WILLIAM CROSBIE
(1915-1999)
Centenary Exhibition
7 - 31 January 2015
INTRODUCTION

There are many Scottish painters who have made a mark on our culture and consciousness in the last century and it is tempting to try to attach each to a school or movement. The artist has a habit of resisting any attempt at taxonomy however, wriggling free from the entomologist’s chloroform bottle and display pin, to be unruly, unpredictable and provide no favours for the art historian. Yes, we had The Glasgow Boys, a coherent group of realist painters before the beginning of the 20th Century. And then came The Scottish Colourists, our first modernists, who certainly exhibited as a group and can be understood as British post-impressionists. In the post-War years the choice seemed to be to stay in Scotland under the wing of your Art College or move to the South, like Colquhoun and MacBryde, Alan Davie, William Gear and W. Barns-Graham. Of course the complex reality denies a simple telling; for every adherent there is an opponent and many of the most powerful and individual painters of the period like James Cowie or Joan Eardley neither left nor taught in Glasgow or Edinburgh. The further atomisation and liberalisation of art in its institutions and education from the sixties has led to confusion; the absence of a master and eventual abandonment of the idea, for example, that drawing mattered at all.

But of course painting and drawing do matter and we are now in times ripe for the rediscovery of painters who believed this passionately, who dedicated themselves to hard work, sustained by their convictions even when the tide seemed to run against them.

William Crosbie was one such. He had a fine, enquiring mind, was deeply read and immersed in the liberal arts; he had great technical gifts and was happy to apply these far beyond the confines of studio and easel but at the same time he recognised that a painter needed to paint and to exhibit. This determination to be engaged with the hurly burly and a prodigious work ethic have left much to be rediscovered and celebrated in the centenary year of his birth.

Crosbie was born in Hankow, China in 1915 where his father, who came from the Scottish Borders (his mother was a Highlander) was working as a marine engineer on shipping and harbour works on the Yangtze River. William had a lifelong passion for boats and sailing which can be traced back to his early life and family interests. His younger brother Glen would join the Royal Navy and Crosbie would have a yacht, Friga harboured at Rhu until he left Scotland. Hankow was a British Protectorate established as an open trading port after the 8th Earl of Elgin came up the Yangtze with four gunboats in 1858. The city was occupied in early 1927 by the Revolutionary army, the Kuomintang, who showed no intention of leaving and after a period of nominal power-sharing the protectorate came to an end in 1929. Hankow is now absorbed into the modern city of Wuhan. We can therefore assume that the Crosbie family’s return to Glasgow in 1926 can be put down to the political and security situation.

Bill aged eleven was sent to Glasgow Academy, the oldest private school in Glasgow founded in 1845, the same year as Glasgow School of Art. He arrived, by his own account, more fluent in Mandarin than English having been looked after by an ayah in a Chinese family. The Academy would have provided a classical education but was not known for nurturing artists and after school it can only have been Crosbie’s determination that pointed him in the direction
of art. His parents were always supportive and his displaying a true conviction to be an artist perhaps persuaded them to support his application to The Glasgow School of Art where he enrolled in the session of 1932. The following year a new Principal was appointed in William Oliphant Hutchison. He came up from London where he had developed a successful portrait practice. Born in 1889, Hutchison had attended Edinburgh College of Art before the War and was a founder of the Edinburgh Group with Mary Newberry, Alick Sturrock, Eric Roberston and DM Sutherland. He was an enlightened leader happy to encourage study of the moderns and became a great supporter of Crosbie who won several scholarships. Hutchison wrote to him on 14th July 1935 offering congratulations and advising him to visit the Hals’ Laughing Cavalier in the Wallace Collection to “see how a slashing master can paint details of lace and embroidery.” He had won the Minor Travelling Scholarship to be taken within a year and valued at £10.00! He also was awarded the Fra Newbery medal for 1935-36, his Diploma year. He was very active in the School, putting on an exhibition in April 1937 and persuading the painter Sir James Gunn to open it. He sat on the Student Representational Council and no doubt used his charm and persuasive powers to back his considerable ability to begin to secure mural commissions which would sustain his professional life for the next decade. Having completed a post-Diploma year he was awarded the major travelling award worth £120.00 in the summer of 1937. This would sustain him in Paris for extended periods where he enrolled at the atelier of Fernand Léger, in preference to the academic training available at the École des Beaux Arts. He had digs on la Rue de la Grande Chaumier, opposite the Académie Colarossi, in a room, offered at a reduced rate, above the lift. Here he could make a cup of coffee but otherwise he ate out in the restaurants of the quartier, like that run by Mme Wadja, full of impoverished art students; (it is still there but rather up-market!). Crosbie subsidised his bursary by washing dishes and sweeping up leaves in the Luxembourg Gardens: “They weighed them before they paid you!”. Léger was a profound influence. There were only three other students and to gain admission he had to draw a sheep’s skull but beyond this there was no examination; instead the master would suggest something that Crosbie might benefit from studying and send him off for a couple of weeks. He did find time to take classes in history of art in the Sorbonne and drawing with Maillol. Léger’s studio was next door to that occupied by JD Fergusson and Margaret Morris with whom Crosbie made a connection that would bear fruit in the years to come when he collaborated with Morris on her Celtic Ballet. The towering example of Fergusson, highly respected in modernist circles and deeply connected with London and Paris bohemia, was important for Crosbie. Here was a painter who never taught, who lived a frugal life dedicated to art but was the antithesis of the ascetic; a modern and bohemian paragon. At the end of his scholarship in 1938 he spent several months with the Royal Archaeological Institute at Saqqara in Egypt surveying and copying murals at the newly excavated Temple of the Bulls.

