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# Interwoven Connections: Examining the History of Scottish Carpet Design to Inform future Learning, Teaching and Research

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## **Interwoven Connections: Examining the History of Scottish Carpet Design to Inform future Learning, Teaching and Research**

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### **Introduction**

*Stoddard Templeton* denotes a group of Scottish carpet manufacturing companies, the formation of which can be traced to the mid-nineteenth century and the businesses James Templeton & Co and A F Stoddard & Co. Due to the growth, expansion, prominence and eventual decline of the Scottish carpet industry the history of these companies is intertwined. For 160 years, Stoddard Templeton were famed for producing carpets for a highly prestigious array of occasions and interiors. This paper describes and disseminates aspects of the project *Interwoven Connections: The Stoddard Templeton Design Studio and Design Library, 1843-2005*, which centred on the Stoddard Design Library, now held by the Glasgow School of Art (GSA). The Design Library was the in-house resource used by designers to inspire the creative process. The project aim was to examine the workings of the Stoddard Templeton design studio and in particular utilisation of the Design Library in the creative process. Findings and outcomes contribute to knowledge and understanding regarding the design history of Stoddard Templeton, explication of the carpet and therefore textile design process and designers' utilisation of archival resources about which there is limited discourse. The subsequent section of this paper provides relevant historical information surrounding Stoddard Templeton. Following on from this, the project methodology is articulated. An overview of the Design Library, its content and acquisition, is described. Project findings are discussed covering the workings of the Stoddard Templeton design studios, the carpet design process, Design Library utilisation and impact of digital technology. The project outcomes and outreach activities are explained and the paper concludes by indicating areas for further investigation to ensure that examining the past continues to influence the future.

### **Stoddard Templeton Company History**

In 1839, James Templeton working with William Quigley, patented a chenille Axminster process which pioneered the industrialization of carpet manufacture. James Templeton & Co was established in 1843. An American, Arthur Francis Stoddard, began producing carpets from a disused Paisley shawl mill in Elderslie in 1862, forming A F Stoddard & Co in 1871. By the early 1900s Templeton's had constructed an impressive carpet factory on Glasgow Green, designed by architect William Leiper and based on the Doge's Palace, Venice. Initially, Templeton exported to Europe and the Commonwealth, whereas Stoddard focused on the United States of America (USA). Over the years to assist expansion, both Templeton and Stoddard purchased numerous subsidiary companies including Ronald Jack & Co (1918), Henry Widnell & Stewart (1959), Gray's Carpets & Textiles (1968) and Blackwood Morton & Sons (BMK) (1992). Well known for their carpets, Stoddard Templeton produced for events such as the wedding of Princess Elizabeth II (1947) and the royal coronations of George V (1911), George VI (1937) and Elizabeth II (1953). Carpets were created for the Great Exhibition of 1851 and for the 1951 Festival of Britain. Stoddard Templeton designed for palaces, cathedrals and government buildings. A publication by James Templeton & Co (1951: 9) states that:

'In the year 1861, Abraham Lincoln entered the White House, Washington, as the President of the United States and Mrs Lincoln soon turned to furnishing her new home to her own taste. It would seem that her ideas were expensive, for she was criticised for having been extravagant in spending State funds in the purchase of various articles,

including ‘a new carpet of Glasgow manufacture ingeniously made all in one piece which had designs of fruit and flowers in vases, wreaths and bouquets.’

The companies also produced for cruise liners including the Queen Mary (1912) and the Titanic. For the latter they created the original carpet for the ship in 1912 and then replicas for the set of James Cameron’s 1997 film. In addition to their well-known commissions, carpets were produced for hotels, restaurants, bars, offices and other contract interiors. Numerous collections of patterned, plain and textured carpets were created for the domestic interior. Despite the success of Stoddard Templeton over the years, consumer preference for other flooring surfaces and competition from cheaper overseas imports led to the regrettable demise of the remaining company, Stoddard International PLC in 2005. At this time a consortium comprising GSA, University of Glasgow and Glasgow Life formed to safeguard and purchase the companies historically significant archives. Today, the collection is divided between these organisations.

