



THE FURNITURE HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

No. 194

MAY 2014

NEW YORK RESEARCH SEMINAR HELD AT THE
METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK



Fig. 1 Carved rococo trophy frame by Paul Petit; frame, commissioned in 1748 for a portrait of Frederick 'The Great', King of Prussia, with David Oakey. Image courtesy of Carlton Hobbs LLC

On Monday 3rd February 2014 the Furniture History Society held its first ever research seminar at the Metropolitan Museum in New York entitled: *British and Continental Furniture and Interiors, 1600–1900*. Over a hundred places were reserved in advance and, despite heavy snow on the Sunday night, the seminar attracted a wide academic audience of over ninety during the course of the day.

There were eleven speakers, most of whom were US based junior museum curators, students or members of the trade. The audience was lively throughout and enthused by the variety of talks, ably chaired by Adriana Turpin, (Grants Committee Chair).

The Furniture History Society would like to express its thanks to the Metropolitan Museum for hosting the event and in particular to Luke Syson, (Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Curator in charge of the Department of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts) for his commitment to the proposal and to Wolfram Koeppe (Marina Kellen French Curator, Department of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts), for his ideas, support and assistance throughout the planning of this event; finally to the staff of the department for ensuring the smooth running of the day. The Society is very grateful to Adriana Turpin and Clarissa Ward, who worked so hard in creating and organising the study day, for attending the seminar and representing the Society.

Finally the organisers thank the Oliver Ford Trust enormously for grants towards travel expenses for some of the speakers — an illustration of the Trust's and indeed the Society's commitment to support early stage career development.

The day owed its great success to the enthusiasm and hard work of the speakers, summaries of whose papers appear below:

Architects of Cabinets: Domenico Cucci & Charles Le Brun at the Gobelins

Careful re-examination of Charles Le Brun's contemporary records show that Louis XIV's director of the Gobelins manufactory had a serious interest in architecture. His zeal to be recognised as an architect became manifest first in the 1660s through his involvement in designing the Louvre's new east façade, and especially during the 1670s when, after the death of Louis Le Vau, the post of Premier Architect du Roi remained vacant for almost an entire decade.

It was precisely during this period that Le Brun is said to have designed the great ebony cabinets assembled in the atelier of Domenico Cucci at the Gobelins. Owing to their distinct architectural vocabulary, these cabinets may have been yet another of Le Brun's attempts to display his abilities as an architect. Indeed, the wide array of materials and techniques, and the large number of artisans involved in the erections of these small triumphal arches, transformed Cucci's workshop into a miniature building site.

Although well-known to furniture historians, the cabinets' building history remains fragmentary. Evidence of Le Brun's responsibilities and of the nature of his collaboration with Cucci is distinctively sparse: whilst a few vestiges of cabinets from the 1660s and 1670s were discovered in recent years, not a single design by Le Brun appears to survive. Moreover, in his capacity of director of the Gobelins, Le Brun received a regular pension and was not paid for specific commissions; this circumstance impedes the assessment of his involvement in the conception of the cabinets.

Based on a re-examination of the archival sources, the paper explored the nature of the fruitful collaboration between Le Brun and Cucci. In addition, it investigated the functioning of Cucci's workshop, its relationship to Gole's workshops (which equally delivered a pair of cabinets for the Apollo Gallery) and tried to evaluate the extent to which Le Brun controlled the building task of the lost cabinets.

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The Chabrières-Arlès Collection and Renaissance Furniture in France and America, 1875–1935

In 1916 Duveen Brothers purchased the important collection of medieval and Renaissance decorative arts belonging to the late Lyonnais banker Maurice Chabrières-Arlès (1829–1897). French art critics and curators had already written extensively about the collection's furnishings, which, although since challenged for their authenticity, were seen at the time as among the best examples of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century craftsmanship in France. Sensing a profitable venture, Duveen Brothers shipped the nearly 300 objects from Paris to New York and quickly sold the majority of the furniture to Henry Clay Frick, to be installed with his collection of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Limoges enamels in his private study, today the Enamels Room at the Frick Collection. This paper traced the changing significance of the collection's furnishings from Chabrières-Arlès' home and 'museum', as it was understood in the Parisian cultural press, to Frick's residence. Despite the exorbitant sum paid by Frick for them, these *meubles*, which had been so highly praised in Lyon and Paris, in New York became something of a backdrop to Frick's period ensembles. While for Chabrières-Arlès and his French contemporaries in the last decades of the nineteenth century, such medieval and Renaissance works had fostered nationalism and had appeased a longstanding nostalgia, on the opposite side of the Atlantic, both dealer and collector saw the collection's worth as primarily aesthetic. The Chabrières-Arlès collection thus provides an interesting case study through which to address some of the differences in European and American collecting circles and the changing mentalities towards the past before and after the turn of the century.

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The Multiple Representations of Bonnier de la Mosson's Collection of Curiosities

Joseph Bonnier (1702–1744), baron of la Mosson, amassed one of the largest and most celebrated collections of curiosities in early-eighteenth-century France. Although the collection was dispersed soon after his death in 1744, it left a diverse set of pictorial and textual representations. The paper focused on one particularly notable pictorial representation of the collection: an album of eight elevation drawings by Jean-Baptiste Courtonne the Younger. By questioning their ostensible status as truthful depictions and highlighting their interpretive aspects, the paper explored what it means to picture an interior that no longer exists — a question that continues to challenge many scholars of historical furniture and its setting.

The drawings have received scholarly attention for their semblance of exactitude. Accompanied by scale bars, the minute depiction of exuberantly decorated display cases and their contents in the format of unfolded elevations can easily lead the viewer to assume that they accurately depict Bonnier's collection as it had been installed in his Parisian residence. A comparison between what has survived from the collection and how they are depicted in the drawings, however, reveals that the drawings sometimes offer just enough visual information to allow identification, rather than operating on the level of saturated description as the viewer may at first expect.