The advent of the War put Crosbie in something of a quandary; he was not a pacifist but could not bear the idea of being instructed to kill. His position was close to that of Douglas Young, the poet, polymath and nationalist politician (with whom he is often linked in discussion of a Scottish post-War Renaissance). Young refused to register as either conscientious objector or for military service and served two terms in Saughton prison. Crosbie had returned to Glasgow and managed to rent the studio at 12 Ruskin Lane which had been built for DY Cameron. He bought the studio at the end of the War with a £400 loan. This was a bold declaration of intent and while he made himself available as an ambulance driver and for duty in the right:

*Festival of Britain, Exhibition of Industrial Power, Hall of the Future.* William Crosbie at work on the atomic mural |Sir Basil Spence Archive| Copyright © RCAHMS
Merchant navy he began to work hard towards exhibitions and began to pick up professional commissions for portrait work and murals. There seems to be little official opprobrium attached to his non-combatant status and indeed he received great support from several senior figures in the Scottish art world. It was a time of enormous stress, but culture cannot be suppressed and the War years saw many of Crosbie’s most interesting collaborations. In 1942 he illustrated Dain do Eimhir, a book of poems by Sorley Maclean published by William MacElian in Glasgow. In the same year he painted the portrait of the poet Robert Crombie Saunders who is likely to have introduced him to Hugh MacDiarmid whose portrait Crosbie painted the next year and which is now in the Kelvingrove Art Gallery. A series of letters from Hutchison demonstrate the affection and regard the Principal had for his star student. He recommended a place at Stowe School to study and teach; he bought a painting from an exhibition and used his good offices to smooth the way for prompt payment for Crosbie’s mural commissioned through the Lord Provost’s office for a canteen at a Working Men’s Club at Doncaster Street. He also prompted Crosbie to work with Margaret Morris. Morris’s Celtic Ballet was set up in 1939 and the second production: The Earth Shapers, (1941) had sets and costumes designed and painted in the School of Art by Crosbie. The musical director was his friend Eric Chisholm. Hutchison proposed Crosbie’s associate membership of the RSA in 1943 although unsuccessfully; he was also initially not voted in as an artist member of the Glasgow Arts Club. These institutions formed an important part of the artist’s professional life but, not surprisingly, they initially represent a deeply conservative viewpoint completely at odds with Crosbie’s modern outlook.

Another significant supporter who grew to know the artist during the War was Dr TJ Honeyman, the polymath Director of Glasgow Museums, previous partner in Reid & Lefevre, and biographer of The Colourists. Like Hutchison he was a strong advocate for Crosbie and intervened to secure payment for a second mural for the City, this time at Maryhill Hall, in June 1940. The following February he wrote confirming his purchase of a major painting from an Annan exhibition for Kelvingrove. He also discussed a joint Fergusson and Crosbie show for the gallery, Fergus and Meg now installed at Kelvin Bridge after returning from France. Honeyman was an enlightened Director knowing a good picture and grasping the populist, transformatory nature of great art. In 1951 he bought Salvador Dali’s Christ of St John of the Cross; he knew Dali from his time at Reid & Lefevre, who represented the Spanish Surrealist in the thirties. It may well have been Honeyman’s introduction which led to Crosbie’s joint show with John Armstrong in 1947, having previously shown with the Brook Street Gallery. During these years Crosbie can be seen as a British Surrealist. He never signed a manifesto nor participated in the happenings and conventions espoused by the adherents of André Breton but his work of the War years shares the spatial ambiguity and disconcerting juxtaposition of motifs characteristic of the movement and his painting with Armstrong, the most overt of the British followers is significant.

