

## THE SOUL OF ARCHIBALD KNOX

### I

Archibald Knox is one of the most gifted, and under-appreciated, British designers of the last century. Although he is generally recognized as the creative force behind the vastly successful Celtic Revival style in silver, pewter, fabrics, ceramics, and jewelry marketed by Liberty & Co. at the turn of the century, and as one of Britain's great early modernist designers, a more complete picture of Knox the artist has yet to emerge. This present volume, the culmination of more than ten years of passionate involvement with Knox's life and work, is my attempt to fill in this important gap - to establish Knox's central role in the evolution of British and Modern design, and to shed some light on the influences that shaped his life and his career.

A great deal of mystery and uncertainty surrounds Knox, both in his personal affairs and in his professional activities for Liberty & Co. Biographical data is both general and anecdotal in nature, and little supportive documentation exists in the form of personal correspondence, journals, sketchbooks, or stockbooks. Knox's fervent reserve and his loathing of self-promotion further complicates matters. His attitude well served the policy of strict secrecy maintained by his principal patron, Arthur Lasenby Liberty, in the attribution of objects to their designers. Maddeningly for those interested in the history of British modern design, and Knox's place in it, uncertainty still exists as to which objects are conclusively from his hand.

By purchasing designs from Knox and a stable of other talented freelance designers - including among others, Oliver Baker, Jessie King, Bernard Cuzner, and Christopher Dresser - Liberty and his directors were free to alter them as they believed commercially necessary, combining motifs and decorative elements to produce what they considered the most salable, though at times hybridized, items. The purpose of this policy was to foster the public's perception that Liberty & Co. itself was the source of the best and most desirable in contemporary design.

As successful as this policy was in promulgating the "Liberty Style," which became synonymous worldwide with British Art Nouveau, it further obscured Knox's activities, rendering him even more anonymous and elusive than he was by nature. Despite this dilemma, Knox's style is unique, and his creative presence is obvious in many of the astonishing objects that bore the Liberty signature during his most active years with the company - between 1898 and 1908.

The essays that occupy the body of this book have been left to the able hands of scholars who have worked with Knox material for the last twenty years. They discuss the specific design principles and ornamental elements that characterize Knox's distinctive style, the historical context out of which he came and in which he worked, and the impact of his genius on the progress of modern design. Throughout the essays, important questions are answered, but new ones are asked as well, which will undoubtedly stimulate future discussion and controversy about Knox and his art.

Widely known as the author of the first serious publication on Knox's life and work with Liberty & Co., Adrian J. Tilbrook considers these topics anew, with the advantage of observation and insight seasoned by years of comparative study of Knox's remarkable output. It is an honor to reprint for the first time Shirley Bury's seminal essay from 1976, "New Light on the Liberty Metalwork Venture," which remains to this day one of the most insightful explorations of the collaboration between Knox and Liberty. Former Keeper of Metalwork at the Victoria & Albert Museum, Shirley Bury was one of the curators of the landmark centenary exhibition mounted at that museum, "Liberty's 1875-1975." To complement her thoughts, Eric Turner, Assistant Curator of Metalwork at the Victoria & Albert Museum, sheds long overdue light on Knox's relationship with this foremost museum of decorative arts in the world and those critical exhibitions from the Sixties and Seventies which unveiled his genius.

In her essay on and annotated chronology of Knox's elusive life, Rosemary D. Wren, esteemed British potter and the daughter of Knox's most accomplished student, Denise K. Wren, does much to set the record straight. With the able help of Peter M. Crotty and Alan E. Kelly, the foremost Manx authority on Knox, who both collected new source material, she paints a vastly more accurate and feeling-toned picture of Knox the man and his creative style.

