

The Furniture History Society

# Newsletter 218

May 2020



**In this issue:** Recreating the Context of the Met Side Table | Society News | Tribute | Society Events | Other Notices | Book Reviews | ECD News and Report | Reports on Society Events | Grants | Publications

# Recreating the Context of the Met Side Table

In 1926, the Metropolitan Museum of Art acquired an early Georgian side table (Fig. 1), which combines a strong architectural character with an orderly expression of neo-Palladian vocabulary and retains its original *faux*-painted mahogany and parcel-gilt decorative scheme.<sup>1</sup>

Executed in a similar style that evokes the work of William Kent (c. 1685–1748), a pair of almost identical white and gold side tables, originally from Ditchley Park, Oxfordshire (Fig. 2) can be found at Temple Newsam House (LEEAG. FU.1954.0009), which is part of the Leeds Museum collection in Yorkshire.<sup>2</sup>

The three side tables may in fact be more closely related than previously thought: recent visits to Temple Newsam

provided an opportunity to undertake a comparative study of all three tables and compile important new information. Combined with archival material, this study has allowed for new observations and speculations with regard to the tables' provenance, manufacture and original decorative finishes.

The Met side table, as well as the pair of side tables at Temple Newsam,<sup>3</sup> are attributed to Matthias Lock (c. 1710–70), after a design by Henry Flitcroft (1697–1769).<sup>4</sup> Their design corresponds very closely to a pencil drawing by Lock for a side table in a drawing, now at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (Fig. 3).<sup>5</sup>

Several variants of this side table's design exist — all attributed to Lock on the basis of the drawing — and many



Fig. 1 Side table. © The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 26.45



Fig. 2 Side table (one of a pair), Ditchley Park, Oxfordshire. © *Country Life*

were destined for houses where Flitcroft worked.<sup>6</sup> The Temple Newsam side tables come from Ditchley Park, a house designed by James Gibbs (1682–1754) and built for George Lee, 2nd Earl of Lichfield (1690–1743).<sup>7</sup> In 1736–41, Flitcroft was employed as Kent’s assistant, when the latter was asked to complete the interiors of the house, as well as the design and execution of the furniture.<sup>8</sup>

Flitcroft’s involvement as designer and architect is confirmed by original bills to the 2nd Earl of Lichfield, kept in the Dillon family archives in Oxford. One relevant bill relates to a commission for the design of table frames.<sup>9</sup> Charges for designs for two sets of table frames appear in the accounts in March 1740, and for drawing three tables and glass frames in March 1741. In addition, the contents of two separate inventories, dated 1743 and 1772, identify a pair of side tables, most likely those now at Temple Newsam. Each inventory

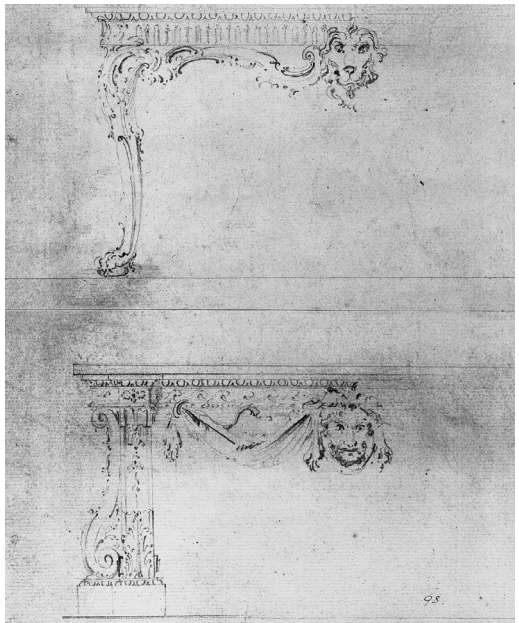


Fig. 3 Design attributed to Matthias Lock, pencil on paper. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 2848:98

describes the tables with variations to the entries: the 1743 Ditchley inventory includes ‘Two fine marble tables on rich



frames' in the Great Room (or Dining Room), while the 1772 inventory lists 'two fine Egyptian marble tables on rich carved and gilt stands' in the Gilt Drawing Room, called the Great Room in 1743.<sup>10</sup>

In 1736–41, Flitcroft completed the design of the interiors of the house, including the new Great Room, the decoration of which was strongly influenced by Kent. The room was converted into a Drawing Room in 1750.<sup>11</sup> Alterations over time at Ditchley illustrate how changes in lifestyle led to a reconfiguration of the plan of the house and the use of its rooms. The White Drawing Room, as it is called today, originally conceived as the Great Room by Flitcroft, has a repeated colour scheme of white and gold punctuated with mythological masks. The pair of Temple Newsam side tables would have been well suited thematically with the Classical iconography of this room and its colour scheme. A photograph from 1945 shows one of the pair of side tables in the

East Dining Room at Ditchley, located on the main floor, perhaps a reference to its original function as a dining side table.<sup>12</sup>

The first illustration of the Met's table was published in a 1919 *Country Life* article<sup>13</sup> at Hamilton Palace, Lanarkshire, Scotland, since demolished, where it can be seen near an expansive black Irish marble staircase in the Great Stone Hall (Fig. 4).<sup>14</sup>

The original provenance of the Met side table, however, is unknown, although its appearance at Hamilton Palace may indicate a family connection, possibly with an earlier Palladian house. The parcel-gilt and mahogany colour ornamentation of the Met side table must belong to a specific decorative interior. Technical examination of this table (Figs 5 and 6) indicates that it consists of a frame made of pinewood constructed following the Classical order of base, shaft, entablature, to which decorative elements were applied.<sup>15</sup>

It is held together with traditional joinery including mortise and tenons with



Fig. 4 The side table *in situ* at Hamilton Palace, Lanarkshire, Scotland.  
© *Country Life*



Fig. 5 The joinery of the side table from the back.  
© Metropolitan Museum of Art, 26.45



Fig. 6 The joinery of the side table.  
© Metropolitan Museum of Art, 26.45



wooden pegs. The double-console in the front is connected to the single console at the rear by one horizontal stretcher. The rear console suggests a production that might have used a prototype template for the frame, which may have allowed easy replication. Templates gave the technical ability to reproduce master furniture designs in workshops.

On the Temple Newsam and the Met side tables, the entablature part of the structure has additional decorative details remarkably similar in their proportions and composition. The decorative elements

and carved details of all three tables have matching dimensions, including Hercules' masks, and shells, which are similarly executed in the carving.<sup>16</sup> Decorative details are affixed with nails and include a Vitruvian motif, floral details and a running frieze. On the front apron, a Hercules' mask carved in high relief together with lion paws are secured with a single piece of wood nailed to the frame from the back. A similar attachment is used for the large central fluted scallop shell on each side of the tables. The use of wrought-iron nails and screws for later

repairs are illustrated in X-ray radiography images of the Met's table.

On the underside of the Temple Newsam and the Met side tables, the main joints of the structural elements are marked with tool cuts to identify the parts during assemblage in a very similar way. In fact, close examination of all three tables reveals a demonstrable relationship in term of dimension, methods of construction — including the correlation of the tool marks — and decorative execution.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, in selected background areas — that is, small fields behind the carving — the wood surface was prepared using a similar technique consisting of a striking detail, a pattern creating a texture-like crossed ridges rather than typical punch-work into the wood; a detail strongly evocative of a prepared wood surface for paint or gilding. The constrained areas where the wood is showing the prepared ground is clear evidence that the tables were made following the same workshop's practices. It appears, therefore, that all three tables are closely related.

The paint and gilded layers on the Met side table were analysed in 2005 and further sampling in 2016 confirmed that its finish is consistent throughout the frame. The surface decoration began with the application of an overall calcium carbonate ground layer. The original reddish-brown oil paint, pigmented mostly with hematite, a form of iron oxide,<sup>18</sup> was applied directly over the ground, while the oil gilding<sup>19</sup> was applied over a yellow mordant. The use of oil gilding corresponds with historical descriptions and, where well preserved, remains astonishingly bright.<sup>20</sup>

This decorative finish with its juxtaposition of brown and gold represented a specific style in the history of English furniture.<sup>21</sup> From the 1720s to the 1750s, reddish-brown mahogany wood increasingly became the preferred wood in furniture-making. The crisp carving enabled by the use of this fine-grained wood was often picked out by oil gilding. *Faux*-painted mahogany and gilt furniture mimicking the original parcel-gilt mahogany wood furniture of the period was fashionable for only a short period of time and few examples have survived.

Microscopic examination of paint samples obtained from the Temple Newsam side tables in 2018 revealed the intriguing possibility that these tables may have been initially decorated with the same colour scheme as the Met's side table. A residual reddish-brown layer containing hematite appears to have been applied as the initial paint layer.<sup>22</sup> In areas, both tables retain several applications of paint layers illustrating the paint layer history over diverse restoration campaigns; the latest reflecting the actual frames paint layer restoration. This finding invites further speculation regarding their original finish as well as the decorative design of the room in which they were formerly displayed.

Based on the comparison of the dimensions, methods of construction, decorative execution and the comparative analysis of the finishes, therefore, it is reasonable to speculate that a common workshop produced the three tables under examination.

At the same time, the complexity of how furniture was ordered during this

period makes a workshop attribution very challenging. Wealthy patrons sent orders to leading cabinet-makers, who in turn may have given these commissions to master carvers or independent journeymen craftsmen, making exact attributions very challenging.<sup>23</sup> The issue of attribution is made more difficult by the connection to Kent's widespread designs for this type of furniture, which were executed at various times, as well as the dissemination of Lock's technical drawings. In addition, Flitcroft's role in the designs for Ditchley has to be taken into account. Several leading furniture-makers and master carvers of the period could have executed very similar pieces.

The observations gathered have begun to reveal details about the creation of this group of architectural side tables, but there is undoubtedly more to discover ...

PASCALE PATRIS  
*Conservator*  
*Objects Conservation,*  
*Metropolitan Museum of Art*

I would like to thank the Leeds Museums and Temple Newsam curators, especially James Lomax and Rachel Convoy, for the help that they have given me while studying the pair of side tables; and the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Objects Conservation Department for their encouragement and support throughout this process.

1 One specific meaning of side table is related to dining or other rooms where meals are taken or served. D. Kisluk-Grosheide, W. Koeppe and W. Rieder, *European Furniture in the Metropolitan Museum of Art: Highlights of the Collection* (New Haven and London, 2006),

pp. 113–14; referring to the Met example Curator Daniella O. Kisluk-Grosheide writes: 'The table was intended for a dining room and had no stretcher or connecting element at the base between the two sides, leaving room for a wine cooler below'.

2 R. Edwards and M. Jourdain, *Georgian Cabinet-Makers* (London, 1944), fig. 64.

3 The slabs that originally lay on the frames are all replaced. In the eighteenth century, people tended to value slabs, and they were often separated and sold — however finely carved, frames were less highly esteemed.

4 C. Gilbert, *Furniture at Temple Newsam House and Lotherton Hall*, II (Leeds, 1978), 445–47.

5 P. Ward-Jackson, *English Furniture Designs of Eighteenth Century* (London, 1958), fig. 48.

6 Gilbert, *Furniture at Temple Newsam House*. From the several models, only a few examples offer a close analogy. The immediate parallels are a pair, originally made for Wentworth Woodhouse, Yorkshire, and another pair, made for the Dining Room at Shugborough Hall, Staffordshire, associated with the Earl of Lichfield, for whom Henry Flitcroft worked for other commissions.

7 Ditchley House was built by Francis Smith (1672–1738), master builder and architect, and designed by James Gibbs (1684–1754), architect.

8 In 1725, Kent was paid for the painted hall ceiling, and in 1731, for two paintings on the hall north wall.

9 A handwritten bill to the Earl of Litchfield, signed by Henry Flitcroft, include the designs of five table frames in 1740–41. Oxfordshire County Council, Archives.

10 In the Dillon Archives, the inventory dated 1743 lists in the Great Room: 'Two fine marble tables on Rich frames'. In the 1772 inventory: 'Two fine Egyptian marble tables on rich carved and gilt stands'.

11 J. Cornforth, *Early Georgian Interiors* (London and New Haven, 2004), pp. 290–95.

12 *Antique Collector*, January/February 1945, p. 10, a picture of one of the pair of side tables in Ditchley's ground-floor Dining Room, flanked by a set of chairs with carved legs with masks and paw feet. In documentation at the V&A, a black-and-white photograph shows a partial view of the pair of side tables in the main-floor Dining Room of the house.

