

Donald Morris Kirkpatrick (1887 - 1965)

Donald Kirkpatrick was born in Easton, Pennsylvania, on 7 March 1887 to Judge and Mrs. William S. Kirkpatrick. He was first educated at Lafayette University, and then entered architectural school at the University of Pennsylvania, graduating with honours in 1911. In 1912 he won the William Harkness Prize for Architecture. This was a nationwide competition, and the prize was two years of architectural study at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris.

When World War 1 broke out, Kirkpatrick returned to Philadelphia and enlisted in the US Army. In 1917 he went overseas as a lieutenant in the First Division, and later became a captain. He received a number of decorations and citations for gallantry in action.

After the war, he returned to Philadelphia and joined the architectural firm of Thomas, Martin and Kirkpatrick. He also served on the Pennsylvania State Art Commission, a body that passed judgment on all state-sponsored art work. Later he became an assistant Professor of Design at the University of Pennsylvania.

In 1920, Kirkpatrick married an artist from New York named Renee Despard. The couple made their home in Haverford, Pennsylvania. At some point Kirkpatrick became interested in pursuing art as well as architecture, and was apparently competent enough that he had two one-man shows in Philadelphia. In 1930 he and his wife went to Paris to live and study art for two years. Kirkpatrick's etchings won him an Honourable Mention at the Paris Salon in 1931.

In 1932 the couple moved to Bermuda, where Kirkpatrick worked for the local architectural firm of Onions and Bouchard. He designed and built a house named "Landfall," overlooking Crawl Point, and the couple moved into their new home in 1934. Homes in Bermuda designed by Kirkpatrick included the following: "Troon", the home of Mrs. M.A. Dunne, in Tucker's Town; "Commonland Point", the home of Mrs. G.B. Hollister, in Shelly Bay; homes for Terry Mowbray, Lady Williams, and Dr. Harry Curtis. Also, in collaboration with others, he helped design the Pink Beach Cottage Colony and the Bank of Butterfield building.

At this time, his interest in art continued. Also, he and his wife did a considerable amount of traveling, visiting and sketching scenes in Dominica and Trinidad as well as in Ireland, Scotland, Scandinavia and France.

Kirkpatrick retired from Onions and Bouchard in the late 1940s in order to devote more time to artistic pursuits. In 1952, along with Emile Antoine Verpilleux and several other artists, he helped to found the Bermuda Society of Artists. When this was superseded by

the Bermuda Society of Arts in 1956, he served as its first president and remained active in other offices for many years. His artwork was exhibited there frequently.

In 1962 Kirkpatrick had a one-man show at the Bermuda Society of Arts. In this show were thirty-six oil paintings, fourteen watercolours, ten pen, ink and watercolour drawings, twelve lithographic crayon drawings, and thirty-five prints, which included etchings, aquatints and drypoints. These works depicted the many countries Kirkpatrick had visited, and included about twelve etchings of Bermuda.

Shortly before his show opened, Kirkpatrick was quoted in a local newspaper as saying, "Since my retirement [painting] has occupied nearly all my time. If I had my life over again I would certainly consider the role of painter for a career....Architecture has helped me in two distinct ways - in draughtsmanship and composition."

Indeed, Kirkpatrick's skill in draughtsmanship and solid composition are notable in his depictions of street scenes, buildings and landscapes of Bermuda. While his etchings and intaglio prints are quite detailed, his watercolours and lithographic drawings have a spontaneity and immediacy that are refreshing.

Kirkpatrick died on 8 April 1966 having been ill for about a year. He seems to have worked until the end, however, because at the time of his death he had completed sixteen new watercolours in preparation for a second one-man show at The Bermuda Society of Arts, that autumn. These watercolours were probably included in the memorial exhibition that was shown of his work from 13 August to 2 September. David L. White, in a Royal Gazette review dated 15 August, commented, "he died in full control of his talents as some of the best works on show were painted in the last four months of his life."