



The Sisters
of Glasgow

Margaret & Frances
Macdonald



The Rose Gallery
153 W. Regent St.
Glasgow, G2 2R
United Kingdom



Charles Rennie Mackintosh

The group known as 'The Four' comprised Charles Rennie Mackintosh, James Herbert McNair (1868 - 1955), and the sisters, Margaret Macdonald (1864 - 1933) and Frances Macdonald (1873 - 1921). The artists met as young students at Glasgow School of Art in the mid 1890s. Mackintosh and McNair were close friends and fellow apprentice architects in the Glasgow practice of Honeyman and

Keppie, and the sisters were day students at Glasgow School of Art. They formed an informal creative alliance which produced innovative and at times controversial graphics and decorative art designs. All four artists were heavily influenced by Aubrey Beardsley and Jan Toorop, whose work "The Three Brides" is considered to be of primary significance in the development of the Glasgow Style.

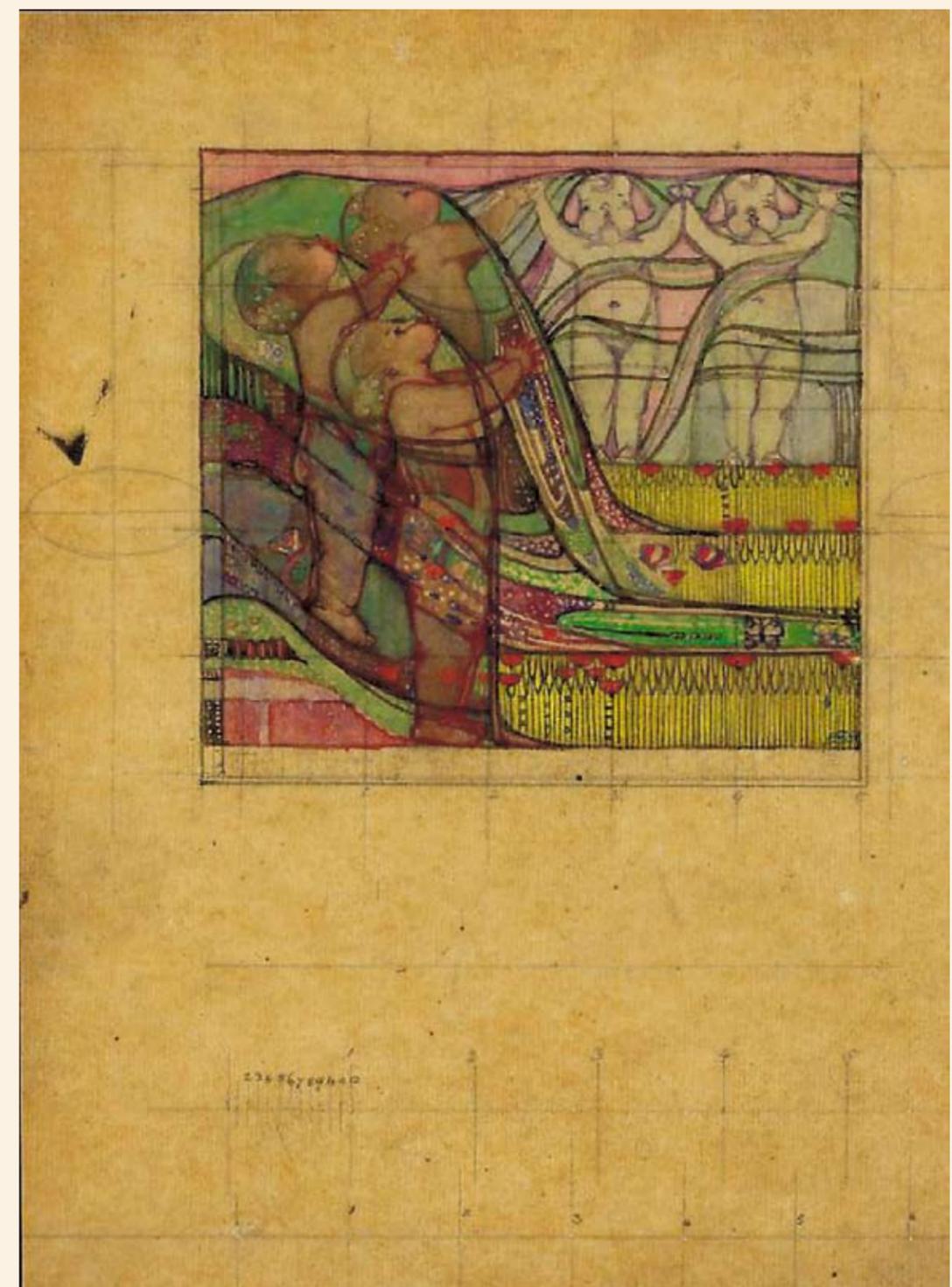
Frances Macdonald



Margaret Macdonald



James Herbert McNair



Frances Macdonald (1873-1921)