13 'Hamilton Palace, South Lanarkshire, Scotland', *Country Life*, 21 June 1919, p. 752; *Country Life*, 14 June 1919, p. 722, full-size picture of the side table.

14 *Country Life*, 21 June 1919, p. 752.

15 Comparable construction to the Temple



- Newsam side tables was observed from visual examination on site, where it was not possible to take pictures of the structure with the slab removed.
- 16 However, variations appear in the artistic carved expression of the masks, which may have been carved by different hands.
  - 17 The baseboard plinths are reduced in height, resulting in a slight difference in the overall height of the Temple Newsam side tables (Temple Newsam's side tables: H. 86.36 cm (34 in.); The Met's side table: H. 90.8 cm (35¾ in.). Alteration to the dimension of the baseboard plinths was likely done to fit in with corresponding panelling, originally or at a later time. On all three tables all other decorative elements and carved details have matching dimensions.
  - 18 Cross-sections of finishes were analysed using microscopic reflective light by Pascale Patris, Conservator, Objects Conservation, Metropolitan Museum of Art. The provided cross-sections were further analysed using energy-dispersive X-ray spectrometry in the scanning electron microscope (SEM-EDS) to characterize the various layers, by Mark Wypyski, Research Scientist in the Department of Scientific Research, Metropolitan Museum of Art.
  - 19 Provided cross-sections for gilded layers were analysed using SEM-EDS: the gold leaf alloy of 94.9% reflects almost pure gold leaf. Analyses were completed by Mark Wypyski, Research Scientist in the Department of Scientific Research, Metropolitan Museum of Art.
  - 20 John Stalker and George Parker, *A Treatise of Japanning and Varnishing* (1688, reissued Oxford, 1971).
  - 21 Lucy Wood, *The Upholstery Furniture in the Lady Lever Art Gallery, Liverpool*, 1 (New Haven and London, 2008), p. 330. Three chairs and a settee, painted brown and gilded, attributed to William Hallett.
  - 22 Samples were mounted in cross-sections and analysed using reflected light microscopy combined with visible and UV light illumination, by Pascale Patris, Conservator, Metropolitan Museum of Art. Based on comparison of cross-sections, it appears that, overall, previous finish layers were removed from the Temple Newsam side tables, including the original ground layer. The baseboard plinths in both tables retain several applications of paint layers illustrating the paint layers' history over diverse restoration campaigns, the latest reflecting the entire frames' paint layers' restoration. The foremost paint layer to be present on the primary ground is a reddish-brown layer containing iron pigments.
  - 23 H. Hayward, *Thomas Johnson and English Rococo* (London, 1964), p. 36.

## Lecture: Gillian Wilson Memorial Lecture

*This lecture has now been postponed; a new date will be confirmed in September*

Anna Somers Cocks will give a lecture in honour of the life and achievements of the late Gillian Wilson at the Hochhauser Auditorium, Sackler Centre, Victoria and Albert Museum. By kind permission of the Trustees of the Victoria and Albert Museum, with support from the Gilbert Trust and Adrian Sassoon.

The lecture will be followed by drinks in the foyer of the Hochhauser Auditorium.

Tickets for this event are free and will be available to reserve; please follow this link: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/furniture-history-society-9817476624>

## A Tribute: John Scott (1935–2020)

No one who passed through the tempting Gothic doors of the Westbourne Grove home shared by John Scott and his wife Takko could forget the experience. The rabbit warren of rooms, created in a sizeable lateral conversion, was furnished (or rather stuffed to the rafters) as a tribute to the greatest achievements of Scott's much-loved pantheon of mainly British nineteenth-century designers and manufacturers. And nor could anyone leave unmoved by the unbridled passion of a man who was, from a young age,

courageous, independent and determined in creating his collection.

As Clarissa Ward noted after the Furniture History Society visit to John Scott in 2010: '[We] had a wonderful visit to the collection last week — he did not draw breath for 2 hours as he took us round and then was v. generous with wine/canapes'. John loved sharing his collection in person with groups such as the FHS, and was also a willing, if demanding, lender to exhibitions in the United Kingdom and abroad. The Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, never did quite sell out of the postcards he insisted on having made as a condition for lending his Voyage clock to 'Aluminum by Design' (2000).

'Scott' (the name by which he invariably referred to himself) was born in Birkenhead (hence his choice of 'The Birkenhead Collection' as the credit line when making museum and exhibition loans). He was educated at Radley College, did National Service with the Gurkha Regiment in Malaysia and read law at Corpus Christi, Oxford. A keen rugby player, he was awarded an Oxford blue and, in 1958, was capped for England against France. He followed a career in property.

Collecting aside, Scott will be remembered for his extraordinary kindness and generosity in helping others less fortunate than himself. For example, for a period of twenty

years he took children with physical impairments for swimming sessions. He was also punctilious with cards of thanks. Following the publication of an article on his collection in *The Magazine Antiques* (June 1995), he wrote to thank the author for 'such a laudatory and gracious article' and continued to comment that, based on the way the photographs had been assembled, he 'hardly recognized the place!'. But, really, it is those of us who had the good fortune to have known John and to have learned from his stories and his collections who should be grateful. It can also not pass without comment that Scott was famously and fearlessly opinionated on a range of topics that might fall broadly under the heading of 'politics', and friends and acquaintances had frequently to dodge verbal bullets.

Beyond the quiet and persuasive campaigns that Scott undertook, most recently to see that the railings outside Alfred Waterhouse's Natural History Museum were correctly painted red and gold, rather than black, he was passionate and vociferous about preserving and improving the area around Notting Hill, where he lived. Notable battles include one to build a public lavatory and flower stall designed by Piers Gough in Westbourne Grove (2001); he took on Kensington and Chelsea Council and won, but not without making his own financial contribution. This delightful postmodern facility stands today as yet another legacy of Scott's tenacity. Less successful was a later fight to prevent an arcade for traders in antiques, on his beloved and regularly frequented Portobello Road, from being demolished for redevelopment (2010).

No account of John Scott's collection, in the form that it existed when it was (largely) sold off, would be complete without acknowledging that there were many on whom, in its creation, John depended and whom he admired: for example, Robert (Bob) Walker, Andy Tillbrook and Richard Dennis. But it is Michael Whiteway (outside whose much-missed Kensington Church Street shop John's black bicycle was often to be seen) who was his most consistent advisor and valued friend. It was Michael who masterminded the collection's disposal through the Fine Art Society.

Scott told the present writer that he was 'brought up in a family where collecting rather than furnishing, was a way of life' and remembered his forebears as 'mini Burrells'. While still at Oxford he began collecting Piranesi etchings and old rummers (which continued to be put to good use throughout his life). And glass remained an enduring passion, as was demonstrated throughout the eight sale catalogues of *The John Scott Collection* produced by the Fine Art Society between 2014 and 2015.

Scott described his collection as '1830–1930 English Decorative art ... roughly [with] extensions of time and place, for instance eighteenth-century glass and Art Nouveau from the continent' (*The John Scott Collection*, 1, p. 7). There was no medium touched by the period that did not arouse his curiosity: 'furniture, ceramics, glass, sculpture, Art Nouveau and Gothic Revival'. Although these are the collector's words, they hardly do justice to the scale and ambition of his unique and



unrepeatable horde. John viewed the period of Empire as a triumphant one for Great Britain, one during which designers and manufacturers, blessed with burgeoning markets domestically and abroad, achieved heights unsurpassed since. Scott's response to the question 'why collect?' is rather poignant and perhaps reveals a humble degree of self-knowledge. His answer: 'loneliness' (*The John Scott Collection*, I, pp. 7–8). He rather confirmed this to Susan Moore: 'I always liked things. I was an only child and I think I was lonely' (*Financial Times*, 13 June 2014); his father left when Scott was aged just three.

Scott, on rare occasions, parted with major pieces from his collection, but not without good reason. An A. W. N. Pugin armoire manufactured by George Myers and commissioned by Henry Sharples of Liverpool during the second half of the 1840s was sold to the Indianapolis Museum of Art in 1999. Why? In 1984, the collector had purchased, against familiar opposition, an even more significant example of this form: Pugin's own armoire from The Grange. In 1991, this was put on loan to the V&A and was finally acquired by the museum in 2015; at each stage, with both armoires, Whiteway was the conduit.

In 2013, Takko and John invited friends to 'a little memorial celebration' to commemorate the gift of his unequalled tile collection to the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust at Coalbrookdale. The evening was, typically for the collector, billed as 'a small token of thanks, remembrance, wonder, delight and friendship ...'. Equally characteristic was the instruction on the invitation to 'RSVP quickly'.

The Fine Art Society's eight catalogues are, as Scott envisaged and was proud to have seen, a record of his decades of collecting. All the most admired nineteenth-century designers are there: Pugin (A. W. N and E. W.), G. E. Street, Owen Jones, Christopher Dresser, William De Morgan and so many more. But also, particularly in *A Christmas Spectacular* (vol. VI), a wonderful miscellany of objects, including many anonymous, damaged and even unexpected pieces that had piqued Scott's curiosity and acquisitive nature.

It is a testament to the quality of the collection that many pieces have since entered public collections in the United Kingdom and in the USA (see Max Donnelly, *Decorative Art Society Newsletter*, 119). With fortuitous timing, disposals from the John Scott Collection coincided with plans by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, to create its new British Galleries (opened to much acclaim in February 2020). Advised by Charlotte Gere and others the museum was able, at a stroke, to bolster its holdings in the area of nineteenth-century British design and manufacture; the furniture in the galleries includes Pugin's own *prie-dieu* from Ramsgate, a Christopher Dresser-designed cast-iron chair and a 'Klismos' chair designed by G. E. Street for the Law Courts in London, all from the Scott Collection. The highlight, however, is surely the Pericles sideboard designed by Bruce Talbert and exhibited by Holland & Sons at the 1867 Paris *Exposition Universelle*.

This enormous piece was so large that it was impossible for it to progress beyond the entrance hall in Westbourne Grove,



The Pericles sideboard, now in the Met.  
Author's image

where it provided an enticing foretaste of what was to follow. Collectors are, by their nature, competitive, and Scott derived particular satisfaction from having outbid the artists Gilbert & George when the sideboard was sold at Christie's in 1986. As further confirmation of the sideboard's importance to the history of nineteenth-century furniture, it was subject to a temporary export bar before being allowed to cross the Atlantic.

It is only possible to be subjective in identifying highlights from the furniture

elements of the collection. However, a selection might include an early circular rosewood table designed by A. W. N. Pugin, the *Wheel of Fortune* table designed by William Burges for Charles Lygon Cocks, cast-iron chairs designed by Christopher Dresser and Thomas Jeckyll, an oak cabinet designed by Bruce Talbert as part of a commission for John Grant Morris, and ebony and ivory chairs designed by J. P. Seddon.

It took the best part of the twentieth century for the decorative arts of the Victorian era to emerge fully from decades of cultural eclipse. There are, it might be argued, three key moments in this reappraisal. First, and of immeasurable significance, was the exhibition 'Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts' (V&A, 1952); second was the sadly posthumous exhibition 'Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Art, The Handley-Read Collection' (Royal Academy, 1972), and third (not to overlook many extraordinary collections created over the past four decades) the formation and disposal of the John Scott Collection.

As Stuart Durant and Michael Whiteway wrote succinctly in the 'Introduction' to *The John Scott Collection*, II, 'Great collectors are trailblazers. This is one of the finest thematic collections of the decorative arts to have been made by a private collector'. A fitting epitaph.

MARTIN P. LEVY

# Society Events

## Coronavirus Update

We are carefully following the unfolding coronavirus situation. At the time of going to press, the events advertised are scheduled to take place. If any events need to be postponed we will offer to those who have expressed interest the option of a refund or the chance to re-book at a later date. Please also check the website for changes.

## Bookings

For places on visits, please apply to the Events Secretary, Beatrice Goddard, providing either a separate cheque for each event or indicating that you wish to pay by card or online. For online payments you will be provided with a link to a payment page and an event reference. Where possible, joining instructions will be dispatched by email, so please remember to provide your email address if you have one.

