

# THE FIRST 21 YEARS — GLASGOW PRINT STUDIO

By Clare Henry

March 1993

GLASGOW PRINT STUDIO has a high-flying international reputation as a major contributor to contemporary printmaking. It offers facilities among the most sophisticated in Europe, attracts artists from all over the world, runs an ambitious exhibition programme, and provides a unique environment where famous names work alongside students or members under the watchful eye of master printers in etching, lithography and screenprinting. And alongside admiration for its professionalism lies affection, for the Print Studio holds a place in the hearts of many Glaswegians.

## GLASGOW PRINT STUDIO — 43 ST VINCENT CRESCENT, 1972-76

Glasgow Print Studio has contributed in great measure to the city's artistic pre-eminence — yet its start 21 years ago was humble enough. It all began in autumn 1972 in a West End ground floor Victorian tenement flat, orchestrated by Glasgow students and post graduates with no experience, very little funding but immense commitment. "The accounts involved various tin boxes and juggling a series of I.O.U.s, I seem to remember", says Sheena McGregor, who found the St Vincent Crescent premises, formerly an electricians, via an advert in the Glasgow Herald. "The place was full of dry rot, really dreadful. The conversion was tough and done entirely by work parties of members. Our only tradesman was a plumber. I remember fourteen layers of wallpaper, an earth floor in the basement and strengthening the workshop floors with steel beams to take the weight of the presses!"

Voluntary labour has continued to shore up Glasgow Print Studio and see it through some rough patches. Indeed without the commitment of many volunteers — chairmen, treasurers, liftmen, architects, engineers, fathers, sisters, friends — over the 21 years, Glasgow Print Studio would not be here today.

In the early 1970s costs to members were low — 25p per 3 hour session — but staff pay was lower. In this non-profit co-operative run by artists for artists, many taught all day for the price of their bus fare, for the start-up budget — £2,700 from the Scottish Arts Council — did not go far. In 1973 SAC revenue funding totalled £1,900 and staff were paid £11 a week. But the Gulbenkian Foundation, god bless them, gave £1,400 towards equipment, (a second-hand off-set litho press, a copy camera and silkscreen press) and in October 1974 came up with £9,906 over three years "to develop the education work of the Studio by establishing regular evening and weekend classes from ad hoc work already initiated, particularly for those who hope to adopt printmaking as a career." Gulbenkian seed money was intended to woo local authority subsidy. It didn't work. When Glasgow Education Department was approached, Glasgow Print Studio was turned down flat. "And because the SAC did not fund educational projects, we had to keep separate books for Gulbenkian money", recalls Beth Fisher, one of the prime movers.

To celebrate its 21st anniversary, Glasgow Print Studio has mounted a retrospective exhibition of its activities from 1971, when a handful of Glasgow School of Art students saw the need for workshop facilities post-college, via three different premises to this year's successes at home and abroad, despite a recessionary climate. For many it is a poignant trip down memory lane; for others a hasty glance at what seems like yesterday. But all those I spoke to recognise that in Glasgow Print Studio, they have witnessed something special, epoch-making and memorable.

Today Glasgow Print Studio has 200 members, receives grant aid of £118,000 and generates an annual turnover of over £200,000. It participates in foreign artists exchanges and tours shows to New York, Berlin, Iceland and Moscow. Over the years 30 foreign printmakers from as far afield as Japan, Canada, Switzerland, Russia, Australia and Brazil have come to Glasgow to work at the Studio. Overall hundreds of thousands of prints have been editioned in small runs of 10 to 50, while many artists like Blackadder, Paolozzi, Wiszniewski, Currie and Howson have been invited to exhibit and to make prints for the studio's prestigious publications list which now features over 300 images.

It's a far cry from the early 'informal' days. And some do regret the passing of a more amateur, grassroot, idealistic period with its community base and democratic intent. The urgency to professionalise the running of workshops in the mid-1980s meant big changes. Clive Sutton voices one view, "I'd be quite happy to put the clock back to the early days." Others, like John Byrne are happy with the streamlined 1990s.

Philip Reeves sees the advantages of a broad popular base. As Glasgow School of Art's Head of Printmaking, he encouraged his students to start a print studio on the lines of Edinburgh (Britain's first open print workshop set up in 1967) and was its first chairman. "We didn't want to become bureaucratic. We were very unofficial for a long time. Everyone was so caught up with the creative side. And the Studio's existence was not a foregone conclusion. At one early meeting Harry Barnes, then director of Glasgow School of Art, made it plain he saw the Print Studio as a rival outfit to the Art School, whereas I saw it as a collaborative thing, a link with the outside world."

So it was not till February 12th 1973 that the first official meeting of The Council of Management took place. Council members were Bill Blacker, James Cosgrove, John Faulds, Sheena McGregor, Eileen Ormiston and Jacki Parry with Reeves as Chairman and Beth Fisher as Company Secretary. Their names as founders were entered under the Companies Act on January 3rd 1973 and the Memorandum and Articles of Association were incorporated on February 27th 1973.

Glasgow Print Studio aimed, "To promote, maintain, improve and advance education particularly by the encouragement of the study, practice and knowledge of the art of printmaking. To provide facilities for the practice by any member of

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the association (Glasgow Print Studio) of such graphic techniques as etching, lithography, silkscreen printing, wood-cutting and other graphic processes. To exhibit works produced by these techniques and the sale of prints and to formulate, prepare and establish schemes provided that all the objects of the association are of a charitable nature." Part 2 of the constitution reads, "To present, promote, organise, provide, manage and produce entertainments and exhibitions which are conducive to the promotion, improvement and advancement of education and encouragement of the Arts." It was an ambitious constitution but Glasgow Print Studio has lived up to it well.

