

The Furniture History Society

Newsletter 231

August 2023



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The Hardwick Hall Cupboards



Fig. 1. Cupboard,
oak, late 16th
century;
Hardwick Hall,
Long Gallery.
HH F349.

The sixteenth-century furniture at Hardwick Hall has attracted the attention of connoisseurs and scholars since at least 1770, when Horace Walpole visited and remarked upon the now famous sea-dog table ‘with tortoises for feet’.¹ The spectacular nature of this and other early pieces of quasi-royal quality at Hardwick has tended to eclipse what in any other context would be a noteworthy assemblage of joined chairs, stools, benches, chests and tables. Among the latter is a group of furniture apparently unique to Hardwick which, although in plain sight and frequently depicted in paintings and photographs since the early nineteenth century, has so far evaded serious scrutiny. These are the five sideboards, four in the gallery and one other, which, although resembling

tables and usually described as such, are probably the survivors of the twenty-nine ‘cubberds’ recorded in the Hardwick inventory of 1601 (Figures 1-4).²

This assertion raises an obvious question – why are these not tables?³ The form and function of cupboards (cubberds, cup-boards) has long intrigued furniture historians and the historiography of the subject is extensive.⁴ The question is complicated by the shifting semantics of furniture nomenclature, so that cupboard has meant different things at different times, and sometimes different things at the same time, depending on the experience, status or even dialect of the witness. Peter Thornton concluded that in a sixteenth-century context a cupboard was ‘a special table... on which could be displayed the family’s silver plate’.⁵

Victor Chinnery concurred, writing: ‘... the cup-board comprised an open-shelved sideboard or side table with one or more display surfaces’.⁶ This definition, he reckoned, held good until at least the end of the sixteenth century, although by then it was also becoming applied to a number of variants, some of which were at least partially enclosed. Leaving aside the still unresolved question of ‘court’ and ‘livery’ cupboards, it is clear that cupboards originally belonged to the family of tables rather than that of enclosed furniture.

The Hardwick cupboards have table-like qualities. They are rectangular in plan, with a leg at each corner and a flat top on which objects can be placed. Three features, however, distinguish them from tables: Firstly, they are unusually high. Figures 1-3 and Front Cover are between 43½ and 45 inches high and Figure 4 is 38½ inches. All may originally have been higher since the plinths would probably

have needed feet (perhaps simple extensions of the corner posts), to be stable on any but the most perfectly flat floor. Most tables of this date were considerably lower, typically about 35 inches. Secondly, they are intended to be placed flush against the wall, and the tops have very little overhang on the three outward sides. Thirdly, they have a solid plinth forming a lower tier or shelf. All these features preclude their use as tables to sit at. They are intended either for display or for serving, or perhaps for both; at least one nineteenth-century artist recognised their function and painted them laden with plate.⁷ Today the National Trust uses them to display ceramics.

Twenty-nine ‘cubberds’ were recorded in the Hardwick inventory, all but two with an associated cupboard cloth or carpet. Most were in [bed]Chambers but one was in the Dry Larder and another in the Pantry, and neither of these had cloths.



Fig. 2: Cupboard, oak, late 16th century; Hardwick Hall, Long Gallery. HH F347.



Fig. 3: Cupboard, oak, late 16th century; Hardwick Hall, Long Gallery. HH F350.

This indicates that cupboards might differ in status if not in function. Nineteen were described simply as ‘cubberds’ but ten merited additional descriptors. Several were ‘inlayde’ and some were also ‘guilt’. Several were ‘guilt and Carved’ and two (in the Withdrawing Chamber and Great High Chamber) also had ‘tills’ or drawers. The evidence is slight but tends to suggest that the more elaborate and enriched cupboards were in the higher-status rooms.

Where do these cupboards fit into Hardwick’s story? Some of Hardwick’s star pieces, such as the ‘sea-dog’ table and the ‘Du Cerceau’ cabinet, are almost certainly French and predate the house, which was not begun until the 1590s. It is assumed they were brought in from other houses, perhaps Chatsworth or Sheffield Castle.⁸ Stylistically speaking, the cupboards should also predate the house and although (unlike the sea-dog

table and the Du Cerceau cabinet) they cannot be linked directly with published designs, their decorative elements surely derive from the same French Renaissance sources.⁹ It is known that Bess of Hardwick’s fourth husband, the 6th Earl of Shrewsbury, imported furniture from France which included cupboards and perhaps these were among those he brought in.¹⁰ Some of the top boards might be suitable for dendro-provenancing to identify the source of the wood; this technique has already confirmed a French origin for the ‘Du Cerceau’ cabinet.

The gallery cupboards are in remarkably good condition, a testament perhaps to the skill of their makers and the selection of the wood, and perhaps also to the benign neglect which preserved Hardwick from wholesale modernisation and refurnishing in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹¹ There are losses to mouldings, some tops may not be original, and there are some repairs, but structurally they are sound and essentially untouched. It is clear, however, that they have been thoroughly cleaned, leaving almost no original surfaces. Some may have been decorated, like other furniture at Hardwick, with carved parts picked out in gold and faux marbling executed in paint. The raised tablets in the frieze of Figure 2 are comparable to those on the Du Cerceau cabinet, which retain their painted marble finish, and conceivably such details might be mistaken for pieces of inlaid marble. Figure 5 has been less vigorously cleaned than the others and copious traces of gilding survive. It has a real marble panel in its frieze and might plausibly be identified with the cupboard

in the Prodigal Chamber, which was ‘guilt and inlaid with a Marble stone in the side’. It was the only one so described.

In his 1971 article, which followed his transcription of the 1601 Hardwick inventory, Peter Thornton discussed the difficulty of distinguishing cupboards from tables and posed the question, ‘When was a Cupboard not a Cupboard?’. His answer was, ‘When it was a table’.¹² But the compilers of inventories certainly knew the difference between tables and cupboards, even if it is not obvious to us today, and at Hardwick they were clearly identified and named. Do other examples survive, perhaps unrecognised and unappreciated, in other collections? Perhaps, but the Hardwick cupboards are surely the most exceptional and coherent group in England, representing a type probably once common in great houses but now exceedingly rare.

ADAM BOWETT



Fig. 4: Cupboard, walnut and elm with marble insert, late 16th century; Hardwick Hall, Blue Bedroom Corridor. HH F331.

1 Quoted by Simon Jervis, ‘Furniture at *Hardwick Hall – I*’, in David Adshead and David Taylor, eds, *Hardwick Hall, A Great Old Castle of Romance* (Newhaven and London: Yale University Press, 2016), pp. 87-109 [88].

2 The inventory is reproduced in Peter Thornton, ‘A Short Commentary on the Hardwick Inventory of 1601’, *Furniture History*, 7 (1971), pp. 15-40.

3 The cupboards have been cited only twice in furniture history literature. Firstly, in Henry Shaw and Samuel Rush Meyrick, *Specimens of Ancient Furniture* (London: William Pickering, 1836), pl. XXIII and p. 35; and secondly, in Christopher Rowell, ‘Furniture at Hardwick Hall – II’, in Adshead and Taylor, *op. cit.* at note 1 above, pp. 165-176. They are described by both authors as tables.

4 Among the more recent articles are: F. Gordon Roe, *English Cottage Furniture*, (London: Phoenix House, 1961), p. 136; G. Bernard Hughes, ‘A status symbol of Tudor Times: The English Court Cupboard’, *Country Life*, 6 January 1966, pp.16-17; ‘Three Centuries of Parlour Cupboards’, *Country Life*, 23 June 1966, pp. 60-61; Peter Thornton, ‘Two Problems’, *Furniture History*, 7 (1971), pp. 61-71; Victor Chinnery, *Oak Furniture. The British Tradition*, (Woodbridge: ACC Artbooks, 1979), pp. 280-81 and 319-22; *Names for Things. A Description of Household Stuff, Furniture and Interiors, 1500-1700*, (Malton: Oblong, 2016), pp. 97-98.

5 Thornton, ‘Two Problems’, p. 61.

6 Chinnery, *Names for Things*, p. 97.

7 William Henry Lake Price (1810-1896), ‘View of the High Great Chamber’, 1858. Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth.

8 David Bostwick, ‘The French Walnut Furniture at Hardwick Hall’, *Furniture History*, 31 (1995), pp. 1-6; Jervis ‘Furniture at Hardwick Hall’, pp. 87-109.

9 Very little new material has emerged since the FHS published Simon Swynfen Jervis, *Printed Furniture Designs before 1650*, Leeds (1974). I am grateful to Simon for alerting me to discoveries published by Peter Fuhring, ‘Furniture Design in sixteenth-century France: Master Rb’s designs for cabinets’, *Burlington Magazine*, 158, (October 2016), pp. 784-792. Unfortunately, neither of these throw any light on the design of cupboards.

10 Bostwick, ‘French Furniture’, p. 4; Jervis, ‘Furniture at Hardwick Hall’, p. 89.

11 Tankerdale Furniture Conservation Report, Hardwick Hall.

12 Thornton, ‘Two Problems’, p. 61.

FHS Events Calendar

* Here you can find **all currently scheduled** forthcoming FHS and BIFMO Events; please refer to subsequent pages for more information. Additional events may still be added and advertised by email and on the website.

2023

15-17 SEPTEMBER	UK Study Trip to North Devon
5-8 OCTOBER	Overseas Study Trip to Andalucía, Spain
18 OCTOBER	Online Seminar with LACMA
25 OCTOBER	Annual Lecture: Christopher Payne
25 NOVEMBER	AGM & Talks

2024

19-21 APRIL	Overseas Study Trip to Brussels
17-19 MAY	UK Study trip to Derbyshire

Bookings

For places on visits please apply by email or letter to the Events Secretary, Beatrice Goddard providing separate cheques for each event or indicating that you wish to pay by card or online. The email address is events@furniturehistorysociety.org, or telephone 0777 5907390. 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 e-mail, so please remember to provide your e-mail 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

provide a telephone number. Please note the closing dates for applications 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 considered equally following the closing date.

Cancellations

Please note that no refunds will be given for cancellations for events costing £20.00 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. Separate arrangements are made for study weekends and foreign tours; terms are clearly stated on the printed details in each case.

Online Events

We are continuing to arrange occasional online events, but we are sometimes unable to advertise them in the Newsletter owing to publication lead-in times. We let members know by email and send links to members about a week in advance. They will also be advertised on the FHS website, on Instagram and Facebook.

Most online events are free to members. Non-members can join for a small fee. BIFMO study courses will charge a fee for both members and non-members.

Recordings of many of our past lectures are freely available to members on the Events page of the FHS website. If you

need a reminder of the login details or have any enquiries, or suggestions for future speakers or topics please email the Events Secretary.

Forthcoming online event:

Wednesday 18 October 6.00 pm.

Online Seminar: *China and India:*

New perspective on Decorative Stones.

This seminar coincides with the exhibition at the Los Angeles Museum of Arts, *Eternal medium: seeing the world in stone* (20 August 2023 – 11 February 2024) which will be a collaboration with The Rosalinde & Arthur Gilbert Collection on loan to the V&A. Speakers will be Lola Cindric, Adriana Concin, Nicholas Grindley, Rosie Mills, and Alice Minter.



Bickleigh Castle.

Autumn Study Trip to Devon

FRIDAY 15 SEPTEMBER TO SUNDAY
17 SEPTEMBER 2023

Our Autumn study weekend takes us to the Exeter area led by Events Committee member Kate Dyson. Our visits will include privately-owned Ugbrooke Park, near Chudleigh an early castellated house designed by Robert Adam, with grounds designed by Capability Brown. Since the 1960s, Ugbrooke has been painstakingly restored by the Clifford family, who have always lived there. The property is mentioned in the Domesday Book. Following this we visit another important private house for lunch and to study the family furniture collection.

Powderham Castle, built in the fourteenth

century by Sir Philip Courtenay, is the seat of the Earl and Countess of Devon. More a fortified manor than a castle, Simon Jenkins, in his book *England's Thousand Best Houses* describes it as a 'family tree in architecture'. Treasures include two huge Baroque bookcases and a longcase clock made by John Channon in 1740, Rococo plasterwork, a music room added in 1794 by James Wyatt, and a splendid staircase praised by Pevsner as the most spectacular architecture of its date in Devon.

