

A Fresh Look at The Glasgow Boys (and Girls)

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Through the 1880s and 1890s a group called the Glasgow Boys was interpreting and expanding Impressionist and post-impressionist painting. Their subject matter featured rural, prosaic scenes from in and around Glasgow. Their colourful depictions attempted to capture the many facets of the character of Scotland.

These artists - some 15- 20 - were brought together by a passion for realism and naturalism and this showed in the pieces they produced. Along with this passion for naturalism, they shared a marked distaste for the Edinburgh oriented Scottish art establishment, which they viewed as oppressive. Driven and motivated by these ideals they embraced change, created masterpieces, and became Scottish icons in the process.

Some of more famous names are James Paterson and William York Macgregor who brought the group together, plus Joseph Crawhall, Thomas Millie Dow, James Guthrie, George Henry, Edward Hornel and Bessie MacNicol.





A great influence on their art was the French Realism – painter such as Jules Bastien-Lepagebut (see below) - but all of their experiences around the world greatly impacted on and inspired their work, in particular in Spain, North Africa, and Japan.

The production of naturalistic paintings was new to this time and their techniques were very innovative. Similarly, the pieces often created a sense of movement, an accurate (or naturalistic) depiction of light and shade, and extremely realistic texture.

This made them stand out in the art community.






The conspicuous absence of women in the “Glasgow Boys” will be noticed. In fact there were about 8 or 9 women who were effectively in the same group, and as successful as the men but it has been difficult to find examples of their work, with exceptions such as Bessie MacNicol (see below).

The Glasgow Boys can usefully be compared to the English artists about the same time, when the Pre-Raphaelites were dominant. By contrast to the Glasgow Boys (some of whom were in fact English) the Pre-Raphaelites artists had no overseas connections or influences of any kind and their subject matter was confined literary/mythological/religious themes – all with an English or medieval “flavour”.

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| <p>Jules Bastien-Lepage (1848-1884) was a French painter closely associated with the Realist movement. Many of the Glasgow Boys met Bastien-Lepage and were influenced by him.</p> |  |  |  |  |
| <p>Despite bring from a poor rural background he was admitted to prestigious École des Beaux-arts in 1867. During the Franco-Prussian war in 1870, Bastien fought and was wounded. After the war, he returned home to paint the villagers and recover from his wound. Always in poor health, he died aged 36. L'Amour au Village 1882. Joan of Arc 1879. Haymaking 1877.</p> | | | | |

VIDEO Hornel and Henry – *The Druids*





<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-L-qOn4ohPc>



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| <p>James Paterson (1854-1932) was a Scottish landscape and portrait painter, best known for his landscape paintings of Dumfriesshire.</p> |  |  |  |  |  |
| <p><i>Self Portrait</i> 1916. <i>Spring In Moniaive</i> 1889. <i>Kippford - Waiting For The Tide</i> 1913. <i>Autumn in Glencairn</i> 1887. The greatest naval surrender in the world's history” was how the Glasgow Herald recorded the surrender of the German fleet in the Firth of Forth on 21 November 1918. It signalled not only the end of German naval power but also the public humiliation of the country that Britain had fought bitterly for four long years. Some seventy journalists, press photographers and marine painters flocked to Edinburgh to witness “a triumph to which history knows no parallel.” Among them was James Paterson. The artist watched the surrender from the deck of HMS Revenge. This painting is an accurate record of what happened that day. The sun rising through the haze and fog creates a beautiful glow across the water, contrasting against the aggressive forms of the camouflaged vessels.</p> | | | | | |



William York Macgregor (1855-1923) was a Scottish landscape painter, whose father was the Glasgow shipbuilder John Macgregor. Although Edinburgh was the home of the art “Establishment”, there was a very “established” Glasgow Art Club. Paterson, McGregor and other Glasgow Boys attempted to join but were not admitted.






Macgregor is usually regarded as “The Father” of the Glasgow Boys. His slight superiority in age, combined with his training and financial independence made him a natural leader for the younger painters in the group. They shared models and materials and discussed the new ideas of the young French painter Jules Bastien-Lepage, whose naturalist “plein-air” painting attracted them.