### ***Interwoven Connections Methodology***

The *Interwoven Connections* project combined historical investigation, archival enquiry and oral history interviews. The project commenced with a review of existing material relating to Stoddard Templeton and the carpet industry predominantly in the United Kingdom (UK). Due to the number of companies encompassing the Stoddard Templeton name it was necessary to construct a timeline of acquisitions and mergers in order to ascertain design studio locations and seek out key employees. Company magazines and records, photographs, films, books, design registers, sketches, patterns, catalogues, samples and carpets provided insight into design studio roles and operations, the carpet design process and types of designs produced. Many hours were spent searching through the Design Library to gain an overview of the collection and locate any significant indications towards utilisation within items. In addition to the Stoddard Design Library, investigation was undertaken in other archives including the GSA Archives & Collections Centre (ACC), Stoddard Templeton Collection at the University of Glasgow Archive Services, Scottish Screen Archives National Library of Scotland, the Museum of Carpet Kidderminster and the V&A archives at the Clothworkers’ Centre for the Study and Conservation of Textiles and Fashion. Oral history interviews paralleled the historical investigation and archival enquiry. Information was ascertained from UK carpet and design industry professionals, historians, educators and others connected to Stoddard Templeton. Former slab boys and girls, apprentices, sketchers, designers, colourists, chief designers, design coordinators, marketing managers and archivists provided in-depth insights into the Stoddard Templeton design studio, carpet design process and Design Library utilisation. Analysis of interview data assisted in the construction of a comprehensive response to the project aims.

### ***Stoddard Design Library***

Today, the Design Library comprises some 670 items, which include books, portfolios, promotional publications and items compiled by designers, including scrapbooks of postcards and fabrics. The collection is grouped by themes such as woven textiles, contemporary interior design, Chinese carpets, floral, art deco, art nouveau, classical and medieval, Japanese art and costume. This system, put in place by a Stoddard Templeton archivist and designer in the 1990s, has been used to organise the collection since coming to GSA. Over half of the items have a definitive date of publication, with a quarter published in the 1800s; the earliest is dated 1840 (Clerget 1840). The majority of items are from the 1900s and a small number date from after the millennium. Titles from Britain, France and Germany are most common, although volumes also come from Scandinavia, other parts of Europe and further afield including Australia, China, Japan and the USA. The Design Library contains design classics such as Owen Jones’ *Grammar of Ornament* (1868) and Christopher Dresser’s

*Studies in Design* (1874) and *Principals of Decorative Design* (1878). Many items are limited edition portfolios containing loose-leaf plates by one individual (for example Lambert c.1890) or comprising works by groups of artists or designers (such as Delaunay 1929). Numerous French titles from the Art Deco period are executed using the 'pochoir' stencilling process (for example Gladky 1929), widely used for commercial publishing in Paris from the late 1800's onwards.

Design Library items contain an abundance of imagery including ornamental decoration, folk based motifs, drawings, abstract representations and photographs of plants, flowers and animals, geometric motifs and patterns, printed, embroidered and woven textiles, rugs and carpets, ceramics, architectural features, furniture, colour and interior decoration. The Design Library evolved due to the acquisition of items throughout the individual and collective companies' existence. Approximately a third of titles have a marking that denotes the company responsible for purchasing. Markings are beautifully hand written, stamped or feature as printed company logos adhered to items. Purchasing company name information often appears with a date of purchase. The earliest year of purchase is noted as 1871 (Metzmacher 1841), although it is likely that unmarked items were accessioned prior to this date. Design Library items provided designers with insight into aesthetic trends and design styles from around the world. Initially only company directors travelled and purchased titles. Items originating from outside of the UK were bought from sellers in Edinburgh, London and Nottingham. As air travel became accessible designers also travelled and purchased. Item acquisition ceased around the time of World War II when the Scottish carpet industry transferred manufacturing to support the war effort. Since becoming a holding of the GSA Library a handful of titles have been added to the collection.

### **Stoddard Templeton Design Studios**

At Templetons, training to be a carpet designer involved mixing colour, copying, draughting, planning out and colouring designs, whereas, the Stoddard apprentice began as a 'slab boy', grinding and mixing colour, before 'getting a desk' in the studio (Byrne 1982). For a number of years Stoddard Templeton designers attended classes at GSA to develop skills in drawing and painting, printed textiles and life drawing. The early Stoddard Templeton 'design rooms' or 'design studios' were men only environments. Designers sat on stools, at large wooden desks, surrounded by stacked paint pots, water jugs and gum for painting carpet designs onto gridded point paper, using an assortment of paintbrushes. Women tended to work in separate rooms as sketchers, copyists or tracers, replicating existing designs or producing small artworks for enlargement and adaptation into carpet patterns. Production required multiple copies of design papers due to deterioration through use, so existing designs were regularly copied. A Head or Chief Designer was responsible for overseeing the running of the design studio and distributed work amongst employees depending on their ability to produce specific carpet design styles. The colourist was responsible for translating designs into carpets.

