
This version is available at: http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/3109/

Copyright:

Middlesex University Research Repository makes the University's research available electronically. Copyright and moral rights to this work are retained by the author and/or other copyright owners unless otherwise stated. The work is supplied on the understanding that any use for commercial gain is strictly forbidden. A copy may be downloaded for personal, non-commercial, research or study without prior permission and without charge.

Works, including theses and research projects, may not be reproduced in any format or medium, or extensive quotations taken from them, or their content changed in any way, without first obtaining permission in writing from the copyright holder(s). They may not be sold or exploited commercially in any format or medium without the prior written permission of the copyright holder(s).

Full bibliographic details must be given when referring to, or quoting from full items including the author's name, the title of the work, publication details where relevant (place, publisher, date), pagination, and for theses or dissertations the awarding institution, the degree type awarded, and the date of the award.

If you believe that any material held in the repository infringes copyright law, please contact the Repository Team at Middlesex University via the following email address:

eprints@mdx.ac.uk

The item will be removed from the repository while any claim is being investigated.

See also repository copyright: re-use policy: http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/policies.html#copy
This brief guide gives an introduction to the Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture's (MODA) opening exhibition.

Archibald Knox at the Silver Studio is the first authoritative presentation of Knox's work in England. It is a fitting choice for MODA's first exhibition since it brings together the museum's important Silver Studio Collection and the work of one of Britain's most talented, yet least recognized, designers of the 1890s and early 1900s.

Archibald Knox (1864-1933) grew up on the Isle of Man where he absorbed the language and motifs of a long tradition of Celtic art. His father and brothers were engineers but Archibald decided that this life was not for him. Instead, he attended Douglas Grammar School and subsequently gained a place at Douglas School of Art. He quickly proved to be an able pupil, and after a short while became a 'pupil teacher', meaning that his fees were paid in return for some teaching duties. As a young man he developed a passion for the Celtic art of the island, recruiting local artists with the hope that the work they were coming to be recognised as a rich part of Manx heritage.

Knox's early life forms something of a contrast to the fashionable world of London, where he arrived in 1897. The capital's increasingly affluent, and ever-expanding, middle classes generated a growing appetite for consumer goods. A number of publications, such as Mrs Panton's From Kitchen to Toilet (1889), encouraged a greater interest in home furnishing. Increasingly, society meant that the middle classes could afford domestic help, which in turn meant that middle-class ladies had leisure time in which to visit the new department stores and study magazines about the latest home furnishing trends. Magazines and household manuals such as these encouraged the idea that it was impertinent to have the right furnishings in order to reflect - and maintain - one's social status.

Archibald Knox became an associate of the Silver Studio in 1897. Arthur Silver had seen the potential of the expanding home furnishing market, and had established the 'Silver Studio of Design' in Hammersmith in 1880. It rapidly became one of Britain's most successful studios producing designs for wallpapers, textiles, metalwork and other decorative items for the home. Designs were employed on both a salaried and freelance basis, and the Studio sold their work to leading manufacturers and retailers. Firms such as Liberty & Co marketed these designs under their own name, which meant that the names of the Silver Studio and its designers were obscured. The Silver Studio continued to operate successfully until 1963, but the period between 1880 and 1910 was undoubtedly its most prolific.

Knox first came to London to teach at the Redhill School of Art, and it is not clear how he developed a connection with the Silver Studio. It is possible that he was introduced by his friend Christopher Dresser, who had been a close associate of Arthur Silver before Silver's death in 1896. By whatever means it came about, Knox quickly established himself as a talented designer of 'flat patterns', as the large pastels shown here ably demonstrate.

These large-scale designs for wallpapers and textiles are among the first work he produced for the Studio. Examples such as 12 and 14 demonstrate his keen understanding of the challenge involved in designing a repeating pattern, while retaining a charming simplicity and subtlety. Designs like these were sold to Wylie and Lochhead, a leading Glasgow furnishing firm and wallpaper manufacturer, and one of the Silver Studio's best customers.