More significantly, the eight drawings do not necessarily correspond to eight rooms in Bonnier's residence as scholars have assumed. A close observation reveals that two of the drawings show exactly the same distribution of architectural elements and display units, even though the latter appear to contain different objects. A comparison with two contemporary textual representations of Bonnier's collection — a description of the collection

in situ from a natural history treatise and the collector's posthumous auction catalogue — demonstrates that the two drawings refer to one and the same room in the residence but separately depict two dominant categories of objects that had been contained within.

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Reframing a Frame: New Discoveries on a Masterpiece of English Giltwood

Recently it was confirmed that a twelve foot high rococo trophy frame discovered on the art market was commissioned by Frederick Prince of Wales in 1748 from the Huguenot carver Paul Petit. Its trophies of war and Prussian iconography helped to establish that it had surrounded a portrait of the prince's cousin Frederick 'the Great', King of Prussia by Antoine Pesne, which remains in the Royal Collection today. At a little over £150, the frame was amongst the most expensive British royal furniture purchases of the eighteenth century. This paper presented further research into the frame's commission that provides exciting new insights on the Prince and his relationship with his cousin.

Examination of the Prince of Wales's broader expenditure with Paul Petit revealed the above example was included in an enormous payment in 1749 of £736. The bill was for a number of frames, among them an elaborate frame for his own portrait to be sent to Trinity Dublin, frames for portraits of his own family, representing his familial links to Prussia; and, most strikingly, for portraits of figures in the alliance who had fought against the Prince's father George II and Great Britain in the recent War of Austrian Succession, including the portrait of his cousin, Frederick the Great. The frame's triumphant iconography and its lavish expense demonstrated that the prince's militaristic and kingly aspirations converged in his cousin, not his father. This stunningly overt statement verges on the unpatriotic and gives us some idea how the depth of antagonism between the Prince and his father.

The paper afforded the opportunity to present newly uncovered correspondence between the prince and his cousin, representing an affectionate friendship, not previously known to historians. It confirmed that the portraits were part of an exchange between the Prince and his cousin and that Frederick the Great had asked specifically for the Prince's portrait, sent in 1748. Discussions with curators in Berlin led to the discovery of a previously unknown portrait of the prince that appears to be this gift. This new information has implications for our historical understanding of the links between the houses of Hanover and Hohenzollern and adds meaning to the above frame, which we can now see as a physical embodiment of this influential relationship.

The Prince has traditionally been seen as one of the primary conduits through which the Rococo arrived in Britain, but art historians have found it difficult to reconcile his patronage of this essentially French style with his anti-French political stance. The new evidence presented in this paper indicates that in his use of the Rococo, the Prince may not have been looking to France at all, but instead to German princely role models, like Emperor Charles VII and especially Frederick the Great.

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From Holyrood to South Kensington: Examining the provenance of a Palladian Mirror at the V&A.

Exploring the provenance of a Palladian Mirror in the British Galleries at the Victoria and Albert Museum, W.47–1928 has led to a reassessment of the mirror in the light of archival evidence. The mirror is catalogued as an 'Irish Mirror in the Palladian style, c. 1750–60' and 'almost certainly made in the workshops of John and Francis Booker, Essex Bridge, Dublin.'

However a label on the reverse of the mirror reads that the mirror had been 'brought to Taymouth Castle from the Marquis of (Brea) Dalbane's apartments at Holyrood Palace May 16, 1860.'

John Campbell, 2nd Marquess of Breadalbane (1796–1862) had occupied rooms in Holyrood, first granted to the family in 1708 by Queen Anne. On May 12, 1860 the mirror was removed to the family's seat at Taymouth Castle after Queen Victoria requested that the 2nd Marquess restore Her Majesty's lodgings in the palace for her 'comfort and accommodation'.

The inventories of the Breadalbane apartments at Holyrood, going back to 1736, indicate that the mirror was in the Drawing Room of the apartments by 1755, if not earlier. This would suggest its acquisition by John Campbell, 3rd Earl of Breadalbane (1696–1782), a diplomat in the Danish Court and a sophisticated patron of the arts. The 3rd Earl employed Edinburgh's leading furniture makers to supply furniture and make improvements to his apartments in the 1740s and 50s, including Francis Brodie, Alexander Peter, and a James Runcimen. A pair of portraits by Allan Ramsey, now at Wimpole Abbey, in their original 'William Kent' frames, were also in the Drawing Room from 1755. These have been attributed to James Runcimen around 1742, based on work cited in surviving bills.

With this evidence it seems more certain that the mirror dates earlier than the V&A suggests and is probably more likely to be c. 1740–45 and part of the 3rd Earl's patronage of Scottish artists and craftsmen and also refutes the assumption that it came from the Booker workshop in Dublin. The paper emphasized the importance of provenance research, raised questions about what characteristics identify a piece of furniture as 'Scottish', 'Irish' or 'English', and also shed light on the contents of the Breadalbane apartments, an important Scottish Palladian interior.

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Capricious Fancies — Regency fashion & draperies in Great Britain and the United States

The August 1816 issue of Rudolph Ackermann's *Repository of Arts* summarized the burgeoning British fascination with draperies quite succinctly by saying that

Perhaps no furniture is more decorative and graceful than that which draperies form a considerable part: the easy disposition of the folds of the curtains . . . , the sweep of the lines composing their forms, and the harmonious combinations of their colours, produced a charm that brought them into high repute . . .

This paper thus argued that despite the fact that the home had not yet been fully surrendered to the woman's domain, female dress and drapery trends were both unified and independent tools expressing contemporary social interests.

Publishers such as Rudolph Ackermann and John Bell repeatedly championed the benefits of setting a mood relative to a room's function, using drapery as the catalyst. Individual spaces within the home became increasingly thematic during the decorative period known as the British Regency as did women's fashion. Referencing popular Regency era publications, this lecture charted women's fashion and interior drapery designs as they progressed in tandem from 1790 to 1830. From Greek and Roman simplicity to Spanish, Military, Romantic and finally Gothic themes, the draping of the body and the window were mirrored. From France came the interpretation of ancient Greek draping; the purity of a Classically draped window during this period was expressed in graceful and continuous lines, much like the gowns of antique female statuary.