Frances Macdonald's achievements are less well known than those of her sister, Margaret Macdonald. In part this is due to the loss of much of her work, destroyed by her husband, Herbert McNair, after her death, and in part to the fact that she left Glasgow in 1899. Nonetheless she produced some of the most powerful imagery of the Glasgow Style, and her late symbolist watercolours are moving meditations on the choices facing women.

Frances was born in England and moved to Glasgow with her family by 1890. She enrolled as a student

at Glasgow School of Art where she met Mackintosh and Herbert McNair.

In the mid 1890s Frances left the School and set up an independent studio in the city centre with her sister. Together they collaborated on metalwork, graphics, textile designs and book illustrations, exhibiting in London, Liverpool and Venice. Her work and development has much in common with those of her sister, although her figures tend to be more emaciated and anguished. Like Margaret's, her work is characterized by an interest in symbolism, mythology and fairy subjects. Following her marriage in 1899 to Herbert McNair, she joined him in Liverpool where McNair was by then teaching design at the School of Architecture and Applied Art. The couple designed the interiors of their home at 54 Oxford Street and exhibited a Writing Room at the International Exhibition of Modern Art, Turin. Macdonald also started teaching, and developed skills in jewelry, enamel work and embroidery. The closure of the School in the early 1900s led to a gradual decline in their careers, compounded by the loss of the McNair family wealth through business failures. McNair had little success as a watercolorist and life for the couple was difficult. Such late works as *Man makes the beads of life but women*

thread them and Tis a long path which wanders to desire are no doubt a reflection of this. The couple returned to Glasgow in 1908. It was in the following years that Macdonald painted a moving series of symbolist watercolours addressing somber themes related to marriage, motherhood and the plight of women. Frances McNair died in 1921 at the age of 47, reportedly of a cerebral hemorrhage, although rumor persisted that she had taken her own life. After her death, Herbert McNair destroyed most of her work, as well as his own.

The largest single holding of her work is housed at the Hunterian Art Gallery, University of Glasgow. For further information consulted. Jude Burkhauser, 'Glasgow Girls', Canongate Press, 1990 and Janice Helland, 'The Studios of Frances Macdonald and Margaret Macdonald', University Press, 1995.



Margaret Macdonald (1864-1933)

Margaret was one of the most gifted and successful women artists in Scotland at the turn of the century. Her output was wide-ranging and included watercolours, graphics, metalwork and textiles. Arguably her greatest achievements were in gesso, a plaster-based medium, which she used to make decorative panels for furniture and interiors.

Macdonald was born in Tipton near Wolverhampton, England and came to Glasgow with her family around 1890. She enrolled as a day student at Glasgow School of Art, c.1893 where she met Charles Rennie Mackintosh and his friend, Herbert McNair. She left the School in the mid 1890s and set up an independent studio in the city with her sister, Frances.

Margaret and her sister worked together until Frances's marriage to James Herbert McNair and departure for Liverpool in 1899. Mackintosh and Margaret married in 1900, remaining in Glasgow till 1914, when they moved to London.

Collaboration was key to Margaret Macdonald's creativity. The partnership with her sister at 128 Hope Street, in the 1890s produced metalwork, graphics, and a series of book illustrations developing a distinctive style

influenced by mysticism, symbolism and Celtic imagery. Her early work c.1893-97, belongs to what came to be known as the 'Spook School' of Celtic expression. Her collaboration with Mackintosh comprised primarily the production of panels for interiors and furniture, notably for the Willow Tearooms 1904, the Warndorfer Music Salon in Vienna and The Hill House. Heady times ensued almost from the moment of their marriage. While exhibiting with the Secessionists in Vienna, they acquired friends among the luminaries of Eastern Europe and her miniatures incorporating substances like sandstone and pearl were revelatory to Klimt. A significant commission was also gained there: the Warndorfer Music Salon, destroyed in World War I. (The surviving panel from her *Seven Princesses* series hangs in the Vienna Arts and Crafts Museum opposite works by Klimt that reflect her influence.) The precise nature of their partnership is difficult to define, because little documentation survives. However it is certain that Macdonald played an important role in the development of the decorative, symbolic interiors of the early 1900s, including the House for an Art Lover portfolio, the Rose Boudoir, Turin and the Willow Tea Rooms.