Mark Turner, former Keeper of The Silver Studio Archives, discusses Knox's work with The Silver Studio, the important freelance design establishment that supplied Liberty & Co. with some of Knox's most successful designs. Isabelle Anscombe, noted scholar of the Arts & Crafts movement, focuses on Knox's relationship to Manx Nationalism and the Celtic Revival movement. Victor Arwas, the international authority on Art Nouveau, compares Knox's work to contemporaneous Continental design. Anthony Jones, President of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, well-positioned by his previous research on the early modern movement, speculates as to whether Knox was right to consider himself a "venturesome modernist." In addition, his lyrical essay from 1992 entitled, "Knox of Manx and Liberty of London: In the Ministry of the Beautiful," is also included. Groundbreaking research by Veronica Franklin Gould, premier authority on Mary Seton Watts, opens to consideration for the first time a little understood but intensely powerful aspect of Knox's creative life, his ceramic and stoneware designs.

Yvonne Cresswell, Assistant Keeper of Social History at the Manx National Heritage, explores Knox's formidable skill and productivity as a designer of gravestones, perhaps his most intimate legacy on the Isle of Man. Marshall Cubbon, former director of the Manx Museum, reflects movingly on the structure and meaning of Knox's great illuminated manuscript, "The Deer's Cry," or "St. Patrick's Hymn." Linda M. Cottier, former teacher of English at St. Ninian's High School, focuses on another extraordinary illuminated manuscript by Knox, "The Book of Remembrance," and its companion memorial, "The Role of Honor." Both were created by Knox to commemorate those "Old Boys" of The Douglas High School (now St. Ninian's) who served in the Great War.

My own contributions, in addition to bringing together these knowledgeable authorities and the most extensive visual record of Knox's work ever assembled, are of a different order. I came to Knox originally as a collector, seduced and conquered by the “strange loveliness” of his objects, owning, passing on, and then owning them again, driven to be part of their chain of stewardship. Knox's work touches me deeply - not only because I am enduringly fascinated by the ancient Celtic spirit or because I love the crisp, linear simplicity of modernist design. They move me because they are his soul made tangible, radiant with his essential creativity. Through my passion for them I have come to know Archibald Knox intimately, and to gratefully feel our lives entwined like one of his signature entrelacs.

Such are the reasons I have spent these years researching, writing about, and living with Knox and his work, and why I am utterly compelled to ensure his place as one of the greatest of modern designers. In addition to this present volume, this fuel has fired my many lecture tours as well as the first international exhibition of Knox's work ever mounted from 1996 to 1998, which I curated with Mark Turner. The exhibition was comprehensive, comprising 150 of Knox's most beautiful objects in silver, pewter and copper, and rare examples of jewelry, as well as his drawn designs for metal ware, jewelry and fabrics. Watercolor landscapes and ephemera rounded out the loans, all culled from private collections and The Silver Studio Archives. It traveled to The Hunterian Art Gallery of the University of Glasgow, home of the magnificent Mackintosh Collection, the Delaware Art Museum, the Phoenix Museum of Art, The Huntington in Pasadena, and the David and Alfred Smart Museum of the Art Institute of Chicago. Hailed as a critical and popular success, the exhibition was a milestone, introducing Knox and his genius to thousands of new admirers and solidifying his reputation among those already familiar with it.

Living with such beautiful, magical objects has also intrigued me as a Jungian analyst. Thus I muse not only about their art historical importance, as I do in my essay on Knox's “great Tudric clocks,” but here in more psychological terms about art, Knox's life, and the meaning in his work. For I am passionately interested in the symbolic meaning of art, particularly as an object expresses the deeper creative and psychological strivings of its maker. Moreover, I am convinced that an art object's power to move the viewer is analogous, emotionally or psychologically, to the artist's motivation to create it. In this respect, the art object is an empathic bridge that links art maker to art lover - and ultimately to the symbolic source of the art itself.