Interior drapery reflected the Federal aesthetic until the mid 1830s, when drapery trends quickly transitioned to a more Victorian decorative expression. However, as a concluding point, there was a revival of the spirit of Regency drapery from an unlikely source — Hollywood. Commonly known as Vogue or Hollywood Regency, set designers such as Billy Haines and Cedric Gibbons created film sets in the 1930s which used lavish draperies based on design plates from Britain's Regency era as backdrops to heighten sexual tension and establish romantic overtures.

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Historicism or Modernism? Re-evaluating the Regency Revival, 1917–1930

The aim of the paper was to re-evaluate a select group of early twentieth-century Regency collectors in England most often associated with the Regency revival; it went on to discuss a contemporary Regency collector in the United States whose collection was unveiled this past September in a new gallery installation at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Edward Knoblock, Lord Gerald Wellesley (later 7th Duke of Wellington) and Sir Albert Richardson have been unanimously recognized by scholars in the field as three prominent Regency collectors in England during the first quarter of the twentieth century, who purchased many of the most important pieces from the 1917 Christie's sale of the contents of Regency designer and collector Thomas Hope's country house in Surrey, The Deepdene. By evaluating a select group of these collectors' interiors of both London and country residences, the paper attempted to analyze their important Regency collections and collecting motivations. While both author and playwright Edward Knoblock and Sir Albert Richardson's interiors reflect a more authentic interpretation and dedication to a pure antique classicism, Lord Gerald Wellesley was rather skilled at mixing Hope influences with both earlier and contemporary styles and adapting historic decoration to new interiors, highlighting a rather avant-garde effect. Whatever their exact motivation, these three men were instrumental in the education and dissemination of Regency design, much as Thomas Hope himself had been during the previous century.

As an example of a contemporary reinterpretation of the Regency interior, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston inaugurated a new gallery of English Regency furniture and decorative arts, showcasing recent gifts by economist and collector, Horace 'Woody' Brock. It was Brock's vision to create a backdrop for this new space by drawing inspiration from designs for tented rooms by George Smith, upholsterer to His Majesty, and architect J. B. Papworth and to bring together some of the most talented designers of the period, such as Thomas Hope, brothers George and William Bullock, and Vulliamy & Son. The gallery also highlights bold, classical motifs including chimera, sphinxes, and griffins and furniture executed in exotic materials, such as calamander wood from India, Sri Lanka, and South East Asia. The new display thus makes one of the finest groupings of English Regency furniture and decorative arts to date in a North American art museum.

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Dazzling Pastiche Decorative Art and Design in Second Empire Paris

By contrast with previous stylistic regimes, under the leadership of Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte and Eugénie de Montijo, the decorative arts in France lacked a sense of aesthetic coherence. Rather, official and elite culture during the Second Empire was characterized by

a wide-ranging eclecticism. While Théophile Gautier lamented the ‘uneasiness’ and ‘vagueness’ indicated by an anything-goes approach to the decorative arts, others followed Victor Cousin’s philosophical example in lauding the democratic ideals and salutary individualism inherent in eclecticism.

Along with their encyclopaedic embrace of historical styles, the decorative arts of the period exhibited the impact of revolutionary technological and industrial shifts. Synthetic dyes, electroplating, veneering, rotary printing for wallpaper and fabrics, moulding technologies, and the industrial system of production all converged to produce dazzlingly sumptuous imitations of past and foreign styles. At the same time, the rise of the department store and the world’s fair and the attendant increase in consumption contributed to an unprecedented proliferation and specialization in material culture. Both by way of their own example and through the implementation of new standards of comportment at court, the imperial family encouraged consumption as a boon to the national economy.

France was not alone in its turn to eclecticism at mid-century. Throughout Europe, an ascendant bourgeoisie mined the classical, Gothic, Baroque, and Rococo heritage in search of nascent national and class-based identities. A close visual analysis of represented period interiors, clothing styles, and commissioned objects along with an understanding of social and cultural shifts, in particular the rise of an urban bourgeoisie, indicates a difficult atmosphere for national representational consistency. From the Second Empire forward, styles and their meanings would be specific and contingent, articulated tactically by increasingly individuated public citizens.

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The Neo-Renaissance Style and the Victorian Interior: the Expression of Identity in the Library at Chateau-sur-Mer, Newport, Rhode Island

In 1869, George Peabody Wetmore undertook an extensive renovation of the family home in Newport, Rhode Island, choosing Richard Morris Hunt as his architect and the Florentine wood carver Luigi Frullini for the decoration of his library and dining room. The renovation revealed much about the identities and aspirations of all three men.

Wetmore did more than elevate the roofline at Chateau-sur-Mer: he elevated his political prestige. The elaborate project was a sign of his education and experience abroad and his decision to use the Renaissance style gave the space a rare sense of gravitas and tradition. In the intense competition among the American elites extravagance and taste were both measured. Wetmore outshone his rivals when the *New York Times* reported that the library and dining room at Chateau-sur-Mer were more costly than any other entire Newport estate.

Luigi Frullini had gained a following among collectors and critics and with it a desire to produce larger and more ambitious pieces. Frullini was extremely popular with the ‘pellegrini appassionati’ ex-patriot community in Florence, in particular the collectors and dealers of Old Master paintings and ceramics. By the end of 1872, when he received the Chateau-sur-Mer commission, Frullini’s fame was reaching its apex.

For Wetmore’s library, his workshop provided the carved walnut wall panels, bookcases, *escritoire*, mantelpiece, table, carved ceiling, and parquet floor. Frullini incorporated diverse designs inspired from antiquity, Renaissance and Mannerist forms, and modern twists of whimsy and naturalism. In the dado level of the pilasters he carved panels with illustrious names from Italian and Anglo-American culture representing literature, politics,

art, science and exploration, these figures embodying the Renaissance man. In their use, Frullini connected the legacy of Italy in the Renaissance and Enlightenment with the America's emerging global identity.

Today, single specimens of Frullini's work can be found across Europe and the United States in major collections and museum. However the Frullini dining room and library at Chateau-sur-Mer are the only examples on this scale within the United States. Moreover, with the ebb and flow of taste, they might very well have been lost were it not for the Preservation Society of Newport County, which maintains them today for the appreciation of all.