With hindsight it's difficult to explain the chemistry of an era to those who arrive on the scene later. "We were totally dedicated to the Studio. It was our life. People worked on Christmas Day or for 24 hours flat out if need be." With moon landings, mini skirts, bra burning, the Beatles and the pill it was also a period when anything seemed possible. Artists experimented, took risks, went out on a limb. Hugely hard work went hand in hand with fun and frolics. "In those barnstorming days there was a great *esprit de corps* at the Studio," recalls Tom Mackenzie.

Print Studio exhibitions, since 1977 so important and high powered, began like everything else in a small way. There was no gallery space. Work in progress was merely pinned up in the hallway and in the printing areas over the presses. Yet with some excellent prints, (I vividly remember a superb line engraving of Mother and Child by Fisher, Blacker's dynamic aquatints, Taylor's hard edged erotica, lone Heath's Finnieston Crane, Lamb's narratives and Parry's Cloudscape) and prices ranging from £3, things sold, for openings were lively affairs as folk spilled down the steps and onto the St Vincent Crescent pavement opposite the Bowling Green. In June 1974 Glasgow Print Studio hosted a travelling exhibition from Edinburgh Printmakers, and Glasgow Print Studio exhibited at Edinburgh's Fruitmarket Gallery, the start of things to come.

And for the first time Womens Lib made it possible to mix careers and motherhood, as Bill Buchanan coyly observed in his 1978 Impressions catalogue introduction. Buchanan was a supportive SAC Art Director during the formation of Glasgow Print Studio and well understood how "the toil of turning idea into reality fell to Beth Fisher and Sheena McGregor, two practising printmakers cum competent administrators. They did not stop at producing a workshop. It was comfortably reassuring to pass the sunning prams on the steps at 43 St Vincent Crescent."

By mid 1974 there were 50 folk using the studio regularly. While Beth and Sheena looked after things in the day, Bill Blacker did evenings and weekends. Part-timers included John Taylor, Eddie Gordon and Carole Bowen. First commissioned prints were by Ronnie Forbes and John Byrne. Artists working there included Kate Whiteford, Elspeth Lamb (who began as an etcher and was encouraged into lithography, for which she is now famous, by Bowen), Robert Paul, Jacki Parry, lone Heath, Rab McInnes and Ann Kelly.

In Autumn 1974 SAC gave £500 towards concreting the basement floors to make a dark room and silkscreen area. There was no money for ducting to extract fumes but John Taylor had a friend who knew a man . . . It was ever thus!

During these often precarious times there was tremendous support, advice and encouragement from the Scottish Arts Council's Bill Buchanan and Harry McCann. Buchanan came to meetings as a good friend to Glasgow Print Studio, so too Philip Wright who succeeded him at the SAC. Over the years the financial backing given, not just to Glasgow but to Edinburgh, then Aberdeen and Dundee print workshops, has been enormous. It's certainly been a good investment which has paid dividends.

Soon there were Glasgow Print Studio collaborations, education programmes — and an American artist-in-residence, "the Roy Orbison look-alike," Ron Glassman, (the subject of Glasgow Print Studio's first catalogue) who ran up transatlantic phone bills and never adapted to Scottish weather. "He had all the fires on, as well as the cooker, day and night. The Studio was like a furnace."

Elspeth Lamb continues, "I remember editioning an etching with Alasdair Gray. The plate started off large-scale. After biting it in acid Alasdair wanted bits cut off. Eventually, halved and quartered, he worked on the remaining bit, then decided he didn't like it and threw it away. That was my introduction to collaborative printing!"

Lamb and Brian McGeogh were both involved in early education projects. Lamb took a Saturday morning class of Dunbartonshire school kids. "One morning a girl burst into the etching area. There were clouds of yellow smoke coming down the hall. An acid bath had over-reacted to the heat and was emitting poisonous fumes. Beth came to the rescue by pouring in heaps of neutralising crystals."

McGeogh also had his moments. "One day Barrowfield School rang looking for art lessons with a difference for their wild, socially disturbed children. We said OK. The kids arrived in a minibus. I worried that they would rip the place apart, pour acid over everyone, bludgeon what was left with the inking rollers and cut up the pieces with the etching tools. In the event kids and artists got on great. The kids made nice little self portraits and left the studio pleased as punch."

McGeogh was one of many who joined Glasgow Print Studio to learn printmaking, having no opportunity at art school. But not everyone was ex-art school. Joe Urie was an unemployed brickie who saw an advert in the Evening Times. "Sheena taught me lithography. I worked on prints at Glasgow Print Studio four days a week for over a year." Urie later went to Dundee College of Art, made a career as a painter and exhibited in The Vigorous Imagination.

My own fond memories of The Crescent go back to 1973. I was a stone lithographer, but wanted to try screenprinting which I had never done at art school. The silkscreen room was tiny, but that made it easier to work late at night alone. I made my first zinc plate lithograph with help from Carole Bowen who continued on the committee into the 1980s in Ingram Street. Before Glasgow Print Studio I had nowhere to print and resorted to doing linocuts at home to keep my hand in. It was a relief to find a small, friendly workshop. I went on to serve as Council of Management Secretary and then Chairman for two years in the late 1970s until I became art critic to the Glasgow Herald in 1980. I still have the Minutes of the meetings — plus letters to Glasgow Print Studio from the Inland Revenue!