It is evident that certain designers remained in the employment of a Stoddard Templeton company for many years. For example, John Eadie began at Templeton's in 1892 and retired after almost 75 years of service creating designs for the company (James Templeton & Co 1957). On retirement, Stoddard Chief Designer, Walter Bartram, an employee for 32 years commented that he was 'proud of the fact that so many of the original staff...remained with him from the beginning' (Halbert 1965: 16). Carpet designers also moved between different carpet companies in Scotland or would go to work in Kidderminster, the centre of the UK carpet industry (Thompson 2002). As well as Scottish-based design studios, at various times, Templeton, Stoddard and subsidiary companies had design studios in London and also in Australia. By the 1960s, Stoddards were employing female designers in their Elderslie studio. During the 1980s Templetons merged with Stoddards. Up until this time,



Templetons had never employed an in house female designer; however, they did commission well-known female designers, including Marion Dorn and Enid Marx in the 30s and 40s and fashion designer, Mary Quant in the 1980s. By the 1990s, there were more female designers working in the studio than there were male. For a brief period of time, when Stoddards purchased the textile company Sekers, printed and woven textile designers were employed to produce collections of fabric to accompany the carpets. During this period Stoddards had design studios in other parts of the UK in close proximity to manufacturing facilities. Prior to the closure of Stoddard International PLC a depleted Elderslie design studio was all that remained.

## **Carpet Design Process**

The design studios of Stoddard Templeton were prolific in terms of the volume of artwork and carpet designs produced. A Stoddard company magazine from the 1960s claimed that in an average year design studio staff would ‘...sharpen away 475 pencils, wear out 97 erasers and apply 700lbs of paint to some 10,500 square inches of paper, at the expense of 960 brushes.’ (St Clair 1965: 11) Historically, the production of a carpet design involved the creation of a design sketch, this could be painted, drawn or collaged, depending on the designers’ preferred working methods and the visual qualities required. Design sketches represented either a section of a design, a small-scale version of an entire design or could be similar in size to the final carpet. Design sketches were also bought in and commissioned from designers external to Stoddard Templeton. If selected for development, design sketches were transferred onto point or draughting paper, each square on this gridded paper representing a different tuft of yarn. The size of grid on the point paper, scale of design, repeat layout and number of colours depended on the production process. Various methods were used to develop design sketches into design papers. For example, gridded lines provided guides for enlargement and motif reproduction; imagery was traced and then worked into. Mirrors, cameras, projectors and other visualisation techniques assisted with pattern repeat formulation and ensured that designs flowed. L-shaped mirrors positioned onto the corner of quarter panel designs showed the effect of the full pattern. As cameras, projectors, photocopies and other digital peripheral devices became available they were used to assist with the design development process. Expertise was required to ensure that non-linear motifs remained fluid when translated into squares. To capture shading and represent three-dimensional qualities the considered application of colour was essential. The colour palette used in a design would be painted as blocks of colour alongside a design pattern. Each colour was assigned a reference number and design patterns had corresponding numbers written small scale within gridded square to ensure correct transference of colour information. The colourist was responsible for taking a design, translating it into yarn and communicating the colour information to the dye house for production.

## **Design Library Utilization**

The copying, reproduction and adaption of existing carpet designs, particularly of Persian origin, was common practice in the Stoddard Templeton design studios. Over the years, versions of carpets such as Ardebil, Chelsea and Trinitarias were produced. The Design Library contains items featuring these original carpets designs, which may have been referenced during the design process. However, Stoddard Templeton also purchased well-known historical carpets for designers to work directly from and museums were visited so that historical carpets could be copied. A carpet created for the Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1871 is described as an, ‘adaptation of Oriental material (by Owen Jones)’ (James Templeton & Co 1952: 17). Publications by Jones feature in the Design Library, indicating utilization of items from an early period. Artwork from a portfolio by Edouard Benedictus (1924) (figure 1) has been enlarged, with slight colour alterations made, to produce the Sandringham Axminster carpet titled ‘Tomato Plant Design’ (James Templeton & Co: date unknown) (figure 2). A

designs from the same Benedictus (1924) portfolio has been adapted to create a carpet presented as part of the 'Golden Riches' Axminster carpet range produced by BMK in the 1980s (BMK c1980). A section of a plate from a portfolio published by Christian Stoll (c.1910) is shown in a Stoddard Commercial Carpet catalogue produced in 1983.



