



Daniel Cottier, *Beauty*, Cairndhu House, 1873.



Daniel Cottier & Company. *Spring*. ca. 1873–85. Leaded and stained glass. 52 5/8 × 30 in. (133.7 × 76.2 cm). Gift of Estate of Virginia Guard Brooks and the Guard family, 2007.



Daniel Cottier. *Magpie*. Links House, now The Links Hotel, Montrose. Colin McLean Photography ©

Glasgow's Stained Glass: Daniel Cottier's Use Of Colour

This research was conducted in order to provide context for the history of the wall panels in Alexander Thomson's Holmwood House, that depicted Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*. This poster hopes to introduce the colours used by Daniel Cottier—friend and collaborator of Thomson—on his stained glass windows.

Background

Born in Glasgow in 1838, Daniel Cottier was a highly influential artist and designer known for his colourful stained glass windows. His style and use of colour are regarded as significant in the development of the Aesthetic movement, specifically in its introduction to the United States.

In the 1850s, he began his career as an apprentice to Glaswegian glazing and decorating firms, such as David Keir and John Cairney & Co. It was with the latter that Cottier met Alexander 'Greek' Thomson, who influenced both his style and use of colour. Through Thomson, Cottier was also introduced to other architects and designers, such as John Moyr Smith and Bruce James Talbert: both of whom also influenced his work. Later, it was William Morris and Dante Gabriel Rossetti who impacted Cottier's style and colour palette.

Colour

"As a colourist Cottier has a range of performance beyond that of any modern artist. Here tone and colour are suggestive of paradise itself." (Michael Donnelly, p.9)

Described by many as harmonious, Cottier's colour palette varied from strong uses of primary colours to olive greens, whites and yellows. It is likely that, like Thomson, Cottier drew from the colour schemes shown in Owen Jones' 1856 *Grammar of Ornament*—one of the most influential design manuals of the Victorian era—in his early work. The book contained Egyptian, Assyrian, Persian and Greek designs and colour palettes; with the Greek colour schemes resembling Cottier's early stained glass windows, though his use of these colours continued until later in his career. In 1865 his colours were described as "striking," with "great masses of positive colour, red and blue, with figures of dense black." (Michael Donnelly, p.9.)

It is around the year 1861 that Cottier is thought to have been exposed to the work of William Morris, whose "subtle and resonant tertiary hues" began to replace the "archaeologically-inspired mid-century primaries" that he had learned from designers such as Thomson (Max Donnelly, p.33). Among the colours used by Morris were soft, muted shades that were distinctively natural and flat; stressing the importance of modest tones. It was at this point that Cottier had "developed a keen sense of colour harmony, heavily reliant on the juxtaposition of contrasting primary or tertiary colours" (Ibid, p.34). This harmony between colours is a consequence of combining the Greek style of Thomson and the Aesthetic style of Morris.

Conclusion

The changes that Daniel Cottier's use of colour underwent over his career can be attributed to changing styles, the influences of social circles, and changing tastes. The beauty and harmony of his colour schemes were a defining feature of his windows, which exhibited both skill and a deep knowledge of colour theory that would go on to inspire future artists and designers, such as American artist and designer Louis Comfort Tiffany.

Citations

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