a significant furniture manufacturing industry.

Collection Size

Approx. 500 pieces of furniture, furnishings and architectural items: pre-1800 (100); 1800-1980 (400).

The Collection

The collection of Scottish furniture, interiors and woodwork covers pieces that were made between 1600 and 1980. The pre-1800 collection includes examples of wooden, mainly oak, furniture, interior panelling and fittings and wooden domestic objects, including Georgian examples from central Glasgow.

The 1800 to c1945 collection consists of pieces produced by West of Scotland designers and cabinetmakers or made for properties in the West of Scotland. It reflects evolving tastes of the time including reproduction and revival styles. The collection contains a few examples or sections from Scottish interiors including fittings, furnishings and interior architectural elements such as wood panelling, stucco, ironwork and plaster ceiling samples.

The mid to late twentieth century collection includes post-war utility-ware furniture, crafts commissions, wallpaper catalogues and samples, textile samples and a number of trade brochures, catalogues and other documents from Glasgow and West of Scotland furniture makers, retailers and interior decorating companies.

Collection Significance

As a whole the collection is of national importance. Many of the individual pieces and some groups are of high quality, excellent design and good provenance. It documents key elements of Scottish furniture making and helps to chart the aesthetic qualities and decorative trends of Scottish interior design.

The pre-1800 collection consists of interior panelling and fittings and wooden domestic objects. The Provand's Lordship Society collection, purchased from a special fund set up by Sir William Burrell, is an important collection of early Scottish oak furniture, which is perhaps the best collection of Scottish furniture from this period in the country. There are also some excellent Georgian examples including 30 pieces of furniture, wall panelling and a fireplace from the Dreghorn Mansion on Clyde Street (c.1730 -1760).

The 1800 - c.1945 collection includes chairs, furniture suites and interiors. The items range from plush balloon-backed chairs with highly worked needlepoint upholstery to reproduction furniture reviving European styles from previous centuries including Louis XVI and Dutch eighteenth century. It also contains cane and bamboo furniture reflecting the then-current taste for Oriental design. There is also an internationally significant collection of Glasgow Style furniture (see separate section of Glasgow Style).

There are a number of important collections of interiors including the Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Society's Glasgow Boardroom of 1897 and samples of the 1890 interior decoration of Glencoats Hospital in Argyll. Of particular importance is the ingelneuk, fireplace, panelling and dining furniture from Queen Victoria's Royal Reception Room at the Glasgow International Exhibition of 1888, designed and made by Wylie and Lochhead. The largest group of material comes from two workers' lodges and a cottage owned by the Strathclyde Regional Water Board at Loch Katrine. The gift of 437 items included a large range of nineteenth and early twentieth century domestic furniture, especially bedroom furniture, and fittings, glass, ceramics, tableware and metalwork used on the premises.

The c.1945-present collection contains a few strong groups of twentieth century furniture including pieces of 1950s domestic utility-ware furniture by Morris of Glasgow. This includes their classic 'Cloud' table of 1950. The twentieth century collection is also notable for its wallpaper catalogues and samples, textile samples and a number of trade brochures, catalogues and other documents from furniture makers, retailers and interior decorating companies.



Bibliography

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