Despite the undoubted charm of his flat patterns, Knox is better known now for his designs for metalwork for Liberty & Co. Like Arthur Silver, Arthur Lascelles Liberty had recognised the potential of the market for luxury goods and home furnishings. His firm, Liberty & Co, opened in 1875 and the Regent Street store quickly established itself as a leader in fashionable taste. It specialised in exotic imported oriental goods, catering for those who wished to decorate their homes in the fashionable 'esthetic' style.

Realising the need for his firm to keep up with ever-changing tastes, Arthur Liberty commissioned a range of silverware inspired by the 'Celtic Revival' which enjoyed enormous popularity at the turn of the century. The Cyrnic range of silverware was launched in 1899, and Knox's metalwork designs were central to Liberty & Co's enormous success during this period. Knox's designs became integral to what we now think of as 'Liberty Style'. Knox was not the only designer responsible for these ranges, (others included Bernard Crane, Oliver Baker and Jessie M King), but he was certainly the central figure.
Cynic silver included numerous ‘special occasion’ items such as cups and bowls that might be given as a prize, or to commemorate a special anniversary. It also included smaller items such as ‘ornaments for personal wear’ (rings, brooches and clasps... [and] such dainty ornamental necessaries of the toilet table as the slender and graceful vase, the elegant trivets yet exquisite jewel tray or essence holder... which help to complete the luxurious equipage of the boudoir’.

Tudric pewter was less expensive, and the range included a number of more ‘everyday’ items such as the tea service (50) and biscuit barrels (46, 47) shown here.

The Cynic and Tudric ranges were intended as an alternative to the more expensive metalwork then being produced by Arts and Crafts designers such as CR Ashbee. Ashbee and others produced hand-crafted items on a small scale. However, workshops such as theirs were not able to produce the volume of goods necessary for a successful London firm such as Liberty & Co, which therefore looked to produce metal items by large-scale production methods.

Knox’s designs were put into production for Liberty & Co by WH Haselor of Birmingham, a long-established goldsmith and jewellery maker. This firm ensured that items were produced to the high standards that Liberty & Co’s reputation for quality required. Knox proved very able to produce designs which were compatible with the demands of large-scale production. They exploit the sort of finish that machines do best, including the smooth cylindrical exteriors of vases such as 38 and 40.

But arguably he also followed in the best traditions of the Arts and Crafts Movement, in that pattern is never simply applied to an object, but is integral to it. The legs and handles of his vases and bowls always form part of the overall shape, as in, for example, 39 and 42. Knox’s metalwork designs are characterised by a lack of unnecessary decoration, a sense of proportion and balance, and appear extremely modern at the same time as drawing their inspiration from the past.

The Celtic style which Knox developed through his metalwork designs for Liberty & Co is characterised by the use of interlacing linear patterns and the use of decorative enamel. His designs for textiles and wallpapers also employ these Celtic motifs, such as the knot-work used in it. It is clear that Knox drew much of his inspiration from the forms and decorative devices of Manx art. Yet he also drew on the ideas of other Silver Studio designers, such as Harry Napper, to develop his own particular Art Nouveau style.

Knox’s authorship of many of the designs for Liberty & Co, said through the Silver Studio, has long been the subject of debate. Arthur Liberty did not attribute designs to individual artists, preferring to market them simply under the name of Liberty & Co. Similarly, the Silver Studio obscured the names of its designers, so that after Arthur Silver’s death designs were often credited to Rev Silver, his son, who took over as head of the studio in 1900.

It is unfortunate that the meticulous day book records kept by Silver Studio employees for almost the entire history of the Studio (1880 - 1963) have not survived for the period that Knox was employed. However, Mark Turner has argued that that ‘flex Silver’ was in fact responsible for only very few of the designs attributed to him during the period 1911 to 1963, and that it was much more likely that the majority were the work of other designers working in or for the Studio during this period and earlier.

Surviving records for November 1898 show that a number of metalwork designs were sold to Liberty & Co, and it is unlikely that anyone else associated with the Silver Studio at the time would have been able to produce this kind of work. Furthermore, some of Knox’s designs for textiles and wallpapers, produced for the Silver Studio, show clear stylistic links to his metalwork. For example, the squared-leaf motif is a feature of both textile designs such as 10, 13 and 17 and of budgies and clasps such as 64 and 51.