This resonance, between art maker and art lover, is the basis of the aesthetic experience - the sense that an object in some way crystallizes and makes visible deeper possibilities in our nature. As a Jungian, in fact, I would say that the longing to possess an art object indicates that it carries, in this felt resonance, a particular, unknown piece of the “soul.” The urge to collect is fueled, in part, by this need to possess the part of our soul reflected in the object of our desire. Ultimately, by owning and delighting in that object, we become more conscious of meaning that is otherwise inaccessible to us. Hence the etymology of the word, “connoisseur,” from the Old French verb,

“connoistre,” “to know,” and from the Latin, “cognoscere,” “to know thoroughly and deeply.” To collect for the purposes of soul is at the core of being a connoisseur.

But more than this: From our passionate response to a work of art and the symbolic understanding it inspires, we can infer something about the feelings, inspirations, and sense of meaning that fueled the artist’s own urge to create it. Such inferences may not be amenable to historical evidence as such, but they permit me to make my own contribution to this volume, by intuiting and interpreting, in light of resonant imaginative experience, something of the soul that moved Archibald Knox.

## II

Major autem animae  
pars extra corpus est  
(The greater part of  
the soul is outside the  
body)

Sendivogius

From a psychological perspective, collecting art is a creative endeavor, much akin to the production of the art object itself. By way of art, we recognize our portion in the unchanging psychic patterns - the archaic or archetypal images, evolved over millions of years - that underlie and stabilize our individual frame of mind. When we respond to an art object, part of that inner life is evoked: something elemental, deeper than words, and its claim is immediate and fateful. We react emotionally without being able to describe the nature of that reaction.

As we ritualize the process, by collecting such objects, we enter into active dialogue with the unknown parts of our soul, much as the artist does when a piece of art is first emerging. We are caught by the material suggestion of inner truths that can never be fully realized. To paraphrase the philosopher, Paul Ricoeur, all human projects represent the failure of infinite intention. Thus, we are driven to create or collect anew.

Artist and collector are partners in this process of illumination, both explorers in search of soul - one by infusing the materials with shaped meaning, the other by enlivening and extending that meaning through refined aesthetic discernment. The personality expands with the knowledge and energy released by this creative activity.

This partnership is alive in all human projects that carry a piece of the soul - myths, spiritual and religious beliefs, the cultural arts, even the legends, lore, and tales that express a people’s sense of “place.” All such projects lend themselves to “collection” as I have just described it. In particular and most importantly, one can enter into creative dialogue with aspects of Knox’s art that suggest his own special sense of place and soul,

his feeling of “home.” For his work is suffused by a Celtic Christian sensibility that has its roots deep in his Manx heritage.

Knox was born in 1864, of Scottish parents, and, apart from working sojourns in London, he lived all of his life on the Isle of Man, an ancient Celtic outpost in the middle of the Irish sea. To know his work is to know that place - not only from the Manx names and titles he gave to so many of his projects, in metalwork, wallpaper, jewelry, and fabric designs for The Silver Studio, but from the literally hundreds of watercolors he painted of the island's romantic landscape. Largely unsigned and undated, all suggest the mutability of sea, land, and sky with broad sweeping brushstrokes of translucent color. Knox would reportedly stand for hours in a soaking rain, transfixed by the scene before him, unwilling to take shelter. A word-picture from an article he published in 1896, in *The Studio* magazine, entitled “The Isle of Man as a Sketching Ground,” attempts to capture his experience:

[In Castletown, Isle of Man]... the sea enters into every view, grey white or glistening beneath the sun, tenderest of blues in the evening, or deep turquoise under the influence of a breeze; it runs in streaks into land touching the greens and pinks of spring, and insinuates itself into the gardens of the fishermen's cottages; it winds among great stretches of golden wrack; and its mists float on to the land where the coast is depressed, offering new forms of clod and new fancies of subject. (p. 146)

Although one can easily recognize in this description the visual origins of Knox's brilliant use of color in his designs for Liberty & Co., his passionate, sentiment-laden drive to mine these fleeting jewels from the Manx landscape is deeper and more personal than that. He was strongly, if not irrationally, resistant to selling his watercolors, claiming that they were never finished, that he had not adequately grasped the ungraspable. Instead he accumulated them, as if to create some sort of private visual journal. Artist and collector are one in this effort, suggesting his profound awareness of the near-mystical identification he had with the land and his drive to reveal its truth.