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Vanderbilt at Biltmore: Building on British Traditions

Many have written of George Washington Vanderbilt as a dedicated Francophile both during his lifetime and in subsequent scholarship. Likewise, Biltmore, his personal estate, is often interpreted as purely a reflection of this passion. While Biltmore's façade is certainly in keeping with the French Renaissance style, a closer look at the house itself, as well as Vanderbilt's life and collection, reveals a wider world view, a diverse set of interests, and the direct influence of British design and the English country house tradition.

As the youngest son of a prodigious painting collector, George Washington Vanderbilt was schooled in the art of collecting from a tender age — accompanying his father William Henry Vanderbilt on buying trips abroad, visiting artist's studios and touring the private collections held in great country houses. Journal entries from these early years document formative experiences, particularly during his travels in England, that ultimately echo in the interior architecture of the home he created and the objects he amassed, including many volumes on British literature, history and society in his outstanding library of 23,000 volumes.

While Biltmore is truly an American masterpiece, remarkably little has been published on its design, design precedents or on the history of the collection. The creation of the estate was a collaboration between Vanderbilt and two of the most respected designers in America: architect Richard Morris Hunt and landscape designer Frederick Law Olmsted. Before completing plans for Biltmore House, Vanderbilt and Hunt spent two months touring grand homes in England and on the Continent surveying for details to incorporate directly into their final plan. Through examinations of photographs, receipts and other resources still held in the estate's private archive, it is clear that Biltmore's design was deeply inspired by these travels and that Vanderbilt drew liberally from British tradition and sources. Vanderbilt's guests dined in a vaulted baronial banquet hall before retiring to the oak-panelled Billiard Room to lounge beneath Elizabethan strapwork ceilings on custom late-nineteenth-century versions of the Knole settee. Research has indicated that Vanderbilt's versions appear to be early and unique reproductions of Knole's now iconic furnishings. Further work could establish other parallels between Biltmore's furnishing plan and those of the estates he visited, as well as Vanderbilt's life-long interest in British culture and England's impact on the creation of America's largest home.

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The American Beneficiaries of the Hamilton Palace Sales of 1882 and 1919

By the penultimate decade of the nineteenth century, the Dukes of Hamilton, premier peers of Scotland, had amassed a superb collection of fine and decorative art. Most of it was dispersed in two series of sales in 1882 and 1919, and the family's famous principal seat, Hamilton Palace, ten miles south of Glasgow, was demolished in the 1920s and '30s. The timings of the sales coincided with moments of great socio-economic significance, not just in Britain (although its effects were profound there) but on a truly international scale. By turning our gaze from the rostrum to the participants, the Hamilton Palace sales present an unusually broad snapshot of a changing society bolstered by an unprecedented surge of new wealth. This paper considered the extent to which North American collectors benefited from the sales through the international art trade between 1880 and 1930.

The majority of the most celebrated dealers and agents who attended the sale were not bidding on behalf of the aristocracy, or the ambitious national galleries and museums, but for a spectacular supernova of social arrivistes made up of bankers and industrialists with fortunes that dwarfed that of even the mightiest landowner. The Rothschilds were undoubtedly among the most significant beneficiaries of the 1882 sale. However, for almost four decades, between 1880 and 1920, it was the transatlantic Midases who raked in Europe's finest artistic treasures.

In 1882 Matthias Arnot appears to have been among the first American citizens to have bid in person for Old Master paintings at a European auction. In the field of decorative arts, he was joined by the socially aspirant Vanderbilts, keen to make a splash on Fifth Avenue with lashings of Old World glamour. They were followed by the likes of J. P. Morgan in whose collection numerous Hamilton Palace items were reunited in the opening decade of the twentieth century. At the 1919 sale, it was a British industrialist, an American railroad tycoon and his compatriot, a newspaper magnate, who made the most notable purchases

and marked the zenith of their prowess in the salerooms. Lord Leverhulme and Henry Edwards Huntington both embellished their already significant collections with lots from the Hamilton Palace sale of 1919 and Huntington also acquired numerous items that had featured in the 1882 sale. The paper concluded with an account of the purchase of the Hamilton Palace interiors by French & Co., New York, and their subsequent acquisition by the newspaper magnate and collector William Randolph Hearst.

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Fig. 2 *Secrétaire en armoire*, Jean Henri Riesener (1734–1806), bequest of William K. Vanderbilt 1920, Metropolitan Museum of Art (www.metmuseum.org)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

FURNITURE HISTORY SOCIETY FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY APPEAL

The Society's Members will be delighted to know that donations and pledges to the Appeal have now reached an encouraging total of just over £210,000. The Society is extremely grateful for all the donations received, whether large or small, and plans to print a list of donor's names in *Furniture History* in 2015. The Appeal is still emphatically active and further donations will be very welcome.

The FHS Grants Committee (whose responsibility covers the Tom Ingram Memorial Fund which incorporates the recent legacy of Anne Crosthwait) and the Council of the Society are now actively considering particular objectives for the allocation of funds from the Tom Ingram Memorial Fund and the Fiftieth Anniversary Appeal Fund (a restricted fund for education, research and publication).

Under discussion are increased grants for Society trips; support for independent furniture research leading to publication; subsidised attendance at overseas conferences; and, possibly, a long-term research project, perhaps in collaboration with another institution. Publications are central to the Society's reputation and work is currently being undertaken to increase the availability of past and current research and publications on line, in addition to the present accessibility of *Furniture History* through JSTOR. The Society is also planning to increase its marketing to create a greater international awareness of all the FHS's activities. At the same time work is in progress to expand the role of seminars and object-based study sessions for the Early Stage Career Development group of the Society. By the time of this year's AGM in November the Council plans to be a position to announce specific projects.

As the Chairman of the Society, I would encourage members to come and celebrate the success of the Society over the last fifty years and to support the Anniversary Appeal at the evening event at Mansion House on Thursday 5 June (see Events for booking details)

Christopher Rowell, Chairman

'MOBILE'

Gesellschaft der Freunde von Möbel- und Raumkunst e V.