We will visit Knightshayes, a renowned house by William Burges, and will, we hope, see the Burges bedroom furniture on loan from the V&A, though currently not on display, and Holcombe Court, a private Grade I listed Tudor house, containing an interesting small collection of bespoke contemporary furniture

inspired by William Burges and designed by Scott Cunningham. Since the thirteenth century twenty-three generations of the family have lived in privately-owned Fursdon House, which was rebuilt in 1723 and altered in 1818 when Waterloo hero George Fursdon returned to add a new colonnade, ballroom and library. The old great hall has its original screen. There is also a small family memorabilia museum. We will be staying in traditional thatched cottages overlooking the beautiful courtyard of Bickleigh Castle, a fortified manor house that stands on the banks of the River Exe at Bickleigh near Tiverton.

To express interest please contact the Events Secretary at events@furniturehistorysociety.org.

FHS Annual Lecture

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

WEDNESDAY 25 OCTOBER 2023

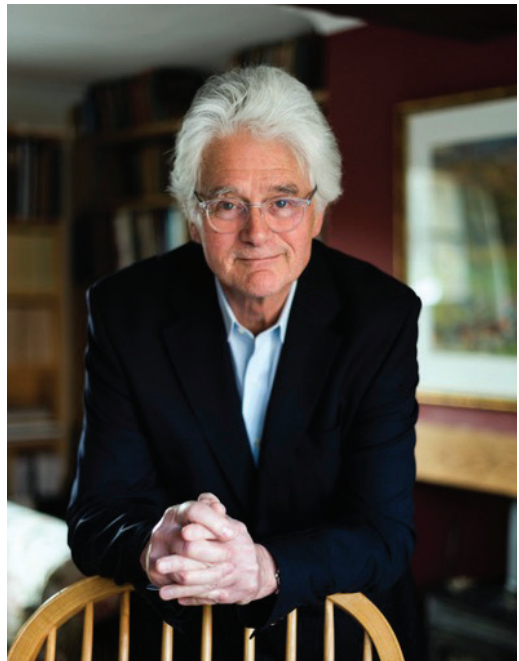
6.00 PM FOR A 6.30 PM START

Decade by Decade: not just 'nineteenth century'; British Furniture 1820 to 1920

Christopher Payne will present some of his findings made whilst researching his new book *British Furniture 1820 to 1920 – The Luxury Market*, to be published by ACC Art Books in early September 2023.

Fashionable furniture does not fit neatly into a particular decade and the overlaps can be confusing. The book is divided into chapters each spanning a decade with a view to establishing a methodology, both visual and archival, for a more accurate form of dating. In the

lecture, Christopher will explore the way in which the eclectic nineteenth-century fashions evolved and often continued side by side, hindering the furniture historian's attempt to position them, from the early origins of the so-called 'Victorian style' through the panoply of influences in vogue up until the 1920s. Whereas much has been written about the Gothic, Aesthetic and Arts and Crafts movements, Christopher will shine the spotlight on other, less well-known areas of the furniture trade, including the so-called Rococo Revival, 'Queen Anne' and 'Chippendale' styles. The words 'copy' and 'reproduction' are used frequently and without fear as he sheds light on the often-unidentified makers of reproduction furniture that dominated the market.



Christopher Payne leaning on a Windsor chair he made himself.

Christopher Payne, who served a term on the Council, has been an active member of the Furniture History Society since joining Sotheby's in 1970. His *European Furniture of the 19th Century* was first published in 1981, followed by other publications including a monograph on François Linke (2003) and *Paris Furniture - the luxury market of the 19th Century* (2018). Christopher worked on the BBC *Antiques Roadshow* for over thirty years and continues to work as an independent advisor to private clients.

Admission to the lecture is free for members, but attendance is by ticket only, which must be acquired in advance.

Please apply to the Events Secretary by email or post. Numbers are limited to 90. This event will be in person only.

FHS Annual General Meeting and Works in Progress Talks

THE EAST INDIA CLUB, 16 ST JAMES'S SQUARE,
LONDON SW1Y 4LH

SATURDAY 25 NOVEMBER 2023

11.00 AM – 1.00 PM

The Annual General Meeting for the year ending 30 June 2023 will be held at the East India Club. The AGM will start at 11.00am (coffee from 10.30am).

Talks will follow the business of the day including Louis Platman, Curator at the Museum of the Home, who will talk about *Real Rooms*, a massive redevelopment project that will see the construction on many new period rooms and immersive displays at the Museum. Louis will also provide updates on the Cotton Collection of English Regional Chairs, and the recently acquired Cotton Archive.

Admission to the AGM is free for members but all members wishing to attend should notify the Events Secretary at least 7 days in advance. Tickets for a sandwich lunch with a glass of wine at the price of £22 per head should be booked with the Events Secretary at least 7 days in advance. We plan to record the talks for those who cannot attend in person.



©Museum
of the Home.



Hotel Solvay Salon.

Overseas Study weekend to Brussels

FRIDAY 19 APRIL TO SUNDAY 21 APRIL 2024

This 2-night, 3-day visit, organised by Maude Willaerts (Events Committee member and Assistant Curator in the Performance, Furniture, Textiles and Fashion Department at the V&A), will focus on Brussels and its world-renowned Art Nouveau architecture, interiors and furniture. In the recent years, much attention has been given to Belgian Art Nouveau heritage: Brussels became the Art Nouveau Capital of 2023, private houses (re)opened to the public and iconic interiors were restored and redisplayed. The trip will provide access to private collections and buildings and include exclusive curator-led tours of museums and houses.

Visits will include a tour of the newly opened, and meticulously preserved, Solvay House by Victor Horta. The architect conceived every detail of the

building – listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Monument – and its opulent interiors, including its lavish furniture, carpets, and light fittings. We will then visit the Art and History Museum which Art Nouveau collections contain the interiors of the 1912 Wolfers Frères jewellery shop by Victor Horta. Its original furniture, recently restored, is beautifully laid out in a gallery of similar dimensions to the ones of the iconic shop, and the cases present some of the best examples of Art Nouveau jewellery and chryselephantine sculpture, including the *Sphinx Mystérieux*.

The Hanon House will be our next stop. The only Art Nouveau building created by the architect Jules Brunfaut, it presents an interesting example of architecture unifying the French and Belgian interpretations of the style. The house opened to the public, with its newly restored façade, in June 2023 and dedicates its first exhibition to the works of furniture designers and architects Henry van de

Velde, Gustave Serrurier-Bovy and Paul Hankar. A guided visit will highlight important objects from the private Belgian Art Nouveau collection of Jonathan Mangelinckx.

The above itinerary will be supplemented by additional visits selected from the abundance of iconic Art Nouveau venues and collections accessible in the European Capital. This immersive study trip will also include dinners and refreshments in historic Art Nouveau restaurants and cafes.

To express interest, please contact the Events Secretary at events@furniturehistorysociety.org.

Spring Study trip to Derbyshire

FRIDAY 17 TO SUNDAY 19 MAY 2024

Our spring study weekend will visit of some of the great Derbyshire country houses as well as some lesser-known historic properties. The itinerary is subject to confirmation, but we plan to visit Renishaw Hall, home of the Sitwell family for 400 years, and Haddon Hall, owned by Lord and Lady Manners. Unmodernised since the seventeenth century, Haddon retains much of its fifteenth and sixteenth-century fabric, including frescoes and panelling and the Medieval banqueting hall with its original dais table.

No visit to Derbyshire would be complete without visiting the two great houses of the Dukes of Devonshire, Hardwick Hall and Chatsworth. At Hardwick, we will see the 'Sea-Dog Table', one of the best examples of Elizabethan furniture in the care of the National

Trust, and the newly-conserved Gideon tapestries, purchased by Bess of Hardwick in 1592-3. Chatsworth boasts some of the most magnificent state apartments of any English country house, furnished by the first Duke of Devonshire in the late-seventeenth century with elaborate woodcarving, mural painting, marquetry cabinets, silverware and Delftware pyramids. We will also visit Kedleston Hall, an eighteenth-century mansion with Robert Adam interiors and many original furnishings, including furniture designed by Robert Adam and John Linnell, and a rococo state bed by James Gravenor. Kedleston's 'Eastern Museum' also contains an extensive collection of furniture and objects acquired in South Asia and the Middle East by George Nathaniel Curzon, Viceroy of India.

If time allows, we will also visit Newstead Abbey, Lord Byron's gothic revival home, which incorporates the cloisters of the ruined medieval abbey, and Buxton Pump Room and Assembly Rooms, recently restored and considered to be the best of architect John Carr's great rooms. We will round off the weekend with a visit to the new Museum of Making in Derby, a finalist for ArtFund Museum of the Year 2022.

The study weekend is organised and led by Amy Lim, curator at Buscot Park and Events Committee member. We will be staying at the New Bath Hotel, Matlock, a Georgian spa hotel with an outdoor swimming pool fed by naturally warmed spring water.

To express interest, please contact the Events Secretary at events@furniturehistorysociety.org.

Hugo Burge

We are extremely sorry to report that Hugo Burge, owner of Marchmont House and a major supporter of arts and crafts, who gave a talk at the 2022 FHS AGM, has died. As well as restoring the Palladian mansion as 'a home for makers and creators in the Scottish Borders', he established a network of studios, and encouraged artists of all kinds to use Marchmont as a workspace. An obituary will appear in the next Newsletter.

Membership subscriptions

There are a significant number of members who have yet to renew their 2023-24 membership. If you have received a renewal notice with this Newsletter then, according to our records your subscription remains unpaid.

There are two ways of renewing your subscription

1. Use your email address and password set up in My Account to renew. If you have forgotten or not set up a password, please use the link below.

www.furniturehistorysociety.org/Account/login

Click the link : Forgot my password. Enter your email address. Send and you will receive a link to set up a password which will enable you to renew by either direct debit, if you have a UK bank account, or by debit card. This is The Society's preferred method.

2. Use the enclosed renewal form and either email or post to the Membership Officer.

Also, a significant number of members who pay their subscription by direct debit have yet to set up a password to access their account. This is required to access online lectures and make changes to personal details. To set up "My Account" please use the above link.

Keith Nicholls

Membership Officer, Furniture History Society

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Publications

The Society is a leading publisher in the field of furniture history and a variety of publications are available to purchase by both members and non-members. Back issues of our journal, *Furniture History*, and other publications are available. For details see the website www.furniturehistorysociety.org/publications or contact our Publications Secretary at the email address given on the back page.

BIFMO UPDATE

British and Irish Furniture Makers Online

BIFMO publishes biographies and blogs of British and Irish furniture makers and associated craftspeople c1600-1914. Now in its seventh year, the project is solely managed by the FHS. Our new URL is bifmo.furniturehistorysociety.org.

BIFMO is our globally-free research tool with a wealth of entries that are always being reviewed and updated. It is an authoritative one-stop site for all researchers in the fields of furniture history, interiors, country house furnishings and associated trades. If you have information you would like to contribute to BIFMO please contact Laurie Lindey and Clarissa Ward at bifmoeditor@furniturehistorysociety.org

Save the Date

Following their summer lectures about furnishing the British country house, the BIFMO outreach team will be running an autumn course every Wednesday throughout November. This course will focus on the ways British furniture makers responded to developments in design and innovations in manufacturing between 1600-1900. Furniture makers often worked with architects but also added designs and ideas from other wide-ranging sources. The course will consider the transmission of ideas between countries and between different disciplines, the pieces of furniture that embody amalgamation of design ideas and the furniture makers who made

them. The full programme will appear in the October newsletter, when tickets will be available on Eventbrite.

Rediscovered: British and Irish Immigrant furniture makers in Early America, 1700-1840

As part of ongoing research into British and Irish immigrant furniture makers in early America, contemporary newspapers, census reports, wills, inventories, and various directories have been examined to form a better understanding of this group of tradesmen's personal and professional lives. While immigrants' contributions to the early American furniture trade have been well researched in parts of New England, especially Boston, Portsmouth, and Rhode Island.¹ This project focuses on furniture makers in Philadelphia, New York, Annapolis, and Baltimore.