To know Knox is also to know the Celtic Christian spirit. One can trace its manifestation backward into his schoolday interests - from his great love for the Celtic crosses that populate the island's countryside, from the inspiration he likely drew from the great devotional manuscripts The Book of Kells and The Book of Durrow, and from the early Celtic metalwork on view in Dublin, such as the "Tara" Brooch and the Ardagh Chalice, a piece of early liturgical silver. He masterfully assimilated their linear and chromatic virtuosity into the Celtic elements of his own work.

These influences were, again, fully realized not only in his commercial efforts, but in stunning, intensely personal works of manuscript illumination: *The Deer's Cry* of St. Patrick, and the Douglas Secondary School Roll of Honor, created in commemoration of those who had served in the Great War. Although inspired by differing sentiments,

these two works are inseparably linked by style. Knox poured into them a passion similar in intensity to his watercolors, as though his broad and impressionistic brushstroke had been replaced with a powerful blend of delicate yet boldly intricate Celtic knotting, in which he embedded the prayerful words of St. Patrick and the names of his fellows.

The pages from these manuscripts are tours de force of design. They are often so elaborately conceived that letter, word, and name recede into the forms themselves, forcing the viewer to give up reading in favor of purely visual pleasure in the fabulous colors and elegant overall shapes. The effect is one of subtle and profound recognition, as if Knox had marshaled all of his experience and skill to render in two dimensions the culmination of his artistic vision - an amalgam of Celtic crosses, the mature sensibility that wrought his Liberty designs, and a vast empathy for the transformative face of the Isle of Man. These designs suggest Knox's own perception of the hiddenness of soul and the way it can be revealed in a flash of emotion-charged meaning.

The dialogue that exists between Knox's inner and outer development - between his psyche and his profession, between his Celtic and Christian sensibilities - is clearly reflected in the design element that defines Knox as an artist: his infinitely varied and personalized renditions of the entrelac or Celtic knot. However, this dialogue is also illuminated at a deeper, archetypal level by the myth that gave his cherished homeland its name. The forms his art took mirror the myth's own dialogue between soul and earth, offering a way to limn the mystery and vitality of Knox's work, the pathway he took to deeper, unseen realms.

### III

...Manannán is “the rider of the crested sea,” the waves are his steeds... His traditional home is the Isle of Man - conceived less as a geographical reality than as a terrestrial location of the otherworld (in which is) echoed that of King Arthur's Avalon.

(from Celtic Mythology,  
1983, by Prosinsia MacCana)

The Isle of Man was initially named for a Moon-goddess to whom it was sacred (in the Indo-European languages, the word Man meant “moon”). She gradually evolved into the Fairy Queen of Celtic lore, presiding over a far-Western realm in which heroes abided, eternally young. More recent Manx legends attribute the island's name to a mysterious sea god, Manannán mac Lir, who inherited some of the functions of that

earlier fertility Queen. His ambrosial cauldron was never empty; he fed the Celtic armies on pigs that returned to life the following day.

Manannán mac Lir, in this respect, was not a circumscribed sea deity. He was lord of the realm that lay beyond and under the sea, the land of Tir na NÓc, the ancient Western "Land of Eternal Youth" once ruled by the Fairy Queen and later associated with King Arthur's Avalon. Manannán mac Lir's was a "Land of Promise," a "Delightful Plain," an otherworld without death, decay, or despair.

Manannán, whose patronymic means literally "son of the sea," thus functions in Celtic lore as a bridge between myth cycles: between goddess and god, between this world and the next, and between the more ancient Celtic way and Anglo-Saxon Catholicism. Never entirely humanized, tied to neither wife nor family, he is a spiritual, hermetic figure, a shape-shifter, a guide of souls. He symbolizes a protean, abundant creative vitality that by artful twist and turn surprises and delights, nourishes the spirit, and opens the mind to visions of other worlds.

