

The Furniture History Society

# Newsletter 213

February 2019



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# A Contemporary Commission: *The Schiele Chair*

*The Schiele Chair*, made by Dublin-based craftsman Colin Harris (b. 1972), is one of the most recent additions to the Goodison gift of contemporary British crafts to the Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge.<sup>1</sup>

It is one of several pieces of furniture in the collection commissioned from leading British designers/makers. Collectively, these pieces demonstrate the quality of work undertaken by these makers over the last thirty years, an achievement that has not received the attention of many commentators or furniture historians. The museum hopes to be a centre for studies in the field, encouraging the interest of visitors and the involvement of makers.

It is the latest in a series of furniture commissions. These have included: two rosewood and satinwood half-moon tables by Alan Peters, together with a sycamore and maple console table and a pair of chairs of Devon walnut and rosewood, all from the same suite;<sup>2</sup> a pair of chairs of fumed oak, cast aluminium and red leather by John Makepeace (b. 1939), Britain's best-known furniture designer/maker, made in 2015 after a design for ceremonial furniture created for the graduation ceremonies at Plymouth University;<sup>3</sup> two elmwood chairs by Matthew Burt;<sup>4</sup> and a marriage chest by Wales & Wales, one of the leading furniture design studios in the UK today.<sup>5</sup>

The brief to Rod (b. 1950) and Alison Wales (b. 1952) was to create this piece of furniture to echo the existing Renaissance *cassoni* in the Fitzwilliam's collection. The resulting fumed and limed oak chest with stainless steel inlay is partly painted red and blue, inspired by the saturated colours of the museum's Italian Renaissance religious painting, especially the traditional red dress and blue mantle of the Virgin Mary. Rod and Alison Wales share a history with Colin Harris (the maker of *The Schiele Chair*) in that all three studied/worked at Parnham College, founded by John Makepeace.<sup>6</sup>

Makepeace opened Parnham College (originally, The School for Craftsmen in Wood) on 19 September 1977, in what had been an abandoned manor house in West Dorset. The college was revolutionary. Makepeace believed that the existing options for young makers were too limited, and that attitudes towards 'business' in the craft world were often, unhelpfully, anti-entrepreneurial. Instead, he proposed a private, residential school offering a small number of students (ten per year) the opportunity to take up a focused two-year course in furniture design and making under Principal Robert Ingham, which encompassed practical skills and techniques, complex projects working to briefs as well as business and marketing, providing makers with the

necessary skills to set up on their own as self-employed designer-makers. The course culminated in a high-profile exhibition. Described by Sir Christopher Frayling as a place 'where the hand, the head and the heart could be brought together',<sup>7</sup> the college, although often described as 'intense' and 'monastic', combined serious learning of traditional skills with an entirely modern outlook, integrating different disciplines. In the words of John Makepeace, 'instead of being seen as separate entities, design, making and business management needed to be regarded as related and mutually complementary'.<sup>8</sup>

Parnham provided a unique environment that encouraged close and intense relationships between students, which often lasted decades after their period of study. Alumni are now spread around the world, and although some, such as David Linley (Parnham 1980–82) and Konstantin Grcic (Parnham 1985–87), have moved onto design more broadly, often working in materials other than wood, others, such as Jim Partridge (Parnham 1977–79), also represented in the Fitzwilliam's contemporary collection, and Colin Harris (Parnham 1995–97), continue to work predominantly with wood, creating objects to commission.<sup>9</sup>

Harris is typical of many students at Parnham in that he had studied elsewhere previously — Engineering at Trinity College, Dublin, where he was awarded a Foundation Scholarship in 1992 and a Gold Medal in 1994. At Parnham, he was awarded the Oldham Prize and Smallpiece Prize (for the design of *The Schiele Chair*) in 1997, the same year winning the student

prize at the 15th International Furniture Design Competition in Valencia, Spain. After spending a number of years working in sustainable engineering and designing for international studios, Harris returned to his first love, instilled in him by his furniture-making grandfather, and to Dublin, where he established his own studio in 2015.

Harris's engineering training is evident in his designs, which combine precise balance with sculptural liveliness, using wild Irish hardwoods. Both the form and colour of *The Schiele Chair* (see front cover) were inspired by the painting 'Seated Woman with Bent Knees' (1917) by Austrian artist, Egon Schiele (1890–1918), now in the collection of the National Gallery, Prague.<sup>10</sup>

The painting depicts the artist's wife, Edith Harms, seated in a provocative but relaxed pose. It was painted just a year before both she and Schiele (and their unborn child) succumbed to Spanish flu. The empty space around the pose, and the absence of background, emphasize the position of her arms and legs to the extent that the pose begins to seem distorted. Harris explains this unusual connection between painting and chair:

I spent a summer working in Prague in 1994 and when travelling I visited a museum of Egon Schiele in Český Krumlov. I really love Schiele's paintings, the lines, the female forms and I think that he is expressing what may be going on internally (emotions) rather than pure external form. I bought a print of the Seated Woman there and I had it with me during my time in Parnham. The brief for the chair design was to make a chair with anthropomorphic qualities. After a lot of thinking, it struck me that I could use the painting as the



Egon Schiele, *Seated Woman with Bent Knees*. Photograph courtesy of the National Gallery, Prague

starting point for it. It took a long time of drawing and prototyping to come up with a chair form that worked well.<sup>11</sup>

Harris captures the figure of the seated woman using the basic elements of a chair, resulting in a work that is surprising and stable, although it appears as if it is not. The original chair (which won Harris the Smallpiece Prize at Parnham) was acquired by collector Mimi Lipton, and a second, made in 1998 and exhibited at the contemporary design show, Modern

Ground, was later purchased by a client based in the Bahamas. This third edition of the chair was commissioned as a direct result of the publication of the design in the celebratory publication *Beyond Parnham* (2017). It was completed by Harris in seven weeks.

A very informative technical report by Harris (kindly donated by him to the Fitzwilliam Museum) details the process of combining the steel, beech legs and steam-bent beech slats. After many trigonometry



equations determining the curve of each slat, Harris completed detailed drawings and 3D modelling of the chair before sourcing the materials. The practical process began by turning the steamed beech legs, which were glued and clamped at a precise angle. The two bent vertical steel rods were welded into place by Harris's uncle, and the slats slowly added, with Harris carefully recording the angle of curvature that would be required for each slat.

Harris created his own steam box using OSB board and a wallpaper steamer, enabling him to steam each slat before bending it around a bending jig, using a compression strap to hold it in place. These slats were held in position to dry. The legs were drilled for the metal threaded rod dowels and the chair was then able to support itself. Each slat was then planed, cut to the correct length and

dry jointed to the steel rods. The slats were stained and the legs spray-painted before, finally, each component was glued up, resulting in the finished chair.

This angular feat of engineering perfectly encapsulates the principles instilled by Parnham College; the chair brings together woodworking skill and craftsmanship, but also precise and innovative design, utilizing Harris's knowledge of engineering. It is an individual design but one that is in demand, as can be seen from the fact that three editions of it have been made to date, and therefore commercially successful. Harris now runs his own studio and acknowledges the significant effect Parnham had on him and his practice, explaining:

I loved the experience at Parnham — learning how to work skilfully with wood and other materials and then the



*The Schiele Chair* in Colin Harris's studio, part-completed, week 5 of 7. © Colin Harris

opening up of the world of design. There, I found what I love doing and made some very good friends on the way too.<sup>12</sup>

*The Schiele Chair* is currently on display in the Twentieth Century Gallery at the Fitzwilliam Museum alongside the other Goodison gift furniture. In the Fitzwilliam tradition of showing furniture, sculpture and other applied arts alongside paintings in what is often known as the 'country house style', the chair is placed against a



Colin Harris with *The Schiele Chair* at the Fitzwilliam Museum. © Victoria Avery

freestanding bulkhead beneath a painting by Prunella Clough, adjacent to a wooden sculpture by Barbara Hepworth and paintings by Frank Auerbach and Keith Vaughan.