In 1914 she and Charles settled in England, living in Chelsea 1916-23, and then at Port Vendres in the French Pyrenees 1923-27. Few works have come to light from these later years. In 1926 Margaret goes to London for medical treatment, and while she is there Mackintosh writes a series of letters to her. Indeed, he writes

to her almost every day. These letters are very important, as they give an insight into how much he loves and admires Margaret. He says that "he merely has talent, and she Margaret has genius", and on another occasion he tells her to always remember that she was half of all his architectural work. Ill health and the strain of Mackintosh's declining career contributed to a decline in her own output and no work after 1921 is known. Margaret died in London in 1933, five years after her husband.

The largest single holding of her work is housed at the Hunterian Art Gallery, University of Glasgow. For further information, consulted. Jude Burkhauser, 'Glasgow Girls', Canongate Press 1990 and Janice Helland, 'The Studios of Frances Macdonald and Margaret Macdonald', Manchester University Press, 1995.



1864 born on November the 5th in Kidsgrove, Staffordshire, England.

1873 born on August 24 in Kidsgrove, Staffordshire, England.

1877 enrolled in the extremely progressive Orme Girls' School in North Staffordshire, pioneer in the field of female education.

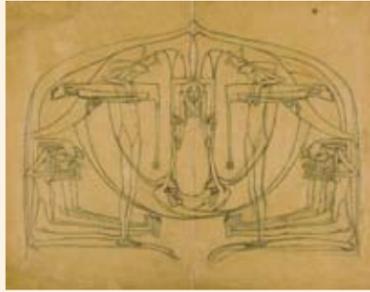
After leaving Orme's, Margaret studied in Germany. She spoke both French and German.

All this is very much parallel to the role of Fra Newberry and his vision of The Glasgow School of Art. Newberry was headmaster of GSA from 1885 - 1917.

1883 Was first admitted to the Glasgow School of Art.

1888 The family moved to 9 Windsor Terrace, in the west end of Glasgow.

1889 Was admitted to the Glasgow School of Art.



Frances Macdonald,

Design for the center panel for The Birth and Death of the Winds screen, 1893-96, pencil and ink on brown tracing paper, 36.6 x 51.1 cm



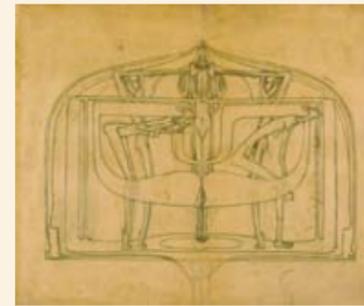
Frances Macdonald,

Ill Omen or Girl in the East Wind with Ravens Passing the Moon, 1893, Pencil and watercolor, 51.7 x 42.7 cm



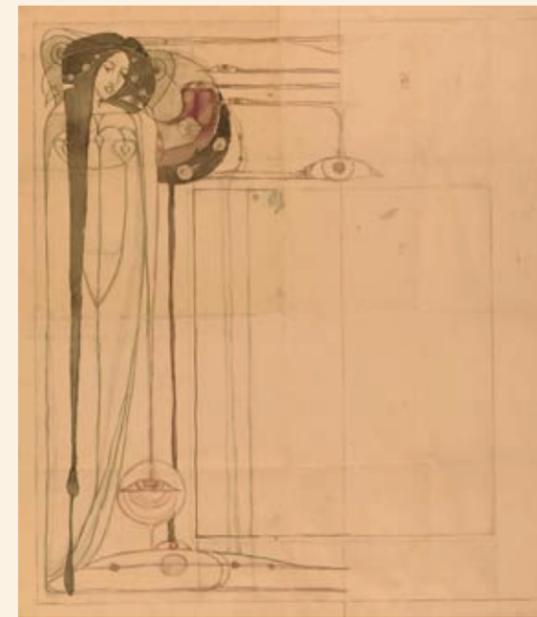
Frances Macdonald and Margaret Macdonald,