Knox returned to the Isle of Man in 1900, and continued to supply metalwork designs to Liberty & Co for a number of years. His silver and pewter of this period is seen by some as among his best work, moving from the Celtic ornament of the earlier work to the uncluttered ‘Modernist’ lines of items such as the Cynic tea service (49).

As an intensely shy, even reclusive person, Knox would doubtless have hated the attention which his work currently attracts: His metalwork items - now extremely collectable - and his past designs, have a strange beauty which is unlike the work of almost any other designer. It is fitting that MoDA’s first temporary exhibition in the new building should focus on the work of this talented yet surprisingly little-recognised man.

Zoë Hendon
Assistant Curator, MoDA
October 2000

2 Mrs J. Burton, from Kitchen to Garden, 1989.
5 'Cynic' Silver catalogue, Liberty & Co, 1900, pls 5-6.
8 See Silver Studio Decksheets, November 1898, in the Silver Studio Collection, MoDA.
6 Florals textile design
attrib. Archibald Knox, ca. 1897
Pencil and pastel on detail paper, 450x395mm.
The square, stylised, blue flowers are similar to those in 7. This motif is also used by Knox for some of his jewellery designs, particularly widows' caps.
SD 25697 Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture

7 Florals textile design
attrib. Archibald Knox, ca. 1897
Pencil and pastel on detail paper, 450x395mm.
Stylised flower and angle leaf in brown, on a maroon ground.
SD 25697 Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture

8 Design for wallpaper or carpet
attrib. Archibald Knox, ca. 1897
Pencil and pastel on detail paper, 750x595mm.
Stylised blue flowers and green leaves on a dark ground.
SD 25697 Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture

9 Florals textile design
attrib. Archibald Knox, ca. 1900
Pencil on detail paper, 710x529mm.
Hand-embroidered, stylised design of flowers and leaves, in neutral colours of grey, olive green, orange and brown.
SD 11702 Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture

10 Florals textile design
attrib. Archibald Knox, ca. 1900
Pencil on detail paper, 585x445mm.
Stylised flowers and leaves in orange, yellow and mauve on dark green ground.
SD 21432 Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture

11 Florals textile design
attrib. Archibald Knox, ca. 1897
Pencil and pastel on detail paper, 660x529mm.
Light and mid-green flowers and leaves on a dark green ground, suggesting elements of Celtic knotwork.
SD 25695 Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture

13 Textile design
attrib. Archibald Knox, ca. 1900
Machine-woven tapestry, 300x430mm.
The design for this textile appears in this firm's catalogue, perhaps from 1900. It is not clear if this is a definitive design or an initial sketch.
SD 11702 Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture

14 Floral textile design
attrib. Archibald Knox, ca. 1899
Pencil and pastel on detail paper, 760x529mm.
Asymmetrical, Art Nouveau, floral design; showing yellow flowers and large heart-shaped leaves in shades of green on a dark blue ground.
SD 25699 Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture

15 Floral textile design
attrib. Archibald Knox, ca. 1899
Pencil and pastel on detail paper, 760x529mm.
Yellow flowers and green leaves on a blue ground.
SD 25698 Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture

16 Floral textile design
attrib. Archibald Knox, ca. 1897
Pencil, gouache and conté on detail paper, 400x559mm.
SD 25637 Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture

17 Floral textile design
attrib. Archibald Knox, ca. 1900
Machine-woven tapestry, 300x430mm.
The stylised flowers and leaves are outlined in brown, and the background is a blue-grey. This is a definitive design and suggests elements of Celtic knotwork.
SD 11702 Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture

18 Design for a silver photograph frame, 'The Rhaco'
Archibald Knox, 1900.
Pencil, crayon and wash on detail paper, 275x235mm.
This design is one of the few known designs by Knox for silverware.
SD 20172 Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture

19 Design for a clock, 'The Magnifico'
Archibald Knox, 1900.
Pencil, crayon and wash on tracing paper, 240x230mm.
This is one of the few known designs by Knox for clocks.
SD 16338 Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture

20 Sheet of trial designs for use
Archibald Knox, 1900.
Charcoal and pastel on card detail paper, 165x127mm.
This is the sheet on which the designs for 'The Rhaco' were sketched.
SD 16338 Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture

21 Design for candlesticks, 'The Luminous'
Archibald Knox, ca. 1900.
Pencil on tracing paper, 240x230mm.
Design is for a group of candlesticks, each with a rectangular base.
SD 20172 Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture
Design for a silver bowl, 'The Dogstar'
Archibald Knox, ca. 1900
Pencil on tracing paper, 34x228mm
This design for a bowl is believed to be by Knox because of its intricate Celtic interlacing, and its title 'The Dogstar' is a possible connection with 'Dogstar', the nickname of the 'Lion of Man', to which the interlaced 'D' motif and interlaced 'dog' motif in the design are related. Its cross-section is illustrated on page 12 of 'The Celtic Art of Man' and its height is indicated on the drawing. I see that 'The Dogstar' bowl was actually made by Liberty & Co. and is shown on page 8 of 'The Art of Man'.
SD 2077, Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture

Two designs for silver clocks, 'The Squirrel' and 'The Otter'
Archibald Knox, ca. 1900
Pencil on tracing paper, 415x320mm
This design for a clock is believed to be by Knox because of its intricate Celtic interlacing, and its title 'The Squirrel' is a possible connection with 'The Otter', which is a popular design by Knox. The designs are illustrated on pages 10 and 11 of 'The Celtic Art of Man'.
SD 2077, Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture

Design for a photograph frame, 'Avonvee'
Archibald Knox, ca. 1900
Pencil on tracing paper, 310x255mm
This design for a photograph frame is believed to be by Knox because of its intricate Celtic interlacing, and its title 'Avonvee' is a possible connection with 'Avonvee', a popular design by Knox. The designs are illustrated on pages 12 and 13 of 'The Celtic Art of Man'.
SD 2077, Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture

Design for a silver photograph frame, 'The Rhemmy'
Archibald Knox, 1900–1905
Pencil on tracing paper, 350x235mm
This design for a silver photograph frame is believed to be by Knox because of its intricate Celtic interlacing, and its title 'The Rhemmy' is a possible connection with 'The Rhemmy', a popular design by Knox. The designs are illustrated on pages 14 and 15 of 'The Celtic Art of Man'.
SD 2077, Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture

Design for a candlestick, 'The Thorsla'
Archibald Knox, ca. 1900
Pencil on tracing paper, 350x235mm
This design for a candlestick is believed to be by Knox because of its intricate Celtic interlacing, and its title 'The Thorsla' is a possible connection with 'The Thorsla', a popular design by Knox. The designs are illustrated on pages 16 and 17 of 'The Celtic Art of Man'.
SD 2077, Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture

33 Clock, 'The Maccos'
Archibald Knox, 1902
Silver and enamel, 1250mm (h)
This unique clock is a rare example of Knox's work. The clock is decorated with a series of engraved Celtic motifs, and the enamelled dial features a series of 'dog' motifs instead of numbers. Similar to no 19.
LO 17, Private Collection

34 Clock
Archibald Knox, ca. 1902–1905
 Pewter and okoumé, 386mm (h)
This pewter clock, and the following four were part of the 'Tuchor' range of pewter designed for Liberty & Co. It contrasts to the lightness and delicacy of some of Knox's other designs. These are reminiscent of Norse gravestones in shape, and give the impression of great strength and solidity.
LO 45, Collection of Dr DA Martin

35 Clock
Archibald Knox, ca. 1902–1905
 Pewter and okoumé, 286mm (w)
This pewter clock, and the following four, were part of the 'Tuchor' range of pewter designed for Liberty & Co. It contrasts to the lightness and delicacy of some of Knox's other designs. These are reminiscent of Norse gravestones in shape, and give the impression of great strength and solidity.
LO 48, Collection of Dr DA Martin