Applications should only be made by members who intend to take part in the whole programme. No one can apply for more than one place unless they hold a joint membership, and each applicant should be identified by name. If you wish to be placed on the waiting list, please enclose a telephone number where you can be reached. Please note that a closing date for applications for visits is printed in the *Newsletter*. Applications made after the closing date will be accepted only if space is still available. Members are reminded that places are not allocated on

a first come, first served basis, but that all applications are equally considered following the closing date.

Please email: [events@furniturehistorysociety.org](mailto:events@furniturehistorysociety.org) to apply for events or telephone 07775 907390.

## Cancellations

Please note that no refunds will be given for cancellations for events costing £10.00 or less. In all other cases, cancellations will be accepted up to seven days before the date of a visit, but refunds will be subject to a £10.00 deduction for administrative costs. Please note that in the rare instances where members cannot pay until the day of a visit, they will still be charged the full amount for the day if cancelling less than seven days before the visit, or if they fail to attend. This is necessary as the Society has usually paid in advance for a certain number of members to participate in, for example, a tour/lunch. Separate arrangements are made for study weekends and foreign tours and terms are clearly stated on the printed details in each case.

## The Forty-Fourth Annual Symposium

George IV — 1820 to 2020:  
Fresh Perspectives on the  
King's Furniture



THE WALLACE COLLECTION,  
MANCHESTER SQUARE, LONDON  
W1U 3BN

SATURDAY 3 OCTOBER 2020  
10.00 AM–5.00 PM

In the context of the coronavirus outbreak, we have moved our Annual Symposium from 28 March to Saturday 3 October 2020, 10.00 am–5.00 pm. Tickets for the Symposium and for lunch (optional) are still on sale through the Events Secretary

TICKET PRICES: £60 MEMBERS,  
£35 MEMBERS UNDER 35 YEARS,  
£80 NON-MEMBERS



A pair of pedestals by Tatham, Bailey & Sanders, c. 1811, carved and gilt wood, 99 × 68 × 68 cm (whole object). Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2020. RCIN 3202

## Visit to Wrest Park and Stores, and Ampthill Park House

WREST PARK, SILSOE,  
BEDFORDSHIRE MK45 4HR  
AMPTHILL PARK HOUSE,  
AMPTHILL, BEDFORDSHIRE MK45  
2HF

WEDNESDAY 1 JULY 2020

11.00 AM–4.00 PM

For over 600 years, the Wrest estate was home to one of the leading aristocratic families in the country, the de Greys, with each generation leaving its mark on the estate. Thomas, 2nd Earl de Grey (1781–1859) designed the current house at Wrest Park in the 1830s, set in an outstanding restored garden landscape originating in the seventeenth century. The house itself is a near unique example of nineteenth-century English architecture following the style of an eighteenth-century French *château*. The Earl carefully furnished its interiors, scouring auction houses and dealers to find the perfect pieces to complement the eighteenth-century French style of the house.

The Archaeological Collections Store at Wrest Park houses over 153,000 historical artefacts spanning over 2,000 years of England's history and adds up to a third of English Heritage's total stored collection. Our visit will also include a tour to the Store in order to examine a selection of furniture.

After lunch, we will visit Ampthill Park House with Sir Timothy Clifford. In 1661,



Ampthill Park House

Charles II handed the Great Park portion of the manor including the sixteenth century Great Lodge to John Ashburnham and extensive rebuilding of 'Great Park House' was done from 1686. The house was then altered and redecorated in 1769-72 for the 2nd Earl and Countess of Upper Ossory by Sir William Chambers and the grounds landscaped by Capability Brown. In 1979, the mansion was rescued from dereliction and divided into four large homes.

**COST: £50 (INCLUDES LUNCH AND TEA / COFFEE)**

**LIMIT: 20**

**CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS:  
FRIDAY 15 MAY 2020**

## Preston Manor and Royal Pavilion, Brighton

**PRESTON MANOR, PRESTON  
DROVE, HOVE, BRIGHTON BN1 6SD  
BRIGHTON PAVILION, 4/5  
PAVILION BUILDINGS, BRIGHTON  
BN1 1EE**

**TUESDAY 7 JULY 2020**

**11.00 AM-5.00 PM**

Preston Manor is the former manor house of the ancient Sussex village of Preston, now part of the coastal city of Brighton and Hove. The present building dates mostly from 1738, when the Lord of the Manor, Thomas Western, rebuilt the original sixteenth-century structure (part of which remains inside), and 1905 when Charles Stanley Peach's renovation and enlargement gave the house its current appearance.



Clock designed for the Banqueting Room of the Royal Pavilion by Robert Jones, and made, or compiled, by B. L. Vulliamy, c. 1819. Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2020, RCIN 30006

The manor house passed through several owners, including the Stanfords, after several centuries of ownership by the bishopric of Chichester and a period in which it was Crown property. We will have a house tour with an emphasis on furniture with the curator of decorative art and the venue officer.

Then, continuing the theme of this year's Annual Symposium on George IV, we will visit Brighton Pavilion. Begun in 1787, it was built in three stages as a seaside retreat for George, then Prince of Wales, later Regent in 1811. This visit, with David Beevers, Keeper of the Royal Pavilion, will specifically examine new loans from the Royal Collection.

COST £65 (INCLUDES LUNCH AND TEA/COFFEE)

LIMIT: 20

CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS:  
FRIDAY 15 MAY 2020

## Visit to Goodwood House

GOODWOOD, CHICHESTER, WEST SUSSEX PO18 0PX

MONDAY 7 SEPTEMBER 2020

10.00 AM–1.00 PM

Goodwood, one of England's finest sporting estates, lies at the foot of the South Downs. Its three façades with copper-domed turrets look out across a well-wooded park and it has been the seat of the Dukes of Richmond since the late seventeenth century. Originally a Jacobean hunting lodge with gabled wings, it was given a Classical makeover when the 2nd Duke of Richmond employed the architect Roger Morris to remodel the great hall

(now known as the Long Hall) in 1730.

The house was then extended by Matthew Brettingham in the 1740s, who added the Palladian family wing. James Wyatt added a north wing in the 1770s, nearly all of which was demolished in the late 1960s, except for the Tapestry Drawing Room, with its beautiful figural chimneypiece by John Bacon and set of Gobelins tapestries. Wyatt also added two new wings at the beginning of the nineteenth century, primarily to house the art collection from Richmond House, which had burnt down in 1791. The new wings include the Egyptian Dining Room, one of the first rooms in this country to embrace the fashionable Egyptian style. The stable block was designed for the 3rd Duke of Richmond by Sir William Chambers.

The house has a mixture of English and French furniture, including a set of seat furniture by Louis Delanois, with its original Lyons silk cut-velvet upholstery. A highlight of our visit will be the Card



Tapestry  
Drawing  
Room,  
Goodwood  
House.  
Photograph:  
James Fennell



Room, which contains the famous set of Sèvres porcelain commissioned by the 3rd Duke when he was ambassador in Paris.

The house was extensively redecorated in the 1990s under the direction of the current Duke of Richmond. The family wing, which is still occupied by the Duke and Duchess of Richmond, includes the Large and Small Libraries. The latter contains Napoleon's campaign chair, given by the Duke of Wellington to the 4th Duke and Duchess of Richmond as a thank you for hosting the famous Duchess of Richmond's ball in Brussels just a few days before the Battle of Waterloo.

Our visit will be led by James Peill, Curator of the Goodwood Collection.

COST: £40 (INCLUDES TEA/COFFEE)

LIMIT: 20

CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS:  
FRIDAY 17 JULY 2020

## Autumn Study Trip to Cardiff

FRIDAY 16 OCTOBER–SUNDAY 18 OCTOBER 2020

This two-night, three-day Study Trip will focus on William Burges and Welsh furniture.

Our visits include Cardiff Castle, remodelled in a spectacular Victorian Gothic style by William Burges for the 3rd Marquess of Bute, and Lord Bute's country



Summer Smoking Room at Cardiff Castle

retreat Castell Coch, where Burges created a Victorian dream of the Middle Ages. We are fortunate that Matthew Williams, former curator at Cardiff Castle, will speak to our group. The trip will be led by Kate Hay, V&A Department of Furniture, Textiles and Fashion and FHS Events Committee Co-chair.

We will visit the nearby St Fagans National Museum of History, an open-air museum of buildings from across Wales, and winner of the Art Fund Museum of the Year 2019. After an introduction by the furniture curator, we will tour the site, which includes farmhouses furnished with vernacular Welsh furniture, industrial ironworkers' cottages, a school and many others. We will also visit the Museum's recently opened and excellent galleries of Welsh furniture and crafts.

Other visits will include Tredegar House, one of the most significant late seventeenth-

century houses in Britain, with its magnificent state rooms, and the small but important group of furniture commissioned by Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn, held by the National Museum of Wales.

N.B. The whole weekend will be strenuous, including many steep and narrow spiral staircases, and long distances to cover on foot at St Fagans.

Please contact the Events Secretary for further details and an application form.

## Annual Lecture

ART WORKERS' GUILD, 6 QUEEN  
SQUARE, LONDON WC1N 3AT  
THURSDAY 22 OCTOBER 2020  
6.00 PM FOR 6.30 PM START

We are delighted to welcome Bertrand de Royere, who will speak on Pelagio Palagi, decorator of the royal palaces of Turin and Piedmont.



The Etruscan cabinet room, c. 1833, by Pelagio Palagi, in the Castello di Racconigi, Piedmont

Following Pierre Arizzoli-Clémentel's publication on the Napoleonic decorations of the Palazzo del Quirinale, Rome, and Hugh Roberts's description of George IV's private apartments in Windsor Castle, Bertrand de Royere has studied the decorative schemes commissioned by Charles Albert, King of Sardinia (r. 1831–49) for his three main residences in Piedmont: Palazzo Reale, Turin, the Castello di Racconigi and the Castello di Pollenzo. Pelagio Palagi (Bologna 1775–Turin 1860), already well established in Milan as a history painter and portraitist, was appointed by the young King in 1832 as designer and impresario of the Palace decorations.

Royere based his research on the Palace archives in Turin, on Palagi's correspondence and drawings, which were bequeathed to the Archiginnasio Comunale in Bologna, and on the surviving decorations and furniture made by highly talented craftsmen in Turin, Genoa, Milan and Paris, such as the cabinet-makers Gabriele Capello and Henry Peters (a native of Windsor), the bronze-makers Colla e Odetti in Turin and Lerolle in Paris, and the silversmith Charles Nicolas Odiot.

Palagi's decorations range from the Gothic to the Etruscan and the neo-Classical, in an interesting mixture of styles typical of the 1830s and 1840s. His style is often a tribute to the interior decoration of Charles Percier and Pierre Fontaine, but also to the eclectic models of Claude Aimé Chenavard and his *Nouveau Recueil* (1833–35), and to the highly talented Venetian Giuseppe Borsato (1770–1849), not to mention the *scuola d'ornato* (ornate school) from Brera, in Milan.

Royere's lecture will provide an opportunity to study the plethora of Palagi's designs for furniture, juxtaposed with pictures of the furniture itself. The designs were in competition with the latest Paris fashions and in some cases influenced French models, as seems to have been the case with the cabinet-maker Jeanselme.

Bertrand de Royere published his research in *Pelagio Palagi, Décorateur des palais royaux de Turin et du Piémont (1832–1866)* (Paris: Mare & Martin, 2017), 400 pp.

Admission to the lecture is free, but attendance is by ticket only, which must be acquired in advance. Please apply to the Events Secretary. Numbers are limited to 80.

## Annual General Meeting and Works in Progress

THE GEFFRYE MUSEUM (MUSEUM OF THE HOME), GEFFRYE ALMSHOUSES, 136 KINGSLAND ROAD, HOXTON, LONDON E2 8EA  
SATURDAY 28 NOVEMBER 2020  
11.00 AM–1.00 PM

The Annual General Meeting for the year ending 30 June 2020 will be held at the Geffrye Museum (Museum of the Home). The AGM will start at 11.00 am (coffee from 10.30 am). Details on the meeting and accompanying talks will be published in the August *Newsletter* and on the FHS website.

The Museum of the Home reveals the ways we live and the many meanings of home with evocative displays of rooms and gardens through time and dynamic





Museum of the Home development. Illustration of the new entrance opposite Hoxton Overground Station. Visual by Secchi Smith, design by Wright & Wright Architects

exhibitions and events. Its home is the beautiful eighteenth-century Geffrye almshouses and gardens in Hoxton, East London.

