

## Architecture & Design Club

### *Scottish Historic Shop Fronts*

*12 March 2020*

Dr Lindsay Lennie gave an illustrated talk on Scottish Traditional Shopfronts. She highlighted through photographs how architectural styles were influenced by the construction period, retailer history, purpose and budget, the parent building, available materials and fashion. She then summarised the evolution of shop styles, identifying key features of each era

Early shop premises such as ‘luckenbooths (locked stall) were used for valuable goods, being more secure than market stalls. Scottish authorities promoted shop colonnades to encourage demolition of timber buildings, but this failed because shady loggias accommodated “thieves, pick-pockets, the idle and disorderly.”

By the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, shops were incorporated into buildings. Georgian shop fronts (1780-1820) had timber frames with limited window spans and small glass panes. Bow fronts allowed more light onto the display while leaving the masonry unchanged.



(513 Lawnmarket, Edinburgh)

As manufacturing techniques advanced larger plate glass windows were incorporated and became a major feature of frontages in the early Victorian period. After the glass tax was lifted, horizontal windows were introduced allowing a more visible display. Pairs of rectangular windows were separated by a central, square recessed entry. The shop name was displayed above the door frequently with console brackets at either end of name boards and often illustrated with a hanging sign or symbol.



(Shop front Perth)

(Console brackets)

The late Victorian period saw the widespread use of cast iron, encaustic tiles, tiled interiors, large and tall windows and splayed entrances, which allowed better views in. In Glasgow, James Duncan Ltd designed and installed tiles in many shops. Clients included the Cooperative Society and Buttercup Dairies. Lipton's Coop in Arbroath is the only intact, surviving Scottish example, with black and white chequered floor tiles.



(Gardner's in Cromarty has a MacFarlane iron frame.)



(Buttercup dairy)

Edwardians designed elegant curved entrances to entice shoppers into their shops, often with the premises' name incorporated into the mosaic or marble entrance floors. Arts and Crafts stained glass was another feature. The Art Deco period saw minimalist design, smooth materials (chrome, Vitrolite, terrazzo), motifs (sunrises) geometric designs; etched glass; and elaborate ventilation grilles. This was followed by electric light lit arcaded entries with showcase islands, which took up valuable display space were time-consuming to maintain.

Post-war designs were more modest with exceptions such as Walkers Bakery wedge-shaped entrance in Aberlour also featuring Travertine marble and bronze. Quirky 1960s designs were followed by 1970s plastic and aluminium. Recent shops show less attention to design and material quality and historic post-war survivals are rare.



(Walkers Bakery)

The talk concluded with a brief overview of six conservation and restoration projects across Scotland.

A [Short Guide on Scottish Traditional Shopfronts](#) is available from Historic Environment Scotland as a pdf document

***The Architects and Architecture of Scottish Cinemas – Fleapits & Palaces***

*13 February 2020*

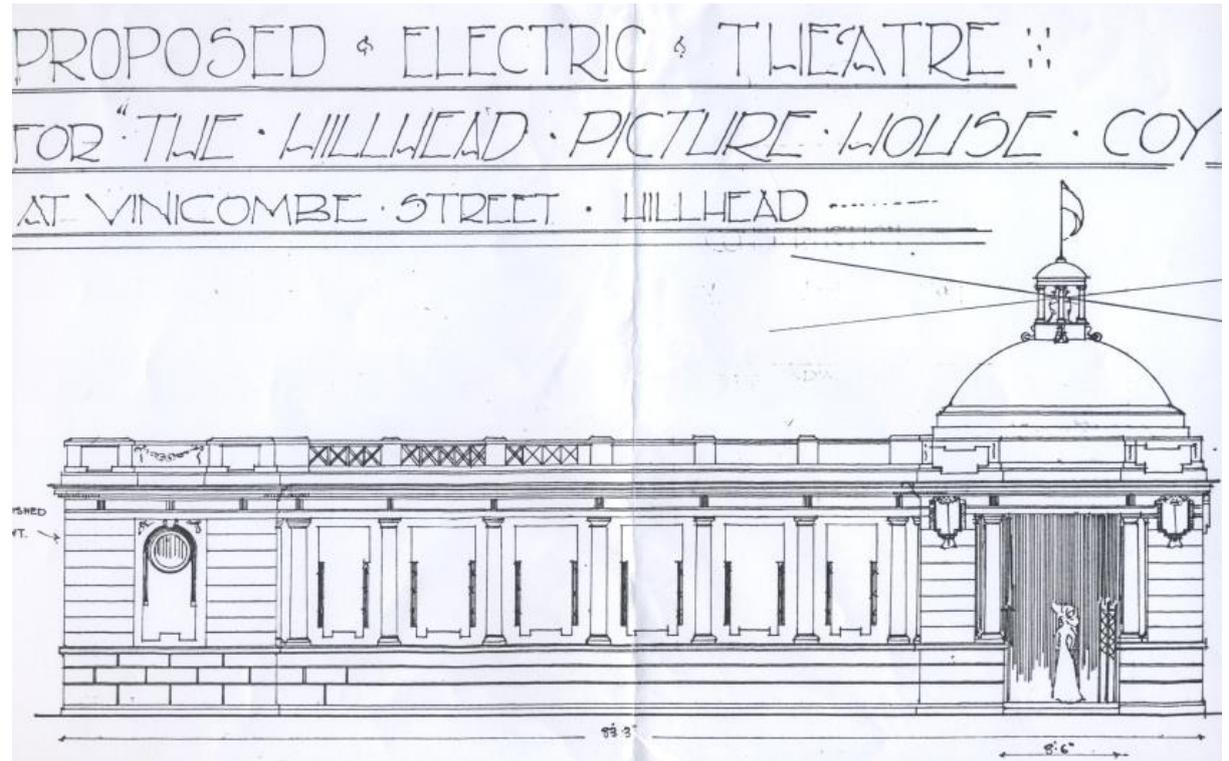
In its heyday just before WW2, “there were 114 picture houses in Glasgow with seating for 175,000, more than any other city in the world.” Glaswegians went to the cinema about once a week, a third more than Scots in general.