While researching this catalogue I've spoken to many people, some after a gap of over 15 years. All have good memories of the early days. Are we romanticising things? Possibly. But overall, I think not.

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St. Vincent Crescent — 1976

In 1975 Beth left to fill in at Glasgow School of Art for Philip Reeves during an illness. Beth's job was taken by Calum MacKenzie, who came from Glasgow League of Artists. He thought big and immediately sought new premises. By May 1976 Glasgow Print Studio was installed in the city centre at 128 Ingram Street. A new era had begun.

#### GLASGOW PRINT STUDIO — 128 INGRAM STREET, 1976-88

Even before premises were found, Glasgow Print Studio's new charismatic director had plans for a gallery, for marketing, for a publicity drive, for publishing prints — and also for expanding the remit to involve writers and poets. This Calum MacKenzie did with the Print Studio Press, publishing Liz Lochhead, Alasdair Gray, Jim Kelman, Alan Spence and others between 1977-82. This built on 4 Poster Poems, editioned in the basement at the Crescent by Rab McInnes. Bill Blacker remembers MacKenzie as The Champ, "He used to terrify me with his wild disregard of business practice and good record keeping. However he did have some brilliant ideas and worked very hard for the Studio. We had several wonderful extravaganzas at that time; The Waverley Midsummer Cruise, The Roast Pig and the Loveliest Night of the Year Mid-Summer Balls being hugely successful fund raising and PR events. Calum should have gone to Hollywood!"

The move itself was carried out one Sunday with the aid of a huge crane. Manhandling the Golding Jobber letterpress (acquired for a snip from the Greenock Telegraph) out of St Vincent Crescent was bad enough, but the Ingram Street workshop was four storeys up in ex-factory premises in the heart of Glasgow's Victorian commercial centre. The road was blocked, and a window on the third floor had to be taken out so that the big presses could be swung in through the gap, "a hell of a height and very dramatic" remembers John Taylor. "The whole exercise was to keep costs down and we did," remembers Blacker.

The next big project was the Print Studio Gallery, which opened in November 1977 with a show by Alan Cox, followed immediately by a Members Christmas show and a John Bellany exhibition (where his etching *The Kiss*, edition of 10, cost £18.) Bellany remembers a great reception, "It gave me such a lift in those bad days. I'd like to thank Calum and John Taylor, especially. Of course along with the exhibition went the party; 2 roast pigs and 8 barrels of beer and at 5.00 a.m. there was only one pig's trotter left! I had to give a Radio Clyde interview at 10.00 a.m. with no voice." Bellany made eight etchings at Glasgow Print Studio, (and is making three brand new ones for the anniversary show) and believes "Glasgow Print Studio is a success story. It started off with the right spirit. It's had its ups and downs but the tenacity of the folk there kept it going. And a place where people roll up their sleeves and work lasts longer than a gallery. Art conquers all!"

The 1978 blockbuster was the famous Lowry exhibition, £3m worth of paintings. By now George Docherty was workshop manager with Taylor "the lynchpin who turned enthusiasts into zealots".

Preparations for the Lowry included upgrading the Gallery — but security was a padlock. No time for burglar alarms. A guard was, however, employed at great cost to stay overnight inside the Gallery. The exhibition was a huge success, or as Ian Macfadden, Glasgow Print Studio publicist put it, "What really fell off the back of the Lowry was a wider awareness that we were here. Where here was." Lowry enticed many new visitors up the four flights past the rag trade sweatshops where the lassies with fags dangling from the sides of their mouths poked good natured fun at the arty types going upstairs. Happily it coincided with the exact time when the pop song, *Match Stick Men*, was number one in the charts and although the exhibition cost £1000 to insure, that was more than recouped through admissions — at 10p a person!



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Lowry exactly fitted MacKenzie's vision for Glasgow Print Studio, as did the famous 1979 Scottish Cartoonists show organised by Macfadden, which toured to great acclaim for 2½ years and is still fondly remembered: "cartoons lyrically beautiful, political aware, excruciating, juvenile, pathetic — just like grown ups, folks," says Macfadden. Cartoonists included Malky McCormick, Willie Gall, Bud Neill, Walter Fleming and the Herald's Jim Turnbull. Says MacKenzie, "The object was to broaden things out, popularise, aim for a higher profile, entice people up three flights of stairs to see and learn about prints, and hopefully become more involved themselves in printmaking — and some did!"