As well as being the Furniture History Society's fiftieth anniversary year 2014 marks the tenth anniversary of the Society's German equivalent, which is a registered association (*eingetragener Verein*) named **mobile** with the sub-title, 'Society of Friends of Furniture and Interior Decoration'. This was founded in 2004 by Dr Heidrun Zinnkann, curator of European decorative art at the *Museum für angewandte Kunst in Frankfurt am Main*, and Stefan Semler, a dealer trained as a conservator, in Fulda. **mobile** has about a hundred and fifty members, museum curators, dealers, conservators, collectors and amateurs. Its chairman is Dr Henriette Graf of the *Stiftung Preussische Schlösser und Gärten, Berlin-Brandenburg*. There is a lively programme of seminars and visits, and **mobile** has produced publications (the latest and most ambitious is reviewed in this *Newsletter*) and supported conservation projects. A website www.mobile-raumkunst.de provides further information about membership etc.

Simon Swynfen Jervis

V&A FUNDRAISING TO SAVE RARE NAPOLEONIC MEDAL CABINET

The V&A has until 28 July 2014 to save this extraordinary cabinet for the nation. It is a superlative example of the Egyptian taste that was fashionable throughout Europe in the period 1800–1815. It is also perhaps the finest piece of French Empire furniture in Britain. It was owned by the same British family from at least the mid-nineteenth century to 2013.



Fig. 3 Medal Cabinet in the Egyptian taste, Paris, c.1810. Veneered with amboyna and mahogany and inlaid with engraved silver mounts by the firm of Martin Guillaume Biennais (1764–1843)

Almost certainly designed by Charles Percier, with the mounts signed by Martin Guillaume Biennais, the cabinet was made for someone in the circle of Napoleon. Its design is based on plate 80 from Baron Dominique Vivant-Denon's *Voyage dans le Basse et la Haute Égypte, pendant les Campagnes du Général Bonaparte* (Paris, 1802).

Works by Biennais in Britain are limited to smaller travelling cases or metalwork, and certainly include nothing of this size or design-historical significance and quality. A similar cabinet, although in dark mahogany, is in the Metropolitan Museum in New York.

If acquired, the cabinet will be shown in the Europe 1600–1800 galleries, opening in December 2014, in a dedicated display on Napoleon. In conjunction with the appeal, Antony Griffiths will give a special lecture at the V&A on 6 June (see OTHER NOTICES AND EVENTS for further details).

Donations to this appeal can be made via the V&A's website: www.vam.ac.uk/medalcabinet and questions can be directed to Christopher Wilk, Keeper of Furniture, Textiles and Fashion (c.wilk@vam.ac.uk)

FUTURE SOCIETY EVENTS

BOOKINGS

For places on visits please apply to the Events Secretary, Anne-Marie Bannister, Bricket House, 90 Mount Pleasant Lane, Bricket Wood, St Albans, Herts, AL2 3XD (Tel: 07775 907390) enclosing a separate cheque and separate stamped addressed A5 envelope for each event using the enclosed booking form. Where possible, joining instructions will be despatched by e-mail. There is no need to send a SAE if you provide a clearly written email address.

Applications should only be made by members who intend to take part in the whole programme. No one can apply for more than one place unless they hold a joint membership, and each applicant should be identified by name. If you wish to be placed on the waiting list, please enclose a telephone number and email address where you can be reached. Please note that a closing date for applications for all visits is printed in the *Newsletter*. Applications made after the closing date will be accepted only if space is still available.

Members are reminded that places are not allocated on a first come, first served basis, but that all applications are equally considered following the closing date for applications.

There is now an extra facility on the website for members to express interest in certain events and then pay, if assigned a place after the closing date (where this is applicable). This is now possible for all day events. If you have no online facility or are uneasy about using this new procedure, please just use the blue form as usual, or simply e-mail events@furniturehistorysociety.org

CANCELLATIONS

Please note that no refunds will be given for cancellations for events costing £10.00 or less. In all other cases, cancellations will be accepted up to seven days before the date of a visit, but refunds will be subject to a £10.00 deduction for administrative costs. Separate arrangements are made for study weekends and foreign tours and terms are clearly stated on the printed details in each case.

CHAMPAGNE RECEPTION IN AID OF THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY FHS APPEAL to be held at Mansion House in the presence of The Right Honourable The Lord Mayor of London, Alderman Fiona Woolf CBE

Thursday 5 June 2014, 6.00 pm – 8.00 pm

To complete the fiftieth anniversary appeal and celebrate its success, the Society has kindly been offered the opportunity to enjoy an evening reception in the splendid setting of the Mansion House in the City of London, by invitation of the Rt. Hon the Lord Mayor of London, Alderman Fiona Woolf, CBE, whom many will know as an active member of the Society.

It is hoped that this special occasion will provide a wonderful opportunity to boost the Appeal. The fund is dedicated to education, research and publication in the field of furniture and interior decoration. Thanks to sponsorship from Apter-Fredericks, H. Blairman & Sons Ltd, Giles Ellwood, Pelham Galleries, Philip Hewat-Jaboor and Ronald Phillips Ltd, profits from this event will benefit the Appeal Fund.

Two hundred tickets are available for this event to non-members as well as members, on a first come, first served basis. Tickets, to include champagne and other drinks, as well as canapés will be £50 each or £40 each for two or more tickets. In line with the aim of the Appeal to encourage the next generation, a limited number of tickets are also available to members under 35 years of age at the price of £40 each.

All ticket bookings must be made via the Events Secretary.

e-mail: events@furniturehistorysociety.org; tel. 07775907390; members can also book via the FHS website.

AGM

Saturday 22 November 2014

We hope to celebrate the Fiftieth anniversary of the FHS at Nostell Priory, Wakefield, a property of the National Trust. The roots of the Society lay in the energy and enthusiasm of two young scholars based in Yorkshire, so it is appropriate that we return there for this anniversary. A full day's programme is being planned in addition to the AGM itself.

OTHER NOTICES AND EVENTS

Please note that the following are not organised by the Furniture History Society. Information/booking instructions can be found under individual items.