The Birth and Death of the Winds 3-panel Screen, 1893-96, Carved chestnut with inset raised copper panels, 162.5 x 152.3 cm



Margaret Macdonald,

Design for the right panel for The Birth and Death of the Winds screen, 1893-96, pencil and ink on brown tracing paper, 53.3 x 42.3 cm



Margaret Macdonald,

Design for a Mirror Frame c.1896, Black and red crayon and watercolour on paper, 85.3 x 71.6 cm

1893 Margaret and her sister Frances enrolled at the Glasgow School of Art as day students.

Exactly how and when they all first met each other is not clear but it's most likely that fellow student Jessie Keppie had a hand in it, as Mackintosh was by now working with her brother John and Macnair in the firm of Honeyman & Keppie.

1893 Article in The Magazine, published by students at The Glasgow School of Art. This is a commentary on students work which directed almost all the attention to the "brilliant sisters Macdonald"

1894 Mackintosh's engagement to Jessie Keppie is terminated, and it is around this time that he and Margaret committed themselves to each other.

1894 exhibit at The South Kensington Institute with far from sympathetic articles in the local press. They are ridiculed as "the spook school."

1895 start to work collaboratively. In July The Yellow Book publishes six watercolours, two each by Margaret and Frances. In October they exhibit in London at the 5th Arts and Crafts Exhibition. Two supportive articles appear in Studio magazine, which introduced their work to the Continent.



Frances Macdonald,
Calendar Art for November,
School of Art, 1894,
Watercolor and ink on paper,
50.8 x 38.1 cm



Margaret Macdonald,
Center detail from May Queen
(wall mural from Willow Tearoom)
1900, Painted gesso, with string &
glass beads, detail 28 x 36cm, full
36 x 76 cm



Frances Macdonald,
The Sleeping Princess, 1896, Pastel on tracing paper in a hammered copper
frame inscribed: Love, If thy tresses be so dark / How Dark those hidden eyes
must be, 19.0 x 46.4 cm



Frances Macdonald, Margaret Macdonald
and James Herbert McNair,
Poster for The Glasgow Institute of
Fine Arts, 1896, Color lithograph
printed in 4 sections, 236.0 x 102.0 cm



Frances Macdonald and Margaret Macdonald,
Clock, 1896, Hammered silver over wood,
26.5 x 26.5 cm



Margaret Macdonald,
Fabric Label for Sheenore Fabrics
c.1915, colored ink on black paper,
18.3 x 14.1cm

1895 Exhibits posters at the Salon de l'Art Nouveau, Paris and decorative art and furniture at Queen's Rooms in Glasgow.

1896 Exhibits posters at Royal Aquarium, London; Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool; Société des Beaux Arts, Glasgow; Arts and Crafts 5th Exhibition, London.

1896 open a studio at 128 Hope Street, Glasgow. Best known works from this period are their hammered metal panels, which are totally unique.

1897 Work featured in Studio magazine, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, and The Glasgow Institute.

1898 Article in Dekorative Kunst. Margaret's first recorded collaboration with Mackintosh. This was for three metal panels by her for a cabinet and fireplace designed by Mackintosh for H. Bruckmann's dining room in Munich.

1898 Work published in Dekorative Kunst magazine, and exhibited at the Royal Society of Scottish Painters in Watercolor, Edinburgh.

1899 Exhibited at the 3rd Venice Biennale, International Society of Sculptors, Painters, Gravers, London.

1899 Frances married Macnair June 14, and left Glasgow for Liverpool.

1899 Create their first white room at Dunglass Castle. Margaret makes a gesso panel for over the sitting room fireplace, The May Queen.

1900 Son Sylvan born on June 18.

1900 Marriage of Margaret Macdonald to Charles Rennie Mackintosh August 22 in Glasgow.

1900 They work on a pair of gesso panels for The White Dining Room at Miss Kate Cranston's Ingram Street Tea Rooms. Margaret's gesso panel is entitled The May Queen, and Mackintosh's is entitled The Wassail.

1900 Before being installed in Ingram street these were first exhibited in the room that they designed at the Vienna Secession Exhibition of 1900.

1900 Meets Gustav Klimt in Vienna and greatly impressed him. So much so, that Klimt's work was very influenced by hers for a considerable period.