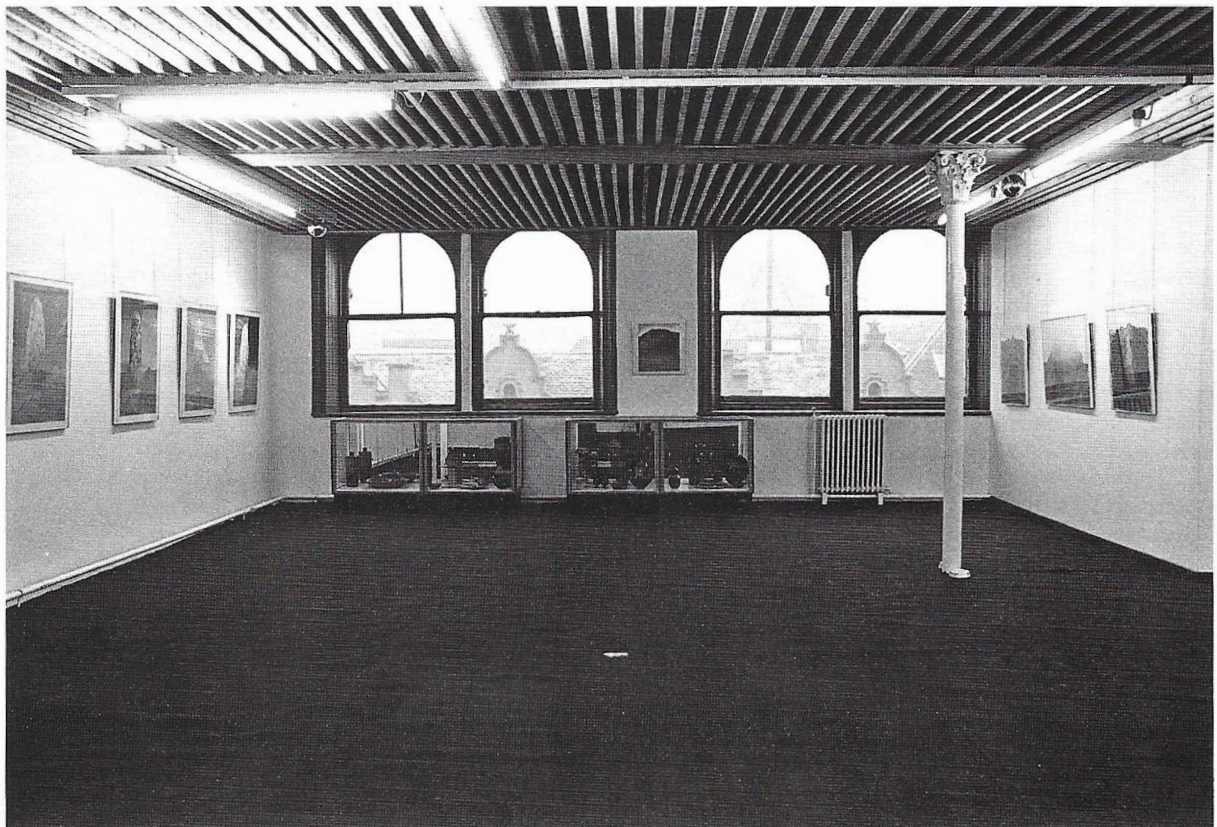
The show was sponsored by the Glasgow Herald, who also sponsored Glasgow Print Studio's New York debut in 1983. Herald writers, especially *The Diary*, have been great Glasgow Print Studio supporters. Colm Brogan, *Diary* editor in the seventies, always did us proud. "MacKenzie kept him in funny quotes and he plugged the events quite unashamedly," remembers Macfadden.

Shortly after the move Clive Sutton arrived back in Glasgow and took a studio in the North Room together with Peter Howson, Brian Kelly, Taylor and Dougie Thomson. By Spring 1978 he was working there part-time in screenprinting. John Mackechnie had recently taken over from Ellie Lamb. (Manpower Services contributed £20,687 between 1977-80 which paid for several salaries.) In 1979 Docherty left for Dundee and John Mackechnie replaced him. "John did absolutely wonderful things with the workshop; got it into shape. He was hired for his expertise in photo-etching, for he had unique talents in that area," remembers MacKenzie.

In those days the Print Studio ran on a small budget, a lot of good will and hard work by staff and enthusiastic members. "It was built on energy more than money," observes Sutton. On the shoestring principle, everyone contributed to the conversion of the workshop interior in whatever way they could. Ione Heath loaned £250 for a few days when some cheap fluorescent lights came up. Robert Hamilton, the Glasgow Print Studio resident photographer-cum-master joiner built workshop benches, partitions, dark rooms, and then started on the Gallery. Not till 1980 was his professional photography seen to advantage, in the important Glasgow Print Studio show, Charles Rennie Mackintosh: Scotland Street School — A New Survey. This project by Alan Miller and James Opfer in conjunction with Andy Macmillan, Professor of Architecture and Mark Baines, coincided with fears over the future use of Scotland Street, happily later resolved — perhaps partly due to this show.

With several artists studios upstairs filled by painters, designers, cabinetmakers, composers, muralists, stained glass artists, even an architect in residence, plus Bill MacNamara's Glasgow Studio Ceramics pottery with its unique double kiln at the top end of the 14,000 sq. ft. space, Ingram Street became a hub of creativity, a mini art centre where friendship, interaction of staff and members created something special. "I can't put into words the feeling or what made it for me probably the most productive, interesting and varied part of my life," says Sutton.

MacKenzie's decision to open up the Gallery to exhibitions of painting, photography, cartoons, murals, theatre design and more, reflected his view that Glasgow Print Studio must embrace all art forms. Soon the Gallery space was in demand



Ingram Street Gallery, Alan Cox Exhibition, 1978



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for performances, plays, filming (Bill Forsyth no less), Indian music, yoga and tapestry classes, bands, and much more. John Byrne's Writers Cramp with Bill Paterson, Alex Norton and John Bett made its debut at Glasgow Print Studio; so too Marcella Evaristi's Scotia's Darlings, Borderline's Jessie Jimmy, Jimmy MacGregor's anniversary celebration for MacDiarmid — and a (massively chauvinist) Men of the Eighties dinner. At that time venues for performance, for entertaining, for foregathering, were limited. The Tron did not exist, Third Eye had no theatre. "It was good to know we were providing a welcome space," says MacKenzie.