Another supporter was the dealer Craigie Annan whose gallery in Sauchiehall Street held shows in 1944, ‘45 and ‘46. Annan was a warm, paternal figure who got on well with the painter. He showed again in 1951 and 1954, having shown significantly with The Scottish Gallery in 1948 and ‘50 at the invitation of the formidable Beatrice Proudfoot.

In the summer of 1944 he married Grace McPhail embarking on a marriage which was to be stable but increasingly stressful as she developed multiple sclerosis. His daughter, Pauline was born in July 1947 and Crosbie confessed the weight of responsibility for looking after the family in the uncertain days of rationing and privation which continued after the War. He felt the loss of his mother who died in September 1948 but was at least comforted by the continuing strength of his father who also provided some financial assistance. His relationship with his daughter was very close, flourishing as she fulfilled her academic promise and was able to interact as her father’s intellectual equal. She studied in France, at Caen University in the mid sixties before
taking her degree at Glasgow University and then took up a position in Cambridge working with
a unit plotting the landscape for the Ordnance Survey with aerial photography. She returned
to Glasgow in 1975 to study silversmithing before settling in Lancaster with her husband Paolo
Rossi who became head of Italian Studies at the university. Rossi was the son of the painter Carlo
Rossi, a contemporary of Crosbie’s at The School of Art.

Crosbie was a prolific diarist of a confessional, honest kind, the words designed to rationalise
his ideas and circumstances, far from the politician’s daily notes made with an eye to eventual
publication. Entries from the late forties and early fifties cover the usual vicissitudes: money,
confidence, criticism, inspiration and technical issues.

In 1954 he had a new exhibition with Annan; it was three years since the last and he
reflected on what had happened and what he had achieved, most particularly keeping body,
soul, wife and child together. He wrote “Seven exhibitions have materialised in the course of my
life. They have taught me much about work, framing and the public including the dealer and
his persistent companion the income tax; neither of them very praiseworthy gentlemen. I never
fail to give birth to new ideas after each of these milestones, steps suggesting themselves largely
as counter-measures to what has been done in the immediate past. My next existence is likely
to be of small highly finished panels inviting removal by the observer.” (He deemed his present
exhibition as overpowering in scale and colour!)

In 1956, in response to a new exhibition he railed, like so many other artists must have, at
the critical response: the assertion that he had not found his own artistic personality. He pondered
“One must meantime fall between two evils; if you desire to bring a picture to a high finish you
are emulating some old master who did the job much better, if you don’t you are liable to be
identified with some other temporary, modern master.”

This question of self is worth exploring. Artists have often been criticised thus for either
adopting a formulaic approach or for failing to demonstrate a consistent, identifiable style. Crosbie
certainly showed some distinct developments but he also moved between different subjects.
Of the forty-eight oil paintings from public collections, recorded for the Public Art Foundation, we
get the impression of an extraordinary variety of subjects: straightforward landscapes of Scotland,
England or France; still life, the female nude, a sort of modern fête champêtre; surrealism; religious
painting; portraiture, both intimate and official; the self-portrait. Each subject is a genre and for
each there are possible or overt influences; Cézanne, Léger and Picasso, Marie Laurencin
and Paul Delvaux; Salvador Dali, Max Ernst and John Armstrong; Stanley Spencer and even
his early mentor W.O Hutchison. Certainly the way of constructing his still life with tubular and
flat components seems a consistent revisitation of Léger’s teaching, or rather example. Perhaps
Jankel Adler is another influence, so important for Crosbie’s contemporaries Colquhoun and
MacBryde, although it can be argued that Adler is most significant as an interpreter of Picasso
for those he met in Glasgow during the War. This variety and vocabularies shared with other
artists is apparent but finally does not undermine Crosbie’s œuvre and even without his distinctive
signature and the date painted in Roman numerals his work is readily identifiable over a lifetime
of development and a range of different subjects. He himself identified a liberating tendency in
modern art which he described in his 1944 article Oriental and Occidental Art, published in
Scottish Art Review (edited by Fergusson). The essay praises the oriental artist’s directness and
honesty in response to his subject and contrasts this with the ‘conventional practices’ which have
obscured and hampered western artists, perhaps until the present times when, “the modern
living as a modern… is operating from sources identical with the oriental’s fountainhead.”
This emphasis on visual stimulation and honesty chimes well with so much of the artist’s practice;
the starting point is the real, observed world, interpreted but essentially honest to the artist’s
instinctive response, by no means an adoption on another’s motif. His friend O H Mavor, better
known as James Bridie, the founder of the Citizens Theatre, addressed the same issue in his introduction to the Lefevre catalogue in 1947.

“His exhibitions in Glasgow are bewildering in their variety. The present exhibition is almost entirely made up of paintings done in 1946 and the early part of this year. Nobody can prophesy what his 1948 exhibition will be like.