36 Clock
Archibald Knox, ca. 1902–1905
 Pewter and okoumé, 386mm (h)
This pewter clock, and the following four, were part of the 'Tuchor' range of pewter designed for Liberty & Co. It contrasts to the lightness and delicacy of some of Knox's other designs. These are reminiscent of Norse gravestones in shape, and give the impression of great strength and solidity.
LO 36, Manchester City Art Galleries

37 Clock
Archibald Knox, 1902–1905
 Pewter and okoumé, 386mm (h)
This pewter clock, and the following four, were part of the 'Tuchor' range of pewter designed for Liberty & Co. It contrasts to the lightness and delicacy of some of Knox's other designs. These are reminiscent of Norse gravestones in shape, and give the impression of great strength and solidity.
LO 47, Collection of Dr DA Martin

38 Flower vase, 'The Dymo'
Archibald Knox, 1902
Silver and enamel, 280mm (diameter)
This vase is a rare example of Knox's work. The vase is decorated with a series of engraved Celtic motifs, and the enamelled base features a series of 'dog' motifs instead of numbers. Similar to no 19.
LO 33, Private Collection

39 Vase
Archibald Knox, 1902
Silver and enamel, 140mm (height)
This vase is a rare example of Knox's work. The vase is decorated with a series of engraved Celtic motifs, and the enamelled base features a series of 'dog' motifs instead of numbers. Similar to no 19.
LO 31, Private Collection

40 Vase
Archibald Knox, 1903
Silver and enamel, 120mm (height)
This vase is a rare example of Knox's work. The vase is decorated with a series of engraved Celtic motifs, and the enamelled base features a series of 'dog' motifs instead of numbers. Similar to no 19.
LO 24, Private Collection

41 Covered bowl on legs
Archibald Knox, 1899–1908
Silver, 870mm (diameter)
This covered bowl on legs is a rare example of Knox's work. The bowl is decorated with a series of engraved Celtic motifs, and the enamelled base features a series of 'dog' motifs instead of numbers. Similar to no 19.
LO 19, Private Collection
43 Drum-shaped bowl
Archibald Knox, 1905
Silver, turquoise and enamel. 310mm (H)
The wide flared drum-shaped bowl is decorated with a flowing, Celtic-inspired motif in blue and green enamels. The bowl has four flared stepped handles above a plain base on a ring-shaped base.
LO.25 Private Collection

43 Cigarette box
Archibald Knox, 1901
Silver and enamel. 220mm (H)
This silver cigarette box for Birmingham Hallmarks for 1901, and was made for Liberty & Co. It is in the unusual form of a flat rectangular box with panels of interlaced foliate motifs enamelled in blue. The box is supported on each corner by delicately-shaped ‘foot’ legs resting on a blue-green and mauve enamelled base. The box is intended for use on a desk.
LO.19 Private Collection

44 Covered cup
Archibald Knox, 1900
Silver and enamel. 270mm (H)
The bowl of this covered cup has a stylized wave pattern in blue and green enamel, supported on a high-shaped stem. The stem is comprised of stylized plant forms, leading to a form of a ‘bud’. This was advertised in Liberty & Co’s ‘Cymric’ Silver catalogue of ca. 1900, priced £5.10s.
LO.23 Private Collection

45 Cup
Archibald Knox, 1900
Silver and enamels/motifs. 240mm (H)
This cup is in the form of a wide shallow bowl on a shaped cylindrical stem. There is a raised foliate border around the edge of the bowl. This design is similar to others by Knox and was previously attributed to him.
LO.18 Private Collection

46 Biscuit box
Archibald Knox, ca. 1903
Pewter with blue and green enamels. 320mm (H)
Square-shaped box with circular lid. Decorated with three horizontal bands of stylised square-shaped leaves and flowers. These square-leaved motifs are similar to those used by Knox elsewhere in his designs for wallpapers and textiles, such as ‘T.P.‘
LO.17 Private Collection