Frances Macdonald,
Honesty, 1897, Hammered copper
on wooden frame, 73.0 x 73.6 cm



Frances Macdonald,
Spring, 1901, Watercolor on linen fixed to a board,
130.0 x 124.0 cm



Margaret Macdonald,
The Opera of the Sea, panel from the piano of the Salon
Warndorfer, Vienna (piano now lost), 1903, Painted
gesso, with string & glass beads 19.0 x 19.4 cm

1901 Margaret and Mackintosh submit their joint entry to The House for an Art Lover and was awarded a purchase prize, and was one of three entries published as a folio in 1902.

1901-02 Attended enameling classes at School of Architecture and Applied Art, Liverpool.

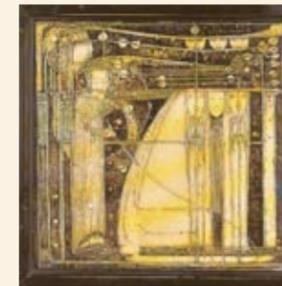
1902 Invited to take part in The International Exhibition of Modern Decorative Art in Turin. They create The Rose Boudoir. For this Margaret created two gesso panels The Heart of the Rose, and The White Rose and the Red Rose. Margaret created two further gesso panels, The Dreaming Rose and The Awakened Rose, which are set into the insides of the dark oak doors of a writing desk designed by Mackintosh. She also made a metal panel The Spirit of Love, which is set into the back of a cabinet in the centre and two further painted metal panels for the outside of the doors, showing a weeping rose.

1902 Exhibited, A Ladies Writing Room, at the International Exhibition of Modern Decorative Art, Turin, and Architecture and Design of the New Style, Moscow.



Margaret Macdonald,
The Heart of the Rose, 1901, Painted gesso, with
string & glass beads 89 x 89 cm

1902 Fritz Warndorfer, a wealthy Austrian businessman and generous patron of the arts, who had visited the Mackintoshes in Glasgow in early 1900, and who had funded their trip to Vienna later that year, commissioned two gesso panels from Margaret. These were small panels to be inserted into the casing of a piano for his Music Room, which Warndorfer also commissioned from the Mackintoshes this year. The Opera of the Wind, was completed in 1902.



Margaret Macdonald,
The Opera of the Wind, panel
from the piano of the Salon
Warndorfer, Vienna
(piano now lost), 1902,
painted gesso, with string
& glass beads
19.0 x 19.4 cm

1903 The other gesso panel of the pair, entitled The Opera of the Sea, was completed.

1903 The Music Room for Fritz Warndorfer is completed to huge acclaim.

1903 Created the much larger gesso panel O Ye, All That Walk in Willow Wood. This was the centerpiece of the Room de Lux in Kate Cranston's Willow Tearooms in Sauchiehall Street.



Margaret Macdonald,
O Ye That Walk in Willowood panel from the Room de Luxe, Willow
Tearoom, Glasgow, illustrates Dante Gabriel Rossetti's sonnet 'O Ye that
Walk in Willowood', 1903, Painted gesso, with braid, shell & glass beads
76.2 x 176.3 cm

1904 Completed the gesso panel Summer, which was then hung on the east wall of the drawing room at Dunglass Castle. The design is a progression of a design she did at Glasgow School of Art, which won the local design competition in 1894 for a "design for a window of mosaic glass".

1905 School of Architecture and Applied Art closed, Herbert moves briefly to the City Art School before joining Sandon Studios.

1905 Paints The Sleeper.

1906 Moved from 120 Mains Street to 6 Florentine Terrace, near Glasgow University.

1906 Paints Cinderella, and exhibits her painting The Silver Apples of the Moon in Glasgow.

1907 Exhibits her painting Spring, in Glasgow.

1907 Leave Liverpool for Glasgow.

1907-08 Teaches at the Glasgow School of Art

1908 Completed the gesso panel The Sleeping Princess for above the drawing room fireplace at The Hill House in Helensburgh.

c.1908 Leave Liverpool for Glasgow.



Margaret Macdonald,

The White Rose and The Red Rose, 1902, Gesso, painted, set with glass beads and shell, 99.0 x 101.5 cm

*The red rose whispers of passion,
And the white rose breathes of love;*

O the red rose is a falcon,

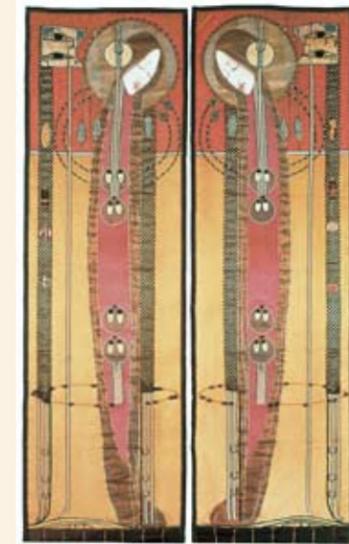
And the white rose is a dove.