The Museum will reopen in Autumn 2020 after a major redevelopment that will greatly improve access and open up spaces previously unseen by the public in its 100-year history. Much more of the collection will be on display in new galleries highlighting touching personal stories and important universal themes relating to the home.

After the AGM, attendees will be able to visit the Museum until it closes at 5.00 pm.

## Grants

The Society makes grants to individuals and organizations from two funds, which have been established thanks to the generosity of members of the Society. They are administered by the Society's Grants committee (Chair: Adriana Turpin), which meets quarterly to consider applications — either for independent travel or study or research, or for participation in the Society's study trips, both overseas and in the United Kingdom.

See the Grants section for more information.



# Other Notices

Please note that these events/notices are not organized/issued by the Furniture History Society. Information/booking instructions will be found under individual items.

## ‘One rich stone table inlaid’ – A Happy Outcome

In the August 2019 issue of this *Newsletter* (215, pp. 20–22) a short illustrated article drew attention to Norwich Castle Museum’s campaign to acquire

a superb Florentine *pietre dure* table top, with inserted Paston coats of arms, probably acquired by William Paston (1610–63) when he visited Florence in 1638 (illustrated). Members were urged to support this appeal. It is gratifying to report that the daunting target of £895,000 was met at the end of November, and Francesca Vanke, Keeper of Art, has asked that the Museum’s gratitude for the generosity of several members of the Society, who contributed to this total, should be put on record.

SSJ



Table top with the Paston arms, *pietre dure*, Florence, probably around 1625 and 1638 (the arms). Length 4 ft  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. (124 cm); width 2 ft  $6\frac{1}{4}$  in. (77 cm)

## Lecture: Neo-Classicism in the North, by Hakan Groth

LASSCO, BRUNSWICK HOUSE,  
VAUXHALL, LONDON SW8 2LG

WEDNESDAY 27 MAY 2020

6.30 FOR 7.00 PM

Hakan Groth, author of *Neoclassicism in the North* (London, 1990) will discuss how the Scandinavian countries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries adopted the neo-Classical narrative of their neighbours to the South — England, France, Holland and Germany. He will also discuss how the Scandinavians developed their own elegant versions.

This is a Salon Wednesday Talk, organized by Historic Decoration, at LASSCO, Brunswick House, Vauxhall, London. Historic Decoration is run by interior designer Caroline Percy and architectural historian Oliver Gerrish. They organize an annual series of talks on aspects of historic architecture and interior design, plus regular four-day courses, exploring historic interior design and its reinterpretation for the twenty-first century. To obtain tickets for the talk and courses, contact [info@historicdecoration.com](mailto:info@historicdecoration.com). For more comprehensive information, see [www.historicdecoration.com](http://www.historicdecoration.com)

**At the time of going to press, the events advertised are scheduled to take place. Please check independent websites for further updates.**

## Position Available: Administrator

HATFIELDS RESTORATION, 26/28  
SIDNEY ROAD, LONDON SW9 0TS

Hatfields are looking for someone to work closely with two pivotal members of the team to maintain the smooth running of the business. Permanent salary based on experience.

Job description:

- Supporting project management
- Process invoicing and estimating
- Professionally managing telephone answering, system and messages
- Inventory management
- Data entry to internal database and Sage
- Liaising with the workshop teams and job sheet management
- Filing and record keeping
- Preparing presentations and client communications
- Maintaining communication with subcontractors and suppliers
- Managing petty cash and workshop supplies
- Managing building H&S, fire plan and security
- Undertaking any other reasonable task
- Skill requirements:
- Advanced level MS Office and, preferred, PowerPoint, Photoshop and Excel
- Proven ability to work autonomously and as part of a team

- Excellent communication skills: written, verbal and interpersonal skills
- Ability to develop strong working relationships internally and externally
- Excellent planning, time-management and organizational skills
- Flexible, driven and self-motivated

To apply, please email a CV and short introductory statement to [info@hatfieldsrestoration.com](mailto:info@hatfieldsrestoration.com)  
All applications will be considered.

## Congress

The Association for Furniture Studies will be hosting the third bi-annual Congress on the History of Furniture from 16–19 September 2020 at the Design Museum in Barcelona. The 2020 theme is ‘Connections’, which will focus on temporal, spatial, material and formal connections within the history of Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American furniture from antiquity to the modern day. The Congress includes an exclusive behind-the-scenes visit to the Museum of Design, Barcelona, amongst others. For more information, see: <https://www.estudidelmoble.com/en/connections-2020/overview/>

## Exhibition: Objects from the Kelmscott Manor Collection

SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES,  
BURLINGTON HOUSE, PICCADILLY,  
LONDON W1J 0BE

*This exhibition, originally scheduled for July–August this year, has now been postponed to either later in 2020 or to 2021; see website for any update.*

This summer, the Society of Antiquaries is holding a one-off exhibition of objects from the Kelmscott Manor collection. This includes works created by William Morris, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Philip Webb and Edward Burne Jones, amongst others. They will be showcasing some items that have never been on public display in London before. This specially curated exhibition will be held in the Society’s historic apartments in Burlington House, Piccadilly.

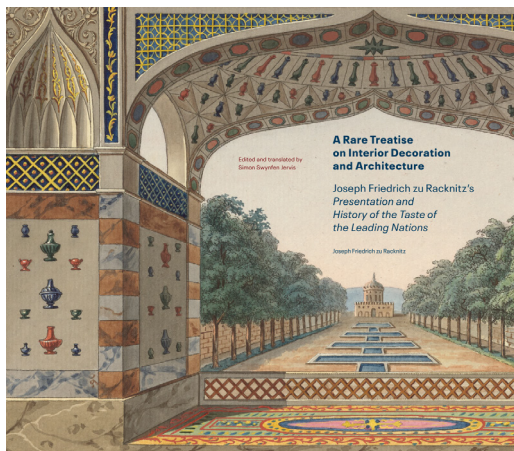
In 1871, the designer, poet, conservationist and social activist William Morris discovered Kelmscott Manor, which became his Cotswolds home. He instantly fell in love with the seventeenth-century house, describing it after his first visit as ‘a heaven on earth’. See: <https://www.sal.org.uk/event/a-house-that-i-love-william-morris-kelmscott-manor/2020-07-13/>

# Book Reviews

Suggestions for future reviews and publishers' review copies should be sent to Simon Swynfen Jervis, 45 Bedford Gardens, London W8 7EF (tel. 020 7727 8739; email: ss.jervis@btopenworld.com).

SIMON SWYNFEN JERVIS (ed.), *A Rare Treatise on Interior Decoration and Architecture: Joseph Friedrich zu Racknitz's Presentation and History of the Taste of the Leading Nations* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2019). 349 pp., 57 col., 59 b. & w. illus. ISBN 9781606066249. £65

Simon Swynfen Jervis noticed Joseph Friedrich zu Racknitz's *Presentation and History of the Taste of the Leading Nations* (four volumes, Leipzig: Georg Joachim Göschen, 1796–99) in the Victoria and Albert Museum Library 'perhaps in 1969'. This discovery determined him to project an edited translation, an ambition triumphantly fulfilled in 2019.



The original took Racknitz seven years to produce. Only twenty-three copies, two, remarkably, in Sir John Soane's library, have been located in present-day institutions. Racknitz's entry in Jervis's 1984 *Dictionary of Design and Designers*, probably the first modern mention outside Germany, described it as 'the earliest comprehensive history of interior decoration and furniture'. Forty-eight hand-coloured plates present twenty-four 'tastes', in pairs, a first illustrating interior decoration and architecture and a second furniture.

Racknitz, who ensured that his book achieved the highest production standards, refusing to publish a cheap edition, would have been delighted by the Getty Research Institute's re-publication, especially the reproductions of his beautiful colour plates. The translation of the text of Racknitz's *Darstellung und Geschichte des Geschmacks* comprises 217 pages of 349, a book within a book.

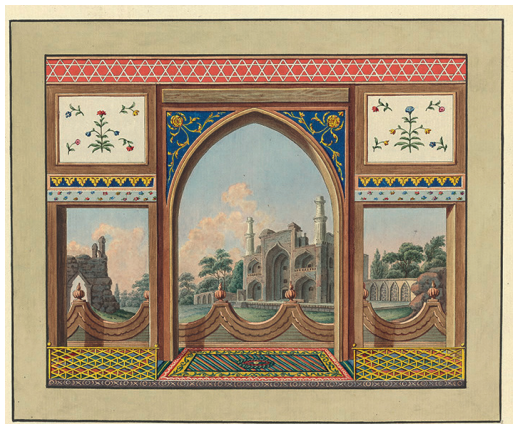
The preface asks: 'Why Racknitz? Indeed, who Racknitz?'. Joseph Friedrich Freiherr [Baron] zu Racknitz (1744–1818) was a nobleman, whose family was seated in Styria from 1224. His courtier father died when Racknitz was fourteen so he was close to his mother, who gave Frederick the Great his first flute. He was — in Jervis's words — 'rich, although not very rich'. The family seat was Schloss Lockwitz, south of Dresden, where Racknitz was brought up. A Protestant



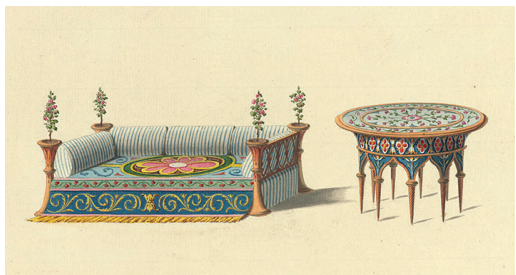
freemason, he served from 1761 in an Uhlán regiment and the Life Grenadier Guards. Leaving the army in 1769 he was appointed a junior gentleman of the chamber in Dresden. By 1790 he was Marshal of the Household and in 1800 was appointed Court Marshal and *directeur des plaisirs*, responsible for the kitchens and opera, in addition to the decoration and furnishing of electoral palaces. The colour plates' theatrical quality anticipates this operatic responsibility. Racknitz was a polymath: composer, geologist, mineralogist, botanist, gardener, collector, art historian and curator. In 1808, Johan Friedrich Reichardt, friend of Goethe and Schiller, described him as 'a sensitive and committed connoisseur and protector of the arts'. He was later called the 'Maecenas of Saxony, Dresden in particular'.

Racknitz's *magnum opus* — he published widely otherwise — originated in the Elector's project to renovate Schloss Moritzburg, near Dresden. Racknitz proposed redecoration in sixteen 'tastes', including Chinese and Gothic. This still-born scheme was transmogrified into his *Presentation and History of the Taste of the Leading Nations* (with twenty-four tastes).

The Elector's favourite, Count Camillo Marcolini, Great Chamberlain and head of the Meissen factory, was a supporter. Racknitz's house, designed and decorated 'in his own fine taste' for his marriage in 1796 to Charlotte von Bülow, daughter of the Danish ambassador, stood next to the Japanisches Palais, which housed the electoral library, an essential source for his far-ranging research. The painter Samuel Benedikt Arnold worked chez Racknitz on the colour plates, designed by the architect



East Indian plate 39



East Indian plate 40

Christian Friedrich Schuricht.

Racknitz's text comprises essays on each taste. They incorporate observations on art, architecture, decoration and landscaping, but may also present history, topography and anthropology. Apart from Europe, Racknitz included Near and Far Eastern countries, Mexico and Tahiti. His essays lengthened as the book developed. Thus Egypt and China have 700 words each, whereas Siberia has 12,000. His description of primitive Kamchatka, arguably irrelevant to taste or interior decoration, was lampooned by Schiller and Goethe, who admired the plates, while the architect Heinrich Gentz coined the ironic adjective 'Racknitzisch'. The author's voice prefaces his twenty-four bibliographies: 'The works

I have used are: ...'. Having recommended arabesque decoration as 'suitable for living and reception rooms where amusing and pleasant subjects are acceptable', he tells his readers: 'Available in Leipzig now are East Indian cotton fabrics which go well with arabesques'. His enthusiasms sometimes tempt Racknitz off piste and the logic of his book's structure is not always evident.