Funding from the Scottish Arts Council in 1977 was £9,000; £10,000 in 1978; £14,500 in 1979. Wheels were oiled in novel, romantic, witty ways unimaginable nowadays. Friends — like SAC staff and District Councillors — received Valentines on Valentines Day, carol singers outside their door at Christmas — and pranks on April 1st!

During this period Glasgow Print Studio not only grew apace artistically but forged its strongest links with the extended community of the city gaining a unique ground swell of public support and assistance through its very active outreach programme. While some of this was social, (Glasgow Print Studio's reputation for the best parties and balls is to Glasgow what the Chelsea Arts Club balls were to London in the inter-war years) it achieved its aim: to generate new audiences and new members through greater media coverage and word of mouth response. The varied and popular exhibition programme — cartoons and tapestries cheek by jowl with famous names like Max Ernst and Lowry plus young Scottish artists — appealed to a wide range of people and nicely avoided the tag of elitism.

Indeed a certain commercial element, necessary to the financing of Glasgow Print Studio, positively helped. Joe Public was well served. Technicians were used to switching rapid from a fine art print to straight commercial graphics, posters, blinds, T-shirts, anything that was requested. Rab McInnes remembers silkscreening vast mirrors for Billy Connolly's house. "It was an ego trip. He wanted a room full of all the dates and venues of every gig he'd done in his life — scrawled out in red. Nowadays folk would claim work like that compromised your artistic integrity — but if the Studio needed money we did it, Taylor, Blacker, and me."

The popularity of the Print Studio was maintained via more publications. Catalogue design and printing for the year 1980/81 was a full £1,800! The roll call of exhibitions grew. Mark Gertler, The Early and Late Years, organised by Chairman Susie Robinson for 1982 was a coup. Transport from London cost £680 — a huge amount then — but offset through excellent sponsorship. The show was opened by Provost Michael Kelly. Other notable exhibitions included the truly strange Art Extraordinary 1978 (which contained a business suit made of grass); Paolozzi, Hannah Collins 1979; Kate Whiteford, Donald Bain 1980; Jung Kunst aus Berlin (with the young unknown Fetting and Middendorf), Yugoslavian Prints (from the Tate), Limburgh Printmakers, (the first of many useful international links) 1981; Marit Gertler 1982; Robert Paul and John Mackechnie, Ian Fleming 1983; Lennox Paterson 1984; Peter Howson 1985. Both the Goethe Institut and the Canada Council pushed good exhibitions Glasgow Print Studio's way while Glasgow League of Artists, who programmed the Gallery for three months a year, invited many good artists to show.

Morale and ambition were riding high — sometimes too high — in these Ingram Street years. In the 1980/81 Annual Report there is talk of an exhibition on Dali. "In the words of Tom Honeyman 'The Glasgow punter is Dali daft. They'll pay anything to see him!'" says the Report, but allowed, "it may prove difficult due to his present retrospective at the Beaubourg in Paris." Nothing daunted, Glasgow Print Studio went for Bellamy instead. The casual prose style of Glasgow Print Studio publications, never mind annual reports, was an engaging feature of the period and owed a lot to Mackenzie, aided and abetted by journalist Ian MacFadden. Their 1976/77 Report to the SAC, made while Ingram Street premises were still undergoing conversion, sums it up. In best Hammond Innes style it declared, "We are all in the gutter, but some of us are gazing at the stars."

Sadly in 1982 the sky fell in. The Print Studio was financially very overstretched and some aspects had become too disorganised. The SAC rightly concluded the Studio had been walking a knife edge for long enough and sent a letter saying that, "unless there were radical changes at Board and officer level", it would suspend its grant. An Extraordinary General Meeting was called, addressed by Tony Jones, Director of Glasgow School of Art. The whole committee resigned; some were re-elected; the grant continued, but MacKenzie left Glasgow Print Studio later that year, followed in 1983 by his able assistant, Catriona Clark who had done so much to put Glasgow Print Studio on the map.

These difficult times were alleviated somewhat by an ambitious project to show New Scottish Prints in New York to coincide with the Britain Salutes New York Festival there in April 1983. I had discovered that Britain Salutes New York was in fact London Salutes New York — with nothing going from Scotland. Determined to change that I cast around for help. Luckily 1983 was the Glasgow Herald's bicentenary year so the editor, Arnold Kemp, agreed to sponsor the show. Thus Glasgow Print Studio's successful American debut, curated by Clare Henry. The show included all four Scottish print workshops with prints by Bellamy, Blackadder, Donald, Fisher, Roschlau, Lamb, Mackechnie, MacKenzie, Will Maclean, Reeves, Parry, Paul, Taylor and Watson among others, resulting in good reviews and an article in World Print News. The show went on from New York to tour Canada to critical acclaim.

Other exhibitors in 1983 included Murray Zimiles, James McDonald, Stuart Duffin plus a show called Grease and Water, an insight into the art of lithography organised by Ken Duffy, Director of Edinburgh Printmakers, who, having learnt the ropes the hard way at Edinburgh from 1970 on, was always very helpful to Glasgow Print Studio.

John Mackechnie took over as General Manager on January 1st, 1983. "Things were not great then. To survive we shrank the staff and I acted as director, workshop manager, etching technician, and soon, exhibitions organiser as well. Administrator Irene McCafferty (then Little) was the only other full time staff member, but chairman, Bill MacNamara acted almost like a staff member, doing all the accounts and much more." MacNamara's involvement goes right back to 1973 when, as President of the GSA SRC, he got Glasgow Print Studio a grant of £200, a lot of cash in those days, to help pay for the lawyer to make up the constitution. He was Chairman for much of the Ingram Street days, first in the seventies and again in 1982-83 being a calming influence on an often volatile scene. "I always maintained the workshop was

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the priority. As long as that was safe, everything else, like the gallery, was a bonus." Robert Paul, Chairman from 1984-89 also worked hard on the Studio's behalf, steering it through the move to new premises.