This is not to decry, however, his mastery of his present mode or the strongly characteristic note in all his work. Beneath the permutations arising from his philosophical outlook there are constants of strong and confident draughtsmanship and the highly individual use of colour.”

The ability of design applied to painting is called composition and Crosbie is a sophisticated and original composer, marshalling the props of his still life (often chosen as much for texture as shape). These same skills wrt large underpin his exceptional ability as a muralist and he is likely to be the most prolific practitioner in Scottish art history. These achievements are necessarily undervalued today since so much has been lost. Crosbie was sanguine about this: after all these were commissioned works and he would have regarded his studio practice as more important, but a full appreciation of the artist is difficult with so much of the legacy destroyed. Indeed some significant projects were essentially ephemeral: he made models for architects and on one occasion built a life size model cottage to take centre stage at an exhibition. In 1938 his first major mural undertaking was for the Glasgow Empire Exhibition and in 1951 Basil Spence commissioned the work Atomic for the Festival of Britain in London. In between he worked for local authorities, particularly in Glasgow and in September 1943 The Studio Magazine published an article illustrating a number of his murals of canteens! Much later he recalled his Presbyterian father’s unease at his son working for the Catholic Church. In August 1946, he completed an oil paint mural in the Victoria & Albert Museum over eight days with one adult assistant and a fourteen year old boy (who got 2 guineas for the week). One of his last murals was undertaken in 1980 for the cafe of the Edinburgh City Art Centre in Market Street and he was able to supervise its restoration a few years before he died. Some of the mural work was photographed and parts are recorded in preparatory drawings. At his eightieth birthday exhibition in Glasgow he discussed his mural scheme City and Park, for the Glasgow Police Headquarters, with the writer Clare Henry for The Herald who describes from the sketch; “Here Glasgow’s sky line sits under a floating park where children play and architects plan. Meanwhile men fish with ropes through holes in the sky. One chap is sawing off the top of a ladder which protrudes upwards. Allegorical snakes and ladders?” “We all live on two planes.” Crosbie responds, “We present one facade in public; the other in private.” He added “I got to know the police well. Sometimes constables came to my studio when they came off duty for tea and rolls.””

Crosbie referred to the War years in Glasgow as ‘A little local Renaissance’ and in an article in Vogue magazine published in the summer of 1950 Eric Linklater continues the theme by looking at Scottish letters and arts, acknowledging the arrival of the Edinburgh Festival, in a piece illustrated by portrait photographs of many of the principal characters, including the painters Crosbie, Gillies, Redpath and JD Fergusson. In the fifties he continued to have regular one-person exhibits and also to be included in some significant contemporary group exhibitions. In 1952 The Scottish Committee of the Arts Council mounted a touring show of British painters including Michael Ayrton, Robert Henderson Blyth, Joan Eardley, John Minton, Julian Trevelyan, and Crosbie. At this moment there was clearly a recognition of his importance in British terms but we cannot see this being followed up and can surmise that his commitment to regular

Right: William Crosbie in his studio, c.1950s.
Image appeared in ‘Scottish Talents’, Vogue, July 1950
exhibitions in Scotland, his choice not to join the staff of an art college nor move to London could have harmed his career in the conventional sense. What he was able to maintain was his independence and his autonomy and the ability to do whatever he wanted. From the mid-fifties he began to construct model boats. Firstly a tug, built in wood and entirely homemade, except for the steam engine; then a sailing dinghy, planked in paper with a basket-cane frame, a copper keel and linen sails.

His exhibition in December 1957 held at Auchendarroch, mainly of pictures made at Balfron during the summer, was a flop (by his own account) and in the deep winter, his studio ‘uninhabitable’, he reached a low ebb. His natural resilience and work ethic served him well however and the next year he returned to Spain for the first time since his visit at the end of the Spanish Civil War, filling a sketchbook with lyrical watercolours. In 1960 he and the family went on a walking tour of the middle-east intending to meet up with his brother, then the Naval attaché in Ankhara. By now he had met his future second wife Anne Roger and she would provide a comfort and security previously absent. Over the next twenty years, until they moved south to Petersfield in Hampshire, the Crosbies lived in Glasgow, sailing frequently in William’s yacht (as well as doing the maintenance), travelling to France and within Scotland. He also did some part-time teaching at the School of Art where many students remember his benign, quiet authority. His shows were less frequent and he had new representatives in the Kelly Gallery, the commercial space run by the Royal Glasgow Institute where Crosbie had been a regular contributor since 1943; he had exhibitions in 1965, ’72 and ’76. In 1973 he was eventually voted full Academician at the RSA and in 1980 working with the new senior partner at The Scottish Gallery, William Jackson, he put on his first retrospective exhibition. Ten years later he mounted a second retrospective with Ewan Mundy Fine Art with an autumn show in Glasgow and a London show following. From then until his death Ewan was his ‘man of business’. In his conversation with Clare Henry in 1995 at the time of an eightieth birthday show in Glasgow he looked back at his career and what he had done: “Any damn thing that turned up!” portraits, illustration, design work, sculpture and murals for Jack Coia and Basil Spence “Where there’s a will there’s a way. If daylight is available you should be working. I believe that if the energy is there it should be making something!”