HELEN RITCHIE  
*Curator, Applied Arts*  
*The Fitzwilliam Museum*  
*University of Cambridge*

- 1 See A. Game, *Contemporary British Crafts, The Goodison Gift to The Fitzwilliam Museum* (London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 2016). Nicholas and Judith Goodison's accumulating gift includes ceramics, glass, metalwork, woodwork, jewellery and furniture.
- 2 Pair of rosewood and satinwood tables (1989), Fitzwilliam Museum accession numbers (hereafter shorted to acc. no.) M.2-2000 and M.3-2000; sycamore and maple console table (1989-1990), acc. no. M.3-2005, and two Devon walnut and rosewood chairs (1990), acc. nos M.5A & B-2018, all by Alan Peters. All were originally commissioned for the Chairman's office at TSB Group.
- 3 *Serendipity 3* (2015) by John Makepeace, acc. no. M.485A & B-2015.
- 4 Pair of finback chairs in Scottish elmwood (2004) by Matthew Burt, acc. no. M1-2-2005.
- 5 Marriage chest, fumed and limed oak, stainless steel inlay, bog oak (2004) by Wales & Wales, acc. no. M.12-2005.
- 6 Rod Wales trained at Parnham College (1978-80), Alison Wales worked there briefly (1980-81) and Colin Harris trained there (1995-97).
- 7 C. Frayling, 'Hand, Head and Heart', in *Beyond Parnham* (Beaminster: John Makepeace, 2017), p. 7.
- 8 J. Makepeace, 'Anything is Possible' in *Beyond Parnham* (Beaminster: John Makepeace, 2017), p. 13.
- 9 Curved bench with trough in blackened oak (2004) by Jim Partridge and Liz Walmsley, acc. no. M.8-2004.
- 10 Inv. no. K 17864.
- 11 Email to author, 6 December 2018.
- 12 Email to author, 6 December 2018.

## Graham Maney

This *Newsletter* is dedicated to the memory of Graham Maney, who sadly died in December. Graham was the publisher of the *FHS Journal* and *Newsletter* until 2018. A full tribute will follow in the May edition of the *Newsletter*.

## The 43rd Annual Symposium: *Pietre Dure*

THE WALLACE COLLECTION,  
MANCHESTER SQUARE, LONDON  
W1U 3BN

SATURDAY 30 MARCH 2019

10.00 AM–5.00 PM

The Annual Symposium in 2019 will focus on *pietre dure*. Organized in association with The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Collection at the V&A, it will bring together an impressive line-up of international scholars, who will share fresh research from Britain, India, Italy, Spain, Russia and the United States, illustrating recent acquisitions for museum collections and exciting discoveries on the international art market. There will be a demonstration of *pietre dure* materials and techniques by Florentine-trained Thomas Greenaway. The event coincides with new publication and exhibition projects from Washington DC and London, and also with the British Royal Collections Trust exhibition at the Queen's Gallery, 'Russia, Royalty and the Romanovs', which includes Russian hardstones.

10.00–10.25 am

Registration and coffee/tea

10.25–10.30 am

Welcome by Dr Tessa Murdoch, The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Collection at the V&A

*First Session: Pietre Dure and the Art Market*

10.30–11.00 am

*Pietre dure* masterpieces deferred from export, 2016–17. Christopher Rowell, Chairman of the FHS, Senior Curator of Furniture, National Trust

11.00–11.30 am

Francesco Stefano di Lorena and the manufacture of *pietre dure* in Florence, 1737–65. Enrico Colle, Director of the Museo Stibbert, Florence

*Second Session: New Research on British, Italian and Spanish Workshops*

Chair: Alice Minter, Curator, The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Collection at the V&A

11.30 am–12.00 pm

Giacomo Raffaelli (1753–1836), a connoisseur of stones and sophisticated master of lapidary art. Anna Maria Massinelli, Accademia di Belle Arti, Brera (Milan)

12.00–12.30 pm

Francesco Belloni (1772–1844), a 'mosaic artist' in Paris from the Directoire to Louis-Philippe: Works and New Identifications. Jean-Dominique Augarde, Historian

12.30–1.00 pm

*Pietre dure* in Britain and Malta in the nineteenth century. Kate Hay, Assistant Curator, Furniture, Textiles & Fashion Department, V&A

1.00–2.00 pm

Lunch, and opportunity to see the demonstration of *pietre dure* materials and techniques by Florentine-trained Thomas Greenaway

*Third Session: New Research on Russian Workshops*

Chair: Philip Hewat Jaboor, Chairman of Masterpiece Fairs

2.00–2.30 pm

Russian Imperial furniture with *pietre dure* from Peterhof 1840–70.

Ludmila Budrina, Curator Ekaterinburg Museum of the History of Stone Cutting

2.30–3.00 pm

Malachite furniture and furnishings. Paul Dyson, Independent Scholar

*Fourth Session: Collecting Pietre Dure*

Chair: Rebecca Wallis, Curator, National Trust

3.00–3.30 pm

An Indian chess board. Susan Stronge, Acting Keeper, Asian Department, V&A

3.30–4.00 pm

George IV and recycling of seventeenth-century work. Rufus Bird, Surveyor of The Queen's Works of Art

4.00–4.30 pm

Marjorie Merryweather Post and Florentine commissions for Mar-a-Lago.

Rachel Elwes, Co-Director Ben Elwes Fine Art

4.30–4.45 pm

Q&A and summing up, chaired by Dr

Tessa Murdoch, Research Curator, The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Collection

4.45–5.00 pm

Tea/coffee and opportunity to see demonstration of *pietre dure* materials and techniques by Florentine-trained Thomas Greenaway

Tickets for the Symposium and for lunch (optional) are now on sale via the FHS website ([www.furniturehistorysociety.org](http://www.furniturehistorysociety.org)).

TICKET PRICES: £55 MEMBERS, £30 MEMBERS UNDER 35 YEARS, £70 NON-MEMBERS

Other associated events are being organized on Friday 29 and Sunday 31 March, with the National Trust and the Gilbert Collection. Please refer to pages 23–24 and the FHS website.



Emperor Francesco Stefano's Drawing Room in his Viennese Palace



## Volunteers needed — V&A Furniture and Woodwork

The Victoria & Albert Museum, Furniture and Woodwork section, are looking for two additional volunteers to join a small team working on the research resources in the department. One volunteer post is for the section library, to help with accessioning new additions and auditing new books. The other is to add files to the research resources, and help to rationalize them, involving some data entry. If you live in the London area and would be interested in offering time on a regular basis, please contact Kate Hay, Department of Furniture, Textiles and Fashion, [k.hay@vam.ac.uk](mailto:k.hay@vam.ac.uk), or 0207 942 2292.

## Breaking News

Long-term FHS member Judith Goodison's book on *The Life and Work of Thomas Chippendale Junior* was recently short-listed for the *British Art Journal's* William M. B. Berger Prize for British Art History 2018 for books published in 2017. See website for more information:

[www.britishartjournal.co.uk/  
page8/page8.php](http://www.britishartjournal.co.uk/page8/page8.php)

## Anne-Marie Bannister and Dr Melanie Doderer- Winkler

The Society has been very fortunate in the last five years to have two particularly lively and committed members overseeing its Events. Anne-Marie came new to the Society, but within twelve months had



Anne-Marie receives a gift at the FHS AGM in recognition of her contribution to the Society

proved herself an excellent and much-loved Events Secretary. Her energy and her kindness in ensuring that all members enjoyed their participation was exemplary, and she soon knew every member, whether they had been part of the Society for years or had joined recently. For new members, her warmth and generous personality reassured them that they had made the right decision. All this took considerable and consistent hard work behind the scenes, and we are very grateful to her for all that she did on our behalf. Anne-Marie continues to support the Society as one of the BIFMO researchers, and as a member of the Events committee.

We are also saying goodbye to Melanie as the Overseas Events Secretary. Those who have taken part in the wonderful programme of overseas events organized by her over the last five years have benefited from her enthusiastic personality



Melanie Doderer-Winkler

and her wide range of contacts, which has led us to enjoyable and valuable trips to Ireland, Vienna and Barcelona, to mention a few. The energy she put into researching these trips has meant that they have always delivered far more than could have been expected — including extras, sometimes unplanned, negotiated with charm on the day. Melanie, too, continues as a member of the Events committee.

## Instagram comes to the FHS!

The Society is pleased to announce a new dedicated Instagram account, 'furniturehistorysociety'. The account will be an online platform for sharing Society news, images from FHS events, and will include generic posts specifically relating to furniture. The aim is to build an FHS Instagram community, which will reach a wider audience. If you have images you think would be suitable for Instagram, please share them by text with Natalie Voorheis on 07383 623368 or by email to [natalievoorheis@gmail.com](mailto:natalievoorheis@gmail.com)

## Call for Papers

If you would like to submit a lead article or research paper to this *Newsletter*, please contact the Editor, Sharon Goodman, [sctgoodman@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:sctgoodman@yahoo.co.uk)

An article in the *Newsletter* enables an author to introduce the early stages of his/her research on a particular piece of furniture, or to present a new angle on an established piece.

# A Tribute

## XAVIER BONNET, 1970–2018: *TAPISSIER EXTRAORDINAIRE*

The sudden death of Xavier Bonnet at the age of forty-eight on 13 October is not merely a personal tragedy for his wife Catherine Voiriot, their young daughters, Nina and Léonie, and his wide circle of friends and admirers, particularly in the museum world, but an immense loss to the community of furniture historians.