Gary Painter, from the Cinema Theatre Association, introduced us to a selection of these cinemas and the architects who designed them (who were mainly Scottish). Magic lanterns, panoramas and dioramas were early forms of visual entertainment but the 1890s saw the introduction of moving film (Lumiere brothers). A range of buildings was used for showing these including: panopticon, panoramas, music halls, church/town halls as well as travelling shows. It was fairly chaotic until the Cinematography Act (1909) which addressed issues such as fire-proofing and a separate projection room (film was highly flammable) and led to purpose-built cinemas.



### *The Hippodrome, Boness*

Amongst the earliest in Scotland were The Hippodrome in Boness (1912 – restored and reopened in 2009), The Salon in Glasgow’s west end (1913) and The Picture House in Campbelltown (1913 – restored and reopened 1917). All three are A-listed.



*Architectural plans for The Salon, Vinicombe Street, Glasgow*

Following WW1, architects looked to the USA where cinema construction had continued, with pleasure palaces that were 'bigger and better' and elaborate interiors— art deco, atmospheric, etc.



### *Campbelltown Picture House*

Cinemas became less ornate (exterior and interior) and more easily maintained in the 1950s, a trend that's continued through to today's Multiplexes. Cinema going declined with the introduction of TV and many buildings were converted to bingo halls or, lamentably, knocked down.

Scottish architects were foremost in the design of cinemas and some well-known names were

- William Beresford Inglis (Toledo, Muirend)
- James McKissack (Cosmo/GFT)
- Alister Gladstone MacDonald (specialised in news theatres, son of Ramsay MacDonald)
- William Glen (chief architect for ABC)
- Thomas W Lamb and B Marcus Priteca (best known in the US).

Gary's talk triggered lots of memories and reminiscences of cinemas visited and experiences of cinema going.