I don't wish to suggest, of course, that Knox literally identified his art or his creative drive with Manannán mac Lir. I'm suggesting rather, that we can see in Knox's work some intimation of what Jung called "the Erdbeingheit of the psyche," the notion that the structure and dynamics of an outer landscape inevitably have their impress on the inner landscape of the people in it. This ecological dance of earth and soul becomes apparent in all manifestations of archetypal reality: myth, art, ritual, dreams. And the power of Knox's art derives, in part, from the fact that it mirrors his living participation in the archetypal ecology of his particular place and time.

Such characteristics are not deliberately cultivated. They move like currents beneath the conscious intentionality of a man, and are discernible only in retrospect, in the products of his hand: his traits, behaviors, choices, passions, ventures, creative inventions. What we see in Knox's visual alphabet is the ever-recurrent impress of the landscape on his character, perhaps best represented by the knot or entrelac, which mirrors Manannán mac Lir's artful, shape-shifting role in the myth that forms his people's undercurrent of self.

According to scholars, the knot entered the Celtic decorative vocabulary with the advent of Christianity in the northern islands around the early part of the seventh century A.D. So, clearly, the myth of Manannán mac Lir has no literal relationship to its history, nor am I postulating that Knox would have recognized the connection I'm making in any deliberate conscious way.

Even in the Christian faith, however, the knot is far more than an exuberant decoration for sacred texts. It is, rather, visual shorthand for the binding and interweaving of the human soul with God's sacred order in Creation. In Knox's hand, it also suggests that more ancient Celtic bond with Manannán mac Lir, bringing into relief the underlying archetype that gives the knot its enduring power to signify. These two energies, one a part of living faith, the other an aspect of his archetypal heritage,

converge in Knox, bringing forth an art that is at once mystical and numinous, transcending the category of “good design.”

This convergence is illustrated by several seminal objects, in whose creation Knox becomes a bridge between the ancient Celtic past and the Christian present. One sees, for example, in his great wirework chalice of 1902, a strikingly modern object, the symbolic convergence of Manannán's cauldron of plenty and its Christian counterpart, the thematic lodestone of the British imagination, the Holy Grail. The contextual bridge between these realities exists not only in the mythic stories that unite the two images, but in the play of wires that comprise the shaft of the chalice itself. Knox has designed therein a three-dimensional entrelac that ingeniously cradles the symbolic equivalent of the favored votive material of the original Celts - the shaped stone. Here is an object as symbol that blends disparate strands of meaning with astonishing grace.

Another visual epiphany of the ancient Celtic god appears in Knox's surface decoration of enlaced and interwoven plant forms, highlighted by a garden of richly colored enamels and semi-precious stones. It at once calls to mind Manannán mac Lir's legendary vision of the sea as “a profusion of flowers,” red-tipped without blemish, or as “a wood with blossom and fruit...with leaves the color of gold” (MacCana, p. 69). And the shape-shifter's play of forms within forms is surely manifest in a mysterious cigarette box designed by Knox in 1901. Like Manannán mac Lir's spectral meadows materializing above the sea before the mortal voyager Bran's wave-tossed curragh,

Sea-horses glisten in summer  
as far as Bran's eye can stretch;  
flowers pour forth a stream of honey  
in the land of Manannán son of Lir,

the design can be read as a field of stylized flower or tree forms, tightly knotted, resting on leafed stalks above a blue-green sea of enamel. Simultaneously, in the knotting that forms an essential design element of the box, Knox alludes to the presence the other Divinity, the Christian God who was so much a part of his conscious life.

A final example might be a claret jug of 1903. Like a proud, turquoise-eyed being with strange flaring hat and cloak of enameled entrelacs, the piece conjures up the otherworldly presence of the god Manannán himself, even as those knotted tendrils and blue enamel are ciphers for the living passion of Knox's Catholic faith.

