

Archive Services: partnerships with businesses to explore their heritage

Stoddard-Templeton Collection - Inspiring designers through business records

The Stoddard-Templeton Collection encompasses the design library, design archive corporate records and heritage carpet collection of James Templeton & Co Ltd and Stoddard International plc, two of Scotland's most prominent carpet designers and manufacturers. The collection is managed in partnership by the University of Glasgow, the Glasgow School of Art and Glasgow Life.

The collection provides an important historical record of the world-renowned carpet manufacturers James Templeton & Co, who together with A F Stoddard and Henry Widnell & Stewart merged to form Stoddard Carpets Ltd in 1983. Between them, for over 162 years, the two companies manufactured the finest carpets of the highest quality. They created coverings for coronations in Westminster Abbey in 1911, 1937 and 1953 as well as the Scottish Parliament and even the Titanic – the ship herself and the 1997 movie. Customers included royalty, film stars, US presidents and passengers on the world's most luxurious liners who all benefited from the innovation and quality of carpets designed by the companies.

Scotland's carpet industry had been in widespread decline from the 1970s onwards and in 2005 Stoddard International plc appointed Ernst & Young to manage the receivership of the company. Recognising early on the historical significance of the collection, the joint receivers at Ernst & Young - Tom Burton and Colin Dempster - enlisted the help of auction house Christie's to catalogue and value the archive. This work was continued by KPMG, when Bair Nimmo was later appointed liquidator of the company. The collection comprises 3,800 design drawings and patterns; 2,000 design sketches; a design library of 1,500 titles including books and journals; 226 carpet pieces; and numerous albums of photographs.

Interest in the collection was expressed by a number of parties from around the world. Fortunately, Ernst & Young and KPMG spent several years working with a Glasgow consortium of heritage institutions, including the University of Glasgow Archive Services, the Glasgow School of Art and Glasgow Life to keep the collection in Scotland. It encapsulates the history of Scottish carpet manufacturing and as such is an important part of Scotland's textile history.

As Tom Burton commented: "If the consortium were to acquire the Archive, it would remain intact, in Scotland, and would be available to view and use, inspiring textile and other designers, as well as being accessible by the people of Scotland." The preservation of this unique collection has been a testament to partnership working between heritage professionals and insolvency practitioners. In 2008, following a scoping project and successful funding bids this unique archive of designs, corporate records, patterns and carpets from Scotland's most successful carpet companies was bought by the University of Glasgow in conjunction with Glasgow School of Art and Glasgow Life, with the assistance of a £172,000 grant from the National Heritage Memorial Fund.

In 2009, when the consortium secured the collection, Blair Nimmo commented: “We were delighted to be finally able to complete the sale of the collection, and secure this important archive for future generations.”

Clare Paterson, senior archivist at the University of Glasgow, said: “This collection is one of the biggest of its kind in the world. It demonstrates the design and technical achievements of James Templeton & Co. Ltd and Stoddard International plc which were both world leaders in carpet design and manufacture.”

“The acquisition of the archive by the University, Glasgow School of Art and Glasgow Museums, will ensure the collection is preserved for the people of Scotland. Users of this rich archive will be able to explore the complete carpet-making process, from initial inspiration and drafting to the agreement of a pattern and colouring, through to final production and installation. We hope the collection will be a rich source of inspiration for Scotland’s future designers.”

The collection has proved popular with designers, academics and students and the general public as it encapsulates business, social, design and technological history. Following the launch of the Stoddard-Templeton Archive online catalogue in autumn 2011, the collection has provided design inspiration for the artists Briggs & Cole’s limited edition Templetonian tables, displayed at The Lighthouse, Glasgow. Items from the collection have been used in exhibitions such as The Inventors of Tradition at 21 Stockwell Street in Glasgow, Carpets of Distinction at Dovecot Studios in Edinburgh, Extraordinary Stories about Ordinary Things at the Design Museum in London and in the recent Interwoven Connections exhibit at the Glasgow School of Art.