OPPORTUNITY AT THE VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM

A volunteer is sought to assist a curator digitising records for the V&A's medieval woodwork. This will involve working from home and will require computer and email access.

If any Member is interested please contact Nick Humphrey, at nickhu@vam.ac.uk (0207 942 2436)

SIR AMBROSE HEAL AND THE HEAL CABINET FACTORY 1897–1939

Monday 19 May 2014

Gordon Russell Design Museum, 15 Russell Square, Broadway WR12

Oliver Heal will be visiting the Gordon Russell Design Museum at 4.00 pm on Monday 19 May 2014 to give a talk on his grandfather.

Admission: £10 payable at the door (includes glass of wine).

The upstairs gallery only holds thirty so please email grdmuseum@gmail.com if you wish to reserve a place.

SPECIAL LECTURE AT THE V&A: 'WRITING HISTORY IN MEDALS: NAPOLEON, DENON AND POSTERITY

Friday 6 June 2014, 5.30 pm – 7.30 pm

Seminar Room 3, Learning Centre, V&A Museum

In conjunction with the medal cabinet appeal noted on p. 11, Antony Griffiths will give a special lecture at the V&A on the 6 June. The lecture will discuss the central role that medals played in Napoleon's Empire. It will be followed by remarks on the cabinet's importance to the National Collection from Christopher Wilk, Keeper of Furniture, Textiles and Fashion.

£15 per ticket to include a drinks reception

Tickets can be booked by contacting the Bookings Office on 0207 942 2211
email: bookings.office@vam.ac.uk

WILLIAM KENT EXHIBITION STUDY DAY

Leaping the Fence

Saturday 7 June 2014

Lydia and Manfred Gorvy Lecture Theatre, V&A Museum

Proclaiming Kent's greatest influence, on the English landscape garden, Horace Walpole wrote that he 'leaped the fence, and saw that all nature was a garden'. Kent trod across

other fences in Georgian Britain, between generations of the royal family, between high society and the general public, between town and country, and even across the accepted boundaries of good taste. This study day explores key themes of the exhibition and offers further perspectives on Britain's most versatile designer.

10.30 Registration

11.00 Welcome and Introduction:

Matilda Pye, Learning (V&A) and Julius Bryant, Keeper of Word and Image (V&A) and curator of *William Kent: Designing Georgian Britain*

11.15 Forget Downton Abbey: William Kent and the role of houses in town and country
Clarissa Campbell Orr, Reader in Enlightenment, Gender and Court studies, Anglia Ruskin University

11.55 Living with William Kent: Raynham Hall today
Lord Townshend in conversation with Julius Bryant
Followed by discussion

12.45 Lunch, not provided

13.45 Reflections during the exhibition
Julius Bryant, Keeper of Word and Image (V&A) and curator of *William Kent: Designing Georgian Britain*

14.25 'Humour and humanism': William Kent's draughtsmanship
Charles Hind, Chief Curator and H. J. Heinz Curator of Drawings, RIBA

15.05 Refreshments

15.30 All Nature as a Garden
Todd Longstaffe-Gowan, Landscape architect and historian
Followed by Discussion

16.30 End

£45, £35 concessions; £15 students

For tickets please email bookings.office@vam.ac.uk or book via the V&A website.

CITY & GUILDS OF LONDON ART SCHOOL DEGREE SHOW

Wednesday 25 – Sunday 29 June 2014

City & Guilds of London Art School, 124 Kennington Park Road, London SE11

The Degree Show features work from final year students in Conservation; Historic Carving in both wood and stone, as well as Fine Art Painting and Sculpture.

Historic Carving exhibit pieces include lettering exercises, architectural carvings, free standing sculptures; exquisitely carved and gilt wood objects such as frames,



Fig. 4 *Serpent Frame* carved by City & Guilds Student Alison Morris, 2012

shields and other ornaments; and a wide range of preparatory drawings. Conservation projects focus on objects in stone, wood and other sculptural materials, as well as decorative surfaces, and feature conserved objects belonging to institutions such as Westminster Abbey, the Royal Palaces Collection and the Watts Gallery.

The Art School has a long history of teaching traditional crafts at the highest level, and through the work of its graduates plays an important role in securing the future of these historical skills.

Opening times are as follows:

Wednesday	25 June	Private View 2.00 pm – 9.00 pm
Thursday	26 June	10.00 am – 7.30 pm
Friday	27 June	10.00 am – 7.30 pm
Saturday	28 June	10.00 am – 5.00 pm
Sunday	29 June	10.00 am – 5.00 pm

For further information please contact Lucrezia Serristori Bossi Pucci, City & Guilds of London Art School, 124 Kennington Park Road, London SE11 4DJ or info@cityandguildsartschool.ac.uk 020 7735 2306

BOOK REVIEWS

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

Ray Leigh and Trevor Chinn, *Drawn to Design. The work of Sir Gordon Russell CBE, MC, RDI, the celebrated 20th century Furniture Designer*, Broadway: The Gordon Russell Trust, 2013. ISBN 978-0-957531-0-7. £20 (hardback) and £15 (paperback).

A special quality of this valuable publication is the personal nature of the brief introductory sections, written by Ray Leigh and Trevor Chinn, who worked with the second-generation English Arts & Crafts designer Gordon Russell (1892–1980), and knew him well. Thus, the uncritical introductory sections to this elegantly designed volume have a warmth and particular insights that could not be replicated by more detached writers. As Jeremy Myerson observes in his foreword, Leigh and Chinn are 'keepers of the flame'.

Russell is presented affectionately as a 'designer of furniture and much else'. Russell had an early interest in railways and ships, and kept a diary of his 1907 voyage as purser on board his uncle's ship *Veronese* (p. 9). The authors chart, very briefly, Russell's artistic evolution (already more extensively discussed in, for instance, Jeremy Myerson, *Gordon Russell: Designer of Furniture*, London: Design Council, 1992). The influence of the interiors of the seventeenth-century Lygon Arms, where Russell's family had moved in 1904, is well known, as is the impact of restoring old furniture, which the young Gordon embarked upon from around 1908. In 1919, for example, Russell exhibited one of three low stools made for his own use, and directly inspired by seventeenth-century joint stools.