We are currently developing information about both known and previously undocumented immigrant furniture makers. To date 115 have been identified; 109 were unknown while the remainder were recorded in the *Dictionary of English Furniture Makers, 1660-1840*. This includes sixty in New York City; seven in Baltimore; ten in Annapolis; and thirty-eight in Philadelphia.

One is an upholsterer who immigrated to Philadelphia, James White. The *Dictionary* noted his recent arrival as

JAMES WHITE,
 Upholsterer and Undertaker, lately arrived from London,
MAKES all sorts of furniture for beds, window curtains,
 either fustoon or plain, all sorts of chairs, either French or
 India back, sofa's, settees and settee-beds, feather-beds, mattresses,
 and all other sorts of household furniture, after the newest taste, ei-
 ther in the Chinese or Venetian, likewise paper hangings put up,
 so as not to be affected by the hottest weather; also funerals fur-
 nished, and shrouds ready made, pink'd as in London, or plain and
 plaited, and sheets.
 N. B. He either finds materials, or will make up ladies or
 gentlemen's own, cuffs and robings to ladies gowns, &c. pink'd af-
 ter the newest fashion. He's to be spoke with, at present, at Mrs.
 Bedford's, opposite Mr. Tenant's new Church, in Third-street,
 any time from ten in the morning, till night; and some patterns of
 papers to be seen as above'said.

Fig. 1: *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 4 July 1754.

advertised in *The Pennsylvania Gazette* on the 4th of July 1754. The *Dictionary* also states that he subscribed to Chippendale's *Director* and that his was likely the earliest copy to reach America. Current research documents further information about his career. Shortly after his first advertisement he entered a partnership with Thomas Lawrence, a fellow Philadelphia upholsterer, trading out of Front-street on the corner of Chestnut-street. How business for White and Lawrence developed is uncertain because they parted ways less than two years on.

James White's trail then went quiet for seven years until he seemingly resurfaced as Blanch White in a *Pennsylvania Gazette* advertisement on 10 February 1763. James

THOMAS LAWRENCE, Upholsterer,
NOW in partnership with James White, at the sign of the
 Crown and Cushion, almost opposite the London Coffee-
 house, in Front-street, hereby gives notice, that he is going to
 remove from said place, to a house in Second street, near Market-
 street, almost opposite the English church, where he intends to en-
 joy on the Upholsterer's business: Those Gentlemen and Ladies that
 are pleas'd to employ him, may depend on having their business
 done with care and dispatch.
 N. B. The business will be continued by James White, at the
 Crown and Cushion, in Front-street, almost opposite the London
 Coffee-house, as usual, where all those who will favour him with
 their commands, may depend on care and dispatch; and as the
 partnership between the said White and Lawrence will expire the
 15th of June; those therefore having any demands against them,
 are desired to bring in their accounts, and those indebted to pay.

Fig. 2: *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 22 April 1756.

White was never mentioned but ironically the two shared many connections. Both were located at the 'Crown and Cushion', both claimed to be upholsterers from London, and curiously, a man by the name of *J.T. Blanch White* appeared in the 1767 Philadelphia's Oyer and Terminer court proceedings.² This evidence coincides with Blanch White's mention of discounted work 'in part of pay of his old arrears' and his emphasis on 'great care and quality work'.

We can presume White was sufficiently affluent and established to have settled in Philadelphia; he worked as an upholsterer in a prominent location and subscribed to Chippendale's *Director*. Hailed as the 'Athens of America' at the period, Philadelphia was known for its cultural scene, connections to trade, and likewise educational, intellectual, and political interests. This begs the question of why an upholsterer from London would suddenly cut ties after a relatively brief period, then resurface seven years later advertising discounted labour for his prior debts? What legalities did White infringe upon? Perhaps the ever-fluid nature of colonial life caused personal struggles. Possibly ongoing conflicts, like the Seven Years' War, brought business into disarray as it transformed the region's commercial and social make-up.

Although James White had a somewhat tumultuous history, others in this research took more pragmatic approaches, such as the hitherto unknown furniture makers, James Smith and Thomas Hays, who created wide networks between craftspeople and dealers. These are but two stories yet to be told.

With more waiting to be rediscovered, our understanding of the Early American furniture trade and the inner workings of these craftspeople will broaden and shape our perceptions. Our objective is to create case studies, network maps, and new BIFMO biographies of immigrant British and Irish furniture makers throughout the 18th century.

A special thanks to The Decorative Arts Trust of Philadelphia for their generous funding.

BRIDGET GRIFFIN

BIFMO Intern & Independent Scholar

1 Brock W. Jobe (Ed.), *Portsmouth Furniture: Masterworks from the New Hampshire Seacoast* (Dartmouth: University Press of New England, 1993); Robert D. Mussey, *The Furniture Masterworks of John and Thomas Seymour* (Dartmouth: University Press of New England, 2003); Patricia E. Kane, *Art & Industry in Early America: Rhode Island Furniture, 1650-1830* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016); J. Ritchie Garrison, 'Boston and its Furniture makers, 1650-1850', *Colonial Society of Massachusetts* vol. 88, 2017, pp. 16-33.

2 The Court of Oyer and Terminer tried capital offenses including murder, treason, and arson.

Discoveries and Research

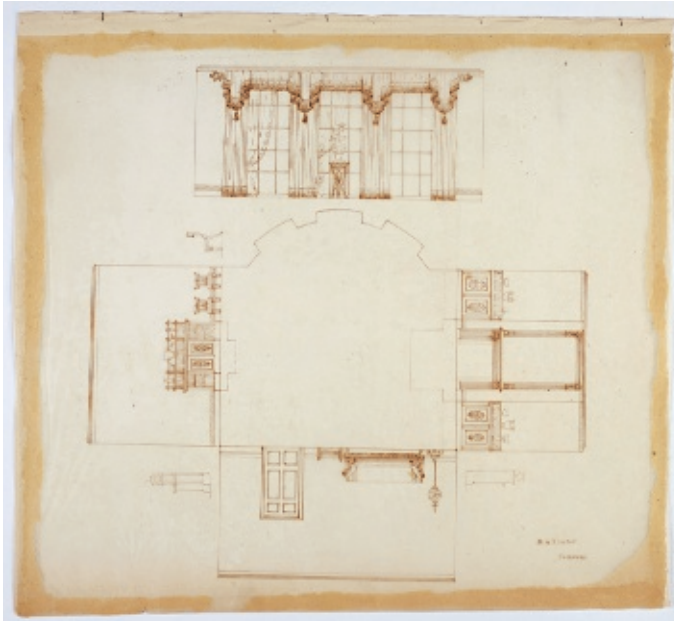
Have you discovered or researched something you would like to share with the Society? We welcome short articles on discoveries made on Society visits, or other discoveries and developments relevant to furniture history. Please send suggestions to the Editor, details on the back of this Newsletter. Articles should be about 500-800 words; the Editor will send you our author guidelines.

The Wilkinson Tracings

Birmingham Museums Trust has recently made a collection of over 200 designs associated with the Regency cabinet maker and artist, George Bullock, open access available via its online image resource.¹ This collection is known as the

'Wilkinson Tracings' and was acquired by the museum as a bound volume in 1974, titled 'Tracings by Thomas Wilkinson from the designs of the late Mr George Bullock 1820'.² The designs have subsequently been separated out, with the irregular rather than sequential numbering of each item relating to its original position within the volume. Most of the designs are ink on tracing paper, but there is also a collection of small, printed designs at the end of the series.

The Tracings are a crucial source for Bullock's output. They showcase the range of styles he worked in and objects he designed, ranging from lamps to memorials, chairs to jardinières. There are several designs for whole rooms as well as numerous designs for ornament,



Design for the Drawing Room at Thornhill from the Wilkinson Tracings, 1820, Birmingham Museums Trust, 1974M3.73. Photo by Birmingham Museums Trust, licensed under CC0.

with Bullock's use of both metal inlay and wooden marquetry being one of the best-known qualities of his work. Some designs are annotated with the customer's name, furthering our understanding of Bullock's clientele, while others can be matched up with extant objects.

However, not all the designs in the Tracings are by Bullock and some postdate his death in April 1818. Several designs can be attributed to Richard Bridgens, who is known to have worked alongside Bullock. This includes a few designs for Aston Hall, a Jacobean mansion in Birmingham, where several pieces of furniture by both Bullock and Bridgens are now on public display. James Watt Junior, the son of the well-known engineer, had employed Bullock to furnish Thornhill, the house in Birmingham where he lived from 1808 to 1818. But when he moved to Aston Hall at the start of 1819,

he turned to Bridgens for its decoration.³ Some of the designs for Aston Hall in the Wilkinson Tracings are either identical or very similar to drawings by Bridgens in Watt's papers, although the design for a bed for Lady Holte's Chamber differs to that which was eventually published in Bridgens' 1838 *Furniture with Candelabra and Interior Decoration*.⁴

While Bridgens employed a distinctive pseudo-Jacobean style at Aston Hall, even those designs in the Tracings which more obviously resemble Bullock's work cannot always be taken at face value. One design in the Tracings is for the Drawing Room at Thornhill (Figure 1). It features classical furnishings and has been done in the same manner as the other room elevations in the Tracings. However, it was not designed by Bullock for his client James Watt Junior, but rather by Bridgens for Anne Boulton, who moved into Thornhill in 1819, after

Bullock's death. A virtually identical design can be found in Boulton's archive and is referenced in a letter to her from Bridgens dated April 1820.⁵

The lack of clarity over the authorship of some of the designs in the Wilkinson Tracings raises questions about the operation of Bullock's workshop and the extent to which he was assisted by other designers. Several designs in the Tracings appear in Bridgens' *Furniture*, but it is not always clear if Bridgens was their original designer or was merely claiming credit for Bullock's own work. It is also not known exactly who Thomas Wilkinson was or how he came into possession of the Tracings, though it should be noted that some of Bullock's designs were sold at the posthumous sale of his stock.⁶ Further evidence for the circulation of Bullock's designs can be seen in the existence of a copy of a printed design for a floral border in the Wilkinson Tracings amongst Anne Boulton's papers; interestingly, her brother Matthew Robinson Boulton – a great customer of Bullock's – owned a table with the same pattern.⁷

We hope that making images of the Wilkinson Tracings available online will help facilitate further research into George Bullock and his associates and assist with the identification of pieces from his workshop, deepening our understanding of this extraordinary cabinet maker.

REBECCA UNSWORTH
Research Assistant (Decorative Art),
Birmingham Museums Trust

1 <https://dams.birminghammuseums.org.uk/>

2 Birmingham Museums Trust: 1974M3.

3 Virginia Glenn, 'George Bullock, Richard Bridgens and James Watt's Regency Furnishing Schemes', *Furniture History*, 15 (1979), pp. 54-67.

4 Birmingham Archives and Collections: MS 3219/9/5/2/6/14, 69-70, 75; Birmingham Museums Trust: 1974M3.41 and 1974M3.148.

5 Birmingham Archives and Collections: MS 3782/13/142/22/17, MS 3782/13/142/8.

6 Martin Levy, 'George Bullock's Partnership with Charles Fraser, 1813-1818, and the Stock-in-Trade Sale, 1819', *Furniture History*, 25 (1989), pp. 155-6.

7 Birmingham Museums Trust: 1974M3.232; Birmingham Archives and Collections: MS 3782/13/142/23/10; *George Bullock: Cabinet-Maker* (London: John Murray, 1988), p. 96.

Book Reviews

Suggestions for reviews should be sent to Wolf Burchard (email: wolf.burchard@metmuseum.org; telephone: +1 212 650 2208).

DANIËLLE KISLUK-GROSHEIDE, *How to Read European Decorative Arts* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, distributed by Yale University Press, 2023). 168 pp., 141 col. illus. ISBN 9781588397515. £19.95.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art contains over two million objects spanning five millennia. From this *embarras de richesses* Daniëlle Kisluk-Grosheide has had the difficult task of choosing just 40 to populate the latest volume in the 'How to Read' series, on European Decorative Arts. Her selection contains some familiar masterpieces: a *nécessaire* by James Cox, a silver ewer by Adam van Vianen, and a Dutch marquetry cabinet on stand attributed to Jan van Mekeren. Many others, though, such as an ivory standing cup attributed to the Zick family and a commode by Pietro Piffetti, acquired by the museum in 2020, will be new to most.