By 1984 the need to leave Ingram Street was becoming urgent. The roof had long been a serious problem which the landlord could not fix. Harry Magee remembers, "In wet weather the premises were only useable thanks to an ingenious network of polythene sheeting in the roof space, channelling rainwater into an assortment of buckets and plastic containers. It was the technician's job at night, before locking up, to empty the buckets!"

Its position three floors up was also recognised as a disadvantage in the climate of increased awareness of the need to market Glasgow Print Studio artists' work. Commitment to ground floor premises was seen as a central core for any move. However it was easier said than done. For several years Glasgow Print Studio searched the city centre for a solution. Good cheap property was hard to find and agreements re leases even harder.

Meanwhile the work of the Studio went on, going from strength to strength. The first development was a publications programme orchestrated by Mackechnie. From the outset some editing had taken place: Byrne, Nicholson, Demarco — but now, "We set out to collaborate with artists. It made a great difference. We invited successful painters like Bruce McLean and the young Peter Howson to come and make prints with our technicians. They experimented, were adventurous, because they were not so interested in the technicalities. McLean memorably used lipstick to draw up one plate!" The products of this strategy were flaunted in one of the best Glasgow Print Studio shows ever, *Unique and Original*, November-December 1985. It contained work by 18 artists who had responded to Glasgow Print Studio's invitation, including Bellamy, Blackadder, Campbell, Forbes, Mistry, Houston, Low, Miller, Rae, Wiszniewski and Wyllie. It was accompanied by a fine catalogue, which came in very useful when Mackechnie put part 2 of his plan into action.

By 1986 Glasgow was firmly on the visual arts map because of the meteoric rise to fame of its lively young painters. The so-called Glasgow Boys — Campbell, Howson, Currie and Wiszniewski — recently graduated from Glasgow School of Art, took the world by storm. The eyes of the art world turned north and from 1987 to 1990 the city enjoyed a very high profile. Glasgow Print Studio became part of this and so it seemed natural that from 1985 Glasgow Print Studio should decide to get out and about, implement its marketing strategy and show what it could do. Art Fairs were flourishing and Glasgow Print Studio got off to a flying start by showing at London's ICAF, Bath Art Fair (and every year after), and, in 1986, the Los Angeles Contemporary Art Fair. In 1987 the District Council showed its faith in the Print Studio's aggressive marketing policy and its high flying reputation with a first revenue grant of £7,500.

There were abortive plans to move in 1982, 85, 86, 87 but none proved workable. Then the bombshell, which ironically arrived on selection day for the Scottish Print Open 1987 when judges from the V & A, Scottish National Gallery, The Financial Times and artist John Houston were gathered there. Glasgow Print Studio was given 14 days notice to quit Ingram Street.

Ten days later the board decided to take new premises in the city centre between the Tron Theatre and the new St Enoch Shopping Centre. It was on the first floor, with a ground floor shop space opposite, practically the only place in Glasgow where contemporary art can be seen from the street. Happily the proposed workshop/gallery space offered by the Council official doubled instantaneously when he opened the door to find that the occupiers of the other half of the floor had done a moonlight flit! One of the many virtues of this former tenement style warehouse was its location just two minutes from Glasgow's main retail area of Argyle Street. Architects McGurn, Logan Duncan and Opfer were appointed to do the conversion. Ingram Street workshop had to be cleared by November 12th. John Taylor, the longest serving staff member, was the last to show in the Gallery. Despite the short timescale the King Street shop premises were converted in time to house the Christmas show. The large etching press was installed there to allow members to continue printing. With a budget of £114,000 work progressed on target and the new King Street Glasgow Print Studio Gallery opened at Mayfest 1988 with a show by Adrian Wiszniewski — much of which had been painted in a corner of the shop across the road! Another venue — another era.

### GLASGOW PRINT STUDIO — KING STREET

1988 was a big year for Glasgow Print Studio. And as befitted the expansionist 1980s, it aimed high. Its impressive, elegant new gallery in the centre of the revitalised Merchant City was inaugurated at Mayfest with a splendid exhibition by famous Glasgow Boy, Adrian Wiszniewski. Wiszniewski personifies all that's best about Glasgow Print Studio. Not only is he an international name but he has long associations with the Print Studio making prints in all media, beginning with silkscreens (assisted by John Taylor) as far back as 1985. The exhibition, which also contained oils painted on Glasgow Print Studio premises, attracted much attention from London and abroad.

The beautiful gallery space, converted to Glasgow Print Studio specification, is rightly considered among the most coveted in Britain. Its perfect proportions and natural light filtering onto a pale polished floor makes it an extraordinarily attractive setting for prints, paintings, sculpture and installations. "It's one of those rare occasions when the end result is better than you ever imagined", says director John Mackechnie.