In the later years he continued to add thematic richness to his painting; smooth faced Victorian dolls promenade; Scottish earthenware pots and jugs containing stylised ‘cut-out’ flowers, flattened design is combined with rich colour (surely Mary Fedden, whose husband Julian Trevelyan exhibited with Crosbie in the fifties must have been an influence), musical instruments float in compositions that turn again to Surrealism and his joy in the female form, sometimes provocative but always painterly, is undimmed.

Looking back in 1990 he quietly acknowledged the privilege he had enjoyed as a painter. “My devotion to the muse and the life it has led me has meant I have enjoyed richness of texture not readily to hand to the majority for my fellow citizens.”

This we hope is apparent in this current exhibition which marks a significant anniversary for one of Scotland’s greatest painters and the beginning of the Gallery’s representation of the artist’s estate and legacy.

GUY PEPOLE, THE SCOTTISH GALLERY

Right: William Crosbie at his 80th Birthday Exhibition, Ewan Mundy Fine Art, Glasgow, 1995 (photograph by Eric Thorburn)
1 Portrait of Fernand Léger, 1938
watercolour, 30 x 23 cms
2 Dream, 1941
watercolour, 54 x 47.5 cms
signed & dated lower left
3  Petunia, 1935
   oil on paper, 28 x 37.5 cms
   signed & dated lower right, inscribed with title lower left
Red Dachshund Sleeping, 1942
ink & gouache, 36.5 x 51 cms
signed & dated lower left
Landscape, Saddle Balmaha, c.1949
watercolour, 37.5 x 55 cms
signed lower left
The Green Children, 1952
red chalk on paper, 33.5 x 44 cms
signed & dated lower right
Irish Tree, 1952
ink, 51 x 76 cms
signed, dated & inscribed with title lower left
Thunder of Fate Through Fields of Fear, 1952
ink & watercolour, 26 x 17 cms
signed & dated upper right
Book illustration
9  The Square, Killearn, c.1954
oil on board, 45.7 x 55.8 cms
signed lower left
10  *Parrot & Still Life*, c.1955
   oil on board, 60.9 x 106.6 cms
   signed upper left
11  *Self Portrait*, 1956
   oil on board, 60.3 x 43.1 cms
   signed upper left, signed, dated and inscribed with title verso

EXHIBITED
*William Crosbie Memorial Exhibition*, Ewan Mundy Fine Art, Glasgow, 2001, cat. 17
12. *Huevos Tapas - Men at a Tapas Bar*, 1958
watercolour, 37.5 x 53.5 cms
signed & dated lower left
Spaniard & Bull, 1958
watercolour, 53.8 x 37.5 cms
signed lower left
Studio Interior, 1958
pen & ink, 46 x 39 cms
signed & dated lower middle
Clown, 1958
oil on canvas, 220.9 x 116.8 cms
signed upper left
Oriental Fan, Quince, Blue & White Vase and Chess, 1965
oil on board, 60.9 x 121.9 cms
signed & dated lower right
17  Flowers and Butterfly, 1967
    oil on board, 124.4 x 114.3 cms
    signed & dated lower right
Reclining Nude, 1969
oil on board, 46 x 61 cms
signed & dated upper right
19  *White Gate with House*, c.1970
  oil on canvas board, 35.5 x 25.4 cms
  signed verso
Abstract Still Life, c.1970

oil on board, 111.7 x 116.8 cms
signed lower left

“The public reaction to Crosbie’s abstract surrealist paintings in the early years was largely hostile. However, Bill’s work in painting murals, building models for architects, creating altarpieces and illustrating books allowed him the freedom to continue painting unrestricted by the lack of a ready market for his easel paintings. These paintings and indeed all of William Crosbie’s pictures are what he described as being in the nature of a diary, whatever the day brought, an attempt to make some comment was the result.”