Cinema Theatre Association <http://cinema-theatre.org.uk/>

Scottish Cinemas and Theatres Project <http://scottishcinemas.org.uk/>

### *Glass and Light - Serendipity*

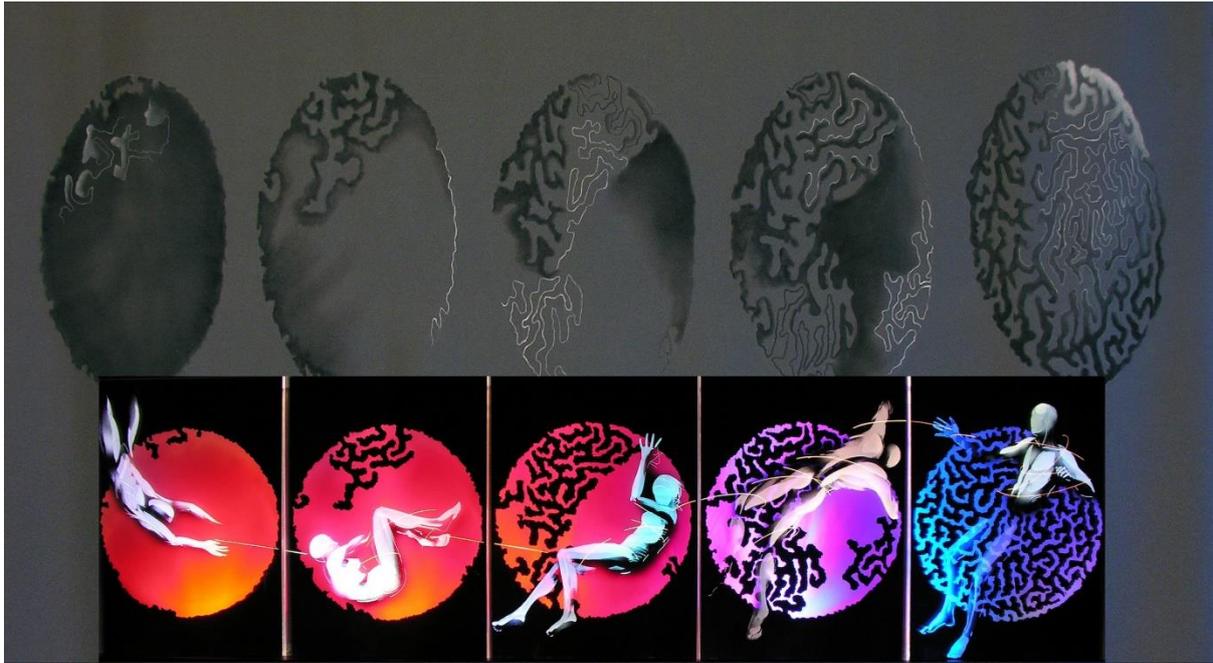
*9 January 2020*

Alison Kinnaird MBE is a Glass Sculptor, Celtic Musician, Teacher and Writer with an international reputation as an artist working in glass. Her talk “Serendipity” reflected the serendipitous way her career and work developed. Alison studied Celtic Studies and Archaeology at university. Later, she met engraver Harold Gordon going on to practice under his guidance – events that influence her work.

Wheel engraving dates from Babylonian times, now electric motors drive lathes to which abrasive wheels are attached. Images carved on the back of glass appear as if modelled in 3D. Engraved glass of many shapes, sizes and colours can be pieced together in sections, leaded into place or laminated. Alison often uses LED technology to produce colour e.g. in her work “Bed of Roses” the red in petals comes from lighting.



Alison presented images of her work including a triptych “Past, Present and Future” and the “Praise” window commissioned for Dornoch Cathedral. She talked of how surroundings and experiences inspire her e.g. to portray youth culture and human diversity in striking ways. She collaborates with glass manufacturers and LED specialists and recently developed the “Double Engraved Reverse Lamination” process. Demonstrating clearly that glass, which might be perceived as unyielding, is transformed by wheel engraving and modern lighting into light, colour and life.



Alison Kinnaird is based at Shillinghill Studios, Temple, Midlothian, [www.alisonkinnaird.com](http://www.alisonkinnaird.com). Her work ranges from small intimate pieces to architectural scale projects and is in many public and private collections including the Scottish National Portrait Gallery.

## ***Glasgow Avenues: How People Make Glasgow, Laura Scott-Simmons and Isla Jackson***

*14 November 2019*

Isla Jackson, Project Director introduced us to “The Avenues” project in which Glasgow City Council is investing approximately £115m to transform 17 key streets and adjacent areas (or “Avenues”) in Glasgow’s city centre as part of the City Deal funding. This is to be achieved through the introduction of an improved external environment that will see streetscape improvements made to the public realm, the establishment of principal routes throughout the city to form an integrated network of continuous pedestrian and cycle priority routes, re-balance traffic modes (prioritising sustainable transport), introduce green and SMART infrastructure, and place people firmly at the heart of the project vision and design strategy, making the city more attractive, “people-friendly”, less traffic dominated and economically competitive.

Glasgow City Council’s Local Transport Strategy is being developed in parallel and a key issue is the Council’s plans in relation to George Square, ie whether to pedestrianise it or not. If yes, there will be consequences for bus routes in particular and knock on effects for the Avenues project.

Laura Scott-Simmons, landscape architect, then told us about “The Underline” project which she is leading on. This will reconnect the West-end with the City by recreating the original link from Great Western Road via New City Road to Cowcaddens and hence into Cambridge Street. The link with the City centre was lost when the M8 was built. Most of the route is extremely unattractive and not conducive to ease of movement plus there are concerns about

personal safety. The proposed scheme will introduce new green space (including trees and rain gardens), improve lighting and footpath/cycleways to tempt people back into using these routes.

More information can be found at <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/avenues>

## The Underline



## St George's Place - Proposed



## Cambridge Street - Proposed



## ***Real Houses Fit for Human Beings***

*10 October 2019*

Dr Ailsa Boyd, an independent researcher, discussed a Victorian interior design movement of the 1860's, in which there was a belief that tasteful decoration had a beneficial effect on the health of society. She illustrated this with examples by Owen Jones, who was one of the most influential design theorists of the 19th century and decorated the house of the great novelist George Eliot, and also by our own Alexander 'Greek' Thomson, who put these beliefs into practice here in Glasgow.

It was a fascinating glimpse into the Victorian mind which led into the later Arts & Crafts movement. They wished decoration to have 'repose' – and she showed an example of an Owen Jones wallpaper which was amazingly modern in the simplicity of its design. They believed in moral sense and good taste; in the importance of beauty and intelligence in design.



Alexander Thomson, who opposed the fashion for gothic revival, was highly influential in the Glasgow buildings of the 1860's. He believed in the 'preminence of eternal beauty' and Holmwood House, Dr Boyd thought, was a wonderful example of this clear, uncluttered design. The recently completed renovations to its murals and original paintwork were well worth visiting.



Thomson was also very preoccupied with how good design could help the health and welfare of the ordinary citizens of Glasgow (he had lost 5 of his children to a cholera epidemic).