47 Biscuit box
Archibald Knox, ca. 1903
Patinated copper. 320mm (H)
The plain copper version of 46 was probably made as a prototype. A similar shaped box, without a lid, was advertised in Liberty & Co’s ‘Talisrle Gifts in Tudric Pewter’ catalogue of 1903, as a ‘Tudric’ form, showing how designs might easily be adapted for different purposes.
BADA 1994: Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture

48 Inkstand
Archibald Knox, 1903 - 4
Pewter and enamels. 150mm (H)
Cylindrical inkwell with hexagonal base on a square base decorated with small flowers’ motifs at each corner. Knox designed numerous pewter items for Liberty & Co’s Tudric range, which was cheaper than Cymric silver, and which included more ‘everyday’ items such as this one. Pewter was made using a mixture of tin, copper and antimony cast in iron moulds, and could be polished to look like silver.
LO.24 Private Collection

49 Tea service and matching tray
Archibald Knox, 1903 - 5
Silver (every handle to teapot and water jug, 535mm (H))
Tea service designed for Liberty & Co. Beautifully decorated with designs inspired by Celtic knotwork, but with a free-flowing organic feel.
LO.18 Private Collection

50 Tea service and matching tray
Archibald Knox, 1903
Pewter with geometric patterns (teapot handle and base, 368mm (H))
This tea service was one of the first and most successful designs in Liberty & Co’s Tudric range of pewter wares. Each item of the set is decorated with a traditional ‘Cymric’ form of a trellis.
LO.44 Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery

51 Waistcoat
Archibald Knox, ca. 1899
Silver. 115mm (H)
The stylized floral design used here is similar to that of 17. Waistcoats and belt buckles were popular with Liberty & Co’s customers who featured a radical ‘Aesthetic’ form of dress.
LO.30 Private Collection

53 Pair of coronation spoons
Archibald Knox, 1901
Silver and enamels. 162mm (H)
Liberty commissioned Knox to design these silver spoons to commemorate the coronation of King Edward VII in 1902.
LO.28 Private Collection

54 Coronation spoon
Archibald Knox, 1901 - 1902
Silver and enamels. 124mm (H)
Described in honour of Edward VII’s coronation, the bowl of this spoon is inscribed ‘Avnis, Carol. FRAT’, above interlaced decoration.
LO.29 Manchester City Art Galleries

55 Necklace
Archibald Knox, 1900 - 1901
Gold and enamels. 38mm (H)
A fine gold chain connects two curved interlaced gold triangles, each enamelled with a small turquoise jewel suspended on a fine chain. The coroantion is an interlaced, pointed oval shape in gold, with three pearls suspended below. These sections are connected by fine chains set with a central pearl. The label inside the box says ‘LIBERTY & CO LTD REGENT STREET LONDON’.
LO.20 Private Collection

55 Waistcoat
Archibald Knox, 1901
Silver and enamels. 100mm (H)
Many of Knox’s designs for jewellery were produced with slight variations. Both this and 57 were available with or without enameled details.
LO.32 Private Collection

57 Waistcoat
Archibald Knox, 1901
Silver and enamels. 124mm (H)
The label inside the box says ‘LIBERTY & CO LTD REGENT STREET LONDON’.
LO.34 Private Collection

59 Spoon
Archibald Knox, 1901 - 1902
Silver and enamels. 122mm (H)
A decorative band of finely enamelled white, decorated with a Celtic knot motif.
LO.38 Manchester City Art Galleries
40 Buckle
Archibald Knox, 1902
Silver with iridescent enamel
LD 37, Manchester City Art Galleries

41 Clasp clasp
Archibald Knox, ca. 1900
Silver, turquoise and enamel, 28 x 22mm
LD 43, Chesterham Art Gallery and Museums

42 Money holder
Archibald Knox, 1903
Silver and enamel, 31 x 11mm
LD 43, Chesterham Art Gallery and Museums

63 Six buttons and case
Archibald Knox, 1903
Silver, 17mm (diam)
LD 61, Chesterham Art Gallery and Museums

64 Belt buckle
Archibald Knox, 1903
Silver and turquoise, 54 x 7 mm
LD 40, Chesterham Art Gallery and Museums