Ewan Mundy, 2000
Coton Road, 1971
oil on board, 20.3 x 27.3 cms
signed lower left
22  Mirabelle (Small Head of a Girl), 1975
oil on board, 24.4 x 20.3 cms
signed & dated upper left
23  *Evolution (Four Nude Figures)*, c.1977
oil on board, 35.5 x 44.4 cms

EXHIBITED
*William Crosbie Retrospective Exhibition*, Ewan Mundy Fine Art,
Glasgow and London, 1990, cat. 71
Walnut, Paraffin & Russets, 1975-80
watercolour, 26 x 38 cms
signed lower right & inscribed with title lower middle

EXHIBITED
William Crosbie Retrospective Exhibition, Ewan Mundy Fine Art,
Glasgow and London, 1990, cat. 73
Phoenix (Female Nude), 1980
oil on board, 147.3 x 63.5 cms
signed & dated upper right
26  I Have a Tale (Female Nude with Guitar & Wreath), 1982
    oil on board, 55.8 x 81.2 cms
    signed & dated upper right

54
27  *Nude (Blue Background)*, 1984  
oil on canvas board, 45.5 x 37.5 cms  
signed upper right
Danseuse, Spanish Hat, 1985
oil on board, 35.5 x 30.4 cms
signed & dated lower left
29 Cathedral Close, 1986
watercolour, 22 x 18 cms
signed, titled & dated lower left
30  The Caller (Doll), 1987
   oil on board, 50.8 x 35.5 cms
   signed & dated lower right
31  Poppy Still Life on Striped Cloth, 1987
    oil on board, 52 x 45 cms
    signed & dated lower left
Madonna & Child, 1988
oil on board, 60 x 49 cms
signed & dated lower left
33  *Music of Living - Monkey and Nude*, 1988

oil on board, 71 x 91.4 cms

signed & dated lower left
Family Friends (Still Life), 1988

oil on board, 50.8 x 76.2 cms
signed & dated lower middle

EXHIBITED

William Crosbie Retrospective Exhibition, Ewan Mundy Fine Art,
Glasgow and London, 1990, cat. 102
Pique-Nique Finisterre (On Beach), 1988
oil on board, 47.5 x 47.5 cms
signed & dated lower left, titled verso
Quince Magic and the President, 1988
oil on board, 44.4 x 129.5 cms
signed and dated upper left

EXHIBITED
William Crosbie Retrospective Exhibition, Ewan Mundy Fine Art,
Glasgow and London, 1990, cat. 98
37  Basin, Norfolk with Boats, 1990
   oil on board, 17 x 44 cms
   signed & dated lower left
In Spring an Old Man’s Fancy Turns (Daffodils in a White Pot), 1990
oil on board, 58 x 45 cms
signed & dated upper left
Guitarist, 1990
oil on canvas, 91.4 x 58.4 cms
signed & dated lower right
Arguing with Self, 1991
ink, 40 x 27.5 cms
signed, dated & inscribed with title lower left
Pot of Anemones, 1990
oil on board, 30 x 22.5 cms
signed and dated lower left

PROVENANCE
Ewan Mundy Fine Art, Glasgow; Tom Bell Fine Art, Troon
oil on board, 35.7 x 30.4 cms
signed & dated lower left
Glass with Flowers, 1991
oil on board, 27.9 x 24 cms
signed & dated lower left
Still Life - Blue & Pink Flowers in a Jug, 1991
watercolour, 41 x 28.5 cms
signed & dated lower left
Still Life with Christmas Balls, White & Pink Tulips, 1991

oil on board, 27.9 x 58.4 cms
signed & dated lower right

“Uniquely his own in Crosbie’s work is the quality of luminosity achieved in many still-lifes of fruits in bowls, the colour values possessing – even when primaries are employed – degrees of warmth very few artists succeed in obtaining.”

Emilio Coia, The Scotsman, Monday 24th May 1993
Anger, 1991
ink & watercolour, 29 x 25 cms
signed, titled and titled lower left
47  Pilgrim's Progress - Pons Asinorum, 1992
    oil on board, 121.9 x 91.4 cms
    signed & dated upper left, titled verso
Christmas Still Life, 1992
oil on board, 62 x 85 cms
signed & dated upper left
“Any attempt to make a personal statement has to pay attention not to produce something which negates a perfectly good principle of thought, design and structure, which can so easily be done if one has a state of mind which says I have no obligation to tradition. You should be able to be a child of the age but not at the expense of what tradition has to offer.”

William Crosbie, 1990s
Onions and Bodkins, 1993
oil on board, 58.4 x 21.5 cms
signed & dated lower left
Looking Forward in Anger (Self-Portrait), 1995
oil on canvas board, 29 x 23 cms
signed & dated lower left
52. *Playing to my Friends*, 1996
    
oil on board, 91.4 x 60.9 cms
    
signed & dated lower right
WILLIAM CROSBIÉ RSA (1915-1999)