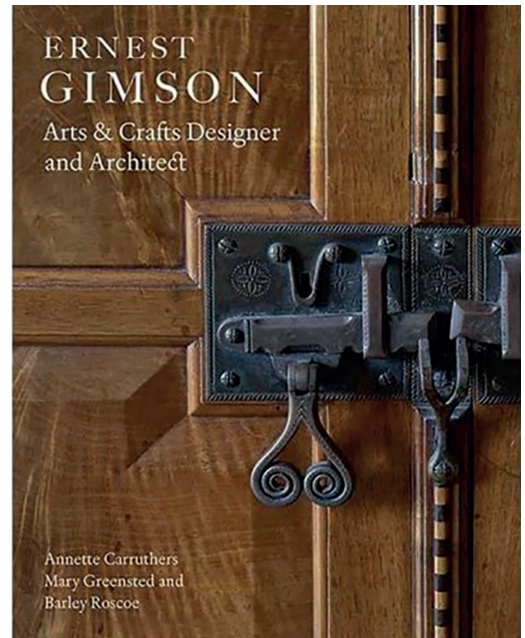
In a recent lecture Jervis aptly dubbed this idiosyncratic world-view from 1790s Saxony an 'Enlightenment Kaleidoscope'. Racknitz's text reflects contemporary knowledge of subjects both de rigueur (Greece and Rome) and exotic (Tahiti and Mexico). His book garnered immediate local acclaim followed by oblivion. Jervis has set it in context in three chapters elucidating Racknitz's social and intellectual inheritance and career, while assessing the significance and structure of his book.

'Racknitz Redivivus' may be recommended to anyone wishing to expand their understanding of the German enlightenment. Racknitz's masterpiece has been rescued from obscurity, translated, edited and lucidly, authoritatively and entertainingly explained to a twenty-first-century audience.

CHRISTOPHER ROWELL

ANNETTE CARRUTHERS, MARY GREENSTED AND BARLEY ROSCOE, *Ernest Gimson, Arts & Crafts Designer and Architect* (Newhaven and London: Yale University Press, 2019). 372 pp., 220 col., 99 b. & w. illus. ISBN 978-0-300-24626-1. £50 (HB)

In 1969, fifty years after Ernest Gimson's death, Lionel Lambourne organized a



commemorative exhibition in Leicester. It is piquant to revisit the *Guardian* review by Fiona MacCarthy, who did much to revive interest in the Arts & Crafts and who died on 29 February this year. After praising Gimson and the exhibition, her conclusion is delightfully phrased:

As we eat off wooden platters bought at Habitat, then surely we should remember Gimson taking lessons in making the traditional rush chairs, singing 'Birds of a Feather' with the cottagers around him — a performance which apparently he frequently repeated — and manfully leading the village in a Morris dance. Surely Ernest Gimson was not just a fine designer but the first and greatest pseudo-country craftsman of them all.

Gimson was first memorialized in 1924, five years after his death, in *Ernest Gimson, His Life and Work*, beautifully printed essays by W. R. Lethaby, Alfred Powell and F. L. Griggs, who supplied seven evocative drawings, accompanying collotype plates

by Emery Walker. This new centenary volume also has three impeccably qualified authors: apart from their writings Annette Carruthers and Mary Greensted have looked after the principal Gimson collections in Cheltenham (and Leicester, in the case of Carruthers), while Barley Roscoe has a career in the crafts, is herself a Gimson, and knew Stoneywell long before its 2013 acquisition by the National Trust (see *Furniture History*, 50 (2014)).

Their book, divided between *Life* and *Work*, is handsomely designed and richly illustrated, with comprehensive notes, index and bibliography. An image of Leicester Secular Hall, with busts of Socrates, Voltaire, Thomas Paine, Robert Owen and Jesus Christ, built in 1881 at the suggestion of Gimson's father, Josiah, whose engineering firm then employed 270 men, is a telling emblem of the Nonconformist, freethinking, entrepreneurial background which informed his attitudes and brought him a private income. Indeed, the importance of family connections emerges throughout (ten Gimsoms subscribed for twenty-two copies of the 1924 book!). The electric influence of William Morris, encountered in 1884, the example of his architectural master J. D. Sedding's engagement with craft (and Gimson's early hands-on plasterwork), the foundation in 1891 of Kenton & Co., a short-lived furniture-making collective, and Gimson's then

election to the Art Workers' Guild as 'Decorator' are elements in a rich preamble to his move to the rural Cotswolds in 1893, aged twenty-eight.

The Pinbury workshop shared with the Barnsley brothers, the later more organized furniture business at Daneway House, with Peter Waals as foreman, and Gimson's building of his own 'cottage' also at Sapperton, The Leasowes, are the background to deep involvement in village life, while maintaining contacts with the Arts & Crafts establishment — hence a London exhibition in 1904 and displays in Ghent in 1913 and Paris in 1914. Although furniture is rightly a dominant theme, *Ernest Gimson* puts his identity and achievement as an architect fully into focus, an appendix listing eighty-eight schemes, including an ambitious design for Canberra with a neo-Byzantine flavour, alongside better-known projects such as Stoneywell and Bedales. Varied church work and involvement with the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings are recurrent themes. Metalwork and plasterwork constitute predictably rich chapters, but embroidery may be unexpected, predominantly white-on-white work, delightful but unflashy.

Building on its predecessors, *Ernest Gimson* is now the standard account of his life and achievements, fully worthy of his 2019 centenary.

SIMON SWYNFEN JERVIS

# ECD News and Report

## Early Career Development Group

As part of its core aims, the Furniture History Society created an 'Early Career Development' (ECD) group to focus on younger members and emerging scholars. It aims to encourage their interest in furniture studies and a deeper understanding of the object as well as providing a networking forum. ECD events focus on three main activities: evening visits and lectures, research conferences and curatorial visits to the European Art Fair at Maastricht ('TEFAF'). There is no charge for participation in the ECD group, but attendees must be members of the Society.

The ECD group began with a series of visits on weekday evenings, focusing on a close examination of a piece or a small group of objects, whether in museum stores, restoration workshops, dealers' galleries or art fairs. When offered funding from the Oliver Ford Trust to further the careers of young professionals, it was agreed that the Society would set up a research forum for emerging scholars to present their work. The Oliver Ford Trust also supports an annual two-day visit by four or five curators from UK museums and galleries to TEFAF.

The evening visits take the form of a monthly series of talks and visits based on looking and learning about materials and techniques. The first series concentrated

on the main techniques involved with furniture-making, including woods, marquetry, carving and gilding. The second and current series, 'Beyond Wood', has been looking at techniques such as japanning and gilt-bronze mounts, and materials, whether *pietra dura* or plywood. Each summer, thanks to the generosity of the Masterpiece art fair, students enjoy a privileged visit to the fair, led by furniture conservator Peter Holmes.

Anyone interested in joining these sessions must be a paid-up junior member of the Society and should apply to Charlotte Johnson, coordinator of the ECD events: [ecdvisits@furniturehistorysociety.org](mailto:ecdvisits@furniturehistorysociety.org)

The research aspect of the ECD activities takes the form of a conference or study day by emerging scholars. These are held approximately every eighteen months, alternating between London and New York. The London conferences are held at the Wallace Collection, while those in New York have been held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Frick Collection. These conferences are intended to support new research and bring the work of students and young scholars to a wider public.

The visit to TEFAF enables junior museum curators and those taking on responsibility for historic furniture collections to spend two days looking at furniture closely under the guidance of Yannick Chastang, a leading furniture



conservator, who also vets for the Fair, and Adriana Turpin, Chairman of the Society's Grants Committee. Those attending are not only able to handle furniture and other objects closely but also to learn about the workings of the art fair and discuss the objects with the dealers and with their peers.

The ECD group has grown each year, offering younger colleagues an opportunity to learn and to socialize. It now has a chapter in New York, led by Kelly Konrad, who regularly leads similar events to those in London, bringing together new members not just from New York but also from various other US cities.

For further information about the ECD or the Society's research and travel grants, please apply to Jill Bace, Grants Secretary: [grants@furniturehistorysociety.org](mailto:grants@furniturehistorysociety.org)

## Research Symposium

FRIDAY 22 NOVEMBER 2019

The symposium is part of the Early Career Development initiative inaugurated by the FHS to create occasions for emerging scholars to meet and learn about furniture. Our fifth conference, hosted by the Wallace Collection, brought seven speakers from several different countries to speak on subjects ranging from the seventeenth century to the present day. As an important forum for emerging scholars to present their research in public, it is also an opportunity for them to meet contemporaries engaging in the subject. We were delighted that this year more than forty young members attended the day, bringing their friends and colleagues to enjoy the day and the reception

afterwards. The papers that follow show the wide range of interests and approaches to be found in the field of furniture and interiors, covering French, English and Dutch topics, patronage and collecting and finally twentieth-century design.

### *The Manufacturing Network of Louis XIV's Silver Furniture*

The silver furniture produced for Louis XIV between 1666 and 1689 was a marvel of the French court, which wowed visitors and inspired a fashion for silver furniture at courts throughout Europe. At Versailles, the royal apartments glittered with gigantic silver tables, chandeliers, orange planters, *guéridons*, stools, ewers and more. After Louis ordered, in December 1689, that all large silver, including his own collection of some 20 tonnes, be melted down, the loss of this magnificent silver was mourned at court. Within a short time, the furniture took on a legendary status, which has more or less persisted until today.

The accepted narrative for the manufacture of the furniture is that the design of the pieces can be entirely credited to Le Brun and their manufacture to a small group of royal silversmiths who, although highly skilled, simply followed Le Brun's directions. Furthermore, as the royal silversmiths were all French, it has been suggested that the furniture stems from a purely French tradition.

A re-examination of the documentary evidence suggests that some elements of this legend are questionable. As has been noted, Le Brun's designs for the silver are rather sketch-like in nature and do not provide precise technical details. It is likely that the silversmiths translated Le Brun's

designs into technical drawings, even adapting them to enable the designs to be created in metal.

There is also evidence for extensive collaboration between the silversmiths themselves. There are numerous examples of multiple silversmiths working separately on matching sets of items, and even working together on the same piece. One set of payments recorded in the royal accounts reveals an even more complex network of production. From 1684 to 1685, five silversmiths, Alexis Loir, François de Villers, Pierre Merlin, Nicholas Delaunay and the widow of Pierre Germain, were paid for two sets of three silver *guéridons*. An ironmonger, Henry Vautrain, was paid for six iron armatures for the *guéridons*, and a joiner, Galiot, and the sculptor Étienne le Hongre were paid for providing wooden and wax models for the manufacture of the *guéridons*. This set of payments is also the only documentary evidence to support the theory that the furniture, or at least some of it, was fabricated by casting. The wooden and wax models of the *guéridons* were almost certainly used for the lost-wax casting process. However, the surviving probate inventories of royal silversmiths show that they did not own the equipment required for casting such works, and the casting must have been outsourced to other artisans. The strongest contenders for casting works of this scale and quality were not sculpture founders, as one might have expected, but the royal *ébénistes* such as Domenico Cucci and André-Charles Boulle, both of whom created significant work in ormolu.

Indeed, we can probably assume that the *ébénistes* played an even greater role in the production of some of the silver furniture. While many of the pieces were simply upscaled versions of traditional silversmithing work, other pieces, such as tables, stools and balustrades, require a knowledge of furniture engineering and construction that silversmiths' training does not encompass. The royal *ébénistes* must have been consulted during the design phases of such pieces and, consequently, had some influence over the design of the furniture. Considering the multicultural nature of the royal *ébénisterie* workshops — the Italian Cucci and Dutch Pierre Gole being prime examples — it becomes more difficult to argue that Louis' silver furniture was purely a French accomplishment. As was the case with royal painting, sculpture, tapestry, *ébénisterie*, stone carving and so on, royal silversmithing also benefited from the innovations and expertise imported with migrant artisans. Rather than the silver furniture being a purely local manufacture, dominated by Le Brun and restricted to the workshops of a handful of silversmiths, it was the cross-trade collaborative project of a broader network of artisans.

CHRISTINA CLARKE

*Centre for Art History and Art Theory  
Australian National University*

*Aristocratic Interiors and Anglo-Franco-Dutch Court Style in Late Stuart England*

'In a monarchy every nobleman ought to model himself on the fashion of the Court', wrote Michel de Montaigne in 1580 from the tower of his Périgord *château*, and the court has traditionally been seen as the

arbiter of taste. This paper examined the influence of the court on the furnishing of the town and country houses of the 6th Duke and Duchess of Somerset (Petworth and Northumberland House) and 1st Duke and Duchess of Devonshire (Chatsworth and Devonshire House) in the late seventeenth century.