Divided into sections for furniture, chests and caskets, and objects for daily, personal and devotional use as well as for display and entertainment, the selection illustrates both geographical diversity and a rich variety of materials and techniques, the latter carefully explained. What binds this disparate collection together is the creative tension between the utilitarian and the decorative, superlative craftsmanship twinned with practicality applied to objects often intended for use



as well as display. The cover image of an eighteenth-century fan with two elegantly dressed ladies, their eyes meeting across a garden display of tumbling waterfalls, encapsulates this: both hold fans to shade their faces from the sun.

The introduction highlights something we often forget, particularly in a museum context: that the decorative arts engage multiple senses: the ticking of a clock, objects made from aromatic woods or with the odour of musk to protect against disease. Their haptic qualities are frequently referred to in the text: a clock watch by Michael Nouwen has touch pins to tell the time in the dark; light shimmering through amber is compared to sunshine filtered through stained glass.

The stand-out quality of this book lies in the spare elegance and clarity of its prose which must be read with close reference to the excellent illustrations. As the eye flits from text to image, it really is possible to 'read' the object as the title promises, further contextualised

with print sources and paintings. This book should be on every student's and curator's shelf, an object lesson in how to analyse the decorative arts with precision in an accessible and jargon-free way. The plentiful illustrations are reproduced to a size and quality that allows for careful observation of every detail.

The notes for each entry are useful for the specialist but it is not always entirely clear to which section of the text they refer. Traditional foot- or endnotes would have been preferable. This is, though, a minor quibble because this is a splendid book.

Daniëlle Kisluk-Grosheide's text sparkles with insights, intelligence, and enjoyment. It also surprises. We are perhaps familiar with Stalker and Parker but as to 'Mrs Artlove's' book on japanning published in 1730, who knew?

DIANA DAVIS

CHRISTIAN JUSSEL AND WILLIAM DE GREGORIO, *English Furniture 1680 - 1760; English Needlework 1600 - 1740: The Percival D. Griffiths Collection* (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2023) 864 pp (2 vols, slipcase), 600 color + b-w illus. ISBN 9780300259889 £200 / \$300

Collectors and those familiar with the market for early eighteenth-century walnut furniture and mid-eighteenth-century mahogany furniture will immediately recognize furniture associated with Percival D. Griffiths (1862-1937). When his name is linked to a piece of furniture, it possesses an extraordinary power to attract a particular type of collector in the market. His fame as a collector was quickly established during his lifetime, and his



reputation and legacy have endured to this day. Collectors in the generation after him actively sought out pieces he owned, many of which are now in museum collections in the UK and the USA.

This magnificent two-volume catalogue chronicles the known furniture and needlework from the principal collections formed by Griffiths. It traces the pieces that passed through his hands, starting from his first purchase around 1900 when he spotted a mahogany bureau bookcase in an inn in Montgomeryshire, up until his premature death in 1937 resulting from a hunting accident when he was thrown from his horse. During his initial decade of buying furniture, there was a notable abundance of carved mahogany, much of which may have been nefariously made specifically for him. However, after meeting the 22-year-old architect R.W. Symonds (1889-1958) in 1911, Griffiths began refining his collection. He started offloading spurious and low-quality pieces and replacing them with the best finds that he and Symonds could acquire.

Both volumes of this catalogue aim to answer the question posed by the late John

Bryan Jr, a renowned figure in the museum and furniture-collecting world: "Who was Percival Griffiths?" Bryan's energy and passion for the subject provided a solid foundation for the ambitious publication project, originally conceived as a selection of highlights. However, that was soon eclipsed by a desire to produce a comprehensive volume, and the tenacity and willingness of the authors, Christian Jussel and William DeGregorio, has admirably seen it through. Jussel is noted as the principal author of Volume I, which focuses on furniture, clocks, and barometers. DeGregorio is the principal author of Volume II, which covers needlework. The authors note that they have each made contributions to both volumes, ensuring continuity and balance despite the different subjects.

Bryan's deceptively simple question, posed in 2013 during a discussion with Martin Levy and referenced in the preface, serves as a guiding thread throughout both volumes. The fact that Sandridgebury, the Hertfordshire manor house where Griffiths lived, had few paintings on its walls and lacked electricity until the 1930s speaks volumes about his passion for living and collecting in a particular way.

In the foreword, Charles Cator examines Griffiths as a pure collector, positioning him as someone who embodies "the universal truths of collecting: the constant, and often restless, reassessment that keeps a collection alive, combined with the particular problem of the furniture collector - space." The authors' preface presents Griffiths' approach to collecting and the fascinating, almost exclusively

connoisseurial approach to objects that he pursued with his expert advisor, R.W. Symonds. Symonds' recommendations and certifications of quality, provided through written reports to his clients, focused solely on the purity of form, quality of workmanship, and condition, disregarding any extraneous information. Such an approach would be unthinkable today, yet Symonds' rigorous and deeply connoisseurial methods ensured that pieces which passed through Griffiths' hands continue to attract interest from today's connoisseur-collectors.

It is axiomatic that collectors are shaped by the era they inhabit, and Adam Bowett's valuable chapter on collecting antique furniture from 1797-1937 contributed greatly to this reviewer's understanding of how eighteenth-century furniture was perceived in the immediate aftermath of the Georgian period, up until the years preceding the First World War. Bowett convincingly argues for the development of a specific set of criteria that allowed for a timely reassessment of late Stuart and early Georgian furniture. The notion of the passage of time as a driver of taste is often overlooked, and Bowett's lucid explanation of the revival of antiques and antiquarianism in the nineteenth century makes a significant contribution to furniture scholarship. Griffiths, along with his near-contemporary William Hesketh Lever (1851-1925), 1st Viscount Leverhulme, was among the new breed of collectors of eighteenth-century furniture. However, while Lever was drawn to post-1750 furniture, Griffiths found his niche in the late seventeenth to mid-eighteenth

century. Subsequent biographical chapters on Griffiths and Symonds vividly illustrate the landscape of collecting and advising in the interwar and post-war eras, particularly concerning furniture collections in America and American museums.

The books are organized according to object type and arranged chronologically within each category. Volume I includes 338 items of furniture and 17 objects. Each entry is concise, providing a title, approximate date, and dimensions (where known). Quotations from Symonds regarding a specific piece are included if available, otherwise, pertinent additional information is noted. The entries provide full provenance information, exhibition history (when known), and relevant references. Each entry is accompanied by an illustration, mostly in colour. In some cases, new photography is used, while for less accessible objects, images are reproduced from auction houses, dealers, museums, or Symonds' published books and articles—often representing the only known images of those objects.

An interesting annex presents pictorial representations of objects illustrated at Sandridgebury that are not independently documented, except for the fact that they were part of Griffiths' collection at the time of the photograph. The extensive appendices, comprising almost 90 pages, cover a detailed assessment of the interiors of Sandridgebury from 1910 to 1930, a chronological list of objects loaned to exhibitions between 1908 and 1938, transcription of a hand list with prices (and concordance) for the proposed sale of the collection as a whole in 1931, a

transcription of Christie's sale catalogue from May 10-12, 1939, which includes the remaining items from Griffiths' collection with transcribed annotations, an edited version of Jussel's article on the desk and bookcase made for Caleb Dickinson (published in *Furniture History*, 55, 2019, pp. 87-100), a gazetteer of "prominent collectors advised by R.W. Symonds," followed by a comprehensive bibliography and index.

The second volume, which focuses on needlework, goes beyond the scope of this review. Nevertheless, it is an important addition to the literature on English needlework collecting, which was predominantly dominated by women until the emergence of Griffiths and his contemporary, Lord Leverhulme. The second volume features 310 objects accompanied by illustrations, followed by appendices and scholarly apparatus.

These beautifully produced books represent towering achievements for the authors and the team behind them. The collector, auction house specialist, dealer, curator, furniture and needlework historians as well as the student of the history of collecting will find much of interest here.

RUFUS BIRD

Reports on FHS Events



FHS Group at the Villa Torrigiani.

Inevitably some reports have had to be edited down for the Newsletter but longer reports are in many cases available from the Events Secretary on request. They are also circulated to those who attend the visit.

Tuscany Study Trip

FRIDAY 14 – SUNDAY 16 OCTOBER 2022

Our Autumn Study Weekend in Tuscany included a mixture of private villas and palazzos, as well as historic villas open to the public. These encounters took us to the ancient city of Lucca and the surrounding area where the aristocratic Lucchese

families would typically spend the cooler months in their city. When the summer heat set in, the families would take to their villas in the fresh air of the surrounding hills. Lucca, being a fashionable city that attracted visitors and artisans from many corners of the Continent, was a center for craftsmanship. As furniture fashions changed over the centuries, so the Lucchese aristocracy would update the contents of their salons and bring in the new. The unfashionable older furniture was then consigned to their country villas. Consequently, in some of the hillside villas, we encountered some grand pieces.

Villa Michaela

Our unusual base for the Lucca weekend, instead of a hotel, was the privately owned ancient Villa Michaela. Our generous hostess, Vanessa Rhode gave us the warmest of welcomes, a wonderful supper in the dining room with its original frescoes, plus delicious breakfasts in the Villa's former *limonaia*, which is now an atmospheric kitchen with a huge table. The Rhode family have owned the villa for over 40 years. It is, like many of the larger country villas, run as a venue for short stays, weddings and private events.

The best-known occupant of Villa Michaela is the architect Lorenzo Nottolini (1787-1851). It became his family home from the early 1800s. He designed the famous Neoclassical aqueduct that bears his name to bring fresh water from the village spring in his hillside village, at the base of the Monte di Vorno, to the hot and thirsty nearby city of Lucca.

Villa Michaela was built in the 1500s with alterations and additions since. The eighteenth-century chapel was redesigned by Nottolini, giving it a Neoclassical façade and frescoes inside. He also upgraded the villa adding and restoring frescoes as well as enlarging the building.

Inside, the villa contains some of its original furniture from Nottolini's day, including a pair of typical long 1860s upholstered sofas with heavy carved backs in the dining room. During her custodianship Vanessa Rhode has carried out a seemingly unending programme of restoration, including the preservation of its original frescoes.

KATE DYSON

Palazzo Sardi, Lucca

We are very sad to report that our generous hostess and guide for this visit, Rosita Pesenti, has recently passed away after an illness. When we met last autumn, she was well enough to invite us to a drink in her private apartment. This was above the grand *piano nobile* apartment of the Palazzo Sardi, one of the aristocratic mansions in the city center to have survived. She kindly arranged a private visit for us to see the apartment, which was then due to be sold.

In the first half of the eighteenth century, the independent oligarchic Republic of Lucca was the center of intense activity for builders and decorators, as the local merchants enjoyed a period of prosperity, whereas the neighbouring Grand Duchy of Tuscany was comparatively impoverished under the Habsburg Lorena's rule. Thanks to our hostess, FHS members had the opportunity to get a glimpse of the palazzo's *piano nobile*. Although it is now partly deprived of its original furniture, the Sardi family's townhouse is still adorned with exceptional frescoes which are relatively unknown to the public, although they have been studied by Paola Betti in recent years.

Once home to the Arnolfini family, and immortalised centuries before in Jan van Eyck's famous double portrait now at the National Gallery in London, the house was acquired by Filippo Sardi in 1637. Sardi came from an affluent family of merchants and became patrician of Lucca in 1652. Later in the palazzo's history, Lorenzo Antonio Sardi (1686-1766), who had inherited substantial means from his uncle Cesare, entirely refurbished the palace when he

married Maria di Lelio Giunigi in 1726, who had been born into another prominent family from the Republic.

Little original furniture remains, apart from a sofa and armchairs in their original crimson damask, matching the covering of the walls, which are also decorated with elaborate gilt rococo framework and mirrors. The suite of chairs was probably made by Todesco who is reported to have worked in the house.