Figure 1. Plate from a portfolio by Benedictus (1924). GSA Stoddard Design Library. Photographer Helena Britt.





**Figure 2. Section of sample. 'Tomato Plant Design'. GSA ACC. Photographer Helena Britt**

Visual material contained within Design Library items was adapted and developed to create design sketches and patterns. Motifs within certain Design Library items were used to provide visual content for development during the design process, evidenced through designers' descriptions of



their working processes and with sketches found and tracings discovered in Design Library items. Gridded lines drawn over certain motifs indicate transference and enlargement of imagery. Design Library items were also used for colour inspiration, as painted colour strips, colour calculations and written notes stating 'Contract these colours' have been found amongst volumes. There are a number of references which present colour and interior trends, used to inform designers' colour choices. Other indications of use found within Design Library items include paint splashes, pen and pencil markings, small drawings and a few sections cut from books and portfolios. Former Stoddard designers reported that in the early 1960s, the Design Library remained under the close control of the then Chief Designer, who distributed items for designers to work from when he deemed it to be necessary. Upon his retirement, the incoming Chief Designer moved the Design Library and other archival reference material into the studio for designers to access whenever required.

As with the examples of copying and adaptation during the 1980s cited above, the importance of working from historical material appears to form part of Stoddard Templeton's marketing strategy around this time. A BMK catalogue (c.1980) includes a photograph of a designer surrounded by and working from Design Library items. The Stoddard Mercia Contract Design Portfolio (c.1990) is full of designs taken from the archive at the Elderslie studio, used to indicate different visual styles, which could be transformed or developed to meet customer requirements. Design Library items, historical design sketches, patterns and fabrics informed the design content of the printed and woven fabrics produced by Stoddard Sekers (c.1990). The designer responsible for working on these collections used various drawing processes to develop historical content into contemporary design ideas. The 'pochoir' stencilling technique found in art deco Design Library portfolios inspired and influenced the layering of technical processes used to create surface textures in the woven and printed fabric collections.

### **Impact of Digital Technology**

The carpet design process remained relatively unchanged until computer-aided design (CAD) was introduced into the Stoddard Templeton design studios in the late 1980s. Scanners and digital drawing devices were used to assist and speed up the design process, as new designs could be produced and alterations made at faster speed than when reliant on hand painting. The Stoddard Carpets Ltd company magazine reported 'the CAD system has a scanner and can transfer designs direct from reference material or the pages of a book onto the computer screen. This can save the designer from having to laboriously redraw the design to get it on to the screen.' (Stoddard Sekers 1994: 2) Designers worked with digitized visual content from Design Library items or archive patterns along with hand painted artwork to produce new carpet designs. The CAD system also generated data necessary for costing and production. Digital designs were exchanged between the Elderlie and Runcorn design studios. The purchase of a computer handtrail machine, linked to the CAD computers, permitted the production of a carpet sample 'in 2 hours which manually would take up to two days, thus allowing for a quicker response time to customers and the elimination of certain costly loom trails.' (Stoddard Sekers 1994: 2) Although digitization of the design process made Stoddard Templeton more responsive to customer demands, various design studio roles were made redundant.

### ***Interwoven Connections Outcomes and Outreach***

The project resulted in the production of various outcomes and outreach activities. An exhibition held in the Mackintosh Museum at GSA ran from November 2013 – January 2014 (Britt 2013a) (figure 3). Divided into four sections, the exhibition initially focused on the Design Library and showed items grouped by catalogue theme. There were difficulties in selecting and presenting the