John Boyle O'Reilly.



Frances Macdonald,

*Design for a pendant, 1901-02, Pencil and watercolor,
12.0 x 18.2 cm*



Margaret Macdonald,

Pair of Embroidered Panels at Glasgow School of Art, 1902, Linen with silk braid, ribbon, silk appliqué and bead decoration, 177.2 x 41 cm

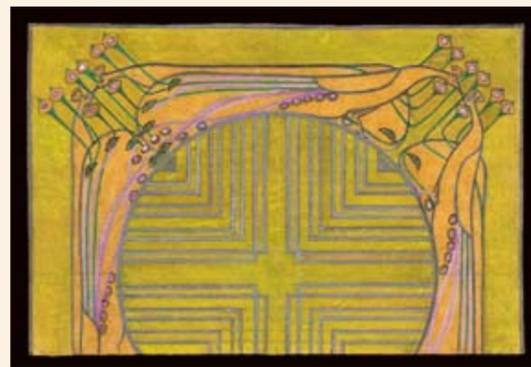
1908-09 Teaches at the Glasgow School of Art.

1909 Exhibited at Allied Artists Association, London; Macnair family bankrupt.

1909 This was the year that Margaret Macdonald completed what we believe to be her masterpiece, The Seven Princesses, from the play by Maurice Maeterlinck. It is her largest work, being made up of three panels of 1.52 x 2 metres (60" x 79") each.

Adding to its impact is the fact that the colors are as bright and vibrant as when it was first painted. The reason is that it was hidden away at the start of the 1914-18 war, due to the anti British feeling throughout Austria and Germany. This would have been perceived as the work of the enemy, and so could easily have been vandalized or simply destroyed.

In the event, the panels, which are extremely heavy, were crated-up and taken down to the basement of The Osterreichisches Museum Fur Angewandte Kunst, in Vienna. They were placed against the wall of the basement, and a false wall was built in front of them. There they remained undiscovered until 1990 when new pipes were being installed.



Margaret Macdonald, and Frances Macdonald

Textile design- vanity handkerchief, c.1920, pencil and watercolour on brown tracing paper, 16.0 x 25.2 cm



Margaret Macdonald,

The Seven Princesses, center of 3 panels, 1906, Gesso and pigment with beads and shell, 152.4 x 200.7 cm. Frieze designed for the Salon Warndorfer in Vienna.

1909 Sketching holiday in Sussex.

1909-11 Teaches at the Glasgow School of Art.

1910 Sketching holiday in Kent.

1910 Exhibits her painting Dead Princess at the International Art Exhibition in the Secession Building, Vienna.

1911 Work on the interiors at Miss Cranston's Tea Rooms, Ingram Street, Glasgow. Margaret paints The Mysterious Garden.

1911 Exhibited at Sandon Studios, Liverpool and Baillie Gallery, London.

1912 Offers a class in embroidery, which soon fails.

By 1913 in Canada, returning before the outbreak of WWI.

1913 Mackintosh resigned from Honeyman, Keppie and Mackintosh. Margaret submits photographs of the Seven Princesses, and In Willow Wood, as well as a design for The May Queen to the Ghent International Exhibition.



Frances Macdonald,
Man Makes the Beads of Life, but Woman Must Thread Them, 1911, Pencil and watercolor, 35.2 x 29.8 cm



Frances Macdonald,
The Sleeping Princess, 1901, Pencil, watercolor and gold paint on vellum, 14.7 x 47.8 cm