BERTRAND DE ROYERE

Villa Bernardini

Beautifully situated against the backdrop of distant hills, and amidst a garden flowing with water from nearby springs, Villa Bernardini aroused delicious anticipation among FHS members, and they were not disappointed. Our host, Massimo Fanizza Bernardini, introduced us to its history. The villa is situated on an ancient site but was transformed in 1615 by Bernardo Bernardini, Ambassador of the Republic of Lucca, which was still at the height of its wealth and power. Arranged in typical Renaissance manner of a cube with two floors of rooms of entertainment and family use, the rustic entrance led to a large saloon, originally terminated by an open loggia, now enclosed. Highlights among the family's collection of furniture for the villa was the large seventeenth-century set of linked walnut dining tables which, when arranged for formal feasting, stretched the length of the saloon. These were still in situ, despite Nazi occupation in World War II (which witnessed a bonfire of over 100 seventeenth- and eighteenth-century rush-seated chairs).

Equally impressive was a pair of late seventeenth-century armchairs in the French style, with turned legs and original leather covered seats and backs. In the Parlour we saw delicate eighteenth-century Lucchese chairs (of which we saw many variants in other villas and town houses), a pair of Lucchese side tables with scagliola slabs of geometric design scattered with birds, flowers and butterflies, and a Lucchese-made

desk of interesting form, the top and front opening to reveal a nest of drawers, above a typical scroll-legged stand. Sabre-leg side chairs with lyre splats to their backs illustrated that the furnishing of Villa Bernadini had an early nineteenth-century up-date.

Throughout, there was an impressive collection of furniture from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. In the full-length upper saloon were a pair of very fine octagonal card tables, from the 1780s, in walnut with decorative inlays of box, in a distinctive Lucchese style. The tables were used for the game of Faro, known for its hideous risk of total loss of family wealth and estates in one unlucky evening. A very rare early seventeenth-century Namban lacquer cabinet of small drawers was a perfect example of early Japanese export to Western Europe.

Signor Bernardini showed us the fascinating 275-page inventory of the villa dating from 1888, with illustrations and valuations, recording the division of family properties between two sons; it showed that the lovely Namban cabinet, still highly prized, was then valued more highly than bricks and mortar.

LISA WHITE



Dining room at Villa Reale.

Villa Reale Di Marlia

After lunch in the beautiful and extensive grounds of the Villa Reale di Marlia outside of Lucca, members of the FHS were able to visit the villa and its famous gardens.

The Renaissance-period house was first updated and modified in the mid-seventeenth century by the Orsetti family, but the largest footprint visible today is that created by Elisa Bonaparte Baciocchi, Princess of Lucca and sister of the Emperor Napoleon, who purchased the house as her country residence in 1806. It is this period of the villa's history that is being meticulously restored by the present owners, Henric and Marina Grönberg, who bought the house and estate in 2015 and live nearby.

In addition to remodelling the exterior of Villa Reale in the neoclassical style of her day, Elisa created a series of Empire-style interiors beginning downstairs with the Atrium and Dining Room, the latter with its beautiful lyre-backed chairs. A sequence of rooms upstairs in the *piano nobile* has wonderful views of the gardens, terraces, fountains and surrounding mountains.

The highlight of the interiors, however, must be the Music Room, which extends from the front to the back of the house and has decorative wall panels on painted canvases depicting swans pulling the chariot of Apollo below the horizon (I am indebted to John Hardy for this information). There is a further suite of lyre-backed chairs and a chimneypiece of grey porphyry with standing Egyptian figures. It is a subtle, sophisticated, and harmonious interior scheme.

MEGAN ALDRICH

Villa Torrigiani

The wonderful Villa Torrigiani in the village of Camigliano (six miles from Lucca), is currently owned by Princess Simonetta Colonna di Stigliano (née Marquess Torrigiani), who welcomed the group for a private visit.

The property was first developed during the fourteenth century as a simple house and vegetable garden and experienced several different transformations throughout the centuries. Similar to Palladio's villa system in the Veneto, Lucchese residents invested in agriculture, often including olive trees above and vegetable gardens below. The purpose of this villa was not to be shown off, but to



Villa Torrigiani.

control an important production of stone floors with a furnace on the property. During the sixteenth century, the villa was one of the summer homes of Lucca's Buonvisi family who were important silk merchants and bankers. When the Buonvisi family fortunes changed, Cesare Santini purchased the house in 1634. Inspired by his visit to Versailles, his son, Marquis Nicolao Santini, the Ambassador to France from Lucca at the court of King Louis XIV, reworked the simple Italian villa into a French style building by adding a fashionable Baroque-style façade, complete with columns, statues, and arches, in a variety of colours. He also enlisted André Le Nôtre to create the French-style gardens.

The original furniture dates to the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries and incorporates the Santini family coat of arms, featuring the panther which is the symbol of Lucca. Some remarkable pieces

of furniture include a scagliola table, a seventeenth century Lucchese organ, a Venetian harp, and a bed made in 1724, complete with Lucchese silk bed coverings, made for Ambassador Santini's son. The house is currently open to the public and continues to be used as the summer home of the descendants of the Santini-Torrigiani family.

REBECCA TILLES

Palazzo Mansi

Our last visit was to Palazzo Mansi, built in the late sixteenth century and acquired by the Mansi family of Luccan silk merchants in 1616. They created the main suite of Baroque rooms on the first floor and continued to make additions through to the nineteenth century. In 1965 the Mansis sold it to the State, who completely renovated it and recovered original furnishings, frescoes and tapestries,

including the Bridal Chamber and the famous alcove bed with its original silk embroidered hangings. It became the National Museum of Lucca in 1977.

The suite of rooms at the front overlooking the Via Galli Tassi, were commissioned by Ottavio Mansi in celebration of the prestigious marriage in 1688 of his son Carlo to Eleonora Pepoli of Bologna. These rooms, created by the Luccan architect Raffaello Mazzanti were decorated in a sumptuous Baroque style including frescoes with allegorical representations alluding to the glory of the Mansi family. An elegant Neoclassical French-fashioned banqueting room was

commissioned by Luigi Mansi for the wedding of his son Raffaele Mansi to Camilla Parenzi in 1791. The scheme was the work of the Luccan architect, Stefano Tofanelli. The paintings, appropriate for a marriage celebration, portrayed the loves of Neptune and Amphitrite, Vertumnus and Pomona, Ceres and Bacchus and Diana and Endymion. Huge mirrors are placed above white marble slabs, supported on delicate frames. The dining-chairs with pelta-shield backs, were inspired by A. Hepplewhite & Co., *The Cabinet Maker and Upholsterer's Guide*, 1788.

The frescoed seventeenth-century Music Hall is the first of four sumptuous formal chambers (*camere di parata*) and still has its carved wooden stage for the orchestra. Each of the following rooms, with a sequence of ceiling paintings representing Earth, Air, Water and Fire are furnished and decorated according to a late nineteenth-century scheme devised by Raffaele Mansi Orsetti, (1866-1956) who covered the walls with a complete cycle of eighteen seventeenth-century Flemish tapestries, woven in Brussels by Geraert Peemans to designs by Justus van Egmont. The tapestries were purchased in 1667 by Ottavio Mansi from an agent in Antwerp. After several unsuccessful attempts to sell them, they were kept but not installed until the late nineteenth century, which accounts for their remarkable condition.

The Dressing Room has a vast over-mantel frame above a 'golden' marble chimneypiece, enriched with 'Venus' badges of shell and drapery. The window-pier glass was, no doubt, intended to be accompanied by the eight-legged and



The bridal bed by Raffaello Mazzanti, Palazzo Mansi.

brass-rimmed dressing-table, with three drawers on either side of a recessed drawer. Fashioned in the Louis Quatorze style, it was covered in light-catching brass and turtle veneer. The spectacular Alcove Room retains its 1688 arrangement. A triumphal arched screen of fruit-bearing herms and cupids sporting amongst antique foliage, frames the magnificent bedchamber, with Venus' attendants supporting the Mansi armorials in its open-scrolled cornice. The chamber recalls the adage that flowers and roses spring at the touch of the Nature deity's feet, and appropriately displays flowers on the wall-hangings and painted in vases on the ceiling. The Venus-green velvet 'Lit d'ange' bed, was embroidered with strewn roses, and crowned with vases. A low screen was fitted around its bed-stock. The small doors, to either side of the bed, were crowned by bows and displayed paintings of Acteon, love of the huntress Diana, goddess of the night. The ceiling represents a scene from the history of Cupid and Psyche.

JOHN HARDY

Our grateful thanks to Kate Dyson who organised the tour. She is deeply indebted to Vanessa Rhode and the late Rosita Pesente who kindly opened doors for the group to view historic private interiors and furniture we would not have otherwise seen, not to mention alfresco lunches and delicious afternoon teas. Also thank you to owners and custodians of historic houses and the museum in Lucca for making private visits possible.

Visit to the Palace of Westminster

MONDAY 13 FEBRUARY 2023

We started our visit in the magnificent Westminster Hall, the largest medieval hall in Europe when built, the roof of which carries carved angels commissioned by Richard II. We were privileged to be guided by members of the curatorial team, led by Mary-Jane Tsang, Keeper Historic Furniture & Decorative Art. She explained that the team care for over 76,000 items of furniture in the Palace of Westminster including over 5,000 chairs, 270 clocks and 1,000 items of silver, which continue in daily use.

In the meeting rooms and elsewhere many of the original oak 'House of Lords Portcullis Chairs' survive, the portcullis stamped in gold on the red leather upholstery, made by two furniture makers, Gillow and Holland & Sons. The House of Commons Portcullis chairs, of which there are over 2,500, are less elaborate, without the turning on the legs and upholstered in green.

One of the most visually stunning items of furniture in the Palace is the Sovereign's Throne in the House of Lords, positioned beneath a huge, gilded canopy, it is used during each State Opening of Parliament by the Monarch. Elaborately carved and gilded throne embellished with rock crystals insets, Pugin, its designer is thought to have drawn inspiration from St Edward's Chair, the Coronation Chair. It was made by John Webb of Bond Street.

In the Robing Room, the Chair of State, in French style and recently restored

(originally having a different profile) is placed beneath a canopy carved with the thistle, rose, and shamrock as well as Queen Victoria's monogram. The fireplace in the room was designed by Edward Barry; made of marble of different colours from the British Isles and contains two cast-brass statuettes depicting St George fighting the Dragon and St Michael overcoming the Devil. Most of the furniture in this room, designed by a young Pugin, came from Windsor Castle, including a cheval mirror.

A set of X-frame chairs are used in the Princes Chamber in the House of Lords, were also made by John Webb. Two gilt X-frame chairs located in the Sovereign's robing room could have been prototypes.

In the Reading Room we saw brass desk lamps and door furniture designed by Pugin and handmade in Birmingham, and one by Charles Barry, the only surviving example due to the damage caused in World War II.

The Speaker's Chair, designed for the Palace by Pugin around 1849, was destroyed in 1941 so a temporary chair was used while the Commons sat in the Lords Chamber after the bombing. Members of the Commonwealth gave gifts towards the refurbishment, often in the native woods of their countries. The present chair was given by Australia and is made of black beanwood from North Queensland. The desk with its green tinge to the wood of the desk in front of the Speaker's Chair was a gift from Canada and the inset mace mounts a gift from Rhodesia (Zimbabwe).

The Royal Coat of Arms and canopy were carved by Charles Gisborne BEM.

The canopy of silk damask with gold thread was created by Watts & Co. of Westminster.

Our thanks are due to Tatara Baachaa of the Palace of Westminster Heritage Collection for arranging our visit.

BEATRICE GODDARD AND KATE HAY

The 47th Annual Symposium: 'Rococo Across Borders: Designers and Makers'

FRIDAY 24 & SATURDAY 25 MARCH 2023

This year's Symposium was a joint event organised by the Furniture History Society and the French Porcelain Society. It was held at The Lydia and Manfred Gorvy Lecture Theatre, Victoria and Albert Museum and live streamed via Zoom. The event was chaired by Helen Jacobsen, David Oakey, Caroline McCaffrey-Howarth and Adriana Turpin.