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| <p><i>The Vegetable Stall</i> 1884. MacGregor's large, bold still-life painting is considered his masterpiece.</p> |  |  |  |  |
| <p>The rich colours and thick square brush strokes contribute to the convincingly robust character of the vegetables and the textural variety of the setting. <i>The Sands Of Morar. Durham, Evening</i> 1903. <i>The Sands, St Andrews, Fife.</i></p> | | | | |




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| <p>Macgregor often travelled abroad and used the opportunity to paint. <i>A Street in Fuenterrabia</i> (Spain)1908 <i>A Street in Rouen</i> <i>A Quayside, Boulogne, France</i> <i>St Jean de Luz</i> 1894</p> |  |  |  |
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| <p>James Crawhall (1861-1913) was, like many of the Glasgow Boys, influenced by the Impressionists, and, like them, his work was rejected by the Establishment, in his case in the form of the Royal Scottish Academy. However, it must be stressed that the Glasgow Boys were as much a part of the avant garde as the Impressionists, not merely "followers". Like many of the Glasgow group, Crawhall went abroad to learn about the new styles of painting that were emerging. <i>Bull Fight in Spain</i> 1891.</p> |  |  |
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| <p>Joseph Crawhall. <i>The Fox Hunt. The Camels</i> 1888. <i>In the Park</i> 1891. <i>The American Jockey</i> 1899. <i>The Aviary</i> 1888. <i>The White Drake</i> 1895.</p> | | | | | |


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| <p>Thomas Millie Dow (1848-1919) was educated for the law and was expected to join the family law firm in Kirkcaldy. Instead Dow went to Paris in 1877 and enrolled at École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts. In Paris he met other "Glasgow Boys" including John Lavery (see below) and James Paterson (see above). <i>Late Autumn At Barbazon</i> 1879. Dow often worked at Barbazon, a village near Paris where artists gathered and where he had a leading role. <i>Reflections</i> 1877</p> |  |  |  |
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| <p>Thomas Millie Dow</p> | | | | |
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| <p><i>A Spring Day, Morocco</i></p> | <p><i>The Herald of Winter</i> 1894</p> | <p><i>A Vision of Spring</i> 1894</p> | <p><i>Eve taking the Apple</i></p> | <p><i>John Nairn</i></p> |

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|  | <p>Thomas Millie Dow. <i>Moonlight in the Alps</i> 1888. <i>The Kelpie</i> 1895. <i>The Kelpies in Falkirk</i> 2003. Kelpie, or water kelpie, is the Scots name given to a shape-shifting water spirit inhabiting the lochs and pools of Scotland. It has usually been described as appearing as a horse but could adopt human form. Almost every sizeable body of water in</p> |  |  |
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| | Scotland has an associated kelpie story, but the most extensively reported is that of Loch Ness - where the monster is a horse. | | |
| <p>Anyone coming into contact with the Water Horse's skin (whether cattle, wildlife or unsuspecting humans) would become stuck fast, unable to free themselves as the creature dragged them into the waters of the Loch. Naturally the victim would be drowned, whereupon the creature would be able to feed on the flesh. The origin of the belief in malevolent water horses has been proposed as originating in human sacrifices once made to appease gods associated with water, but narratives about the kelpie also served a practical purpose in keeping children away from dangerous stretches of water, and warning young women to be wary of handsome strangers.</p> <p>Kelpies have been portrayed in their various forms in art and literature, most recently in two 30-metre high steel sculptures in Falkirk, The Kelpies, completed in October 2013.</p> | | | |

