

Protecting the GSA Heritage

Guidelines for commercial use of the Mackintosh Building

GSA has a major responsibility to care for the fabric and contents of the Mackintosh Building. It has realised this responsibility through the recent *Mackintosh Conservation and Access Project* which has resulted in a considerable amount of restoration work and major improvements to both its educational and heritage facilities. Its aim now is to maintain the building in this revitalised condition for current and future generations of users. It is also committed to ensuring that the Mackintosh Building continues to function as was originally intended as a working art school providing students and staff with an excellent working environment. This should be seen as a considerable privilege which carries a duty of care which recognises the importance and unique nature of the building. It requires that the School consider how its daily 'work' activities add to the level of 'wear and tear' faced by the building and its historical contents, and how damage can be minimised.

In addition, third-party use of the building in the form of public access/commercial use will always be strictly controlled and if needs arise could be severely limited and/or refused.

The following document identifies simple operating guidelines which will greatly assist with the preservation of the historic fabric of the Mackintosh Building whilst allowing the building to continue to function as a unique space of learning. In many instances, the same guiding principles of 'use and management' of the Mackintosh heritage apply as much to GSA staff and students as they do to all external users of the building.

Historic fabric

It is essential that every care be taken of original woodwork, surface finishes, doors, stained glass and other fittings across the Mackintosh Building as damage to them is often impossible to correct without incurring considerable costs. The Mackintosh Building is unique in that many original Mackintosh items of furniture are either still in daily use, or are located in areas of high footfall. As a result, special consideration needs to be given to how these areas are utilised. Interiors such as the Mackintosh library should only be considered as a valid venue for third-party use including commercial activities if the particular request justifies its use. Could an alternative venue in the building be considered as a suitable replacement?

The Mackintosh Room

The original Mackintosh chairs, settles and cabinets in this room should not be used, or moved from their current location. (Most of these items already carry a label to that effect).

Care should also be taken not to lean other items, including foldaway tables, projectors and screens, and/or other equipment against the original Mackintosh furniture. When used for corporate hospitality glasses/plates should not be placed on any of this original furniture and the use of hotplates/food serveries requires separate approval, in advance from Estates and/or the Mackintosh Curator. The serving of red wine is not allowed at events due to the risk of spills and the potential of staining to the carpet.

Mackintosh Library

Whilst this interior is first and foremost a working space, specific attention should be made to the original library furniture. The recently restored Mackintosh tables and chairs can, in most instances be used by students and staff (only), but extra care should be taken when doing so. All other surfaces should be treated with respect and nothing should be pinned or taped, particularly to the wood and glass.

Furniture should remain if possible, where it is, particularly the central periodical desk, which is at risk from damage if moved. The smaller tables and chairs should only be moved if *absolutely* necessary and always with prior approval of either the Mackintosh Curator or the Library. The smaller chairs placed around the periodical desk, together with the curved Windsor chairs should *not be* used – these pieces are simply too delicate. (Most of these items will already be roped off and/or labelled accordingly, and tours groups are advised not to use any of the furniture, thereby reducing the amount of unnecessary ‘wear and tear’.

Extreme care should be taken when introducing filming or other bulky equipment into the Library. It is important that the temperature and humidity of the Library remains as constant as possible. However, if additional lighting is to be used when filming, consideration should be given to the potential build up of heat caused by these lights and the close proximity of smoke and heat detectors within this room. Arrangements can be made in *advance* with Estates to isolate *some* of these sensors if required, but only for a limited time period. Access to the Library balcony is also restricted on health and safety grounds.

Avoid placing bags and other items onto all Mackintosh table and chairs. Food and drink should also not be consumed with the library.

If books/periodicals left out on work surfaces or in other vulnerable locations are in the way, then Library staff should be notified and they will arrange to move them.

Plaster Casts

The School's collection of late 19th century plaster casts located throughout the Mackintosh Building have all been recently cleaned and restored with funds provided by the *Mackintosh Conservation and Access* project.

In the past, substantial damage has occurred as a result of casts being moved, often to inappropriate locations, such as too close to doors. To prevent this element of damage occurring again, most of the larger casts have now been fixed to their current position by means of wall brackets. The School's Mackintosh Curator should be contacted in advance to approve the removing of these brackets and the moving of all casts. The casts are surprisingly delicate objects and should be treated as such.

Outstanding issues/permissions

In line with Scottish Government regulations, the Glasgow School of Art operates a strict No Smoking policy across all campus building. In addition, and with the exception of Assistance Dogs, animals are not permitted within school buildings

Inevitably, commercial requests can throw up unexpected requests which often require a seemingly immediate decision. If uncertain, responses should be sought from either the Mackintosh Curator or from colleagues in Estates, the Library or elsewhere in the School.

In the absence of a suitable response from an appropriate department (within the time required), it would be perfectly acceptable to turn down these third-party requests and GSA/GSAE staff should not feel pressured in any way to meet every request. Most importantly, the School must be seen to dictate what can and can not be done and inevitably what happens in the Mackintosh Building rests entirely with GSA itself.

If you have any further questions or queries then please do get in touch.

Peter Trowles
Mackintosh Curator
October 2011

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Some Do's and Don'ts

DO consider alternative venues, where possible, for filming/interviewing etc to minimise the risk of potential damage/disruption to the building and its users. Use of the Mackintosh Library, in particular, should be kept to the very minimum.

Don't move original Mackintosh furniture in areas such as the Mackintosh Room and the Mackintosh Library, and any of the plaster casts, unless absolutely necessary and without first consulting the Mackintosh curator or other relevant staff.

Don't allow food and drink into the Mackintosh Library, and in the Mackintosh Room this should be kept to a bare minimum, with no red-wine to be served.

Don't place bags or other items (camera equipment, used glasses etc) on original surfaces, Mackintosh furniture, or on any of the plaster casts throughout the building, and take care when bringing large items of additional furniture/equipment into these heritage interiors.

Do remember that the use of extra lighting/reflectors etc can generate additional heat and the GSA's smoke and heat detectors are very sensitive to this.

Don't forgot that GSA has the final say on all public/commercial access and can limit/prohibit the use of the Mackintosh Building as it deems fit.

Points of contact:

Peter Trowles, Mackintosh Curator (x4524): for all queries concerning the Mackintosh heritage, including permission to move/relocate objects.

Catherine Nicholson, Head of Learning Resources (x4550): for permission to use the Mackintosh Library

Michael Quigley/Barrie Stewart/Michel Kelly, Estates Department (x1426, 1430, 1430): for access arrangements, including weekends/evenings; delivery of additional services (power supplies etc) and other GSA facilities, i.e. cleaning.

Scott Parsons, Marketing and Communication Director (x1440): for all media/communication matters.

John Martin, Assistant Company secretary (x1434); legal liability, insurance provision etc