This international courtly style permeated into aristocratic interiors in a variety of ways. In some cases, courtiers directly imitated what they had seen at court. Squab couches or daybeds enjoyed a resurgence of popularity in 1689 when Queen Mary ordered four for her closets at Hampton Court, Holland House, Kensington House and Whitehall. This was quickly followed by the Duchess of Somerset, who commissioned four similar squabs from several different makers, two of which were destined for her 'Great Apartment' at Northumberland House. Queen Mary's Water Gallery at Hampton Court exerted a direct influence on the 4th Earl (later 1st Duke) of Devonshire. He commissioned a lacquer-panelled closet with mirror-glass pilasters from Gerrit Jensen in November 1692, just a few months after Jensen had installed a similar closet in the Water Gallery.

Sometimes, aristocratic patrons could draw on migrant craftsmen to introduce new styles into England. Thus, Gerrit Jensen was employed by the Duchess of Somerset from at least 1681, enabling her to be among the first to acquire new types of furniture, such as the 'fowlding righting Table markatree lined with velvit and Gould Galoome', purchased in February 1688, the first recorded instance of this type in England.

Personal connections also facilitated the acquisition of luxury furnishings. Through the Duchess's stepfather Ralph Montagu, the 6th Duke and Duchess of Somerset were able to commission a set of 'Grotesques' tapestry designs from Jean-Baptiste Monnoyer, a French decorative painter who was working at Montagu House in London during the summer of 1690. A previously unexamined contract in the Petworth House archives shows that these tapestries were worked in 1691 by royal arras-worker John Vanderbank; their dimensions accord with the walls of the 'Tapestry Room' in the principal *enfilade* at Petworth, now incorporated into the enlarged Carved Room. This was the first time the design had been worked in England (as the contract makes clear), and it was clearly something of a fashion *coup* for the Duke and Duchess.

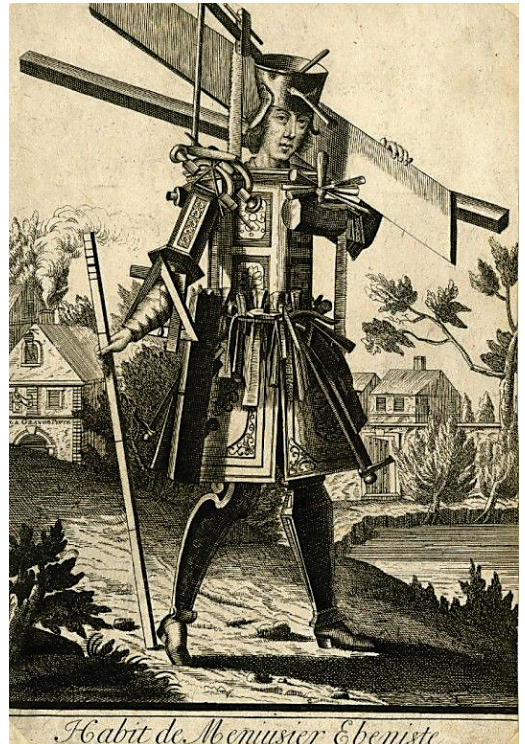
Just as the English court was part of a European stylistic network, wealthy and powerful courtiers saw themselves as part of a European elite. They drew on local and immigrant craftsmen, imports, personal connections and foreign travel to source the finest and most fashionable furnishings that Europe had to offer, projecting a personal magnificence that echoed that of the monarch.

AMY LIM  
*DPhil in History*  
*University of Oxford*

*From Craftsmen to Patrons – Transmitting Masculinity in Eighteenth-Century France*  
Pieces of furniture were part of an overwhelmingly masculine professional constellation. Although female presence in workshops is documented, the legal

and social frames defining work and property excluded them from the space of the *ateliers* as it was perceived and represented. As implied in the Guild's statutes, the *menuisiers* concentrated on the carcass of the piece, and on its assemblage. They portrayed themselves not so much through their tools or workshops, but through the act of production, through this embodied knowledge. An image such as Larmessin's 1695 *Habit du Menuisier-Ebéniste* linked the artisan's body directly with his tool and products. Yet, it placed his identity neither as the production, nor the structure, but instead camouflaged it. Heavily indebted to fashion plates and caricature, the picture's vocabulary substituted the set of mechanical tasks that characterized the identity of the joiner with fashionable symbols of ornaments and tools. Furniture thus appeared as a portable garment.

In the *Encyclopédie*, the depiction of the *menuisier* shows a subtle but powerful attempt to expropriate an otherwise tacit artisanal knowledge and adapt it for its elite readership. The *Menuiserie en meuble* section conveyed very little sense of the practice. While tools and objects were widely described and depicted, the particular processes associated with making furniture were absent. The joiner's masculinity was reduced to his tools and a generic workshop. The *Encyclopédie* moreover suggested a perceived gendering of furniture-making. The sexual division of labour appeared bound to parts of the chair, with men taking care of the *menuiserie* and women focusing on the *tapisserie*. A third text, André-Jacob



Larmessin's 1695 *Habit du Menuisier-Ebéniste*

Roubo's 1769 treaty *L'art du Menuisier*, aimed to define the process of making furniture more precisely. Despite Roubo's personal views on the *menuisiers en meuble*, he rightly highlighted the preponderance of internal structure over ornament. His use of a gender-specific vocabulary linked the producing body with the product's body. Particularly representative was the depiction of the hand as quintessential synecdoche of the *menuisier*.

The type of hand shown in his illustration, however, hardly resembled that of a labourer. Instead, Roubo was concerned with presenting an elite type of artisan who could serve elite readers, linking the quality of the hand with the quality of the craft.



In all these examples previously cited were cases where the *menuisiers* were not in control of their image. Self-portraits, however, both textual and pictorial, allowed some *menuisiers* to create their own personal representations. Charles Cressent distinguished himself from other joiners by highlighting the solidity of his pieces' manufacture in the catalogues of his sales, which he organized at his home. Furthermore, he published an engraving of David Tenier's *Les Compagnons Menuisiers*, a painting he owned, thus creating a link between the work and the domestic spaces, and taking masculine identity beyond the professional sphere.

The birth of the artisan as a masculine identity in the eighteenth century was contiguous with the development of the personal, masculine spaces. As can be seen in the Marquis de Marigny's correspondence with his *menuisier* Pierre Garnier, once included in the interior, pieces then came into the artistic ownership of the patron. Male patrons saw themselves as the creative power that produced the pieces, and the image of the *menuisier* discursively and visually confirmed this fiction.

LEO STEFANI

*Phd Student*

*Courtauld Institute of Art*

*Guillaume Dupré's Image of Henri IV in French Eighteenth-Century Decorative Arts*

An interest in Henri IV (1553–1610) flourished in French literature from the early eighteenth century, beginning in 1723 with Voltaire's ten-canto poem, *La Henriade*. However, the years between 1766 and 1770 saw a proliferation of panegyrics

that contemplated the benevolence and personability of Henri IV, as well as his agenda of state reform. Meanwhile, Parisian theatres presented fifteen stage productions on the subject of the monarch between 1775 and 1782. This surge in popular enthusiasm for Henri IV in the last quarter of the eighteenth century is reflected in the production of French decorative arts of the period, which included the replication and repurposing of a medalllic image of the King that had been created in 1606–07 by the sculptor Guillaume Dupré (1574–1643).

Drawing on surviving objects, archival sources and historic sales catalogues that were examined in preparation, this paper surveyed the practice of fitting Dupré's medals of Henri IV to furniture



Levasseur Cabinet. © The Wallace Collection

and assessed how they were collected, reproduced in a variety of media and formed part of a much larger trend in French decorative art objects that were created to interpret and perpetuate the memory of the King and his reign.

ALEXANDER COLLINS  
*Riesener Project Leverhulme Fellow  
The Wallace Collection*

*Van Venedien, Patriotic Cabinet-Makers in  
Late Eighteenth-Century The Hague*

The Hague has been the location of the Dutch court since the Middle Ages, making the city internationally orientated and a political centre where many diplomats and noblemen settled because of the presence of the Stadtholder and his family. The wealthy citizens of The Hague were a sought-after clientele for the many craftsmen in the city. Many of these craftsmen moved from elsewhere to The Hague for economic opportunities. Among them was the famous furniture-maker Matthijs Horrix (1735–1809), who moved from Germany to The Hague and had a flourishing career as the preferred purveyor of furniture for the court of Stadtholder William V, Prince of Orange (1748–1806). During his career, Horrix became both a master cabinet-maker and a master chair-maker. Besides Horrix, only two other furniture-makers in The Hague, who also probably originated from Germany, are known to have been both master cabinet-makers and master chair-makers in the second half of the eighteenth century. These are Reijnier van Venedien (c. 1720–65), who produced a second masterpiece, for the Chairmakers' Guild, sixteen years before Horrix would, and his

son Johannes van Venedien (1753–1810). A second son of Reijnier, Hendrik van Venedien (1744–1812), also worked as a cabinet-maker in The Hague. With guild regulations in mind and from an economic point of view, producing both chairs and cabinets was a very successful option. Having both master titles enabled Reijnier and Johannes van Venedien and Matthijs Horrix to offer a more complete range of furniture to their customers. Unfortunately, no furniture by one of the van Venedien cabinet-makers has survived, as far is known. However, it is certain all three made high-quality furniture and had a prominent clientele, amongst them the former grand pensionary of the Dutch Republic Pieter van Bleiswijk (1724–90) and members of several prominent noble families. Archival research has also shown that the van Venediens were also active far outside of The Hague. Both Johannes and Hendrik van Venedien sold their furniture in the latest fashion across the country at fairs in Middelburg, Rotterdam and Amsterdam, and even exported furniture to Rostok, Germany, for example. By doing so, these craftsmen showed an unusual level of entrepreneurship.

It is remarkable that, despite their successful careers, none of the van Venediens supplied furniture to the court of the Stadtholder. The court may have shunned them because of their involvement in the patriotic association in The Hague. In the last quarter of the eighteenth century more and more citizens of the Dutch Republic became dissatisfied with the way Stadtholder William V ruled the country and united themselves in so-called *Vrijkorpsen*, 'Free Corps'. These

armed associations strove to democratize the government of the Republic and their members became known as Patriots. The Patriots in The Hague distributed many pamphlets, requests and membership lists and in several of these Johannes and Hendrik van Venedien are mentioned, just like many hundreds of other craftsmen in The Hague. In most cases the members are listed with their name, street name and profession. For now, it cannot be concluded yet that the court did indeed shun the van Venediens for their political activities. In any case, the demographic data in documents published by the patriotic association is a particularly interesting source to gain more insight into the networks of craftsmen, their clients and political and social activities in eighteenth-century The Hague.

SEBASTIAAN VAN VENETIEN  
*Leiden University*

*Patrons, Period Rooms and the Museum:  
 The French Salon at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*

Over the past eighteen months, the MFA Boston has been working on the reinstallation of a period room that has been in the Museum's collection since 1924. Working with the architectural restoration firm, Traditional Line, the room was reassembled piece by piece in a new gallery space. Through the process, we had the opportunity to examine the physical *boiserie* for the first time in almost a hundred years. Close examination showed that panels in the room dated from two distinct time periods: the eighteenth century and the early twentieth century.

The reinstallation of the room in the recent past afforded the opportunity to delve more deeply into the room's history prior to its arrival at the Museum. It came from an important — but short-lived — Gilded Age mansion on Fifth Avenue in New York City built by banker William Salomon. The room — the 'Grand Salon' — is comprised of white and gold wooden panelling with an eccentric purple, grey and pink marle



Drawing Room decorated by Jules Allard et Fils (active in New York and Paris), c. 1903. Courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

baseboard. There are three large sets of double-glazed doors, complete with gilded bronze hardware supplied by the firm Bricard of Paris. These three doors would have originally looked out over 83rd Street. Additional interior doors led into the room from the entrance hall of the mansion and on into a smaller room — the ‘Petit Salon’. A number of decorative overdoors of pastoral scenes lend the room a playful and lively air. Complete with a carved white marble mantelpiece and large mirror, the entire space is both impressively grand and subtly intimate.