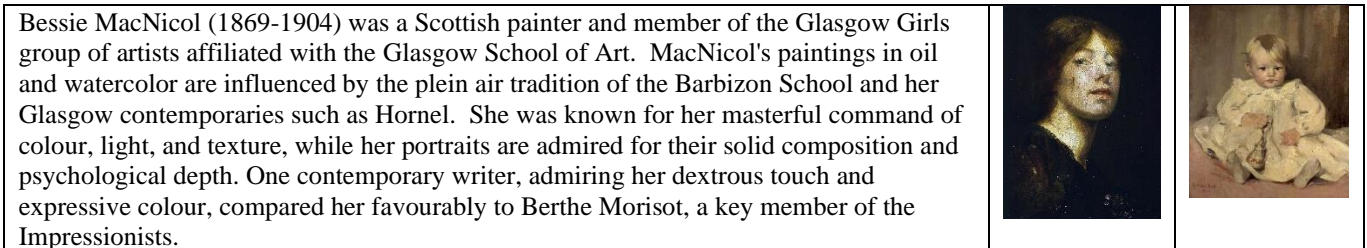
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| <p>James Guthrie (1859–1930) was a Scottish painter, best known in his own lifetime for his portraiture, although today more generally regarded as a painter of Scottish Realism. He was born in Greenock, the youngest son of a minister. He originally enrolled at Glasgow University to study law but abandoned this in favour of painting in 1877. Unlike many of his contemporaries he did not study in Paris.</p> <p>He lived most of his life in the Scottish Borders where he painted some of his most important works, including <i>A Hind's Daughter</i> 1883 and <i>Schoolmates</i>. He was strongly influenced by the French Realists, especially Jules Bastien-Lepage. (see above).</p> | | | | |
| <p><i>A Hind's Daughter</i> James Guthrie 1883 <i>Schoolmates</i> 1884 <i>To Pastures New</i> 1883</p> |  |  |  |  |

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| <p>George Henry RA (1858–1943) was a Scottish painter, one of the most prominent of the Glasgow School.</p> <p>Henry was born in North Ayrshire and studied at the Glasgow School of Art and later in the artists' colony at Kirkcudbright. He collaborated closely E. A. Hornel in such works as "The Druids" 1887. His "Galloway Landscape" was epoch-making at Glasgow because of its higher key of colour and essentially decorative character. Following these tendencies, the two friends spent a year and a half in Japan.</p> |  |
| <p><i>A Galloway Landscape</i> 1889. The subject is unremarkable in itself - a herd of cows grazing on a sunlit hillside. The flattened pictorial space, the intense unnatural colour and the stylised forms were revolutionary. The sinuous lines of the winding stream and curving hillside give the composition a rhythmic decorative quality. Like his mentor Whistler, Henry was greatly influenced by the decorative line and form of Japanese prints. The painting also suggests knowledge of the paintings of the French Post-Impressionist Gauguin.</p> | |

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| <p>Paintings by George Henry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Poppies</i> • <i>Felicity</i> 1916 • <i>Sir Thomas Dunlop</i> 1917 • <i>The Lark</i> |  |  |  |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Spring Has Come</i> • <i>The Druids Bringing the Mistletoe*</i> by George Henry and Edward Hornel 1890 • <i>Geisha Girl</i> 1894 • <i>The Star in the East</i> George Henry and Edward Hornel 1891 |  |  |  |  |
| <p>*Here we see the rite of bringing in the sacred mistletoe and showing a group of Druids or Celtic priests in richly decorated ceremonial robes and insignia proceeding down a steep hillside in solemn procession. The mistletoe, cut from the sacred oak by a golden sickle held by the chief druid, is ceremoniously received by subordinates in white raiment and borne home reverently on the backs of the white bulls.</p> | | | | |



Hornel and Henry collaborated upon *The Druids Bringing in the Mistletoe* 1890. (above). The two worked side by side to achieve decorative splendour of colour, Hornel boldly and freely employing texture effects produced by loading and scraping, roughening, smoothing, and staining. In 1893–94 the two artists spent a year and a half in Japan, where Hornel learned much about decorative design and spacing. Edward Hornel: *Earth's Awakening* 1909. *Wonderment*. *Seashore Roses*



Her early death at the age of 34 robbed Scotland of a fine artist. She died in childbirth, and tragically one of her last paintings was titled *Baby Crawford* 1904.



1) *In the Park*. 2) *Girl of the Sixties* 1889. Bessie MacNicol was well-known for her paintings of young women in the open air. In this work, the girl is standing underneath the branches and leaves of an oak tree. The sunlight filters through the leaves and casts specks of light on her crinoline and fancy hat. The dress is from a play set in the 1860s, hence the title. 3) *French Girl* 1895. 4) *Fur Coat*. 5) *Under the Apple Tree* 1899. 6) *Vanity* 1902