The *raison d'être* for this volume, and its great achievement, is to make available a selection of by and large previously unpublished Russell's designs from the period 1923–30, now preserved at the Gordon Russell Design Museum based in the old workshops in Broadway, Gloucestershire. A 'Catalogue of Designs' at the back of this publication, really just a list,

records 906 individual drawings, mainly for furniture but also for glass and metalwork. The smaller selection of 80 plus designs chosen for illustration is preceded with a page illustrating various labels used by the firm during the period under consideration (p. 18).

As early as 1911 Russell was designing furniture for the Lygon Arms and for his own use, but the first surviving design drawing in the archive is a 1923 dressing table (p. 21). Throughout *Drawn to Design*, where examples of Russell's work survive in public collections, these are illustrated alongside the designs. On other occasions, contemporary photographs are used. Some of Russell's work shows a clear debt to his Cotswold predecessors such as Ernest Gimson, for example the 1928 'Snowhill' chest of drawers commissioned by Lloyd George (p. 99). But Russell also developed his own distinctive style, as in the 1924 seventeenth-century-inspired cabinet on stand, now in the collection of the Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum (p. 44).

Russell's designs for metalwork and glass reveal a talent that arguably exceeds that of some of his contemporaries. Examples include the 1923 polished iron 'Persian Rose' firedogs (p. 26) and the 1926 'Stanway' wine glasses, manufactured by James Powell & Sons (p. 66).

The drawings reproduced in *Drawn to Design* are a valuable introduction to a little-known archive. Russell's work, deeply steeped in tradition, also shows a sympathetic awareness of the pared-down aesthetic that evolved during the 1920s.

Martin P. Levy

Paul Hardwick, *English Medieval Misericords, The Margins of Meaning*, Woodbridge, viii + 189 pp., 32 b. & w. illus., 1 map, 2011 (hardback) ISBN 9781-84383-659-9 £45.00, 2013 (paperback) ISBN 9781-84383-827-2, £19.99.

Misericords, those combined tip-up ledges and tip-down seats in mediaeval choir-stalls, have always interested and amused the antiquary. About 3,500 survive in this country but the genre is pan-European and, while the English corpus is predominantly Gothic, nineteenth-century productions apart, many were produced elsewhere in later styles. Supporters are a special and almost exclusively English feature, small carvings flanking the central ledge and affording extra complexity and interest. It is estimated that nearly half the surviving English misericords are foliate and, if supporters were thrown in, the proportion would doubtless be greater. But beautiful as they often are, and for all the significances they may embody, such foliate elements are rarely the focus of attention. This new book is no exception to the understandable concentration on animal, human and grotesque subjects. There once was a tendency to interpret such carvings as expressions of the unchecked creativity and fantasy of the mediaeval carver, given free range in this 'hidden' position. Paul Hardwick belongs rather to a well-established tradition which interprets misericords as complex and calculated expressions of all-pervasive Christianity, particularly as they were in the choir, the area reserved for the clergy, a relatively literate and sophisticated elite.

In a series of case studies, illustrated by twenty-six English misericords and three Irish (and one French) Hardwick attempts to tease out meanings. This is a tricky business. The objects themselves are often worn or damaged, frequently missing small but potentially significant details. There are no contemporary or even early accounts of their subjects. And whereas some late examples — and late examples predominate in this study — may derive from printed images, most, early or late, have not so far been related to visual models, apart from earlier misericords. It may be assumed that workshops possessed manuscript pattern-books, which circulated as craftsmen travelled, but there are almost no survivors. In reading the mediaeval mind Hardwick calls in aid an early-thirteenth century *Bestiary*

(MS Bodley 764), much poetry, notably Chaucer, writing in the late-fourteenth century, and a number of theological and historical texts, as well as the tales centred on Reynard the fox. Subtlety was a quality admired in mediaeval theologians, but Occam's razor was another mediaeval tool, and Hardwick's iconographic discussions, often too ingenious or fanciful to carry conviction, would have benefitted from the latter. At one point two goose supporters are interpreted as proxies for a griffin and a pelican, and too often the lure of 'a more complex reading' proves irresistible. And the statement that 'a surprisingly small number [of biblical misericords] represent the perfidy of women' suggests frustration that the fashionable theme of mediaeval misogyny is not as prevalent as might be predicted. No fewer than three misericords from Limerick Cathedral, the only set in Ireland and firmly attributed to Irish craftsmen (the jury is surely out), are discussed with a stress on their problematic marginality, whereas there seems little to distinguish them, thematically or artistically, from a fine quality English set.

Paul Hardwick is clear — repeatedly — about the difficulties of interpretation, 'through a glass darkly' being a favourite phrase, but when it is stated without equivocation that certain misericords 'refer to the threat or actuality of disorder within a turbulent period' the question hangs: 'Is this so certain?' He concludes with a brief general survey of the surviving sets and a full bibliography, although M. D. Anderson (not a man, as on p. 146; she was Lady (Trenchard) Cox), *The Imagery of British Churches*, London, 1955, would be a useful addition. Misericords, particularly if approached internationally, are a vast subject and if other carvings on choir-stalls, on benches and elsewhere in the church are taken into account for comparisons and context — roof bosses can be particularly useful — the scope is even more daunting. Yet, the more so given the scarcity of secular Gothic furniture, the field richly deserves exploration, and Hardwick's determined detective work, undertaken with a full sense of the risks, illuminates both the objects themselves and ways of thinking about them.

Simon Swynfen Jervis

Wolfgang Wiese, *Die Zeichenmappe des Ebenisten Johannes Klinckerfuss (1770–1831), Möbelzeichnungen des Empire und des Biedermeier*, Regensburg (Schnell and Steiner), 2013, 228 pp., 230 col., 3 b. & w. illus. ISBN 978-37954-2690-3, €49.95

Sponsored by *mobile*, the Furniture History Society's sister organisation in Germany (see p. 10) and by the Landesmuseum Württemberg in Stuttgart, this handsome and useful book reproduces the contents of a portfolio of furniture designs, acquired by the Museum in 2000, from the workshop of the celebrated cabinet-maker, Johann Klinckerfuss (1770–1831), who was first put properly on the map by Wolfgang Wiese, who published the definitive monograph in 1988 (reviewed by the present writer, *Burlington Magazine*, 131, 1989, p. 720) and introduces the drawings. The vast majority of the designs are by Klinckerfuss himself, a substantial proportion relating to furniture supplied to Schloss Rosenstein, King Wilhelm I of Wurtemberg's private retreat, in the late 1820s. To these Wiese has added six drawings by Klinckerfuss for Rosenheim which have descended to the State Archive in Ludwigsburg. And he has also included fifteen drawings by cabinet-makers contemporary with Klinckerfuss in the same repository.