The artistic sensibility, hard-won technical prowess and rigour that he brought to his work as a practising upholsterer, allied to a profound historical curiosity, intellectual discipline and inexhaustible capacity for archival research, made him a unique figure in furniture study and conservation. Universally respected in Europe, Britain and the United States, he undertook major projects at the

Louvre, Fontainebleau, Versailles, the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, the Wallace Collection, Waddesdon, the V&A, the MFA Boston, the Metropolitan, the Legion of Honor in San Francisco, to name but a few of the many institutions that relied upon him for his unrivalled combination of art-historical and practical competences. At the time of his death, he had recently completed a four-year project to restore the furniture and wall decorations of the Château de Ferney-Voltaire.

Uncompromising in his approach to authenticity, he researched every scrap of fabric found in the *château*, sometimes tiny fragments lodged behind the moulding of a *boiserie*, or previously undetected beneath the more recent upholstery of an eighteenth-century bed or chair. He went to St Petersburg to examine the fabric samples



Xavier Bonnet at work  
at the V&A Museum.  
Photo: Bonnet Archives

sent by Voltaire to Catherine the Great, and in concert with the few surviving manufacturers working on Jacquard looms, such as Guillaume Verzier of Prelu in Lyon, ensured that the colours and technical details were minutely accurate replicas of their historical prototypes.

His work for the American museums led to a special commission to restore and reupholster the suite of B  llang   furniture in the Blue Room at the White House, acquired by President Monroe in 1817. The restored suite was unveiled in September of this year. For those who did not have the pleasure of knowing him personally, the video of his lecture given in San Francisco on the *Salon Dor  * of the H  tel de la Tr  moille in April 2014 is on Youtube: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=H1Hd1ABFqBE229s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H1Hd1ABFqBE229s), and offers a poignant record of his exceptional personality.

His knowledge of the internal structure and the materials used in upholstered furniture was the product of obsessive analytical observation and continuous study of historical sources, and led to a significant reappraisal of historic upholstery practice. Not content merely to study and to practise as an artisan, he was an active teacher, an inspiration to students and apprentices, whom he galvanized with his combination of charm, humour and patent mastery of his subject. His workshop was in the heart of the faubourg Saint-Antoine, the ancient quarter of the *  b  nistes* and *menuisiers*, and appropriately on the rue Roubo, named after Andr  -Jacob Roubo, author of the famous four-volume encyclopaedic *L'Art du Menuisier*, published between 1769 and 1782.

From 1993 onwards, he was an active member of the *Compagnons du Devoir*, eventually nominated *pr  v  t* (provost). The society carries on the ancient traditions of the eighteenth-century craft-guilds, with a mission to promote and maintain the highest standards of craftsmanship through apprenticeships and technical education. Eighty-two *Compagnons*, wearing their traditional costumes and regalia, attended his funeral in the beautiful church of Sainte-Marguerite, the parish church of the *  b  nistes* and *menuisiers*, and performed the moving ceremony of the 'broken chain' to mark his passing, joining hands at the end to symbolize the continuity of the 'unbroken chain' of craft tradition.

Xavier was born in Roanne in 1970. He started his apprenticeship as an upholsterer at the age of eighteen, although there was little to indicate his future pre-eminence in the field beyond a natural skill for the work. When he joined the *Compagnons* in 1993, he was able to profit from the *Tour de France* offered by the society, a sort of extended apprenticeship, which became for him a *Tour d'Europe*, to begin his archival research into the French upholsterers of the eighteenth century. What started as a hobby became an all-consuming passion. Realizing the necessity for a more general art-historical training, he enrolled at the   cole du Louvre in 2000, specializing in the architecture, decoration and furnishing of the great French houses of the eighteenth century. His coursework included an extended dissertation on the restoration and conservation of the fabric



on historic French seat-furniture. In the course of this work he established himself as a pioneer in the examination and analysis of the technical minutiae of the upholsterer's craft. For his thesis he produced a major work on Claude-François Capin (1727–89), *tapissier ordinaire du Roi et du Garde Meuble de la Couronne*, an important but hitherto neglected figure. In 2010, with the accolade of his professors at the École du Louvre, he won a two-year scholarship to the Académie de France in Rome founded in 1666 by Louis XIV and now housed in the Villa Medici. He used his time there to deepen his knowledge of Italian upholstery and fabrics and produced a ground-breaking dissertation on the French furniture at the Bourbon court in Parma. During his intense periods of study he continued to work on major projects for museums in Europe and America. By the time of his death he was considered one of the great ambassadors of French culture and craftsmanship in the international museum world.

His portable computer, which is temporarily in my possession, is a combination of *Liber Amicorum* and Encyclopaedia. It contains the fruit of more than twenty years of unstinting research, much of it unpublished, including lists of more than 2,000 upholsterers from the eighteenth century categorized by town, a valuable photographic archive and records

of rare treatises. It is hoped that an enterprising furniture historian might one day be able to collate this scholarly archive to make it available to a wider circle of enthusiasts.

My own most striking memories of this enchanting man are of his joyous wedding to Catherine, a Louvre archivist and scientific consultant, in the glorious setting of the Villa Medici in 2010, and of my last meeting with him earlier this year. I had a lunch appointment with an organist friend at Drouot, where we found Xavier examining, with infectious enthusiasm, a rare length of Louis XVI brocaded velvet in perfect state. He joined us for a lunch at which he revealed his deep and knowledgeable interest in music. By the end of lunch it seemed that my two friends had themselves been friends for years. Afterwards, the three of us went to look at a precious manuscript of 'Viol da Gamba Suites' by Marin Marais, with unique and exquisitely detailed instructions for expression on almost every stave. Xavier scrutinized the manuscript with the same connoisseur's eye with which he had examined the panel of velvet before lunch. His enthusiasm encouraged me to acquire the panel the following day and it will always serve as an evocative souvenir of our friendship.

ALAN RUBIN

## Sir Rowland Winn's Monkey House

On 24 June 1767, Thomas Chippendale invoiced Sir Rowland Winn for 'A Mahogany house for a Monkey' costing 18 shillings.<sup>1</sup> As well as its own mahogany house, the precious animal had its portrait painted the following year by Hugh Douglas Hamilton at a cost of two guineas, and in her recent illuminating article on the furnishing of the Winn's London house, Kerry Bristol remarked, 'It is a great pity that Hamilton's portrait of Sir Rowland's primate has not been traced ...'.<sup>2</sup> Now it has.

It has survived by direct descent from Sir Rowland, but until recently was in a very dirty and unrecognized state. Now cleaned, both the monkey and its house

can clearly be seen. The 'monkey' is in fact a 'marmazet', as described in Hamilton's bill;<sup>3</sup> it sits on a windowsill, drinking from a porcelain cup and tethered by a silver chain to a small mahogany kennel modelled as a Chinese house with 'pagoda' roof and pendant bells. Surely no primate was ever more fashionably housed?

Two further survivals from Sir Rowland's London house have also come to light. On 24 June 1766, Chippendale invoiced '2 Mahogany card racks' at 10 shillings the pair. They are exquisitely made, seemingly each of one piece of mahogany, which has somehow been slit six times to create six flaps to grip the visiting cards inserted in it. Each flap is fretted with a different design cut with wonderful delicacy. Unsurprisingly, given



The monkey portrait by  
Hugh Douglas Hamilton  
(Private Collection)



'2 Mahogany card racks' by Thomas Chippendale (Private Collection)

their fineness and fragility, both have suffered small losses, but they are otherwise just as Chippendale delivered them in 1766.

ADAM BOWETT

- 1 Nostell Papers, WYW 1352/3/3/1/5/3/47, Thomas Chippendale's account for Sir Rowland Win for work at the London house, 1766–69.
- 2 Kerry Bristol, 'Recovering a "Lost" Account: Thomas Chippendale at No. 11 St James's Square, London', *Furniture History*, LIV (2018), 145–82.
- 3 Nostell Papers, WYW 1352/1/4/56/32, Bill from Hugh Douglas Hamilton.

## A French Design for a Pair of English Candlestands

The illustrated pair of giltwood candlestands (see p. 16), c. 1730, and measuring 57½ in. (146 cm) high, was formerly in the collection of the Poulett

family at Hinton House, Hinton St George, Somerset, and was probably supplied to John Poulett, 1st Earl Poulett (c. 1668–1743), passing by descent in the family until sold at auction by George Poulett, 8th Earl (1909–73) in November 1968.

In July 1968, the candlestands were photographed in the Gallery at Hinton House by *Country Life* when they were mounted on stands, presumably to align their tops with the nineteenth-century Gothic panelling.

Their construction identifies them as English, but intriguingly they are modelled on a late seventeenth-century French design by the little-known print-maker, Alexis (I) Loir (1640–1730), practising in Paris during the reign of Louis XIV. Thus, they demonstrate the enduring importance of French design to English craftsmen. In this period, Loir compiled some of his designs into a pattern book, *Nouveaux desseins d'Ornemens, de Paneaux, Lambris, Carosse torchères* and other furniture items were widely adopted by carvers and other craftsmen, their popularity persisting well into the eighteenth century.

