

Collection Significance Report: Scottish Decorative Arts & Design: Glass

Alison Brown, March 2008



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

Glass is a hard material commonly made by fusing together at high temperature materials such as silica, potash, and lead oxide. Glassmaking is an ancient craft, but Scottish manufacture of glassware began in earnest in the nineteenth century, producing a range of drinking vessels, bottles and other domestic objects.

Collection Size

Approx 900 pieces: 19thC (750); 20thC (150).

The Collection

This collection includes material dating mainly for the 1870s to the 1990s. It covers a wide range of glass manufacturing techniques employed by Scottish and especially Glasgow glass manufacturers. The collection includes examples of blown and moulded glass, various methods of engraved or painted glass, and late twentieth century art glass including sculpture and paperweights.

This collection includes domestic drinking vessels and tableware, art glass, vases, bottles and 'friggers' (glass novelties in the shapes of items and animals). Key manufacturers represented include Jenkinson's Norton Park Glassworks in Edinburgh, John Baird of Glasgow and James Couper's Glasgow's City Glassworks. The twentieth century collection focuses on art glass and sets of tableware produced between 1974 and 1990.

Collection Significance

This collection reflects the rise of the Scottish glass industry in the nineteenth century and demonstrates the range of glassmaking techniques utilised by Scottish manufacturers and craftspeople since this time. The nineteenth century glass is of national significance in terms of breadth, quality, provenance and opportunity for research.

The earliest pieces in the collection are bottles, some chip engraved, dating to the first half of the nineteenth century. Other significant early pieces include a group of sixteen pieces of engraved drinks and table glass by John Baird of Glasgow and a fine selection of sixteen contemporary drinks and table glass pieces from Jenkinson's Norton Park Glassworks in Edinburgh, which formed the first glass

collected by the museum in 1876.

Scottish turn-of-the-century glass is best represented by a significant collection of Clutha art glass produced by James Couper's Glasgow's City glassworks. This collection of over 120 pieces includes vessels, jugs and lampshades and important pieces from their 'Clutha' art glass range designed by Christopher Dresser and George Walton. There is also a large amount of material samples such as glass pieces, minerals, metals and other chemicals. Also important are 25 examples of hand-painted glass, particularly the early twentieth century moulded glassware painted by Helen and Hannah Walton.

Sets of table glass have been collected in tandem with European glass collecting. These include 34 drinks glasses and a decanter dating to the period 1920s-40s by the Edinburgh and Leith Glass Co. (Edinburgh Crystal), a set of 1970s drinks glasses and a decanter made by Caithness Glass and a variety of single pieces and pairs from individual manufacturers.

Twentieth century art glass was almost exclusively collected between 1974 and 1990. This focussed on contemporary collecting of work by Scottish craftspeople and manufacturers, including art glass and a substantial number of paperweights. This modern glass collection highlights the reintroduction of glass design at Edinburgh College of Art in the 1960s. Just a few pieces in the collection, including a couple of pieces of Monart glass produced by Moncrieff's of Perth and 34 drinks glasses and a decanter dating to 1920s-40s by the Edinburgh and Leith Glass Co. (Edinburgh Crystal), represent the period 1920-1960.



Bibliography

(1987) *Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum: The Building and the Collections*, Collins & Glasgow Museums and Art Galleries.

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