Apart from Klinckerfuss's own drawings the portfolio contains twelve particularly skilful sheets stamped with the signature of his nephew and eventual successor, Bernhard (1801–1859), who trained as an architectural draughtsman, most probably under Nikolaus Friedrich von Thouret, court architect, who signed a design for an elaborate Egyptian clock, dated 1811, and to whom another half-dozen are attributed, including two spectacular

jardinières-cum-birdcages-cum-aquaria. A further one or two are tentatively associated with the other court architect, Giovanni Salucci.

In his introduction Wolfgang Wiese gives a resumé of Klinckerfuss's career: trained under David Roentgen at Neuwied, he served the Wurtemberg dynasty as a court cabinet-maker in Bayreuth and then, definitively, in Stuttgart, went independent in 1816, but continued to work for the King as well as for courtiers and private clients. He died relatively young but, although his own firm gradually morphed into a piano manufactory, he was and is recognised as the founder of the Stuttgart furniture industry. Wiese also chronicles Klinckerfuss's stylistic evolution from a close adherence to Roentgen models to an increasingly French Empire manner, sometimes directly copying La Mesangère, paralleled by a simpler 'Biedermeier' mode. He also illustrates some recently identified pieces, including a very Empire desk of about 1809 which was in 1812 in the 'reiches französisches Zimmer' [rich French room] of the Neues Schloss and was acquired by the Landesmuseum in 1988. Some sheets feature room plans, others the furniture for a single room, and yet others single pieces or a miscellany of types. There are some unfinished sketches and the odd technical drawing, but almost all the others are conceived as presentation drawings, often adopting the format of pattern-books. English influence is well-nigh absent except, remotely, in a secretaire and a couple of long-case clocks in the Roentgen manner, in a nice drawing of chair backs which has strong hints of Hepplewhite and Sheraton, and in another of rustic seating, by definition English in origin.

However actual pieces illustrated by Wiese include some with Ludwigsburg porcelain plaques painted by Queen Charlotte Mathilde, Princess Royal in England, who had honed her skills at Amelia Lodge and Frogmore.

It hardly needs adding that this book will be a constant point of reference for students of early-nineteenth century furniture to set alongside Gabriele Fabiankowitz and Christian Witt-Döring, *Genormte Fantasie*, Vienna (ÖMaK), 1996, and that it will lead to many more identifications of works by Klinckerfuss. Definitely one for every serious furniture library.

Simon Swynfen Jervis

Moira Coleman, *Fruitful Endeavours. The 16th-Century Household Secrets of Catherine Tollemache at Helmingham Hall*, Andover, 2012, xiv + 162 pp., 13 col. illus. ISBN 978-1-86077-734-9, UK £17.99 incl. p&p, non-UK £25.00 incl. p&p from www.fruitfulendeavours.com

As might be deduced from its title this book, based mainly on the 1597 inventory of Helmingham Hall in Suffolk and on slightly earlier household accounts, and on Lady Tollemache's recipes, medical and culinary, is not focussed on furniture and interior decoration. Nonetheless it supplies many details of the working of and activities within a substantial but not overly grand house at the turn of the sixteenth century. The allocation of chambers, the nature of the various functional spaces and their equipment, costs ('2 joynd stools' 2s 8d), the maintenance of beds and bedding, rats (a theme rarely tackled), and the use of cushion canvas for straining fruit pulp and among the topics which crop up, along with numerous mentions of furniture from the inventory, which whet the appetite for the full transcript which the author is preparing.

Simon Swynfen Jervis

THE OLIVER FORD TRUST AND TOM INGRAM MEMORIAL FUND (FHS GRANTS)

In line with one of its roles — the promotion of interior design — the Oliver Ford Trust has generously expressed the desire to sponsor a place on each FHS study weekend or foreign tour. Applicants should either be a student with a particular interest in interiors or a junior museum professional. Application from non-FHS members will be considered. Grants will be awarded by the Tom Ingram Fund, to which candidates should apply.

The Tom Ingram Memorial Fund makes grants towards travel and other incidental expenses for the purpose of study or research into the history of furniture (a) whether or not the applicant is a member of the Society; (b) only when the study or research is likely to be of importance in furthering the objectives of the Society; and (c) only when travel could not be undertaken without a grant from the Society. Applications towards the cost of FHS foreign and domestic tours and study weekends are particularly welcome from scholars. Successful applicants are required to acknowledge the assistance of the Fund in any resulting publication and must report back to the FHS Grants Committee on completion of the travel or project. All enquiries about grant applications should be addressed to Clarissa Ward, Secretary FHS Grants Committee, 25 Wardo Avenue, London SW6 6RA, or email grants@furniturehistorysociety.org.

The FHS Grants Committee now meet quarterly to consider all grant applications, either for independent travel/incidental expenses for the purpose of study of study or research, or for participation in FHS foreign and UK study trips. Completed application forms should be submitted, with current Curriculum Vitae, by the following deadlines so that they can be considered at these meetings:

A) June 10, B) September 10, C) December 10 or D) March 10. Applicants will be informed of all decisions by the end of the applicable month.

COPY DEADLINE

The deadline for receiving material to be published in the next *Newsletter* is **15 June**. Copy should be sent, preferably by email, to Matthew Winterbottom matthew.winterbottom@ashmus.ox.ac.uk or posted to Matthew Winterbottom, Department of Western Art, The Ashmolean Museum, Beaumont Street, Oxford OX1 2PH.

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This issue edited by Elizabeth Jamieson

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