

Charles Rennie Mackintosh objects to be sold in Edinburgh this week

A selection of rare objects by Charles Rennie Mackintosh, one of the greatest designers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, will be sold live online and in Edinburgh by fine art & design auctioneers Lyon & Turnbull on Wednesday 19 April as part of its latest Design Since 1860 sale.

A striking bedside cabinet, specially commissioned by Mackintosh's most important patrons, Kate (Miss) Cranston, in 1904 for her marital home Hous'hill, is one of the items featured in the specialist auction. Cranston married businessman John Cochrane in 1892 and the couple set up home in the outskirts of Glasgow, near Barrhead.

The Glasgow entrepreneur had already commissioned Mackintosh to design her famous tea rooms in the city, including the renowned Willow Tea Rooms which opened in 1904.

The cabinet, one of a pair made for Hous'hill's Blue Bedroom, will be sold alongside a fine and delicate watercolour, Ivy Seed, painted during Mackintosh's time in the fishing village of Walberswick on the Suffolk coast. Both works are estimated

to fetch between £30,000 and £50,000 each.

Mackintosh and his wife, Margaret Macdonald, decided to head down south to the seaside destination Walberswick in June 1914 for a summer break. With a world war on the horizon and Glasgow in the grip of a recession, the designer's professional fortunes had dwindled, and he had resigned from Honeyman, Keppie & Mackintosh, the architectural business in which he was a partner.

The couple intended to stay in Walberswick for the summer, but ended up staying for 15 months. Mackintosh sought solace in nature and embarked upon a series of more than 40 botanical studies, as exemplified by Ivy Seed, the pencil and watercolour drawing in the auction.

Mackintosh and his wife Margaret Macdonald moved to London from Walberswick in 1916 and he embarked on a new direction as a textile designer. His close study of nature investigated ways in which natural forms created abstract patterns.

By 1920, he had built up an impressive body of work and had become one of the leading textile designers of the period. One of these remarkable designs from his time in London is being offered at the auction estimated between £10,000 and £15,000.

The final item in Lyon & Turnbull's Mackintosh line-up is an original copy of the catalogue for a Memorial Exhibition which took place in Glasgow's McLellan Galleries, following Margaret's death in early 1933. It is valued at between £600 and £800.

John Mackie, a director of Lyon & Turnbull and a specialist in early design said: "The works being sold next week chart significant stages in Mackintosh's artistic development.

"As one of only two cabinets created by Mackintosh for Catherine Cranston's bedroom, it's a rare and unique example of furniture which was specially made to his specifications

for his patron.

“Miss Cranston was a canny operator and saw the marketing advantage in having a pioneering designer like Mackintosh involved in her business enterprises. They had a good working relationship, and he was the obvious choice for designing the interiors of her marital home.

“The exquisite watercolour in the sale demonstrates another departure. These careful, naturalistic depictions of his immediate surroundings give an insight into the artist’s state of mind as he sought to recover from turbulent events at home.

“Mackintosh was an exceptional designer who could turn his artistic hand to anything and was compelled to do so by necessity after his architectural work almost dried up completely as the war continued.

“The Mackintosh textile design in the sale is evidence of yet another artistic reinvention by one of the finest designers of the era. We’re expecting competitive bidding from across the world.”



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