This design was found through that longstanding 'friend' to furniture historians and researchers, 'serendipity'. Whilst browsing the Rijksmuseum website for another pair of candlestands, inspired by Daniel Marot (1661–1752), the French-born Dutch architect and decorative designer, engaged at the court of King William III and Queen Mary of England, the exact design for these candlestands was recognized. The style is evidently Baroque, but it also combines



far left  
© Christies  
Images, 2018

left  
© Rijksmuseum,  
RP-P-OB-8541

neo-Classicism in the dress of the maidens together with a certain exoticism in their headdresses.

Although the actual maker of these candlestands cannot be identified, they were created during a period when the Royal craftsman, Benjamin Goodison (c. 1700–67), was active; the latter known for his carved giltwood figural stands, which include a pair of cabinet stands supporting seventeenth-century Roman *pietre dure* cabinets, now in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, but formerly at Castle Howard, Yorkshire (the subject of the lead article ‘From Castle Howard to Cambridge’ by Tim Knox, published in this *Newsletter* in May 2017), and candlestands in the Royal Collection. Goodison’s predecessor was James Moore the elder (c. 1670–1726), and the influence of contemporary designs from France, including those of the Fontainebleau school, and Jean Le Pautre (1618–82),

disseminated through works such as Marot’s *Nouveau Livre d’Orfèverie* (1703), can be seen in his work. Another contemporary, Batty Langley, who published his *Workman’s Treasury of Designs* in 1740, even included a design by Le Pautre, first published in 1700. Interestingly, John Poulett, 2nd Earl (1708–64), was ordering furniture from Matthias Lock (1710–65) in the mid-1740s, which included furniture in the Late Baroque idiom — a side table, now at Thorpe Underwood Hall, Yorkshire, a looking glass, now in the Victoria & Albert Museum, and a pair of candlestands (J. F. Hayward, ‘Furniture Designed and Carved by Mathias Lock for Hinton House, Somerset’, *Connoisseur*, January 1961, pp. 284–86; C. G. Winn, *The Pouletts of Hinton St. George* (London, 1976)).

These candlestands were sold again through the salerooms (Christie’s London, 23 May 2018, lot 104).

SHARON GOODMAN



# Future Society Events

## Bookings

For places on visits, please apply to the Events Secretary, Beatrice Goddard, tel. 07775 907390, with a separate cheque for each event, using the enclosed booking form. Where possible, joining instructions will be dispatched by email, **so please remember to provide your email address if you have one. There is no need to send an 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 where you can be reached. Please note that a closing date for applications for visits is printed in the *Newsletter*. Applications made after the closing date will be accepted only if space is still available. Members are reminded that places are not allocated on a first come, first served basis, but that all applications are equally considered following the closing date.

Please note the Events email address: [events@furniturehistorysociety.org](mailto: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. Please note that in the rare instances where members cannot pay until the day of a visit, they will still be charged the full amount for the day if cancelling less than seven days before the visit, or if they fail to attend. This is necessary as the Society has usually paid in advance for a certain number of members to participate in, for example, a tour/lunch. Separate arrangements are made for study weekends and foreign tours, and terms are clearly stated on the printed details in each case.

## Spring Study Weekend to Kent

FRIDAY 17 MAY–SUNDAY 19 MAY  
2019

This Spring Study Weekend will be led by Dr Tessa Murdoch, The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Collection.

We shall be staying at the Canterbury Cathedral Lodge Hotel, situated in the beautiful grounds of the cathedral, and where we will be having dinner on the first night. Highlights of the weekend will include a visit to the Private Apartments at Knole and Penshurst Place. 'The Queen Elizabeth Room' at Penshurst Place, named after Elizabeth I, who often held audience there during her many visits, has

The day bed,  
c. 1690s, from  
'The Queen  
Elizabeth Room',  
Penshurst Place,  
which featured  
in the V&A's  
International  
Baroque exhibition



a remarkable display of early eighteenth-century upholstered furniture.

For the first time, the FHS will visit Queen Anne-style Bourne Park. The house is home to the Fitzwilliam Collection, a notable private art collection that the current owner has inherited as a descendant of the Earls Fitzwilliam. The collection was formerly housed at Wentworth Woodhouse, the Fitzwilliams' traditional country seat in South Yorkshire. The collection is not on public display and pieces are rarely loaned to exhibitions.

We will have a private tour of Canterbury Cathedral, Archives and Deanery, as well as of St John's Hospital, an almshouse near the cathedral, before visiting Smallhythe Place. The weekend will also include dinner on Saturday night at a private home with an inherited

collection of English furniture and textiles. Our hosts are keen members of the Irish Georgian Society. On the Sunday, we will conclude the weekend with a visit to Linton House, Chartwell, another Private Collection, and several churches.

LIMIT: 20

This is now fully subscribed. Please contact the Events Secretary if you would like to go on the waiting list.

## Autumn Study Trip — Plymouth

A study trip to Plymouth is planned for early autumn, led by Lisa White and Christopher Overton. Please keep an eye on the website for further announcements, which will also be published in the May *Newsletter*.

# Occasional and Overseas Visits

## Blythe House

23 BLYTHE ROAD, LONDON W14 0QX

WEDNESDAY 6 FEBRUARY 2019

2.00 PM FOR 2.15 PM

START-4.15 PM

This year is our last visit to the Victoria & Albert Museum Study Collections at Blythe House before it moves to the V&A East — Collection and Research Centre on the Queen Elizabeth Park in East London. The visit will focus on the theme of 'Painted Furniture', with a team of V&A curators giving us the much-valued opportunity to examine a wide range of pieces closely and to discuss them in small groups.

COST £28

LIMIT: 20

There are still places available, please contact the Events Secretary if interested.



Cassone with *The Meeting of King Salomon and the Queen of Sheba*, Florence, circle of Apollonio di Giovanni, 1450–1500, restored c. 1855. V&A Museum no. 7852-1862

## Visit to 2 Willow Road and the Isokon Gallery, Hampstead

2 WILLOW ROAD, LONDON NW3 1TH

THE ISOKON GALLERY, LAWN ROAD, LONDON NW3 2XD

WEDNESDAY 10 APRIL 2019

11.00 AM–4.00 PM

We start with a guided tour of 2 Willow Road (National Trust), which houses many of the treasures, furniture and objets d'art of one of the most influential figures in the British modern movement, Ernő Goldfinger. A Hungarian-born architect with a dynamic vision, Goldfinger's life and career was one of continent-spanning variety. A little-known aspect of his work, his furniture is full of innovation and style and embodies his design philosophy. Much of Willow Road's furniture is bespoke, and full of interesting touches and trademarks, including his black laminate-top desk, featuring stylish pivoting drawers.

After lunch, we will visit the Isokon Gallery, which is a permanent exhibition telling the remarkable story of the Isokon building, the pioneering modern apartment block opened in 1934 as an experiment in new ways of urban living. Also known as the Lawn Road Flats, the daringly modern apartment block was the epicentre of North London's avant-garde



Long Chair by Marcel Breuer, 1936, for the Isokon Furniture Company

circle during the 1930s and 1940s. The gallery, once the residents' garage, also features furniture produced by Jack Pritchard under the Isokon furniture brand. Throughout the 1930s, he collaborated with many of the building's architect residents, among them Walter Gropius, Marcel Breuer and László Moholy-Nagy, to create pieces for the flats. Originals such as the 'Penguin Donkey' bookstand by resident Egon Riss and Breuer's 'Long Chair' are on display. Our short talk will particularly focus on the furniture.

**COST: £60 INCLUDES A SANDWICH BUFFET LUNCH**

**LIMIT: 20**

**CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS:  
FRIDAY 15 MARCH 2019**

## Lecture by Jay Stiefel, *'The Cabinetmaker's Account: John Head's Record of Craft & Commerce in Colonial Philadelphia, 1718–53'*

**BENJAMIN FRANKLIN HOUSE**

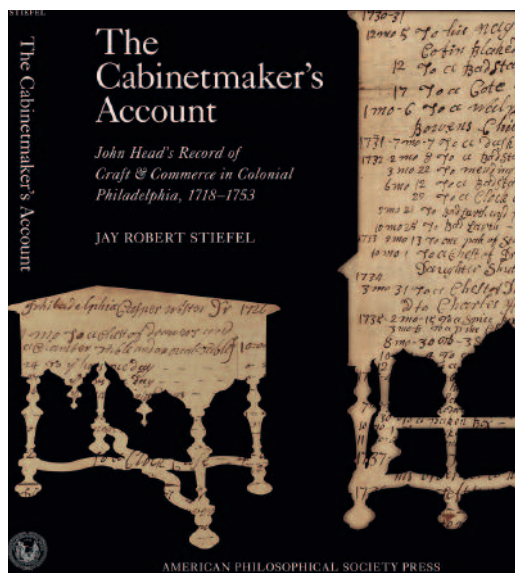
**36 CRAVEN STREET,  
LONDON WC2N 5NF**

**WEDNESDAY 1 MAY 2019**

**6.00 PM ARRIVAL FOR A 6.30 PM  
START–8.00 PM**

The account book (1718–53) of Suffolk-born joiner John Head (1688–1754), an immigrant to Philadelphia, is the earliest and most complete to have survived from any cabinet-maker working in Great Britain or





British North America. Head's ledger offers a thirty-five-year 'moving picture' of an eighteenth-century cabinet-maker's daily life. *The Cabinetmaker's Account* was commissioned by the American Philosophical Society, founded by Benjamin Franklin in 1743, in emulation of the Royal Society. The author, Jay Stiefel, is an authority on the crafts and commerce of Colonial Philadelphia and the institutions founded by Franklin for the welfare of its tradesmen. His lecture will detail his discoveries and definitive research.