content for this section due to the vast amount of material available for inclusion and the necessity to give a representative overview of Design Library content. The second section of the exhibition provided insight into the Stoddard Templeton company history, primarily surrounding the design studios and design studio employees; this included a company timeline, photographs and articles from company magazines. To depict the carpet design process and Design Library utilization the next section combined design sketches, design patterns, library items, brochures, folders used for colour matching yarn, carpet and textile samples and edited films showing Stoddard Templeton designers at work. A group of Stoddard Templeton carpets, now held by GSA's ACC, were presented to indicate the resulting products. This grouping was by no means fully representative of all the outputs produced by Stoddard Templeton over the 160 years but it did present an interesting mixture of early picture carpets, warp painted carpets, a sample from the cruise liner Cariona, a boarder section of a floral design Brussels carpet, the Tomato Plant design, an early stair runner and a sample of a rococo scroll carpet. A publication produced to accompany the exhibition (Britt 2013b), took inspiration from Design Library portfolios and consisted of a surrounding cover with lose leaf inserts showing text on one side and an image on the other.



**Figure 3. *Interwoven Connections* Exhibition, Mackintosh Museum. GSA Exhibitions. Photographer Janet Wilson.**

*Interwoven Connections* exhibition outreach activities included a preview evening for former Stoddard Templeton employees, a public opening, public lecture and vimeo film outlining the exhibition and project. Gallery talks were given to GSA undergraduate and postgraduate students and to school pupils enrolled in the group 'Sew Last Century' and on GSA's Continuing Education and Widening Participation programmes. For those taking the continuing education class, items and images from the exhibition were used as a starting point to inform project work. Accompanying widening participation workshops were held, during which staff and participants articulated and explored the design process, working from copies of Design Library visual references. Other items

from the ACC, such as sketchbooks, were shown to represent the design process. The exhibition also connected with an industry-based third year undergraduate student project. The project began with an induction from GSA Archives and Special Collections staff showing items based around the theme of 'folk'. For this project, textile and rug designs had to be produced, with the winning design manufactured.

Artefacts from ACC and the Design Library are regularly used within the GSA fashion and textiles curriculum. A specific example involves the use of Design Library items for an undergraduate printed textiles technical workshops. Students worked from patterned but non-repeating artwork to create lengths of repeating screen-printed fabric. Potential repeat structures were explored, with visual qualities recreated through drawing and CAD. Working in small groups, students colour separated designs and produced filmwork for exposure onto screen. Base fabrics were dyed and colours mixed to match the original artwork. The repeat was set up on the print table and the final designs screen-printed. Aspects of the *Interwoven Connections* project and follow on research have been disseminated through journal article (Britt & Chappell 2014), presentations at symposia (2013c, d) and through other conference presentations and papers (Britt et al 2014, Britt 2014).

### **Carpet Makers of Distinction**

The *Interwoven Connections* project provided an opportunity to study an aspect of UK textile history and disseminate understanding surrounding the once prominent Scottish carpet industry. From the outset the intention was to trace Design Library use into design sketch, pattern or carpet. In certain instances it has been possible to establish these connections, however, the extensive volume of the entire Stoddard Templeton Collection, spanning the lifetime of the companies, has impacted upon the number of connections made to date. There is still scope to uncover further connections from initial inspiration, design process output, to carpet production across various Stoddard Templeton companies and time periods. Further examples of working processes in terms of design reproduction, adaptation and development would provide useful insights relevant to the study and design of textiles in contemporary contexts to promote awareness surrounding copyright, intellectual property, development of new design ideas and methods of design creation. Due to the complexity of the number of companies involved in the study, identifying various design studio roles and working process has meant that there is further potential to examine this in more depth, particularly surrounding social history, gender division and equality at different companies. An overview of the impact of digital technology on Stoddard Templeton design processes has been provided, however further examination of changes to manufacturing and production technology would reveal further insights. The oral history interviews provided a range of fascinating viewpoints into the workings of the textile industry; many stories have been captured, often with items viewed from an individual's own archive. Further analysis of this and other data amassed from the project forms the basis of a comprehensive design history of Stoddard Templeton to ensure that future generations are aware of the Scottish carpet industries past prominence.

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Special thanks go to those who participated in the oral history interviews, for sharing expertise and creating such a fascinating history to study and pass on to future generations. Unfortunately, since *Interwoven Connections* project completion GSA's Mackintosh Building, which housed Library Special Collections and ACC, suffered a fire. A fund has been established to collect donations to facilitate restoration, details can be found at <http://www.gsa.ac.uk/support-gsa/the-mackintosh-appeal/>.

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