

### Mike Davis: *Authenticity*

Mike Davis, architectural historian, delved into the vexed question of authenticity in building (or rebuilding) schemes. Were mad King Ludwig's castles on the Rhine copies or originals? What about Burges's Castell Coch? He cited a different issue: the repairs to Theseus's ship overcame the original parts; was it therefore inauthentic? The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings emphasises 'authenticity' in its listed building rules. Is the restored Uppark a replica or a reconstruction, and anyway does it matter as long as it does not actually falsify the past? Should we mind how the past is repaired or renovated? Often the modern has to merge with the historic in particular sites.

These questions can be applied to Mackintosh's Art School. A replica will not be the real thing but can still give an authentic experience. It should at least recapture the 'wow' factor. Mike gave Audley End, Saffron Walden, as an example of this. Some of the original interiors were remodelled (by Adam) in Pompeian style; then a Victorian state room was introduced but later replaced by facsimiles of Adam's alterations. Some felt that this destroyed the authenticity and coherence of the building. He gave Gladstone's Land in Edinburgh as another example: it was reconstructed twice, and 18th-century interiors were brought in; these were not original to the building but they were nevertheless 18th-century. Mike's talk and the questions he raised gave us food for lively discussion over coffee.

Noël Riley

### Alison Brown: *Rediscovering Lost Spaces*

Alison Brown, who had entranced us the day before at Kelvingrove with her enthusiastic introduction to the *Charles Rennie Mackintosh 150th Birthday Exhibition: Making the Glasgow Style*, considered aspects of 'authentic' presentation as well as conservation through one of Mackintosh's iconic interiors. In 1971 the entire contents of his Ingram Street tea rooms were dismantled and acquired by the museum. The 16 interiors included the Ladies' Luncheon Room, the Museum Room, the Chinese Room, the Oak Room, Billiards Room, Smoking Room and the Cloister Room as well as the Ladies' Rest Room and even the gents' lavatory.

From 1993–96 a restoration and recreation programme was put into action to conserve these acquisitions. It involved removing emulsion from gesso panels, repairing fire damage, paint losses and perished fabrics, cleaning nicotine stains and removing mould, among other interventions. The Chinese Room is now displayed at Kelvingrove, and in 1996 the Ladies' Luncheon Room travelled to the Art Institute of Chicago for a Mackintosh exhibition there. Meanwhile other rooms underwent assessments for long-term conservation as well as bids for grant funding.

For the future, the Cloister Room of 1911–12 may be recreated in a way that enables it to go on tour to other sites, while the Oak Room tearoom is to be the centrepiece of the V&A's new outpost in Dundee, opening in September this year. Alison's talk gave a fascinating insight into the range of issues faced by museums in conserving and presenting large-scale acquisitions such as these important rooms.

*Noël Riley*