For more information about the Benjamin Franklin House, please visit the website: [www.BenjaminFranklinHouse.org](http://www.BenjaminFranklinHouse.org)

**COST: £28 INCLUDES A GLASS OF WINE**

**LIMIT: 25**

**CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS:  
18 APRIL 2019**

## Visit to the Higgins Art Gallery and Museum, Bedford

CASTLE LANE, BEDFORD MK40 3XD

TUESDAY 11 JUNE 2019

10.30 AM–4.00 PM TBC

The Higgins Bedford unites on one site three previous venues: Cecil Higgins Art Gallery, Bedford Museum and Bedford Gallery. The Cecil Higgins Museum, as it was formerly known, opened in 1949, housed in the former family home of its founder, the philanthropic brewer, Cecil Higgins (1856–1941). The aim was to house his collection of ceramics, glass and objets d'art for the benefit, interest and education of the inhabitants of, and visitors to, Bedford. In 1971, over 200 pieces of



William Burges's furniture at the Higgins Museum

nineteenth-century decorative arts from the Handley-Read Collection, including the William Burges furniture, were purchased, and in 2005 the Cecil Higgins Art Gallery merged with Bedford Museum.

This visit will concentrate on the furniture from the Handley-Read Collection, and also look at some of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century pieces acquired as furnishing for the rooms of the Higgins's house. Victoria Partridge, Keeper of Fine and Decorative Art, will introduce the museum and speak about the acquisition of Handley-Read pieces, and Max Donnelly, Curator of Nineteenth-Century Furniture at the V&A, will lead our detailed study of the furniture.

**COST: £60 INCLUDES LUNCH & TEA/COFFEE**

**LIMIT: 20**

**CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS:  
FRIDAY 24 MAY 2019**

## Study Trip to Lisbon

**THURSDAY 9 MAY–SUNDAY 12 MAY  
2019**

This Spring Study Trip seeks to provide an overview of the extraordinary cultural wealth of Lisbon and its collections of furniture and decorative works of art. As a global power, Portugal entertained close links with the rest of Europe, Asia and South America, which are reflected in the wide array of materials and techniques employed in their furniture-making.

Amongst other visits, the trip will include tours to the major royal palaces, Ajuda, Queluz and Pena, the Fundação Ricardo do Espírito Santo Silva (FRESS), with its exceptional furniture collection and conservation studios, the newly reopened furniture galleries at the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, the *pietre dure* chapel of St John the Baptist at the Igreja de São Roque and the elegant eighteenth-century French galleries at the Gulbenkian Foundation.

This visit will be organized and lead by Dr Wolf Burchard.

**LIMIT: 23**

At the time of going to press there are still places available, please contact the Events Secretary for an application form.



Throne chairs from the Ajuda Palace

## Autumn Study Trip — Holland

A study trip to Holland is planned for early September, led by Steven Coerne and Saskia Broekema. Please keep an eye on the website for further announcements, which will also be published in the May *Newsletter*.

# Other Notices

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

## Exhibition: Inside Out. Understanding the Art of Furniture-Making

MUSEUM OF DECORATIVE ARTS,  
MATTHAIKIRCHPLATZ, 10785 BERLIN  
FRIDAY 2 NOVEMBER 2018–SUNDAY  
24 FEBRUARY 2019

This exhibition includes examples of neo-Classical furniture in all its guises. The exhibition features loans from private collections, the Prussian Palaces and Gardens Foundation Berlin-Brandenburg, Danzer Deutschland GmbH, the Botanisches Museum Berlin, the Ibero-Americanisches Institut and the Staatsbibliothek, both institutions of the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz.

An international conference is planned for February 2019, which invites the participation of art historians, makers of handcrafted and industrial furniture, designers, art dealers, conservators and friends of the art of furniture.

For more details, see:  
[www.museumsportal-berlin.de/en/exhibitions/inside-out-einsichten-der-moebelkunst/](http://www.museumsportal-berlin.de/en/exhibitions/inside-out-einsichten-der-moebelkunst/)

## Pitzhanger Manor & Gallery

Sir John Soane's country house in Ealing, Pitzhanger Manor & Gallery, will reopen to the public in March after an extensive three-year conservation and restoration project. The plan has been to restore the Regency manor, built in 1800–04, to Soane's original design and to reunite Pitzhanger with its former parkland, the recently renovated Walpole Park. Every part of the building will be open to the public; for further details, see [www.pitzhanger.org.uk](http://www.pitzhanger.org.uk)

## The Judges' Lodgings, Lancaster

The Judges' Lodgings will reopen in March. The programme of events will feature tours of the building, talks on local history and activities based on the links with Lancaster history, which The Judges' Lodgings brings together in its magnificent building. Themes include the wonders of Gillows. For further information, see: [www.lancashire.gov.uk/leisure-and-culture/museum/judges-lodgings](http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/leisure-and-culture/museum/judges-lodgings)

## Pietre Dure Festival Weekend

To complement this year's Annual Symposium on *pietre dure*, organized in association with The Rosalinde and Arthur

Gilbert Collection at the V&A, three further events have been made available to attendees of the conference.

**FRIDAY 29 MARCH 10.00 AM–4.30 PM**

*Behind the Scenes: Pietre Dure in the Gilbert Collection*

The Gilbert Collection holds a selection of exceptional *pietre dure* objects, which have barely been on display since their transfer from Somerset House. This Study Day will provide unparalleled, expert-led access to pieces, and will be divided into two sessions: in the morning, access to V&A storage, and in the afternoon, a guided tour of the new display of *pietre dure* objects in the Gilbert Galleries, South Kensington.

Limited tickets for this small group session will be made available to attendees of the Furniture History Society's Annual Symposium, on a first come, first served basis.

Booking via the FHS Events Secretary.

**LOCATION: 10.00 AM, BLYTHE HOUSE;  
2.30 PM: GILBERT GALLERIES, THE  
VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM**

**FRIDAY 29 MARCH, 5.30–6.30 PM**

There will be a fantastic opportunity to attend a guided visit of the Russia Exhibition at the Queen's Galleries led by Caroline de Guitaut, Senior Curator of Decorative Arts, The Royal Collection. Limited tickets will be made available to attendees of the Furniture History Society's Annual Symposium, on a first come, first served basis.

**LOCATION: THE QUEEN'S GALLERY,  
BUCKINGHAM PALACE**

Booking via the FHS Events Secretary.

**SUNDAY 31 MARCH, 9.30 AM–4.30 PM**

*Hinton Ampner: The National Trust's Most Comprehensive Collection of Pietre Dure*

Hinton Ampner in Hampshire holds a significant collection of *pietre dure* amassed by Ralph Dutton in the twentieth century. On this curator-led Study Visit we will examine key pieces, as well as exploring the grounds and the house.

The £30 fee covers travel to and from the house, departing from the V&A, and the entrance fee.

Lunch is not provided, but the café onsite will be available.

Booking via the V&A website.

## Call for papers: Nachwuchstagung 2019 in Köln

The FHS's German sister organization, Mobile – die Freunde von Möbel- und Raumkunst, is organizing a conference for young curators and scholars in the field of furniture and decorative arts on 13 and 14 June 2019 at the Technische Hochschule in Cologne. It seeks to provide a platform for new research and encourage a dialogue between academics, conservators and museum curators. For further information, please contact: Dr Henriette Graf (Stiftung Preußische Schlösser und Gärten Berlin-Brandenburg, Potsdam; h.graf@spsg.de) or Dr Jörg Ebeling (Deutsches Forum für Kunstgeschichte, Paris; jebeling@dfk-paris.org).