John Whitehead, Independent Scholar

Form versus Function: The Rococo Contradiction and its Application to French Eighteenth-Century Decorative Arts

Evaluating success in the decorative arts during the rococo period is often linked to the fluency and compatibility of the relationship between sometimes fanciful theoretical designs and the actual handcrafting of those designs into three-dimensional, usable objects. The rococo credentials of much French decorative art dating to the first half of the eighteenth century depend on whether they can be

said to combine satisfactorily their fanciful freedom from the restrictions of classical proportions and use of natural motifs with their ultimate usability and practical equilibrium. John Whitehead looked at examples and designs to illustrate the varying ways the question is posed in different fields.

**Marie-Laure Buku Pongo,
Assistant Curator of
Decorative Arts, The Frick
Collection, New York**

*Rocaille and Politics: The Diplomatic Gifts
of Louis XV*

‘A Madame la Comtesse Sedlinski : une tabatière d’or avec le portrait du Roi et entourage de diamans: 5100 livres.’ Note in the margin: ‘Cette Dame avait alors la confiance du Cardinal de Bavière, Evêque de Liège.’

1753, *Registre des Présents du Roi*.

French diplomatic gifts during the eighteenth century included porcelain, jewellery, tapestries, carpets, clocks, watches, silver, gold boxes, snuffboxes, rifles, pistols, medals, books, paintings, furniture, Burgundy wine, Champagne and many other objects. Used on various occasions to secure an alliance, gain more power, or celebrate a peace treaty, these gifts were an integral part of the ceremonial and diplomatic practices during the *ancien régime* and were perceived as a tool to stimulate trade. They spread the fashion for *rocaille* beyond the borders of France. While the courts of Europe were the primary recipients, gifts

were sent to the Ottoman empire, China, North Africa and even Northern America.

**Stéphane Castelluccio,
Director of research at
the Centre national de
la recherche scientifique
(CNRS), Centre André
Chastel, Paris**

*From Cathay to Paris: Trade with Asia, its
Actors and its Influence on the Arts in Paris
in the Eighteenth Century*

Asian objects, mainly from India, China and Japan, reached Europe in unprecedented numbers from the middle of the seventeenth century thanks to the development of the East India companies established in England, Holland and France. In Paris, the *marchands merciers* played an essential role in the distribution of oriental products, having almost exclusive rights to their trade. They sold them as they were and then, gradually during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, modified them to adapt them to the Western aesthetic. The fascination for imported fabrics, porcelains, lacquers and wallpapers had a major influence on the style and techniques developed by craftsmen, artists, merchants and clients. This paper first examined the commercial circuits in Paris. It then detailed the different levels of influence, from the simple adoption of an ornamental vocabulary to technical research aimed at imitating these products, that so fascinated Europeans.

Sarah D. Coffin,
Independent Curator,
Former Senior Curator,
Cooper Hewitt Museum,
New York

The Rococo Diaspora: Wandering Craftsmen, Objects, Patronage and Diplomacy

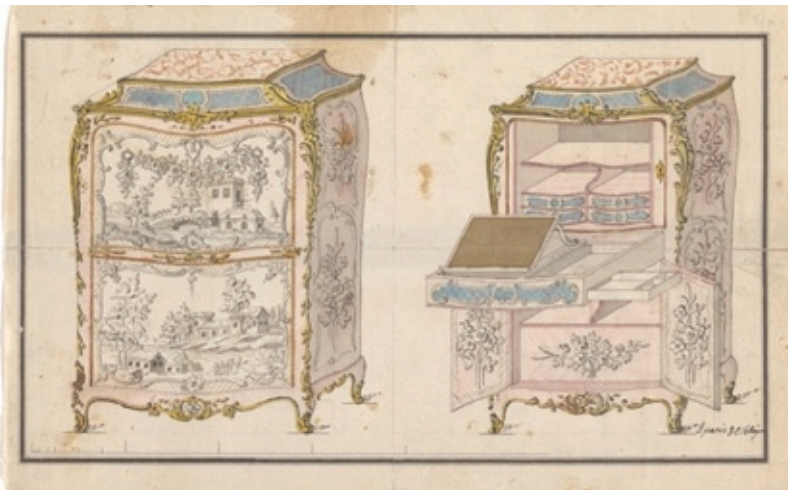
While the wedding and coronation of Louis XV saw the introduction of rococo design to France, it came primarily through the Torino-born and trained goldsmith and architect, Juste-Aurele Meissonnier, who received commissions from Louis XV and his father-in-law King Stanislas of Poland, later duc de Lorraine. Meissonnier's exposure to the Savoy taste in Torino combined with King Stanislas's taste, may have provided a major impulse for the dissemination of rococo design to both Warsaw and Nancy. Other royal and wealthy individuals followed suit, from the crowns of Portugal and Spain to Frederick, Prince of Wales and Frederick the Great. The Duke of Kingston's tureens from a *surtout de table* designed by Meissonnier accompanied the ambassador and his wife back to England and to Russia. Italian stuccoists in Austria, Germany, England and Ireland provided another source of this organic style. Modellers from the German states influenced rococo silver and ceramics in London. Rococo porcelain, silver and furniture and some of the great artisans who made them, travelled with diplomats and collectors from one part of Europe to another. This paper aimed to show how, in addition to the printed sources, the routes and results of the migration

of craftsmen and objects created new expressions of rococo design, as the style became appreciated from Europe to the American colonies during the eighteenth century.

Jenny Saunt, Curatorial
Research Fellow, Victoria
and Albert Museum,
London

'A Peculiarity in the Lines': Drawing and Carving 'Rococo' in mid-Eighteenth Century England

This paper explored the design and production of carved works produced in England in the middle years of the eighteenth century. It looked at the ways in which the relationships between carving practice, drawing practice and how drawing was taught led to new ways of conceiving form and design. There is a temptation to consider design processes of this period as 'solved' by the profusion of extant drawings and prints that we have as our research resources today. This paper offered an alternative approach and set out to read these visual sources against textual commentary of the time to re-create the craftsman's voice: the missing piece of the story. By looking at the writings of Hogarth, Ince and Mayhew, Thomas Chippendale, George Bickham and Matthias Lock and reading these against a case study of mid-eighteenth-century carving, the new principles of carving and form that were transforming the practices and products of wood carving at that time can be re-animated. Not only were these craftsmen learning



Baijer drawing inv. no. RP-T-2017-3-7, Rijksmuseum.

new ways of understanding and inventing three-dimensional form, but they were also developing their capacity to design through a new method of work, a mode of design and making which came into being through the craftsmen's engagement with this 'peculiarity in the lines'.

Patricia Ferguson, Independent Scholar

Chelsea's Extreme Rococo: A Perspicuous Misunderstanding or a Calculated Risk

Between 1759 and 1764, as a British victory in the war against France was increasingly assured, the Chelsea porcelain manufactory's proprietor, a former silversmith, Nicholas Sprimont (1716–71), produced ever more capricious vases in an extreme rococo, a style associated with the enemy, known as the 'Anti-Gallican spirit'. The patriotic Anti-Gallican Society, founded in 1745, aimed to improve Britain's economic competitiveness through enhanced design skills eliminating the aristocratic preference for French luxuries. The arms of the society appeared in 1758 in the dedication plate

for an equally eccentric set of inexecutable 'modern' designs for woodworkers by the London carver Thomas Johnson (1714–78). Sprimont's new vases gave sculptural form to these design prints in the 'modern' or 'French' taste, sharing features found in similarly bizarre designs by John Linnell (1729–96) in *A New Book of Ornament useful for Silver-smiths*, London, c. 1755–60. Rather than second-guessing Parisian fashions, these vases responded to the creed that variety was evidence of virtuosity.

Reinier Baarsen, Curator Emeritus of Decorative Arts at the Rijksmuseum

Designing or Making: On the Role of Craftsmen as Designers

A rare series of designs for Louis XV marquetry furniture made in Paris by one Baijer raises questions about the role of craftsmen as designers. It seems likely that Baijer was a marquetry maker, who probably designed his own work. Was he also involved in the design of the furniture

that was decorated with his marquetry? Who was responsible for designing the work of the famous Parisian *ébénistes* of the eighteenth century and of their less famous, often anonymous colleagues? Reinier Baarsen's careful investigation of Baijer's drawings pointed to some answers to these questions.

Wim Nys, Head of Collections and Research, DIVA Museum, Antwerp

Rococo Silver in the Austrian Netherlands: A Virtuoso Kaleidoscope?

The lack of an in-depth study on rococo silver in the Austrian Netherlands throws up many questions on the origin and the distribution of the rococo in a region with diverse production centres. How and when this new style was introduced? Which silversmiths were working *au dernier goût* and what was their source of inspiration? Also, is there a discrepancy between the rather traditional tablewares and imported trinkets or objects of vertu? Focusing on silversmiths in the Land van Waas, a region between Antwerp, Brussels and Ghent, and eighteenth-century ornament prints, this paper investigated how the rococo style was introduced and applied. A kaleidoscopic survey of the work of Jean-Henry Liénard, Petrus Simon Hoffinger and Jean-Baptiste Verberckt in Antwerp, Lambertus Millé in Brussels, Franciscus Nijs in Temse and Antoine-Constant de Bettignies in Mons on the one hand and the royal sculptor Jacques Verberckt, the architect-sculptor Jan Pieter van Bourscheit, the ornament prints of Germain, Meissonnier and Habermann,

the engravers Heylbrouck and Fruijtjers and the 'À la Mode de Paris' shop in Antwerp on the other provides new insights into the development of rococo silver in the Austrian Netherlands.

Michael Yonan, Professor of Art History, University of California

The Prints of Carl Pier (b. 1717): Visions and Potentialities in Southern German Rococo Design

This paper analysed the social connections of a little-known designer in southern Germany, Carl Pier (b. 1717) whose work survives in only two commissions, both in German town of Ellwangen. His reputation rests on his prints, made in the 1740s, which are some of the most experimental and unusual produced in eighteenth-century Bavaria. This paper examined why an artist in this region would make such images and reflected on the roles of rococo prints for designers and patrons in a specifically southern German context.

Henriette Graf, Curator of Furniture, Stiftung Preußische Schlösser und Gärten Berlin-Brandenburg

Custom Made for the King - Frederician Furniture in Berlin and Potsdam c. 1740-1775

To promote manufacturing and manufactures involved with interior decoration, Frederick II of Prussia (1712-86) embellished his palaces with luxurious chandeliers, silk wall hangings and textiles, huge wall mirrors and furniture

tailormade for him. Some of the cabinetmakers had already supplied pieces of furniture to his parents, Queen Sophia Dorothea and Frederick William I for the Berlin Schloss and several palaces. When Frederick II succeeded to the throne in 1740 they were immediately employed by the court. Martin Böhme (active 1723-57) was among them as well as Johann Schilansky (active 1745- before 1763).

In 1746 Sanssouci Palace was built and furnished in Potsdam. Johann Heinrich Hülsman (c.1688-1760) was cabinetmaker to the king, making the library panelling and several chests of drawers. He continued to work in the Potsdam Stadtschloss. The most outstanding pieces were created by Johann Melchior Kambly (1718-84) who established the Prussian bronze manufactory in 1752 run by French *bronziers*. Kambly created the first turtleshell furniture mounted with gilt bronze (a small *bureau plat* and a corner closet) for the writing *cabinet* in the Stadtschloss. In 1900 this furniture was sent to the World Exhibition in Paris in a display of the Collections of Works of Art established by Frederick the Great, now owned by Kaiser William II.

After the Seven Years' War (1756-63) the New Palais was built in Sanssouci Park. The king's apartments were to be the most luxurious he ever had ordered, furnished with turtleshell commodes, pietra-dura tabletops, sculpted gilt and silvered pier tables and numerous suites of seat furniture. The furniture and interiors remained untouched by his successors, even Kaiser William II who lived there until November 1918 when he fled to Holland. Like his ancestors, he had

presented as the dignified successor to Frederick II, validated ruler of Prussia and the German Reich.