#### IV

"...not until...Self nature (the combination of Outside Nature and our Own Nature) is distinctive by its individuality, growing as a stone

mined from the recesses of the unknown."

Archibald Knox, ca. 1910

"...The higher excellence is of the eye, not craft mastery; the imagination is satisfied if just within sight is the thing it knows."

Archibald Knox, 1925

Animating collective religious behavior and belief, says Jung, are archetypal predispositions codified by a given faith tradition. As an active Catholic involved with his church, Knox was certainly influenced by that tradition's psychological expectations and belief structure. He is widely known to have given of both his art and his time to the benefit of his community. Also, as reported by friends and associates, Knox embodied many classic Catholic values: a tenacious modesty; a disregard for personal fame; an intense, inviolate integrity and sense of justice; a disinterest in material wealth and personal luxury; a profound appreciation for the glory of God as reflected in the beauty of nature; and even in what might be controversially interpreted as a penchant for lifelong celibacy. Such distinctive and publicly acknowledged characteristics, so deeply and assertively lived, are, in their intensity and consistency, the hallmark of archetypal determinants in a personality.

However, it is in the deeper, less obvious aspects of Knox's character that we glimpse meaningful traces of the ecological dance between soul and earth that Manannán Mac Lir represents. Like all men who bridge two worlds, Knox often seemed like an "outsider" to both. One of his most remarked upon qualities was that of his "differentness" or "otherness." Even in his own family, he made choices at odds with expectations, disappointing his father in his failure or refusal to join the family engineering business (Tilbrook, p. 23), and following instead, perhaps with his mother's support, his own artistic instincts. One might consider that Manannán mac Lir seems less humanized than other hero-gods of his stature, in part, because he shares his goddess mother's nature and moves between her and the world of men. Tilbrook suggests, more prosaically, that Knox's exclusion from his father's favor imposed on him at an early age a "discipline and solitude" that may "explain some of his seemingly more eccentric behavior in later life."

Indeed, Knox might have lived out his days as a modest, idiosyncratic artisan in a location far removed from public knowledge or interest, had it not been for five men who compensated his lack of paternal support in both recognizing his genius and seeking to channel it. Four were deeply connected to the Manx ethos and well disposed toward a young man of Knox's introspective and artistic temperament, and the fifth was cannily aware of the British taste for revivalism and good design.

The first three, all older than he and apparent mentors, were the Reverend John Quine, headmaster of the Douglas Grammar School and a “keen amateur archaeologist,” who was very familiar with the Celtic heritage of Man; George Sheffield, the painter; and John Nicholson, the Manx artist and photographer. It was the fourth man, however, with whom Knox worked, M. H. Baillie Scott, an English architect relocated to the Isle of Man, who actually encouraged Knox to take his unique sensibility beyond that small island into the wider professional world.

Like Knox, Baillie Scott was enchanted by the Celtic spirit and hoped to incorporate something of its magic in his own architectural and design work. But his real talents lay elsewhere. He was more ambitious than Knox, more worldly. He recognized in Knox's designs an interpretation of Celtic form that would immediately appeal to the current European taste for nationalistic and folkloric revivals. Knox's subsequent relationship with Arthur Lasenby Liberty was the direct or indirect result of Baillie Scott's foresight and influence.

Liberty was yet another older paternal influence, whose own mercantile vision further shaped and harnessed the timeless, mythic nature of Knox's Celtic designs to the realities of professional production. He made Knox his major designer for the Tudric and Cymric metalwork lines market by the firm.

Despite his professional successes and the paternal guidance of these five men, Knox remained, as so many have described him, mysteriously elusive or hidden. These descriptions have overtones of Manannán mac Lir, whose ship had neither sail nor oar, whose skills were more visual than vocal, who had neither wife nor family, and who seemed to be more of a “spiritual force” than a fully humanized hero. Winifred Tuckfield, one of Knox's favorite students, tersely remarked that Knox could be “almost Cistercian in his silence” (p. 381) in what may be regarded as the Christian equivalent of Manannán's characteristic “otherworldliness.”