# Book Review

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

ROBERT D. MUSSEY, JUN., and CLARK PEARCE, *Rather Elegant Than Showy: The Classical Furniture of Isaac Vose* (New Hampshire: Massachusetts Historical Society in association with David R. Godine, Publisher, 2018). 312 pp., 338 colour and b. & w. illus. ISBN 9781567926194. \$50.00

Through much of the twentieth century and almost to the present, Boston furniture of the Federal period (1788–1825) has been viewed primarily through the lens of the work of immigrant English cabinet-makers John and Thomas Seymour. The seminal study by Vernon C. Stoneman of this father-and-son team, *John and Thomas Seymour: Cabinet Makers in Boston, 1794–1816*, was published in 1959 and later, in 2003, reprised by Robert Mussey, one of the authors of the book under review here, in *Furniture Masterworks of John and Thomas Seymour*. Both of these studies demonstrated that the Hepplewhite- and Sheraton-inspired furniture produced in the Seymour shop was unsurpassed in Boston in terms of the quality of its design, construction and carved and inlaid decoration. This current new volume by

Mussey and his co-author, Clark Pearce, moves the Boston furniture story forward in time by another decade or so, and defines for the reader, through the work produced in the shop of this heretofore little-known cabinet-maker, Issac Vose (1767–1823), Boston classical style of the next generation.

Despite their consummate skill as furniture-makers, the Seymours eventually failed at business. The elder Seymour withdrew from the trade in 1804 and eventually died penniless in an almshouse in Boston in 1818. Just a year before his father's death, Thomas Seymour, who had carried on the family business, closed his own establishment, the Boston Furniture Warehouse, and embarked on a career superintending the interior part of the furniture-making business at other master cabinet-makers' establishments. James Barker, for whom Seymour worked first in this capacity, announced the newcomer in an 1817 newspaper advertisement: 'The skill and taste of Mr. Seymour, are so well known, that it is only necessary to apprise the ladies and gentlemen that several articles are already in the Ware Room, for sale, or inspection'. Tracing the arc of Thomas Seymour's career in his earlier research, it must have been extremely rewarding for Mussey to find his old friend Seymour playing a central role in the efflorescence of the Vose furniture manufactory in the

years that he served as its superintendent between 1819 and 1824.

Vose, as the authors make abundantly clear, separates himself from the Seymours by his business acumen. Better capitalized than the Seymours, over the course of his thirty-five-year career he managed to flatten the business cycle by diversifying his holdings and to increase his profits through vertical integration. For example, he housed journeymen in a building he purchased on Orange Street at the start of a real estate boom on Boston neck; sold mahogany and operated a sawmill to process it into cabinet-making stock; owned a wharf and entered into a partnership as a ship owner for the direct importation of mahogany from the Caribbean, where he stationed his brother, Steven, to serve as his purchasing agent; and by 1809 was in the business of directly importing into Boston luxury home decorations from London and Paris, a practice his son and partner continued after his father's death and the closure of their cabinet-making business.

As Vose's business portfolio expanded, he stepped back from the bench and hired immigrant cabinet-makers, both English and French, to work at his cabinet-making concern. These immigrants brought with them highly refined, often specialized skills, as well an intimate knowledge of the latest classically inspired furniture styles from abroad, just the ticket to attract style-conscious Boston worthies such as David Sears, Nathan Appleton and George Ticknor to his cabinet warehouse on

Washington Street. The Vose shop produced beautiful, superior quality furniture in the late English Regency style, but in the French antique taste, as well. The author's note that the current number of extant pieces of furniture that bear the label of Isaac Vose & Son is eight, and, of these, half are in the English and half in the French style. Numerous attributions are made by them, but these seem carefully considered. An exceptionally well-illustrated final chapter entitled 'By These Signs You Will Know Them: Connoisseurship and Construction of Vose Furniture' offers a deep, object-centred discussion of the furniture made in the Vose shop over time and explicates the reasons for the authors' attributions. The reproductions of the photographs in this section — fully 120 of them — are extraordinary, and in this writer's estimation perhaps the best he has ever seen in a book on American furniture.

*Rather Elegant Than Showy: The Classical Furniture of Isaac Vose* is a deeply researched, sharply focused and superbly illustrated publication on an important Boston cabinet-making firm that succeeds brilliantly at defining Boston classical style in the post-War of 1812 period, and paints a clear picture of the challenges and opportunities facing urban furniture-making enterprises in the emerging market economy of the United States; what it took to succeed and to have its exceptionally fine furniture remembered to this day.

PETER M. KENNY

# Reports on the Society's Events

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

## Study Trip to Amsterdam

FRIDAY 6 JULY–SATURDAY 7 JULY 2018

*Rijksmuseum Print Room*

The origins of the collection lie in the 1880s, but at that time decorative arts drawings were not collected, because they were not greatly appreciated. The collection now contains a huge collection of ornament prints, including those by Adam van Vianen, which were published posthumously by his son. A number of these were included in the KWAB exhibition, which was the principal focus of the Amsterdam visit. Few design drawings had formerly been included in the collection, which is a major gap as there is no separate museum of the decorative arts in the Netherlands.

In 2013, at the occasion of the reopening of the main building of the Rijksmuseum, the generosity of some benefactors provided the opportunity to start to remedy the absence of design drawings.

The decision was taken to collect drawings that show objects or parts of objects, that reveal the design process and enhance understanding of the function of drawings around works of art.

Recent acquisitions have included a rare drawing by the famous Amsterdam silversmith Johannes Lutma, which was included in the exhibition.

There are about fifty drawings from the Valadier workshop. Some are working drawings to establish ideas, such as a tureen study on a sheet of paper in the shape of its platter. Others are fully finished presentation drawings; there is also a design for a mount on the back of a letter addressed to a silversmith in via del Babuino (next door to Valadier), which is evidently a working drawing for a commode.

The earliest drawings date from the sixteenth century, and their presence ensures that the collection includes a wider range of material than in most other museums; they are mainly for silver and furniture, not ceramics. Outstanding examples include a complex design for a frame by Franceschini (seventeenth-century) and a design for a centrepiece made in 1747 by Claude Ballin II for an English patron, now at Grimsthorpe, which in some respects differs from the finished object. In all, about 650 drawings have been added to the collection in just over five years, including a folio of 105, amongst which are a sixteenth-century

French design for a cabinet, which shows only half of the object. Such drawings were frequently attached to contracts, or they might be kept in the workshop. A highly finished design for a pulpit, signed by Erasmus Quellinus, dated c. 1635, was probably intended for approval by a church board. This made an interesting link with the outstanding pulpit we saw in the Nieuwe Kerk. A very striking drawing of a table with four lion supports, and what was probably intended to be a slate top, may be Swiss and a record of an actual piece of furniture; it is probably datable to the late seventeenth century. One of the rarer examples is a German study of the lock mechanism for a metal money chest, with colour notes, and this example is both technical and decorative. A letter from Philipp Hainhofer records such an object. There is also a splendid presentation drawing by Foggini for a *pietre dure* casket, which is rare, as he seldom did them. Although there is no surviving example that is quite the same, the satyrs are similar to those on the casket at the Vyne. This example could be associated with Andrew Fountaine.



Design by Foggini for an unidentified casket

Peter Fuhring catalogued the drawings collection belonging to a local collector, Lodewijk Houthakker, who died early in this century and whose collection is now dispersed, but some examples have entered the Rijksmuseum.

There is quite a large group of mid-eighteenth-century drawings for furniture. In Germany, it was a requirement that an apprentice made the drawing and the furniture in order to become a master. Did these drawings emerge from that tradition?

There are also some fully coloured presentation drawings, such as a Percier / Jacob Desmaltre Empire commode in Boulle marquetry, inlaid with a *pietre dure* panel, c. 1810. Recently, a *gueridon* has appeared on the market with the rectangular panel re-cut to be circular.

Our visit introduced us to what is already one of the most wide-ranging collections of design drawings in any museum.

#### *Kwab Exhibition at the Rijksmuseum*

Telling the story of a style as curious, exuberant and fantastical as Kwab demands a dynamic and original approach, a challenge that Professor Reinier Baarsen's dazzling Kwab show met with ease. At the heart of this exhibition sat Adam van Vianen's famous ewer of 1614, the piece that defines this art form. Kwab, known in the UK as 'auricular', is the fantastic style of seventeenth-century ornament that morphs forms through a whole spectrum of amphibious identities, from water and waves into monsters, tendons or human body parts.





Adam van  
Vianen's  
1614 ewer

The exhibition explored Kwab from its origins as it started to take shape in the metalwork of Paulus van Vianen, then as it came to fruition in Adam van Vianen's silver-gilt ewer. From this high point, the exhibition showed how the story of Kwab broadened. It demonstrated both how the style found its way into other mediums — such as print, furniture, leather, architectural ornament and painting — and how it spread throughout Europe.

We entered the exhibition through a darkened room; to a hypnotic soundtrack of rushing water and crashing waves, projected on a huge scale, Adam van Vianen's 1614 ewer was slowly rotating on a constantly shifting axis. As Professor Baarsen explained, the projection was designed to mimic the movement with which one might turn the ewer in one's hands. In practical terms, it gave us an intimate view of the piece, inaccessible through conventional display: little

surprises and mysteries of the design presented themselves, such as the tiny lizard taking a moment's rest inside the ewer and the uncertain identity of the forms that make this piece — is it a wave or a monster that makes up the lid? Does the figure of the woman who forms the top of the handle have hair or is she melting into a rush of liquid gold?