Conor Lucey, Associate Professor in Architectural History, University College Dublin

The Englishness of Irish Rococo: The Dublin School of Stucco Workers

The historiography of decorative plasterwork in Ireland has long championed the so-called 'Dublin School' of stucco workers, or stucco-men, a largely anonymous troupe of plasterers active in the 1760s and early 1770s. Received wisdom suggests that their vocabulary of *rocaille*, acanthus tendrils and arabesque constitutes a vernacular response to a continental ornamental repertoire mediated through embodied knowledge and demonstrative practice: European craftsmen working in Ireland, from Paolo and Filippo Lafranchini in the 1730s to Barthelmeij Cramillion in the 1750s, stimulated a unique and burgeoning local production. Moreover, in their *Insular Rococo* (1999), Timothy Mowl and Brian Earnshaw went so far as to suggest a vector of artistic influence never before entertained in British scholarship on interior design – the influence of Irish modes of decoration on English houses in a benign gesture of 'cultural colonialism' – although this book was subsequently criticised for its failure to substantiate its thesis with material or documentary evidence. This stands in marked contrast to the scholarship on Irish

silver, furniture and related luxury goods, that acknowledges England, specifically London, as the principal centre of stylistic innovation. Missing from the collective scholarship is an understanding of the role and influence of published English designs on local Irish practices; designs by John Crunden, N. Wallis and others, names not often invoked in scholarship on the rococo in either England or Ireland, inspired an extraordinary and unequalled efflorescence of stucco decoration in Dublin's terraced houses. Given that interiors in Ireland share with Britain what Peter Thornton has described as 'a rococo veneer' over an essentially Palladian architectural framework – as opposed to the more fully integrated interiors of their European counterparts – this paper argued that the designs and productions of the Dublin School are properly a constituent of a British rococo taste.

Turner Edwards, Independent Scholar

Pineau le Russe: A French Sculptor in Service to the Tsars

Russia's status in the eighteenth century as a space for foreign artists to exercise and develop their artistic practice and train local craftsmen is well established, with figures such as Bartolomeo Rastrelli (1700-71) pushing the *rocaille* to its very limits under the rule of Empress Elizabeth (1709-62). One of the very first batch of foreign artists to arrive in Russia during the reign of Peter the Great (1672-1725) was a group of over twenty French artists and artisans, headed by Jean-Baptiste Alexandre Le Blond (1679-1719). Among them was

the sculptor, woodcarver and eventual architect Nicolas Pineau (1684-1754). Considered to be one of the foremost representatives of rococo decoration in Paris in the 1730s to 1750s, Pineau's time in Russia (1716-28), which spanned over twelve years and three reigns, covered an important gestational period for the *rocaille*. Having left France shortly after the death of Louis XIV (1643-1715), Pineau brought with him an ornamental vocabulary that was decidedly indebted to the seventeenth century, and returned with an outlook on ornament and interior decoration that was nothing if not modern. This paper proposed a new reading of the ways in which *rocaille* and the rococo developed following different tracks during the first decades of the eighteenth century by drawing on the decorative schemes invented by Pineau in Saint Petersburg. There was a discussion of the working relationships between other Western and local craftsmen and how these ties were perpetuated throughout Pineau's career, even after his return to France.

Philippe Halbert, Curator of American Decorative Arts at the Wadsworth Athenaeum, Hartford

Persistence, Resistance, and Canadian Rococo Furniture

In October 1806 the editor of the English-language *Quebec Mercury*, Thomas Cary, bemoaned increasing ethnic and linguistic tensions in Lower Canada, a province created in 1791 and encompassing much

of present-day Quebec. 'This province is already too much a French province for an English colony', he opined before declaring that 'to *unfrenchify* it, as much as possible [...] should be a primary object, particularly at these times.' Cary's words alluded to the looming threat of Napoleonic France but French-speaking *Canadiens* were more than capable of challenging British cultural hegemony themselves. A compelling facet of their resistance can be seen in the 'frenchified' furniture made by generations of Canadian cabinetmakers, carvers, and joiners who, like many of their patrons remained steadfast, if not resiliently conservative, in their adherence to French design precepts. The bold, exuberant curves of the rococo offered an especially powerful means by which to articulate and leverage French Canadian identity after the fall of New France in 1763 and well after the style had given way to neoclassicism. Craftsmen like Louis Quévillon (1749-1823) continued to supply the powerful Roman Catholic Church with altarpieces, case furniture for storing religious vestments, and reliquaries embellished with curves, shells, and floral motifs. Other Canadian interpretations of the rococo include forms such as serpentine or 'crossbow' front commodes of butternut, maple, and pine that by the 1780s paired a French rococo silhouette with a distinctive local variation on the Chippendale ball and claw. Extending from the Saint Lawrence Valley, across the Great Lakes and down the Mississippi River to Louisiana, the 'Canadian rococo' constitutes a dynamic, often surprising synthesis of high style, 'frenchified'

taste, and vernacular traditions. This presentation provided a trans-regional, trans-cultural reading of the rococo as it evolved within a comparatively understudied North American context. In the process, Philippe Halbert sought to further our understanding of the rococo's transmission, continued influence, and survival beyond the geographic confines of metropolitan France.

Mei Mei Rado, Assistant Professor Bard Graduate Center, New York

'Ornaments from the Western Ocean': Rococo as a Qing Imperial Style in the Decorative Arts

In the eighteenth century a major outcome of the cultural exchanges between the imperial court of the Qing dynasty (1644-1912) and Europe was the assimilation of European styles, motifs and techniques in Qing court arts. Gauvin A. Bailey has thoroughly examined the rococo ornaments in the European architecture in the Summer Palace (Yuanming Yuan). This paper investigated a little-studied topic: the adaptation of rococo vocabulary in eighteenth-century Qing imperial decorative arts across various media, ranging from porcelain bearing painted enamel designs, hardwood furniture, timepieces with intricate mechanism, and textiles including silks and woollen tapestries. Between the 1720s and the 1770s, many high-end objects produced by the Qing imperial workshops featured a new decorative scheme – simply referred to as 'ornaments from the Western Ocean' in court documents – which encompassed

baroque- and *rocaille*-style sinuous lines, C and S scrolls, coiling leaves, and shell motifs. Such designs were often mediated by Chinese aesthetics and combined with indigenous motifs. This unique eclectic style became a trademark of Qing imperial arts. Qing court documents show that prints hardly existed as a reference for such designs. Instead, actual objects from Europe frequently lent inspiration to new designs executed by artists serving in the Qing imperial workshops. My research suggests that European snuffboxes with metal mounts and English timepieces, which had a prominent presence at the Qing court, offered rich sources for the rococo decorations in Qing court porcelain, furniture and clocks, while rococo patterns in silks and tapestries were often directly copied from European textiles. Towards the end of Qing dynasty, Empress Dowager Cixi (1835-1908) revived the rococo style in her interior decoration to assert her matriarchal power and diplomatic attitude, infusing new meanings to this time-honoured Qing imperial style.

Dennis Carr, Virginia
Steele Scott Chief
Curator of American Art,
Huntington Library, Art
Museum, and Botanical
Gardens, Los Angeles

*The French Rococo Style in Colonial
Latin America*

With the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–14), the Spanish crown was brought under the control of the French House of

Bourbon. This political change introduced new artistic styles and customs to Spain and Spain's overseas territories, including those in Latin America. While the earlier Baroque and Mudéjar styles predominated in Latin American architecture and furniture design during the eighteenth century, the rococo added new modes of ornamentation and expression, sometimes mixing with local stylistic treatments and the use of Indigenous artistic materials. The rococo style is found in both domestic and religious contexts across the Spanish empire, from Mexico to the Philippines to South America.

This talk focused on individual artists in Latin America who worked in the rococo style in the decorative arts, in particular furniture. Among those are Domingo Gutiérrez, a Canary Islands-born furniture maker and carver, who along with the painter Juan Pedro López, is credited with introducing the rococo style to Venezuela in the mid-eighteenth century. Also considered was the extraordinary eighteenth-century lacquer furniture of José Manuel de la Cerda, an Indigenous painter from the town of Pátzcuaro in the western state of Michoacán, Mexico. By combining the style of imported Asian lacquerware with Indigenous painting materials and the vogue for European chinoiserie, de la Cerda's work visualizes Mexico's position as the nexus of the transpacific and transatlantic trade routes that connected Spain's global empire. His work also signals the increasing influence of French styles under the Bourbon court during a period of changing leadership of the viceroyalty of New Spain during the period of the Seven Years War.

Iris Moon, Assistant Curator of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

*Colonial Fantasy and Rococo Regressions:
Porcelain in the Time of Louis-Philippe*

This paper took as its subject a Sèvres partial coffee service in the Metropolitan Museum of Art and what it might tell us about the potential political meanings of the rococo revival during the precarious reign of Louis-Philippe (r. 1830-48), the bourgeois king of post-revolutionary France. Building on the work of Katie Scott and Melissa Hyde in *Rococo Echo*, the paper proposed thinking of the rococo not along a progressive linear trajectory of development, flourishing, and decline, but instead to contemplate the ways in which the style in the nineteenth century might better be characterised by a structure of returns, recursions, and in the case of this paper, regressions. Manufactured at Sèvres in 1836 and sent to Queen Marie-Amélie, the partial service features original compositions by the factory painter Charles Develly of *Culture et récolte de cacao*. Set in a lush, tropical landscape, the scenes depicted in the reserves of the tray and vessels are reminiscent of the travels that the naturalist Alexander von Humboldt undertook from around 1799 to 1804 to South America in an effort to discover new scientific species and specimens. However, closer observation of each painting shows a careful staging of colonial encounters in the 'New World' in the compositional framework of rococo

paintings. This regression to ancien régime pictorial idioms of fantasy and what Adrienne Childs has described as 'colonial reverie' carried with it a political agenda, deeply tied to France's colonial territorial ambitions under Louis-Philippe.

Visit to the Brotherton Research Centre, University of Leeds: The John Evan Bedford Library

WEDNESDAY 8 MARCH 2023

This was an exciting departure from usual FHS events with the whole day given over to hearing about and admiring the archive and library of furniture history belonging to the late John Bedford (1943-2019) bequeathed to the University of Leeds and now open for business in the Special Collections of the Brotherton Library. The gift and its projected development were first discussed at an FHS Symposium in March 2021 and so it is enormously gratifying now to see how it has come to a highly satisfactory conclusion. The FHS is particularly honoured to be the first specialist group given privileged access to its treasures.

Rhiannon Lawrence-Francis, Collections and Engagement Manager, began by telling us of the process by which the collection came to Leeds and its journey since 2019. John's trustees generously provided funding for its professional cataloguing and for the creation of a study room and an upgraded area for temporary displays. The overarching name, the John Evan Bedford Library, references John's father, the distinguished surgeon Dr Evan

Bedford. A Bedford Scholarship was also established.

When prompted to do so, Dr Mark Westgarth modestly referred to his own and Jonathan Harris's role in suggesting that the collection might come to Leeds, and equally in persuading the University of its significance. It seems John was unsure about its final destination but was eventually persuaded that a university library would provide better general access than a museum. He was evidently impressed with the success of the Antique Dealers' Project at Leeds and the long tradition of decorative art studies associated with the city's cultural institutions.

Rachel Eckersley, the rare book specialist at the University of Leeds, then gave us an idea of the scope of the collection: some 4,500 English and European books; 600 trade cards; portfolios of drawings and designs; 500 trade catalogues; business ledgers; photograph albums; auction catalogues; ephemera of every kind and periodicals, not least a run of 20 volumes of Ackermann's *Repository* (1809-15) including the elusive pinned-in textile samples. The cataloguing is now almost complete and the trade cards digitised and accessible online.

After lunch we returned to view some of the treasures laid out for us: Robert Sayer's *Ladies' Amusement* (1762) was one of the stars – the plates exquisitely coloured with incredible care for botanical and ornithological accuracy; a mint edition of Stalker and Parker (1688) with lacquered covers (from the collection of the antiques dealer Ronald Lee); Paul

Sandby's copy of Walpole's *Description* (1784); the only known complete copy of Chippendale Junior's *Sketches of Ornament* (1779); and much else.

En route to the Parkinson Building we encountered a few items of furniture: John's own sea chest, from Nelson's *HMS Agamemnon*, the eighteenth century Winchester Cabinet for coins and medals, and an enigmatic Qing dynasty shrinal cabinet given by Dorothy Una Radcliffe. At the exhibition, *Treasures of the Brotherton Collection*, Rhiannon outlined the genesis of Lord Brotherton's great collection of rare books. Here we admired a copy of Shakespeare's First Folio, various medieval Books of Hours, a display of early maps, and even manuscript material from the present Poet Laureate. In a private room next door, even more treasures had been specially selected for us: Redouté's *Roses*, Piranesi's *Antichita*, seventeenth-century books on garden design, early cookbooks and many others. In 2024 there will be a special exhibition of the Bedford Collection in these public galleries.