After Salomon’s death, the mansion was dismantled and sold off piecemeal before it was demolished. Notorious dealers French & Company purchased the room and sold it directly to wealthy Boston art collector Mrs Harriet J. Bradbury who, in turn, donated it to the MFA, where it has lived ever since. The room’s status in the collection has fluctuated from genuine eighteenth-century room to early twentieth-century fake, and is now acknowledged to be a mixture of the two time periods. The reinstallation of the room in 2018–20 included the addition of period appropriate *parquet de Versailles* flooring. Two cut-glass and amethyst chandeliers will be re-wired and installed to provide subtle atmospheric lighting to the space.

COURTNEY HARRIS  
*Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*

*Where Can You Cry in an Open-Plan Office?  
Office Furniture 1904–2019*

This paper details the changing nature of office furniture and interior design from Frank Lloyd Wright’s 1904 Larkin

Administration Building metal furniture to the open offices of the Googleplex. Beyond outlining the changes in physicality of office spaces and furniture, this paper also questions conventional narratives of design changes and proposes that the evolution of office furniture can be tied to a need for capitalistic control over labour in the workplace.

In this paper Frank Lloyd Wright’s 1904 Larkin Administration Building is used as a starting point for the modern office. This office-as-factory featured large open spaces with standardized metal desks in straight rows, complete with affixed, cantilevered seats allowing only for movements Wright believed would be necessary.

Regimented office spaces remained relatively standard until the introduction of Bürolandschaft (Office Landscaping) by the German Quickborner Consulting Group in the late 1950s. Bürolandschaft designs maintained wide open office spaces, but instructed that desks and potted plants be deployed in order to disrupt lines of sight and create a facsimile of privacy. Bürolandschaft served as the inspiration for the next office furniture benchmark — Action Office. Developed and sold by Herman Miller, Action Office introduced modularity to the office, allowing companies to buy a matching suite of furniture to be adjusted and rearranged as needed. Action Office achieved workspace division through a series of purpose-built dividers, available in many shapes, colours, sizes and potential usages.

The popularity of Action Office prompted a proliferation of similar partition-based office furniture systems,



quickly termed 'cubicles'. Unlike Action Office, cubicles offered little design merit of their own, frequently appearing in shades of grey or beige and lacking the research-based ergonomic features of Action Office. In cubicle layouts dividing walls, originally intended to provide privacy, modularity and personalized spaces were heightened, lengthened and fixed into place. While the cubicle remains a prevalent design fixture in office spaces, furniture and interiors more akin to Frank Lloyd Wright's Larkin designs have recently gained tremendous ground. Termed the 'open office', these designs feature rows of frequently narrow desks with minimal or no divisions.

Such an account of the evolution of office furniture raises several key questions: why has the office not changed in the same way for everyone, why has the office not changed in the same ways everywhere and why have these 'changes' seemed to repeat themselves? This paper challenges accepted understanding of the role of technology in directing changes to office furniture, suggesting instead that the concept of capitalist control over workers has been the core motivator of changes to

the spaces in which we work. Applying a paradigm of control, offices and their furniture have not changed in the same way for all office workers because not all office workers need to be controlled. Control and power dynamics within the office provide answers as to why the cubicle and open office were slow to catch on in northern Europe, where organized labour exerts more control over office proceedings. The need to control workers can also account for why office designs are re-invigorated and re-introduced, and why employees in 2019 sit in offices almost identical to their 1904 counterparts.

This paper concludes by arguing that office furniture serves as an omnipresent physical reminder to office workers that the space in which they work, and in fact their existence during working hours, is not their own. And, further, that continued close study of office furniture and the spaces in which it is situated has the potential to provide important insights into our labour system, priorities in the workplace and the role of design and designers in enabling such a system.

PETRA SEITZ  
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# Reports on Society Events

Members will have noticed that the new *Newsletter* includes many more photographs than before. The Editor would be grateful if members could send as separate files **high quality digital photographs, 1MB minimum**, taken during Society visits and events that can be used to illustrate the reports. Where indicated, a longer version of a report is available from the Events Secretary, email: [events@furniturehistorysociety.org](mailto:events@furniturehistorysociety.org)

## The Netherlands Study Trip

THURSDAY 19 SEPTEMBER–SUNDAY  
22 SEPTEMBER 2019

Our first day started with a visit to the Atelier Building of the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, led by Paul van Duin, Head of Furniture Conservation, to see work in progress on two seventeenth-century Japanese lacquer cabinets from the Dutch Royal Collections and a Japanese lacquer chest, the so-called 'Mazarin chest', from the collection of the Rijksmuseum. It concluded in Utrecht with a lecture, 'Looting Het Loo', by Prof. Dr Johan de Haan, Head Curator at Museum Paleis Het Loo.

### *De Haar Castle*

De Haar Castle is a large neo-Gothic residence, a restoration and reconstruction of a fourteenth-century ruin, built and furnished between 1892 and 1912, for Baron Etienne van Zuylen van Nijvelt

and his wife Hélène de Rothschild, daughter of Salomon de Rothschild. Originally in the hands of the De Haar family and from 1440 onwards with the van Zuylen van Nijvelt family, today it is a private foundation. For its design, the Baron and his wife had turned to Pierre Cuypers (1827–1921), an architect whose recent works, the Rijksmuseum and the Amsterdam Central Station, had made him famous. Its careful and thorough ten-year restoration project was completed in 2011.

The large scale of the interior is dramatically established upon entering the truly 'Great Hall', corresponding to the inner courtyard of the medieval castle, which turns out to be also refined in its carved decoration, its numerous windows enhanced with stained glass and its partly gilded wooden ceiling featuring coats of arms of families related to the van Zuylen. Cuypers not only designed the architecture and the ceiling plasterwork but also many furniture pieces and wainscots, of which the Dining Room retains several examples both in wood and wrought iron. In the Great Hall also stands a series of late Renaissance and Baroque cupboards, among them a rich late seventeenth-century Hamburg example in walnut, with allegories and peopled scrolls carved in high relief.

### *Museum Huis Doorn*

The mid-fourteenth-century fortified castle, largely rebuilt from the seventeenth



One of a pair of chest of drawers by Spindler

to the nineteenth century, and restored in 1991, has been the residence in exile from 1920 of Wilhelm II (1859–1941), the last German Emperor, following the proclamation of the German Republic and his abdication in November 1918.

Wilhelm was allowed by the German government to furnish Huis Doorn with numerous furniture pieces, works of art and personal objects from the private rooms of his formal palaces in Berlin (Stadtschloss, Bellevue and Monbijou Schlösser) and Potsdam-Sanssouci (Neues Palais). Cornelis Van der Bas, curator of this house museum, pointed out that the choice of objects and furniture items was guided by three criteria such as the reminder of the ties of the House of Orange and that of the Hohenzollern. They testify to Wilhelm's admiration for his ancestors, particularly Frederick the Great, while other objects, such as portraits, are reminders of the ties of his family with the great royal houses of Europe.

Highlights included in the 'Gobelins Room' are the pair of richly adorned chests of drawers by one of the Spindler brothers (Johann Friedrich or Heinrich Wilhelm), one of the most admirable examples of Berlin Rococo inspired by French Louis XV models, combining here notably elaborate floral veneer and bronzes, both gilded and silvered. This pair was made *c.* 1767 for the New Palace in Sanssouci and epitomizes the kind of works they made for Frederick the Great. In the same room hangs an equally amazing KPM chandelier of about the same date, made of porcelain and bronze branches, signed by Pierre Geoffroy. In the Dining Room, late eighteenth-century Berlin furniture relating to the reign of Frederick William II of Prussia (1786–97) is of particular interest both for its design and the quality of its execution. This includes a suite of eighteen chairs, designed by the architect Carl Gotthard Langhans and executed in the 1790s, in mahogany with marble

medallions and gilt bronzes, with a design on their pierced backs which derives from Thomas Sheraton's *The Cabinet-Maker and Upholsterer's Drawing Book*. A pair of side tables of the late 1780s, also in mahogany, has been attributed to the most prominent Berlin cabinet-maker of the period, namely Johann Gottlob Fiedler, after a design by Karl von Gontard.

In several other rooms are to be found typical furniture from Berlin of the 1730–40s, with cedar veneer: a chest of drawers, possibly designed by Georg Wenzeslaus von Knobelsdorff, with distinctive curving of body and legs as well as of bronzes; a pair of bookcases with writing desk in a pull-out drawer, made for Queen Elisabeth Christine of Prussia (as shown by the heraldic cartouche of the pediment), c. 1733–40, the veneer of which also features contrasting bands of padouk. Two more late eighteenth-century neo-Classical style pieces of contrasting technique and effect are noteworthy: a mahogany veneered side table with bronzes and an Italian scagliola top featuring a picturesque ruin; a rare pair of chests of drawers with red lacquer ground and painted landscape medallions and stylized scrolls, produced by the Braunschweig Stobwasser factory, which opened a branch in Berlin in 1771. Fine furniture made by the Berlin cabinet-maker Julius Zwiener c. 1900 is also to be found in several rooms of the house.

#### *Amerongen Castle*

We were met by Curator Lodewijk Gerretsen and Paul van Duin (Head of Furniture Restoration of the Rijksmuseum). This great seventeenth-century Dutch

house designed by Maurits Post was built between 1673 and 1685 for Godard Adriaan van Reede (1621–91) and his wife Margaretha Turnor (1613–1700) after the previous castle was burnt down by the French invaders in 1672. From that family it passed down to the Bentinck family in 1879. And in 1976 the house, inventory and gardens were sold by the family to the Castles of Utrecht Foundation.

The most exceptional group of furniture of the house is to be found in the Grand Salon (*Grote Zaal*). It is a rare seventeenth-century veneered set including two large cabinets on stands, one table and two candle stands (*guéridons*). Because of its sumptuous and highly skilled floral marquetry covering all the visible outer surfaces, it has been attributed to the cabinet-maker Jan van Mekerem (1658–1733) from Tiel (Gelderland), who had set up in Amsterdam c. 1687. A comparable study of both the Amerongen and the Rijksmuseum cabinets by use of sensors measuring the inner and outer climate-related changes and cracks has been carried out by the Climate4Wood Research Project. Also noteworthy in the same room are two suites of Louis XVI settees including two sofas and armchairs (*fauteuils* and *bergères*), stamped by the French joiner Jean-Baptiste III Lelarge.

In the Portraits Gallery, our attention was also drawn to a rare travel chest of the second half of the seventeenth century, painted in brown and featuring crowned interlaced initials (G A V R M T), which are those of Godard Adriaan van Reede and Margaretha Turnor.

MARC-HENRI JORDAN



### *De Wiersse*

On Saturday, we started at the moated brick manor house of De Wiersse, noted for its English-style gardens. Rebuilt after 1678, De Wiersse came, in 1893, into the possession of Victor de Stuers, the founder of monument protection in the Netherlands and the moving spirit behind the building of the Rijksmuseum. De Stuers restored the house between 1907 and 1912 and his memory is kept alive by his *Grote Zaal*, hung with gilded leather from Mechelen, transferred by his daughter, Alice, from his town house in The Hague. Alice and her husband, the English Major W. E. Gatacre, gave the garden and park their present structure. We had the good fortune to be shown round by the present owner, Mary Gatacre, granddaughter of Alice, and by Cornelis de Bas, curator of Huis Doorn. The Salon (south room) with an eighteenth-century overmantel taken from a demolished building in Leiden, had an armchair of 1640–50, possibly from Norwich, with original turkey-work covers and wool fringe, and a Lombardy chest, probably

from the Alto Adige, decorated with curiously Dutch-looking male figures. The Dining Room walls were hung with inset landscape paintings of 1822 by Willem Uppink, bought by Alice in 1916, while in the Music Room members were attracted by a Roentgen writing-cabinet of c. 1770 and an English writing desk of 1690–1700 with arabesque marquetry.

### *Jachthuis Sint Hubertus*

A complete contrast was formed by the tough, modernist Jachthuis Sint Hubertus, where we were shown round by the curator, Yuri van der Linden, from the Netherlands Cultural Heritage Agency.