The theatricality of the exhibition was continued throughout, with strong monochromatic schemes and a high-contrast lighting design. Of particular interest to FHS members will be the way in which these design decisions worked to give furniture a satisfyingly high profile in the show. Indeed, each piece sat at the centre of its own little tableau, with a bespoke backdrop that highlighted and enhanced all its best qualities. Professor Baarsen explained the intention here was to create a series of 'spotlights' in which performers were paused, poised to entertain and delight their audience. And, given such a stage, the furniture performed magnificently well. The decision to display two cabinet-stands as the tables into which they have since been converted was supported by clear labelling and well justified in that it brought focus to the extraordinary, abstract, melting-flesh forms of the stand. As a final point, younger audiences have responded with enthusiasm to this strong visual dynamic and have flocked to the show, lovingly 'Instagrammed' their favourite piece of Kwab and quite possibly taken away the useful idea that furniture might be worth their time and attention, after all.

A report such as this can only touch on the riches of such an exhibition and cannot



Kwab exhibition at the Rijksmuseum

do justice to the passionate and rigorous work of its curator, Reinier Baarsen.

### *The Nieuwe Kerk*

We also visited the Nieuwe Kerk, a large, mainly fifteenth-century, church in the heart of the old town. After a serious fire in 1645 it was refurnished, the burgomasters commissioning a new organ, screen and pulpit. The main object of interest to us was the fine brass and marble choir screen, probably installed in 1654. Entering at the west door, this would

have impressed visitors at once; entering through a side door from Dam Square, as one does today, its impact is less immediate. It was designed by Johannes Lutma the Elder, a German silversmith and designer who came to Amsterdam, via Paris, by 1633. This attribution is based on the engraving of it by his son, Johannes Lutma the Younger, which was published that year. The print is not exactly as executed, so he may have used an earlier design as his source; the engraving was in the exhibition, cat. no. 68.

The base of the screen has marble panels, probably carved by Artus Quellin, who was also working on the organ case. Each one has an auricular design reminiscent of a face or sea monster carved in white marble, contrasting with the black marble background. Above that, unusually, the entire screen is of brass, with no wood or other metal. Brass had often been imported from the southern Netherlands until around 1600; the maker is unknown, but it is work of the highest quality. Barleytwist columns with delicate Corinthian capitals alternate with attenuated balusters, and are



View of brass screen from the west, Nieuwe Kerk

topped by an almost Gothic tracery; above the entablature is pierced cresting in free-flowing forms, with the arms of the city of Amsterdam in the centre. There is no religious symbolism anywhere, apart from cherubs' heads over the pilasters. These fluted pilasters contrast with the more fluid auricular design of the whole. Might Jacob van Campen have designed them? They are a very architectural feature, and van Campen designed the magnificent organ case at the west end of the church, so was involved with the refurbishing of the interior.

The magnificent oak pulpit, signed and dated 1649 and made by Albert Jansz Vinckenbrinck, has a sounding board topped with a massive superstructure; it dominates the nave and emphasizes the importance of preaching in the reformed church. Here we examined more brasswork: the fluid design of the small lectern attached to the reading desk at the base of the pulpit was probably another design by Lutma. In the exhibition were three similar brass lecterns (cat. nos 99, 100 and 101). Behind the pulpit, the 'baptismal garden' had three entrances into its



Brass lectern attached to the pulpit, Nieuwe Kerk



Brass arch to Baptismal Garden, Nieuwe Kerk

panelled enclosure; two were topped with their scrolling brass overthrows, while the third was shown in the exhibition (cat. no. 102). Again, these were probably made to Lutma's design. Brass chandeliers completed the lavish use of brass in this splendid church interior.

### *The Royal Palace*

We received a very warm welcome to the Royal Palace from Steve Coene (Keeper of the Royal Furniture), who was accompanied by Alice Taatgen (Curator of Exhibitions & Education). The palace, on Dam Square, was built between 1648 and 1665 as Amsterdam's Town Hall by architect Jacob van Campen (1596–1657). One of the most important monuments of the Golden Age, its architecture is a cohesive Italianate classicism — made more Dutch by the inclusion of specific representations such as the stone relief of Diana of the Hunt, featuring more fish than deer. It excludes the use of Kwab ornament. However, Reinier Baarsen considers van Campen possibly designed the Classical framework for Johannes Lutma's (1584–1669) famous



Kwab-ornamented brass choir screen (c. 1654) in the Nieuwe Kerk. The palace's impressive central Citizen's Hall was built



The Royal Palace

as a public area — and it retains decoration symbolic of the universe, with the Netherlands as the powerful and wise leader of the world. Scottish oak was imported for the beams and roofing slate came from England.

In 1808, King Louis Bonaparte (1778–1846), who had been appointed king of Holland in 1806 by his brother Napoleon, decided Amsterdam should become capital of the Netherlands. He wrote to the mayor of Amsterdam to request the Town Hall become his palace. The French court architect Jean-Thomas Thibault (1757–1826) and the Dutch architect Barthold Ziesenis (1762–1820) oversaw the renovation within a few months. The Classical design of the Empire-style used for the palace's renovation meant it matched van Campen's building well. Rich fabric colours, gilding and mahogany were added to the building's original palette of white marble and black stone. Hundreds of pieces of Empire-style furniture were made for the palace, some in Paris, but the majority was ordered from Dutch firms. There are only four gilded chairs in the palace, made by George Jacob (1739–1814). Other pieces, after Jacob, were possibly made in the Netherlands. Bronze mounts were probably imported from France for the Dutch-made furniture. Amsterdam cabinet-maker Carel Breytspraak, sen. (1769–1810) and upholsterer Joseph Cuel (1763–1846) received large commissions. The large bookcase now in the Red Salon was designed by Thibault and made by Breytspraak. Only a few pieces, including the desk, are signed by Breytspraak, and bear the stamp A P Amsterdam (Amsterdam Paleis) with a crown.



Most of the furniture that was made survives, forming one of the largest Empire collections in Europe.



The Royal Palace

Louis Bonaparte resided in the palace until Napoleon forced his abdication in 1810. Subsequent monarchs have typically visited only for a short time each year. In 1936 the palace was transferred to the state, and Queen Wilhelmina initiated the removal of much of the Napoleonic interior decoration, desiring an appearance more faithful to the seventeenth century. Since 1979, the palace has been open to visitors, but it is still used by King Willem-Alexander for state visits and official receptions. Between 2005 and 2009 the palace underwent a large restoration programme. The Empire furniture was restored for use, reupholstered using Empire designs (but not colours), creating many en suite rooms of red, yellow or blue. Carpets replicated designs made for Louis Bonaparte. In contrast, a seventeenth-century brocade pattern was used for the wall coverings and curtains of the Throne Room. Queen Beatrice was instrumental in the reallocation of furniture between rooms. The palace is furnished with portraits from the Royal Collections.

SUSAN BRACKEN, DR JENNY SAUNT,  
CAROLINE KNIGHT, GERRY ALABONE

## ‘Innovation & Collaboration. The Early Development of the Pendulum Clock in London’ at Bonhams

WEDNESDAY 12 SEPTEMBER 2018

Richard Garnier, exhibition curator, gave us a superb exposition of the links and ideas behind the development of

movements and case-making of these early clocks both in England and Holland, well summed up as ‘Temples to the Achievement of the Science of Horology’.

Early clocks were always expensive, but precise timing only improved with the patent of 1656 of the pendulum by Christiaan Huygens in The Hague, which accelerated the development and proliferation of movements and necessitated the change of case manufacture from the metal of spring-driven table clocks with horizontal dials to wood for the new generation of vertical-dial movements. This had already started in London when Ahasuerus Fromanteel (1607–93) had encased a spring-driven vertical-dial clock for Dudley Palmer in wood in 1649, and this trend was assisted by the steady influx of mainly Huguenot cabinet-makers. The design of these cases was Classical in form, a style associated with Court and Catholicism, a difficult choice for the strongly Protestant Fromanteel, but nevertheless one he adopted rather than the newly fashionable Baroque. The use of exotic and expensive woods reflected the cost of movements with ebony, most fashionable early on, as it was in Holland and Paris. Later, from the early 1670s, this gave way to well-figured, colourful wood veneers and to marquetry and walnut.

Garnier argues persuasively that these early cases may well have been designed by John Webb (1611–72), the student of his uncle Inigo Jones, and to whom Fromanteel was possibly introduced by Cornelius Drebbel (1572–1633). Drebbel was a considerable scientific polymath who made improvements to scarlet



cloth-dying, mechanics for Court masques, lenses for which Fromanteel turned cases — and a submarine. These inventions must have been an inspiration for Fromanteel, who seems to have been his pupil and even successor.