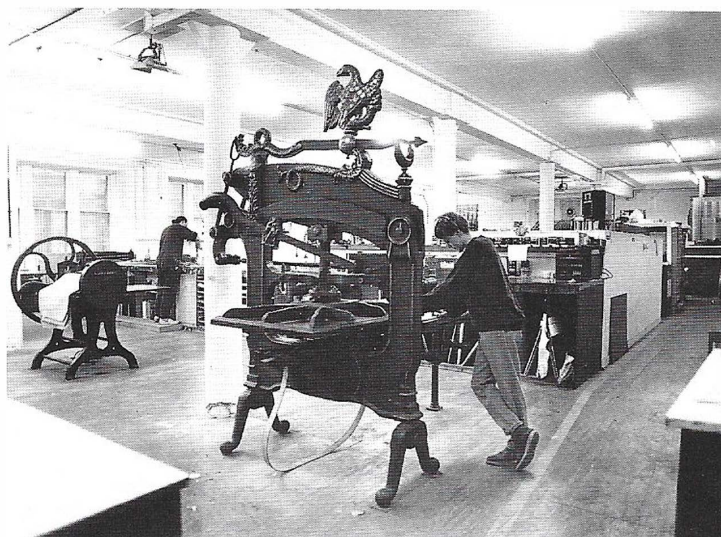
By summer the workshop was also open and in full swing with a busy editing programme of members and "stars" working side by side. Dave Reed, Chairman 1983-84 and exhibitions officer 1990, explained it well, "It's like being in the same snooker club as Steve Davis." Membership still only cost £35 per year with concessions for students, OAPs and unemployed at £12. Evening classes were £25. Well equipped with darkroom, acid room, drawing up room, three presses for relief and intaglio; three silk-screen beds and two lithographic presses arranged around the 120 year old Columbia Press whose counterbalance eagle provides Glasgow Print Studio with its logo, the workshop, though smaller than Ingram Street, was streamlined and efficient.

In September Glasgow Print Studio launched into Europe with a group show of seven printmakers and seven sculptors including Blackadder, Howson, Gonzalez Fernandez, Mackenna, Parry and George Wyllie, at Berlin's Ka De We.

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The Workshop — King Street

1989 exhibitions like July's Munich Printmakers and November's Polish Season reflected the international dimension while local members continued to be well represented in theme shows like Avant Garden. With a total area of 7500 sq ft Glasgow Print Studio was set fair to continue its position as a dynamic and innovative force in the cultural life of Strathclyde and the UK. Full credit for the encouragement of this magnificent project must go to Glasgow District Council, especially Councillor Jean Macfadden and Director of Finance Bill English, and the Scottish Arts Council, who each contributed £30,000. The Henry Moore Foundation gave a welcome £8000. Happily Glasgow Print Studio had started its own Redevelopment Fund way back in 1984 under Chairman Robert Paul, which supplied the rest. And the accolade of £28,000 SAC Incentive Funding was on the horizon.

Highlights of 1989 include the first King Street sculpture show (by Tracy Mackenna), Neil Macpherson's successful Mayfest show and a six week residency of Boris Belsky and Alexander Yastrebinetsky from the USSR who went on to take part in Glasgow's exciting citywide Soviet Season.

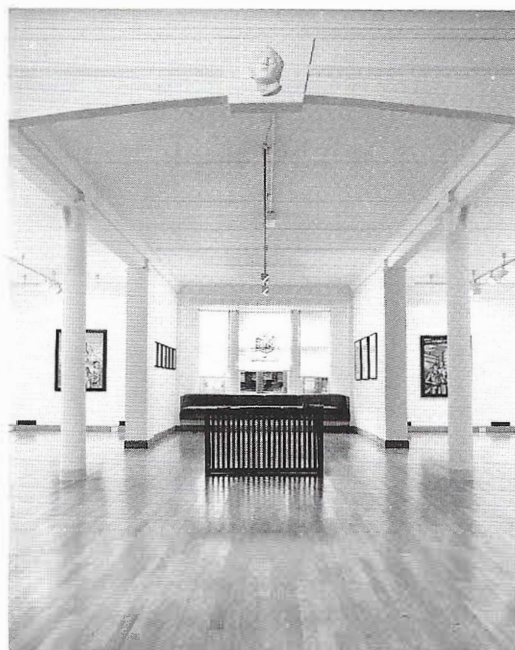
Then came Glasgow's *annus mirabilis* as European City of Culture 1990. For all of us it was an unforgettable twelve months which changed the perception of Glasgow worldwide. No amount of commercial, political or business initiative could have achieved this minor miracle.

It resulted in a top Glasgow Print Studio turnover of £400,000, £280,000 self-generated. The year included an acclaimed exhibition at New York's Mary Ryan Gallery (Howson, Currie, Davie, Macpherson, MacDonald, Lamb, Blackadder and Bellany were among the 15 artists who attracted "more red dots than in a measles ward as New Yorkers snap up their prints"); touring exhibitions to Munich, Los Angeles, plus the book, *Vier + Four*, made in collaboration with the Berlin Printworkshop. Here the eight contributors, four artists, four writers, Scots and German, include Liz Lochhead, Alasdair Gray, Joe Davie and Murray Robertson. Glasgow Print Studio's exhibition at London's Festival Hall was a magnificent occasion, with sales of over £20,000 worth of prints the icing on the cake.

With 200 members and over 1,000 images on display at the Print Shop, the 1990 exhibition programme again contained painting and sculpture shows along with prints. January opened with Scottish Monotypes — which inspired Wiszniewski to create a mammoth diamond shaped "Through the Garden Wall" which was later woven into a hanging by the Dovecot Tapestry Company. This was followed by Heliogravures from Michael Roschlau who, as lecturer at GSA for 25 years, has encouraged many good lithographers. In March the growing international reputation of artists editioning at Glasgow Print Studio, Currie, Campbell, Howson, Macpherson, Thomson and Wiszniewski together with established artists like Blackadder, Paolozzi, Houston, Low, Rae and McCulloch made the Studio's appearance at London's Olympia Contemporary Art Fair a great success.