1915  Born in Hankow, China
1926  Crosbie family returned to Glasgow from China
1932-35  Studied at Glasgow School of Art
1935  Awarded Haldane Travelling Scholarship and Fra Newbery Medal
1936-7  Diploma and Post-Diploma year at Glasgow School of Art
1937  Exhibition at Glasgow School of Art opened by Sir James Gunn
1937  Visited Spain during Civil War
1937-39  Traveled to Paris with travelling award
          Entered Ecole des Beaux-Arts
          Studied under Fernand Léger who introduced him to JD Fergusson
          and Margaret Morris
1938  Traveled to Dongder, Egypt to work on the Temple of Bulls
          Studied at Athens College of Art
1938  Mural in Empire Exhibition, Glasgow
1939  Set up studio in Ruskin Lane, Glasgow
          One-man show at 12 Ruskin Lane
1941  TJ Honeyman purchases painting for Kelvingrove Art Gallery
1941  Designed sets for Earth Shapers Ballet
1942  Dain Do Eimhir – Illustrations for Sorley McLean’s poetry, published by William
          MacLellan, Glasgow
1944  Married Grace McPhail
1944  First one man show at Annan’s (aged 29). He continues to show annually at
          Annan’s until 1948
1946  Commissioned to paint a mural at the entrance of the Britain Can Make It
          exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London
          Painting exhibited in Brook Street Gallery, London alongside Anne Estelle Rice,
          Augustus John, John Piper and Christopher Wood, attracting critical attention.
          Met Robert Colquhoun and Robert MacBryde during the exhibition
          Commissioned by Dr O.A. Mavor (Governor of Victoria Infirmary) to produce a
          series of paintings of Victoria Infirmary and its work. Forty-four watercolours of
          the hospital were exhibited at Annan’s in Glasgow
1947  Daughter Pauline is born
1947  Joint exhibition at Reid and Lefevre with John Armstrong
1948  First exhibition with Aitken Dott Ltd, The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh
1950  Article in Vogue on ‘Scottish Talents’. Two photographs of Crosbie were
          published
1951  Commission for mural painting at Kelvin Hall Exhibition of Industrial Power.
          Crosbie painted a fluorescent mural – a symbolic illustration that the basic
          source of all power is the sun.
1952  Exhibition at Connell & Sons, Glasgow
1953  Elected Associate of the Royal Scottish Academy
1955  Shows again at Annan’s
1956  Commission for mural at new Duncarrig School, East Kilbride
          Show at new premises acquired by RGI at 13 Blythswood Square, Glasgow.
          The first series of one man shows sponsored by RGI included Crosbie’s
          drawings of Brydekirk (near Annan) and clowns. JD Kelly was president of RGI
          at this time and the show was opened by Sir William Hutchison
1957  Show of paintings from summer spent painting in Balfron. Held at Auchendarroch, Balfron
1960  Walking and painting tour of the Middle East in the hope of meeting up with his brother Glen, a naval attaché at the British Embassy at Anhara.
1962  Commission for a wood carving of Christ for the Scottish Episcopal Church of Holy Name, Cumbernauld
1965  John D. Kelly Gallery, Glasgow
1966  Romart Gallery, Edinburgh
1970  Royal College of Science and Technology (now Strathclyde University), Glasgow
       Annan, Glasgow
1972  Exhibition at John D. Kelly, Glasgow and Retrospective at Lillie Art Gallery, Milingavie, Glasgow
1973  Elected Academician at the Royal Scottish Academy
1974  Given a parrot by daughter Pauline, which he names *Cambridge* as Pauline is currently at university in Cambridge
1976  Exhibition at John D. Kelly Gallery, Glasgow
       Portrait commission to commemorate the retirement of Sir Charles Wilson after 15 years as principal of Glasgow University
1980  *William Crosbie Retrospective Exhibition*, The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh
1990  Major retrospective exhibitions held at Ewan Mundy Fine Art, Glasgow and London. Also at Perth Museum & Art Gallery
1999  Died in Petersfield, Hampshire, England

Top: *William Crosbie Exhibition* at Annan Gallery, Glasgow, 1944
Bottom row, left to right: *Poetry Scotland*; *The Fury of the Living*: Poems by John Singer; *Women of the Happy Island*: Poems by Adam Drinan; William and Anne Crosbie, c. 1990
EXHIBITION HISTORY