We felt enormously privileged and grateful to Rhiannon, Rachel and Mark and their staff for such thoughtful presentations arranged for our exclusive benefit, and for the whole day organised so well by Beatrice Goddard.

JAMES LOMAX

Calling All Scholars and Museum Professionals

The Furniture History Society welcomes grant applications for independent travel, research or for participation in the Society's study trips both overseas and in the United Kingdom. Scholars and museum professionals working in the fields of furniture history, furniture making, decorative arts, interior design and conservation who are in need of support for travel and research are encouraged to apply.

The Society makes grants to individuals and organisations 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 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 the 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/ enquiries. Enquiries should be addressed to the Grants Secretary, Jill Bace, at grants@furniturehistorysociety.org.

Early career curators' visit to TEFAF

On Friday, 17 March, five curators from various British museums and houses travelled to The European Fine Art Fair (TEFAF) at Maastricht with David Wheeler from the Royal Collection Trust and Adriana Turpin, Chairman of the FHS grants committee, to spend three exciting days talking to the dealers in decorative arts and examining the furniture in some considerable detail. We are, as always, hugely grateful to the Oliver Ford Trust for giving this exceptional experience to emerging curators. This trip was no exception in the range and variety of objects we looked at and the knowledge gained examining furniture first-hand with experts. We would also like to thank Christophe de Quenetaïn for providing us with entry tickets and to Jonathan Coulborn for his generosity in sponsoring our visit.

A suite of Chinese Export Chairs

This was my first visit to TEFAF, and so it was wonderful to be accompanied by Adriana Turpin and David Wheeler, both of whom have a wealth of knowledge and expertise they were able to share. As well as Adriana and David, I am grateful to my fellow curators, all of whom had valuable insight into the pieces on show. Working with a collection of predominantly English furniture, dealing with pieces by Riesener



The ECD group at TEFAF with David Wheeler.

and Roentgen is not my natural habitat. There was one suite however, which really caught my eye, and that was a suite of Chinese export seat furniture displayed at Thomas Coulborn & Sons.

At first glance, this looked like a typical English suite of furniture from the 1730s, but on closer inspection they contained many charming details which betrayed their origin, such as lions' masks to the knees and scrolled acanthus to the splat. The construction of the armchair was particularly fascinating, showing how

Chinese craftsmen employed their own methods to execute the English design. The suite was likely made in the late 1730s; an identical set of chairs is pictured in a painting of William Gough and his family painted in 1741. Gough was a merchant who is known to have traded with China; he may have commissioned a Chinese craftsman to make copies of his English furniture, although other sets are known, such as those at the Lady Lever Gallery.

The chairs were being sold ensuite with a Harlequin table, which Jonathan Coulborn was kind enough to demonstrate for the group. This type of table – named after the character in the *Commedia dell'Arte* – contains four different types of table in one. Although the English prototype apparently dates to the 1730s, we can trace a precise date for the arrival of Chinese export Harlequin tables in Europe, through a Danish example, which is recorded in Copenhagen in 1737 and remains in the collection at Fredensborg Castle.

KATHERINE HARDWICK
Curator, Holkham Hall, Norfolk

A south German table cabinet

At Peter Mühlbauer we viewed a sixteenth-century marquetry table cabinet from southern Germany. A riot of foliage and ornament, the marquetry has tantalising glimpses of original colour. The cabinet is attributed to a maker or workshop in Augsburg, Bavaria circa 1570/80. Around the time of this cabinet, a marquetry writing or table cabinet, was one of proof of skills required to join the furniture makers guild.



Chinese export chair at Thomas Coulborn & Sons.

Though now associated with southern Germany, the rendering perspectival imagery in marquetry was popular in Italy throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Similar cabinets are associated with the work of Nuremberg born painter and designer Lorenz Stoer (c.1537-c.1621).

Stoer designed purposefully with the title page of his *'Geometria et Perspectiva'*, published in 1567, explaining that the designs are intended to be useful to artists working in wood inlay or marquetry. The publication features surreal landscapes, with classical architectural elements and colossal geometric shapes.

An apparent addition to this style in this cabinet are the trophies featuring musical instruments and books, most apparent in the marquetry of the top and

open front. Design elements such as this are more commonly associated with the Augsburg goldsmiths of the period, hinting at a piece made for export to appeal to a wider taste or a maker associated with the goldsmiths. The scrolls woven across the body of the box are like the scroll of a stringed instrument rather than the more foliate scrolls in Stoer's designs.

The cabinet is of rectangular form, with a fold-down front. Upon opening, the remarkable utility of the object is apparent with the smooth finish of the fold down front serving an ideal writing surface. There are drawers of various sizes, lockable cubbyholes and a large central void. The scale of the marquetry diminishes with decreasing decorated panel size.

PENELOPE HINES
Arts Development Officer, Guys and St.
Thomas Foundation



A south German table cabinet at Peter Mühlbauer.

The Joachim Tielke Cabinet

This sumptuous 'wedding' cabinet, on the stand of Kollenburg Antiquairs, is outstanding for its design, workmanship and use of exotic luxury materials. First presented at TEFAF 2022 as being of South Asian origin, a suggestion from the member of the vetting committee that the maker might be Joachim Tielke, one of the most renowned instrument-makers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, led to further research and its subsequent identification as a cabinet mentioned in the travel memoir of Zacharias von Uffenbach, who visited Tielke's Hamburg shop in 1711 to buy a guitar. Uffenbach described a 'very special and beautiful' cabinet, of which his detailed description fits the present piece.

The rosewood cabinet is entirely veneered with ivory and tortoiseshell marquetry in *première-* and *contre-partie*, embellished with silver, gold leaf, semi-precious stones and coloured glass. Inside are twelve drawers and a central mirror-lined recess with a solid ivory Corinthian column, which removes to reveal a further twelve small drawers. While the *grotesque* designs in the main panels are derived from the engravings of Jean Bérain and Daniel Marot, the source of the inset medallions has been identified as the German edition of Daniel de la Feuille's *Devises et Emblems*, helping to date the cabinet to c. 1700-6.

The rich materials, marquetry and inlay are typical of the *cithrinchens* (bell citterns), guitars, violins and other instruments for which Tielke is famous. However, under



The Joachim Tielke cabinet at Kollenburg Antiquairs.

Hamburg guild regulations, Tielke was forbidden to make goods other than instruments for the free market. Although he claimed to have been offered 800 Species Thaler for it, it is likely that the cabinet was not intended for sale, but as a showpiece of Tielke's exceptional craftsmanship.

AMY LIM

Art Curator, Faringdon Collection Trust,
Buscot Park

A red lacquer *bureau en pente* stamped by Jean-Pierre Latz

At the beautifully curated stand of Röbbig München we were warmly welcomed by their Director Alfredo Reyes. The space had the feel of a small Parisian hôtel, where arched vitrines packed with Meissen porcelain alternated with mirrors against which more porcelain figures and vases stood on small gilt consoles. Their curator, Dr Claudia Bodinek, showed us in one of their rarest objects, a Böttger stoneware black-glazed teapot with gold and cold-painted lacquer

decoration of circa 1715. Anchoring the display, a selection of French eighteenth-century furniture included a pair of floral marquetry chest-of-drawers with a bombé outline stamped 'N.PETIT' for Nicolas Petit and 'JME', mark of the quality control passed by the Jurande des menuisiers ébénistes, of circa 1760–65. The group, led by Adriana Turpin and David Wheeler, examined in detail a red lacquer writing-desk (*bureau en pente*) stamped 'I.P.LATZ' of circa 1740–50. Originally from Cologne, Jean-Pierre Latz (1691–1754) settled in Paris in 1719. He must have developed a successful career for, in 1741, Louis XV appointed him *ébéniste privilégié du Roi*. It is during this period that our writing desk was made. Of small proportions (87.5 x 61 x 36 cm), the desk was probably intended for a woman. We could examine it in detail, opening the slanted drop-front to reveal an interior with an undulating range of three drawers and storing shelf veneered in a sophisticated geometric marquetry of unidentified exotic woods. The examination of these drawers indicated a traditional French construction



Latz writing desk at Röbbig München.

of small and neat dovetails. The side drawers, of concave profile, showed a drawer bottom with the woodgrain running parallel to the sides, while in the central drawer, of convex profile, the wood grain run perpendicularly to the sides. David Wheeler explained that, in drawers of such small size and light weight, this discrepancy is not uncommon. The oak carcass was covered with red French lacquer or *vernis* decorated in gold lacquer with scenes inspired by Chinese landscapes. The painterly technique of feathery brushstrokes indicated a European hand.

The corpus of pieces stamped by Latz is not large, and, to the author's knowledge, this is the only stamped piece with a red *vernis* finish, a technique that seems to be absent from the *ébéniste's* posthumous 1754 inventory. That year, his widow Marie-Madeleine, *née* Seignet, took over Latz's

workshop, running it until her own death in 1756. The workshop closed in 1756, and its contents were sold. Are we looking at a writing-desk made at Latz — or his widow's — workshop and later decorated in red '*chinoiserie*' lacquer? The question remains open. Latz's known clientele was international to a great extent, including Louise-Élisabeth, Duchess of Parma, and, most prominently, Frederick II of Prussia and August III, Elector of Saxony. As the literature points out, Latz's German origins may have been instrumental in securing commissions from Berlin and Desden.

FÉLIX ZORZO

Curatorial Assistant, The Wallace
Collection

A worktable by David Roentgen

To single-out a highlight from the stands of over 250 dealers, from some 20 countries, is a difficult task. During the weekend we were treated to up-close and privileged access to some of the finest furniture (and other works of art) on the art market today, accompanied by some of the foremost experts. The collection of furniture from the father-son Neuwied workshop of Abraham (1711-1793) and David (1743-1807) Roentgen, on the stand of Christophe de Quenetain, was particularly special. An oval worktable displayed the idiosyncratic 'mosaic' style of marquetry associated with the firm's later output, which used numerous fine pieces of different woods, to create remarkable detail. In contrast, a rococo commode with gilt-bronze mounts and

floral marquetry decoration, owed more to the marquetry style of Roentgen senior. For the easily amused among us, Roentgen's famed mechanical mechanisms were also on show. A richly veneered mahogany cylinder desk, with distinctive gilt-bronze mounts, displayed the figuring of the wood to wonderful advantage, and concealed several tricks; pulling the writing surface forward simultaneously, and effortlessly, opened the cylinder. Inside, a gilt-bronze button (disguised as a mount) made sections of the interior spring forward, revealing concealed compartments. The oval table, too, had two hidden side drawers in the frieze, which hinged open with suitable theatrics, when operating a concealed catch.

MICHAEL SHRIVE

Assistant Curator, Waddesdon Manor



David Roentgen table at Gallerie Neuse.

Other News

Paxton House Masterclasses

A series of three masterclass study days in September, with furniture historian David Jones and Paxton House's Curator, Fiona Salvesen Murrell, will examine the internationally important Chippendale and Trotter furniture collections at Paxton House, Berkshire. Areas such as furniture type, technical construction, ornament and

timber finishes will be covered in detail with hands-on analysis.

Masterclasses will run from 10am to 4pm. Each day will cost £95 per person, including lunch and refreshments. Places are limited and must be pre-booked on their website www.paxtonhouse.co.uk.

A limited number of student places may be available (subject to grant funding) at £50. Please apply via email to info@paxtonhouse.com.

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The views expressed in this *Newsletter* are those of the respective authors. They are accepted as honest and accurate expressions of opinion, but should not necessarily be considered to reflect that of the Society or its employees.

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Copy Deadline

The deadline for receiving material to be published in the next Newsletter is Thursday 7th September 2023. Copy should be sent by email to katehay86@gmail.com.

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COVER PICTURE: Cupboard, oak, late 16th century; Hardwick Hall, Long Gallery. HH F353.