Because Knox never married, he could seek out the kind of solitude and privacy he required without personal conflict. Most noteworthy of this penchant was his decision to leave London in 1900, only three years into his collaboration with Liberty & Co., just as he was hitting his creative stride. He resettled alone in Sulby, a particularly beautiful and out-of-the-way locale on the Isle of Man, and spent four years in a small cottage, surrounded by Liberty furnishings. During this period of what reads like a monastic retreat amidst the sea-bound fog, Knox experienced the single most concentrated burst of creative energy of his entire career. The results made his reputation as a great designer and are recognized today as some of his most inspired commercial creations.

Like Manannán mac Lir, who preferred the company of the waves, the clouds, and the fields to the discordant world of men, or like the silent, contemplative monk pursuing his spiritual devotions, Knox sought a meaningful solitude, the creative fruits of which are undisputed. As Jung has pointed out, some artists are not oriented by the demands of objective existence, but are alert to the archetypal drama within that gives shape to the outer world. Apart from his internationally recognized design work, which

expresses this aspect of his personality publicly, Knox's watercolor paintings and illuminated manuscripts testify to the passionate confluence of his meditative spirit and the shape-shifting archetypal power of Manannán mac Lir. Knox's art is a portal to that other realm, a revelation of worlds within worlds, images within images.

Knox returned to Man permanently in 1913, having been dismissed from a teaching position at the Kingston School of Art for too "modern" a methodology. Interest in the Celtic Revival style had been steadily waning since 1907, and Knox was unsuccessful in finding employment elsewhere. Once home, however, he had a second burst of creative energy, which culminated in varied forms of illuminated lettering, his watercolors, monumental memorial stones, and copious commercial graphic work. Here again, it would seem that contact with the physical place, immersion in the cultural spirit, ignited Knox's deepest creative fires.

As with many deeply introverted people, Knox was able to give of himself when he had control of a social situation, and he was to all accounts an extraordinarily generous and inspirational teacher. He believed that art arose out of the individuality of the artist's spirit but also required containment by good form, taste, and a disciplined sense of simplicity and design. He underscored his points with memorable blackboard illustrations and visual comparisons from his over 3000 lantern slides of ancient and modern art, high design, and the vernacular. His true gift, however, was his ability to bring out the individual spirit of each student with personal attention and a flexible style of instruction. Like Manannán mac Lir's attentions as a host, Knox gently guided his charges between the quotidian and the groundbreaking possibilities of art making, giving out of his own prodigious genius, and encouraging his students, above all else, to be true to their own imaginations.

Knox's synthesis of disparate visual and aesthetic traditions in order to distill a uniquely personal approach to art making is another aspect of what he accomplished in the over 5000 designs he provided for Liberty & Co. during his life. He traveled back and forth across the chronological borders of tradition, melding his Celtic-Christian sensibility with a vigorous attention to good design, the right materials, and a compatibility with machine production consistent with cutting-edge contemporary design. His preference for restrained sinuosity over the organic excesses of Continental Art Nouveau clearly allied him with the modernist ethos of "less is more," but it also proclaims the Christian tenet of the power of the spiritual, the mystical, over the excesses of the body. This artful liminality, abundant productivity, and restrained elegance suggest yet again an imagination imbued with the archetypal energy of Manannán mac Lir. And they suggest as well the ascetic fervor of his anonymous monastic predecessors, sequestered and laboring in their scriptoria and workshops, who, with their otherworldly illuminations and exquisite metalwork, brought to a dawning Western culture the visual experience of the eternal made visible.

In the final analysis, Archibald Knox remains a near mythic figure. His hermetic creations glow with the soul-laden radiance of the "strange loveliness" of which I spoke. Never does this fail to fire my imagination, charm my eye, or spur my desire. It is my

hope that something of this ability to transport will be conveyed by the present volume so that others may share my susceptibility, my most welcome flaw.

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