Solo Exhibitions
1937 Exhibition at Glasgow School of Art opened by Sir James Gunn
1938 ‘Chez Henriette’ Restaurant (Rue de la Grande Chaumiere), Paris
1939 ‘Anderlect’ Restaurant, Brussels
        Solo exhibition at 12 Ruskin Lane, Glasgow
1940 Annan Gallery, Glasgow
1941 Annan Gallery, Glasgow
1942 Annan Gallery, Glasgow
1943 Annan Gallery, Glasgow
1944 Annan Gallery, Glasgow (photo on page 105)
1945 Annan Gallery, Glasgow
1946 Annan Gallery, Glasgow
1947 Annan Gallery, Glasgow
1948 Annan Gallery, Glasgow
        The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh
1950 The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh
        Connell & Sons, Glasgow
1952 Connell & Sons, Glasgow
1955 Annan Gallery, Glasgow
1956 Opening Exhibition, December 1956, Blythswood Gallery, sponsored by RGI
1957 Paintings of Balfron Region, Auchendarroch, Balfron
1965 John D. Kelly Gallery, Glasgow
1966 Romart Gallery, Edinburgh
1970 Royal College of Science and Technology (now Strathclyde University), Glasgow
        Annan, Glasgow
1972 John D. Kelly, Glasgow
        Retrospective, Lillie Art Gallery. Milngavie, Glasgow
1976 John D. Kelly Gallery, Glasgow
1980 William Crosbie Retrospective Exhibition, The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh
1990 William Crosbie Retrospective Exhibition, Ewan Mundy Fine Art, Glasgow and
        Celia Philo, London
        Perth Museum & Art Gallery
1995 80th Birthday Exhibition, Ewan Mundy, Glasgow
2001 William Crosbie Memorial Exhibition, Ewan Mundy Fine Art, Glasgow
2015 Centenary Exhibition, The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh

Selected Mixed Exhibitions
1941 Modern Glasgow Painters, Annan Gallery, Glasgow
1942 Glasgow Group Show, McLellan Gallery, Glasgow
1944 Edinburgh Group Show, The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh
1946 Painters of our Time, Brook Street Gallery, London
1947 Joint exhibition with John Armstrong, Reid and Lefevre, London
1950 United Artists Touring Exhibition, USA
1952 Eight Young British Painters, Arts Council exhibition, The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh
1956 Paintings by Four Glasgow Artists, Victoria Halls, Helensburgh
        Group show with French painters, Mayor Gallery, London
1964 Fifteen Glasgow Artists, Douglas and Foulis, Edinburgh
1970  
*Pictures for Scottish Schools, Aberdeen Art Gallery*
*Contemporary Scottish Painting, British Institute of Adult Education*
*Christmas Exhibition, Compass Gallery, Glasgow*

1973  
*West of Scotland Artists, Civic Centre, Dumarton*

**Murals**

1938  
Two major scale murals, Empire Exhibition, Glasgow

1939-40  
Maryhill Mutual Service Club, Doncaster Street, Glasgow

1940  
Glasgow Central Police Headquarters

1944  
Bishopton Mural, Renfrewshire

1946  
Alexandra Palace, London

1946  
Plantation Club, Clifford Lane, Glasgow

1947  
Education Liaison Officer’s Office, Glasgow Art Galleries

1948  
*Britain Can Make It*, Victoria and Albert Museum, London

1950  
Two major scale murals, Community Service Hall, Glasgow

1950  
*Festival of Britain*, London

1951  
*Festival of Industrial Power*, Kelvin Hall, Glasgow

1960  
*Glasgow Industrial Exhibition*, Glasgow

The only murals surviving to date are:

1956  
Main entrance hall, Secondary School at East Kilbride, Lanarkshire

1967  
Entrance portico bas relief, Victoria Drive Secondary School Extension, Glasgow

**Church Paintings**

Buckieburn, Stirlingshire, 1939-40

St Margaret’s Polmadie, Glasgow (Baptistry), 1945

Stations of the Cross, Archbishop’s Oratory, Diocesan Office

Stations of the Cross, St Lawrence’s Greenock

Reredos, St Cuthbert’s, Burnbank, Blantyre

Reredos, St Bonaventure and altar front, *Resurrection and Entombment*

St Columkilles, Rutherglen, Lady Altar ceiling painting

Reredos, St Michael’s, Linlithgow

*Christ in Majesty*, wood carving, commissioned by the Scottish Episcopal Church of the Holy Name, New Town of Cumbernauld, 1962

**Public Collections**

Perth Museum & Art Gallery, Perth & Kinross Council

McLean Museum & Art Gallery

University of Glasgow, Hunterian Art Gallery

Dundee Art Gallery & Museums Collection

South Ayrshire Council

Glasgow Museums

Maggie’s, Glasgow

University of Strathclyde

Newport Museum & Art Gallery

National Trust for Scotland

Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums

Royal Scottish Academy of Arts and Architecture

Paisley Museum & Art Gallery

National Galleries of Scotland

Gracefield Arts Centre

British Museum, Department of Prints & Drawings

The Royal Collection

Scottish Arts Council

Museum and Art Gallery, Newport, Gwent

Museum and Art Gallery, New Zealand

Sydney Art Gallery, Australia
Published by The Scottish Gallery to coincide with the exhibition
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7 - 31 January 2015

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www.scottish-gallery.co.uk/williamcrosbie

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