Peter Howson's Mayfest show attracted transatlantic buyers; Ellie Lamb's best selling August show toured Britain extensively while Bruce McLean, who has made prints plus witty book (*A Scone Off a Plate*) with Glasgow Print Studio, linked his exhibition with a Tramway performance of *Vertical Balcony*. Ana Maria Pacheco astounded everyone with her powerful figures in November. However several museum quality shows, like American Master Prints from Washington's National Gallery and Colquhoun and MacBryde, increased overheads, making 1990 memorable but expensive!

1990 was a peak year for foreign visitors to the workshop. Some, like Thorkild Havmoller and Sascha Suvorov came as part of the 1990 official artists exchange programme which resulted in Dave Davies and Dominic Snyder spending 6 weeks in Senej near Moscow and Deran Fenwick visiting a print studio in Denmark. Havmoller is now a regular visitor, coming every 2 or 3 months. Others "heard about Glasgow Print Studio on the grapevine and just ended up here" as John Mackechnie puts it. "The workshop was fantastically busy with Brazilians, a Japanese, Germans, New Zealanders, five Spanish printmakers as part of the summer Spanish Realism show plus esteemed Americans Eric Avery, Richard Mock and Caroline Brady." Martin Hopkinson, curator at Glasgow's Hunterian Art Gallery and long serving member of the Board, who travels extensively, likes to recall his surprise when he entered a Baltimore Gallery to be confronted by Brady's Glasgow Print Studio monotype. The Bulgarian Konstantine Bojanov, now at the Royal College, is another visitor who



The Gallery — King Street

"dropped in because he fancied Glasgow" and stayed. To my mind the exchange programmes are one of the most important and successful legacies of 1990 because they are self-generating and on-going.

The Russian link, for instance, is still going strong. In 1992 eight artists swapped, including Stuart Duffin who met the famous mezzotint artist Chmutin in Leningrad, with the result that Chmutin is editioning at Glasgow Print Studio right now. Moreover Boris Belsky is currently setting up a print workshop in Moscow modelled on the lines of Glasgow Print Studio. This is one of many instances when Glasgow Print Studio has played role model, and given advice, to others.

Another new initiative in 1991 was the popular Artist of the Month shows in the Print Shop which allowed more members to have small exhibitions. Tours continued abroad, with a major Glasgow Print Studio print show celebration in Moscow for Spring 1991 requiring extensive planning. In contrast Douglas Thomson's Swiss show at Gallerie Saqqarah came out of the blue. Georges Marci saw a poster for his show, got on a plane and arrived at Glasgow Print Studio unannounced. It was the start of a fruitful period for Thomson and Glasgow Print Studio. Meanwhile curators, collectors and dealers such as American David Kiehl plus in London Bill Jackson and Henry Meyric Hughes have evolved long term relationships with Glasgow Print Studio. Clive Jennings now represents Glasgow Print Studio in London, giving Scottish artists a permanent metropolitan outlet.

Last year Glasgow Print Studio celebrated its 21st birthday early at London's Barbican. Over 200 prints and paintings included Ken Currie's remarkable, awe inspiring etched series, *Age of Uncertainty*, Howson's "Dosser" woodcut, Snyder's stylised jazz images, Murray Robertson's linear figurations (Robertson has been a studio printer since 1986), Ashley Cook's dynamic pop screenprints and John Byrne's acute self portraits done in his own personal kind of mezzotint. One of the first artists to work at Glasgow Print Studio, 21 years on he is still a staunch supporter, workshop user and admirer of Director John Mackechnie, now 15 years with Glasgow Print Studio. Indeed Mackechnie's style of management — cool and calm whatever the problems — combined with his flair for marketing Glasgow Print Studio's publications, and Chairman Harry Magee's stalwart presence, has served Glasgow Print Studio very well. And the Studio's 21st birthday celebrations at the McLellan Galleries are only part of a busy 1993 schedule which includes more shows, more editioning, more international visitors. Katherine Shaw, the exhibition officer has a big programme ahead including June's Photography in Printmaking, the Studio's contribution to Fotofeis. Meanwhile, due in no small part to the enthusiasm and professionalism of Stuart Duffin the workshop manager and master printer, Glasgow Print Studio publications have topped 300 and with sales to both public and private collections ranging from the Tate to Glasgow's Hilton, the British Council to Motorola, Scotworks to Pat Kane and Peter Gabriel, all looks set fair for another action-packed season.

This catalogue includes an impressive list of achievements from a 21 year journey. There were the inevitable flops and hiccups — but they were relatively few — and as this is a celebration, I won't dwell on them. Of course, as someone involved from the start, I may well be accused of bias. I hope not, for I have spoken with many Glasgow Print Studio members, past and present, and tried to report them accurately. But nevertheless the last words are better left to respected and independent observers, one American, one English. David Kiehl curator at New York's Whitney Museum and ex-print curator at the Metropolitan, believes, "Glasgow Print Studio is unique. I know of nowhere else that offers such an ideal combination of workshop, editioning and exhibitions, and of such high quality too." William Packer, art critic of the Financial Times affirms, "in all the years since the Print Studio's inception in 1972 it has supplied a facility and a creative opportunity to the community of Scottish artists that the rest of us in Britain can only envy."

Clare Henry  
March 1993