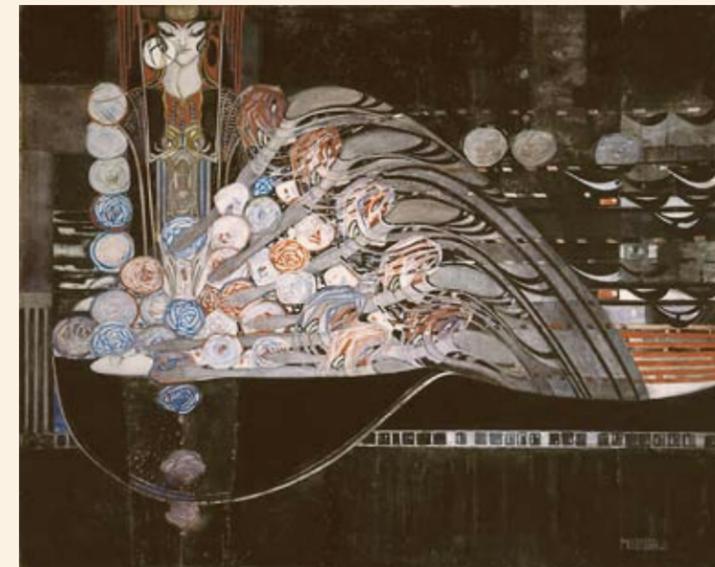
Frances Macdonald,
The Choice, 1911, Pencil, watercolor, gouache and gold paint on vellum 34.2 x 30.3 cm



Frances Macdonald,
study for Autumn, 1897, Pencil on brown vellum, 34.0 x 21.7 cm



Frances Macdonald,
Tis a Long Path which Wanders to Desire, 1912, Pencil and watercolor on vellum, 35.0 x 30.0 cm



Margaret Macdonald,
La Mort Parfumee, 1921, pencil, watercolour, gouache and gold paint on paper, 63 x 71.2 cm

1914 Take an extended holiday in Walberswick, on the Suffolk coast. He is exhausted, and has by now become totally depressed by the lack of interest and appreciation of his work in Glasgow.

1915 Move to London, and he never returns to Scotland. They joined private theatrical clubs and groups, and helped design sets and costumes and produce a large number of textile designs while living in London.

1916 The final documented artistic collaboration of Margaret with Mackintosh is the series of seven or eight paintings with candelabra that they exhibited at the 11th Arts and Crafts Exhibition in London. This was collectively titled The Voices of the Wood.

1921 Frances dies, and Margaret paints La Morte Parfumee.

1922 Paints her last known watercolor, The Legend of the Blackthorns.

1923 Moved to the South of France.

1923 Runs a car repair business with son Sylvan

1927 Sylvan emigrates to Rhodesia, Herbert moves to Argyll, Scotland.

1926 Margaret goes to London for medical treatment, and while she is there Mackintosh writes a series of letters to her. Indeed, he writes to her almost every day.

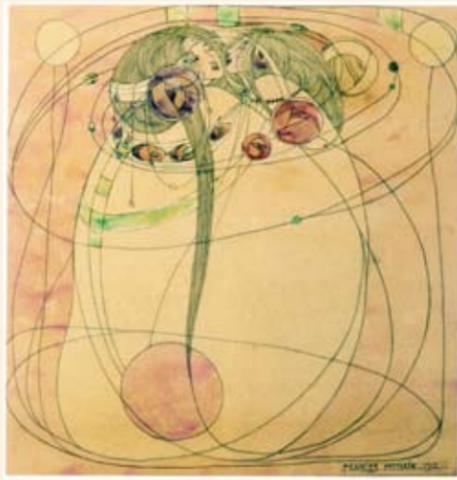
1927 Return to London so that Mackintosh this time can have medical treatment.

1928 Dies in London on the 10th of December.

1933 Dies in London on the 7th of January.

1952 Victoria and Albert Museum, Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Art exhibition includes their work.

1955 Dies April 22 in Argyll, Scotland.



Frances Macdonald,
Design for an Appliqué Panel for
Fritz Warndorfer, Vienna, 1903,
Pencil and watercolor, 30.5 x 30.5 cm



Frances Macdonald,
Prudence and Desire, 1913, Pencil and watercolor,
35.2 x 29.9 cm



Frances Macdonald,
Spirit of the Rose, 1903-03, Pencil and watercolor
on brown paper, 50.5 x 50.6 cm



Frances Macdonald,
The Moonlit Garden, 1898, Pencil, watercolor and gouache
on brown tracing paper, 31.8 x 52.0 cm



Frances Macdonald,
Girl and Butterflies, 1907, Watercolor on vellum , 28.6 x 28.6 cm



Margaret Macdonald,
Design for Chiffon Voile Fabric, 2 schemes,
1917, Pencil, watercolour and gouache on
brown tracing paper laid on cream paper,
251.0 x 200.0 cm



Frances Macdonald,
Woman Standing Behind The Sun, 1914, Pencil, watercolor,
gouache and gold paint on vellum 35.2 x 30.3 cm