The Jachthuis is a hunting lodge, designed by Hendrik Petrus Berlage for Helene Kröller-Müller, and her husband Anton, whose collection now forms the Kröller-Müller Museum at Otterlo. Built between 1915 and 1920 of brick and slate, with the brick inside the building glazed, the lodge is dominated by a central tower 31 m high, giving extensive views over the surrounding De Hoge Veluwe National Park. Berlage also designed

the interiors, with all the elements, tiles, lamps, furniture, crockery and cutlery coordinated. In plan, the lodge is shaped like a letter 'Y', with the two arms of that letter embracing the courtyard like the antlers of a stag and with the north side of the courtyard enclosed by the former dog kennels. The main range towards the lake consists of the Dining Room, flanked at one end by the apsidal Smoking Room, with its Art Deco humidior, veneered with Coromandel ebony and lined with zinc, at the other by the identically shaped Tea Room. The furniture, largely of Macassar ebony, was supplied by the firm of Mutters in The Hague, the Dining Room table having the cross of Saint Hubert on its legs. The doors in the grander rooms were of the same wood, with a characteristic ornament of three chamfered verticals.

#### *Middachten Castle*

At Middachten Castle, a late seventeenth-century brick building, built on the site of an earlier castle for Gode van Rede, Earl of Athlone, victor of the Battle of the Boyne, we had the privilege of being shown round by the present owner, Count zu Oldenburg. The castle has a magnificent staircase, with carved balustrades, contained within an oval well surmounted by a stucco dome and enclosed by an arched gallery at first-floor level. In the Blue Drawing Room was a small cabinet with a corner marble chimneypiece displaying porcelain. The Green Drawing Room and the Dining Room contained attractive Louis XVI marquetry furniture, presumably Dutch, notably drop-front secretaires and a sideboard fitted with a zinc-lined sink for rinsing wine glasses, of

which the room contained a fine collection with twist stems. In the Library, the books included Diderot's *Encyclopédie*, which had been judiciously left in its original paper covers, while a further bedroom was furnished with a four-poster bed with a brocade velvet bedspread and with yet another Louis XVI Dutch secretaire en suite with those in the Green Drawing Room.

#### *Biljoen Castle*

Biljoen Castle, built around 1661 by Alexander van Spaen, came onto the market in 2006 after the death of the last private owner and was bought by the Geldersch Landschap & Kasteelen Foundation on condition that the building should remain inhabited. The tour members were graciously entertained to dinner in the castle by the present tenants, Marnix and Mary Heersink, who have given major support towards its restoration. Before dinner, the Foundation's Curator, Jorien Jas, showed us the Ballroom of 1780–82 on the first floor, with its stucco decorations of the Pantheon, the Ponte Milvio, the pyramid of Cestius, the tomb of Cecilia Metella and the temple of the Sybil at Tivoli after Piranesi's *Vedute di Roma*. The late nineteenth-century seat furniture, which still has its original pale blue silk covers matching the Ballroom curtains, was acquired from an exhibition at Arnhem in 1879. The eighteenth-century parquet floor has a late nineteenth-century heating system inserted into it, with metal grilles fitted into the earlier Greek key border. The Tapestry Room was hung with panels of seventeenth-century verdure tapestry woven in Delft

and Amsterdam. From 1849, Biljoin was occupied by Anna Pavlovna, widow of King William II of the Netherlands, who found the castle reminiscent of Pavlovsk, and we were able, thanks to the kindness of our hosts, to drink coffee in her private apartments, which have been furnished with nineteenth-century furniture by François Linke and others.

PETER HUGHES

#### *The Rietveld-Schröder house in Utrecht*

In 1924, Truus Schröder asked the well-known furniture designer in Utrecht, Gerrit Rietveld, to design her new home. She had recently become a widow with three young children. She wanted a special house and had very definite ideas on the subject. Both Schröder and Rietveld hated traditional designs, so they formed a perfect partnership. Mrs Schröder played an important role when designing the layout of the house. Instead of following the rules, she wanted simplicity and a free way of living.

At that time, Gerrit Rietveld had only made the special furniture in primary colours, red and blue, for which he was well known. He had never designed a house. For him the commission was a dream come true, and it was an exciting challenge to create a house that would be totally in the style of 'De Stijl'. 'De Stijl' is an art movement named after a modern art magazine, which was first published in 1917. Rietveld was an important member of that movement.

What makes the design of the Rietveld-Schröder house so special is the fluent composition between inside and outside, the strict horizontal and vertical lines,

together with, of course, the use of only primary colours with white, grey and black.

Truus Schröder was born in 1925 and died, in her house, in 1985. Initially, she lived there with her three children and then with Gerrit Rietveld, following the death of his wife in 1957. Rietveld continued to live and work in the house until his death in 1964.

#### *'Het Raadhuis' in Hilversum*

This town hall was built by the former city architect and director of public works of Hilversum, Willem Marinus Dudok. Dudok was given free rein in his design of the building, which was to be situated in a residential area just outside the city centre. The result is a sculptural building, constructed in the period 1928–31, consisting of cubist volumes, and still today the foundations are visible in the basement of Witten Hull Mansion on which site the town hall was built. 'Het Raadhuis' is considered to be Dudok's best

# Visit to the Frederick Parker Collection

WEDNESDAY 22 JANUARY 2020

The Frederick Parker Collection, after multiple shifts in location and management, seems finally to have found a perfect home. The 200-odd chairs and company archive are housed in London Metropolitan University's Aldgate site as part of their special collections, which includes other archives such as that of furniture-maker Atkins Atcraft. The collection has been owned by the Worshipful Company of Furniture Makers since 2013. A selection of the most interesting and best-preserved chairs is viewable in three attractive display areas, with the less well-preserved and the usual store-room candidates well cared for in a separate accessible store room.

Frederick Parker set up the company in 1870 and by the 1880s was living and manufacturing from Curtain Road, moving on soon after to Drummond Street, just two in a succession of company moves. Finally, in 1898, he abandoned the difficulties of London and moved construction to High Wycombe, where extra space allowed the production to be modernized. A London link was kept in the form of a showroom in Newman Street, indicative of Parker's ambition to be more than an anonymous small-scale supplier to outlets such as Maples or Liberty.

Several significant large-scale contracts buoyed the business as it entered the twentieth century. From the archive we saw a weighty photo album depicting images of the company's furniture on

and most important work and is now a national monument, also housing Dudok's Architecture Centre.

Dudok developed a different kind of brick for the construction of the town hall, an oblong format in a yellow colour. On the inside of the building, with bell tower and two courtyards, one can see the idea of a medieval town hall. On the outside, it has an almost strict militaristic appearance, asymmetrical, imposing and exciting.

The interior is more intimate and colourful and the ambiance has been carefully adapted to the intended function. The hand of the architect can be found in every detail, in the use of materials for upholstery, decorations and so on, and, consequently, the interior blends harmoniously with the exterior. Dudok resisted unnecessary changes and, as a result, the building has retained its authenticity for almost a century.

ANNE FABER

With grateful thanks to Saskia Broekema and Steven Coene for organizing and leading this visit. Full reports for individual visits are available upon request to the Events Secretary.



the Cunard's RMS *Aquitania* – vast rooms with white linen-covered dining tables surrounded by chairs repeating as far as the eye could see. Contracts for BBC Broadcasting House and the NHS followed in later decades. By this time the company's identity had settled itself as producer of solid, well-made, conservative but comfortable furniture. Their emphasis and expertise in comfort is largely due to the arrival of Willi Knoll in 1931, who brought a patented coiled wire spring system to the company which was used unsparingly on their upholstered seat furniture.

As the collection was for study, Parker's motivation to buy differed from the average customer and condition was not a concern. Its potential for copy was, on the other hand, crucial. Unusual or even odd items were of interest (a bed back-rest, a child's correction chair or a double-scroll arm). Although the small 1954 catalogue claims the chairs were used 'in every detail, [...] faithfully as models', the reality

is that this collection was exploited in a creative way — legs were swapped to create better models and new prototypes were constructed (see fpf106), a chair built around an original splat (fpf380), and a new model built from antique parts kept in stock. Others were invasively restored. This extensive use supports Parker's supposition that actual chairs were far easier to copy than two-dimensional drawings.

The catalogue of chairs is recommended and available online via the Furniture Makers' Company ([www.furnituremakers.org.uk](http://www.furnituremakers.org.uk)). Many thanks to Jo Sovin, the Frederick Parker Collections Manager, David Dewing Chair of the Committee, Dr John Cross, Honorary Curator, and Christopher Claxton Stevens of the Committee who gave up their time and helped make the visit so interesting.

VICTORIA BRADLEY

The Frederick  
Parker  
Collection



# Grants

The Society makes grants to individuals and organizations from two funds that have been established thanks to the generosity of members of the Society. They are administered by the Society's Grants committee (Chair: Adriana Turpin), which meets quarterly to consider applications — either for independent travel for study or research, or for participation in the Society's study trips, both overseas and in the United Kingdom.

## Tom Ingram Memorial Fund

Grants are awarded from the Ingram Fund towards travel and associated expenses for the purpose of study or research into the history of furniture. These grants are offered, whether or not the applicant is a member of the Society, where travel could not be undertaken without funding from the Society; and only where the study or research is likely to further the Society's objectives. Applications towards the cost of the Society's own foreign and domestic trips and study weekends are particularly welcome from scholars and museum professionals. Successful applicants are

required to acknowledge the assistance of the Ingram Fund in any resulting publications, and will be required to make a short report on completion of the trip.

## Oliver Ford Trust

The Oliver Ford Trust supports research by emerging scholars and junior museum professionals in the fields of furniture history, the decorative arts and interior design, mainly by sponsoring places on the Society's study weekends or foreign tours. Recent awards have included grants to enable participation in the Society's symposium at the Frick Collection in New York; a weekend visit to TEFAF (The European Fine Art Foundation) fair; and international conferences. Applications from individuals who are not members of the Society will be considered.

For further information or to download a grant application form, please go to the Grants page of the Society's website at [www.furniturehistorysociety.org/grants/](http://www.furniturehistorysociety.org/grants/) enquiries. Enquiries should be addressed to the Grants Secretary, Jill Bace, at [grants@furniturehistorysociety.org](mailto:grants@furniturehistorysociety.org) or at 21 Keats Grove, Hampstead, London NW3 2RS.

# Publications

As a leading publisher in the field of furniture history, the Society offers for sale a wide variety of publications to both members and non-members. Among the publications that are currently available are the following:

*Index to the Dictionary of English Furniture Makers*, £20 (members £18)

Pat Kirkham, *The London Furniture Trade 1700–1870*, £20

Francis Bamford, *Dictionary of Edinburgh Furniture Makers 1660–1840*, £20

Jacob Simon, *Thomas Johnson's The Life of the Author*, £7.95

Judith Goodison, *Thomas Chippendale the Younger at Stourhead*, £6.95

Simon Swynfen Jervis, *John Stafford of Bath and his Interior Decorations*, £6.95

Simon Swynfen Jervis, *British and Irish Inventories*, £12 (members £10)

Morrison H. Heckscher, 'Chippendale's Director: The Designs and Legacy of a Furniture Maker', *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (May 2018), £15

*The Chippendale Society, Thomas Chippendale 1718–1779: A Celebration of British Craftsmanship and Design*, £5

Post and packaging for the above UK £5.00; Europe £7.50; Rest of the World £10.00

Index volumes for *Furniture History*, vols I–X £5, XI–XV £5, XVI–XXV £5, XXVI–XXXV £5 including post and packaging

The following back numbers of *Furniture History* are available for purchase: XI (1975)–XIX (1983), XXII (1986), XXV (1989)–LIV (2018). A full list of articles published in these editions may be found on the Journals page of the website.

Prices including post and packaging UK £28.00; Europe £32.00; Rest of the World £35.00

To order these or any other FHS publication, contact the Society's Publications officer, Jill Bace, at [publications@furniturehistorysociety.org](mailto:publications@furniturehistorysociety.org) or 21 Keats Grove, Hampstead, London NW3 2RS. On receipt of your order, she will send you an invoice. Upon receipt of payment (which may be made by cheque, debit or credit card), orders will be despatched by the Society's printers.

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## Copy Deadline

The deadline for receiving material to be published in the next Newsletter is 15 June 2020.

Copy should be sent, preferably by email to Sharon Goodman, email: [sctgoodman@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:sctgoodman@yahoo.co.uk), or by post to 26 Burntwood Lane, London SW17 0JZ. Tel. 07855 176779.

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