Although the pendulum was patented in Holland in 1656, by Christiaan Huygens, he never achieved a patent in either England or France, and it was Ahasuerus Fromanteel’s son John who advertised the sale of pendulum clocks in London in 1658, having spent time in The Hague working with Solomon Coster, the first maker to create clocks with the new invention. John Fromanteel signed a contract with Coster that allowed him to produce such clocks on his return to London.

The development of pendulum clocks continued in England after the elder Fromanteel moved to Amsterdam in 1666, following the destruction of his workshops in Lothbury in the Great Fire of London. Many such workshops were destroyed and dislocated, and several clock-makers moved to Southwark, south of the Thames,

where cabinet-making workshops had long been established. These workshops were in turn destroyed in another major fire in 1676 in Southwark, after which both clock-makers and cabinet-makers moved back north of the river. Joseph, John and Samuel Knibb, and Thomas Tompion, in particular, took up the baton, advancing clock design with continuous improvements, whereas Dutch clock-making remained very conservative.

There were far too many superb clocks on view in this majestic exhibition to be able to report on all of them, and great thanks must be given to Richard Garnier for his thought-provoking ideas and for the gathering together of so many important early clocks, and to Bonhams for their generous hospitality.

CHRISTOPHER OVERTON

## Visit to 'Lost Treasures of Strawberry Hill'

THURSDAY 8 NOVEMBER 2018

Now is the best of all times to visit Horace Walpole's brilliant 'summer' house at Strawberry Hill, since the entire contents were dispersed in the sale of 1842. The current show — running to 24 February 2019 — has reunited over 150 items from Walpole's collection, including many of his huge range of paintings and some furniture, drawn from more than forty separate lenders (of whom 75 per cent are private).

It is an outstanding opportunity to see the house as Walpole intended. In 2010, Strawberry Hill reopened after a two-year restoration, which put its decoration back

into the bright conditions of 1797; but the rooms were substantially empty. It is astonishing to see the brightness of colours as well as the dramatic shadings from dark to light between rooms: they must have been almost dull before the restoration.

Walpole was clearly born with a very large silver spoon in his mouth, but had enormous energy and the broadest taste for the best Classical and antique items, as well as for 'modern' furnishings of the eighteenth century. And he had an extraordinary vision of how to put them together.

Michael Snodin, Hon. Curator of Strawberry Hill House and co-curator of the exhibition, took us through what is known about how Walpole assembled his collection — over 4,000 items, not including prints, drawings and coins — and how he and his team were able to track down so many of them for this exhibition. There had also been an exhibition at Yale and the V&A in 2009/10, but with fewer paintings.

In this, he was helped by the detailed Description of the house, with its 'inventory of the furniture, pictures and curiosities' that Walpole had drawn up in 1774 and 1784, and kept updated with additions until 1791. Many items have been lost since the twenty-four-day sale in 1842, but Michael and team have been on a treasure hunt that has identified over 200 further items from Strawberry Hill. They know what else they are looking for.

One of the pieces of furniture already in the house before the exhibition is an English walnut armchair of 1703, with a fine central armorial panel, in the entrance hall, that was made for one of the

signatories to Guy Fawkes's death warrant. This is displayed next to the large Chinese tub in which Walpole's cat Selima drowned while trying to catch his goldfish.

Some of the Gothic furniture designed by Walpole with Richard Bentley is being displayed in the Dining Room. We saw one of the two original pier glasses, and four out of eight high-backed black chairs made by William Hallett that have been recreated for the room. One of the original chairs is in the V&A. The whereabouts of the large Gothic sideboard — black with a slab of green Sicilian jasper on top — is currently unknown, as is the whereabouts of the other mirror.

The Holbein Chamber has more dark furniture of a type that Walpole believed was Tudor and associated with Cardinal Wolsey. They are, in fact, fine Coromandel pieces from South India, dating from about 1660–80. At the end of his time, Walpole had twenty-three ebony chairs and some tables spread across Strawberry Hill.

Some fine 'settes' have been recreated for the Long Gallery in the State Apartments, standing in for pieces by Vile and Cobb that Walpole had installed in 1762 but only paid for in 1765.

One of the most extraordinary items is the reproduction of a portrait of Robert Walpole and his wife, with Houghton shown in the distance, over the mantel in the Blue Bedchamber, which Walpole had painted to fit into a highly elaborate carved frame he thought was by Grinling Gibbons. The originals of both are in the Lewis Walpole Library at Yale. The painting has been digitally copied, and the frame is made by 3D printing that has

Pier glass in the Refectory, incorporating a portrait of George Walpole, 3rd Earl of Orford.

Designed by Horace Walpole, made by William Hallett, sen., 1754–55. Wood, painted black and gold, and oil on canvas.

Strawberry Hill Collection Trust.

The pair to this pier glass, sold in 1842, has not been traced. It contains a portrait of George Cholmondeley, Viscount Malpas

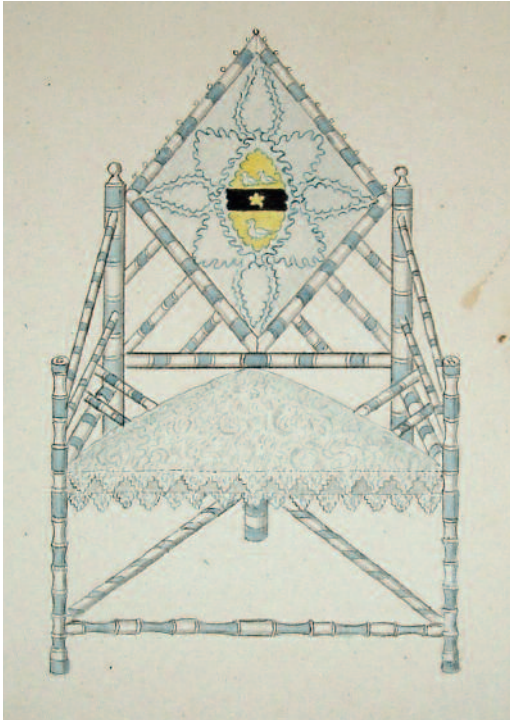


been gilded — with a sheet of metal attached to the back to make it rigid. When the front was shown to experts, half thought only the painting was original, and the other half thought it was only the original frame: how wrong both were.

These recreations will stay on in the house after the exhibition ends, which will add to the furnishings in the house.

In the Tribune, designed as a secular chapel for some of his finest treasures, Walpole's Miniatures Cabinet of 1743 is wonderfully displayed in its original location. Walpole designed this himself, possibly with William Kent, and drew on experts for its construction with padouk veneer and carved ivories. It was made for the family house in Arlington Street, and later moved to Strawberry Hill. In its home at the V&A, the cabinet is displayed inside





One of a pair of chairs in the Star Chamber, of Welsh type, but painted blue and white, and one with the added coat of arms of Richard Bateman. One was at Carnsalloch House, Dumfries, in the 1950s, but is currently untraced. Drawing by George Perfect Harding, 1800

a glass case, so it was brilliant to see it *en plein air*. Walpole had strong views on picture frames. There are many fine eighteenth-century frames in black and gold throughout the house, a number of

which were designed for Walpole and have amazingly survived their distribution among new owners.

There are a number of unexpected touches in the house. Many rooms have shutters that slide into the walls next to the window frames. This is part of his strong interest in mood lighting, with many rooms going from light to dark. He also put coloured glass into the top of many windows — sometimes antique, sometimes new blue glass — to increase the light effects.

The recreation of the wall decoration in the hall and stairs is a tour de force appealing to many people: the walls have been put back to a tracery design copying a Gothic tomb screen, in shades of grey paint that Walpole's decorating committee had devised.

Many of the rooms have elaborate Gothic mantelpieces, with pinnacles and fretwork, some of which originally housed Chinese and other ceramics. It was useful to be reminded that these — and, indeed, the wholly Gothic Library — were to be seen as modern in the late 1700s, rather than with the antiquarian twist we might give them today. Walpole had very unexpected taste for his times.

ANDREW CARTWRIGHT



Table in the Refectory, designed by Richard Bentley, made c. 1755, and untraced since 1842. It is ebonized, with eight legs and a top of Sicilian jasper, 6 feet by 3 feet. Drawing by George Perfect Harding, 1800

# Publications

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

*Index to the Dictionary of English*

*Furniture Makers*, £20 (members £18)

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

*Dictionary of Edinburgh Furniture Makers*  
1600–1840, Francis Bamford, £20

*Furniture History Forty Years on*, Nicholas  
Goodison, £7.95 (members £5)

*Thomas Johnson's The Life of the Author*,  
Jacob Simon, £7.75

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

*Makers, Dealers and Collectors: Studies in*  
*Honour of Geoffrey de Bellaigue*, £24.95

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

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

## Thomas Chippendale: Gone But Not Forgotten!

The year-long celebrations for the tercentenary of Thomas Chippendale's birth may have ended, but several

important publications dedicated to the master furniture craftsman are available for purchase from the Society.

In addition to the compendium of scholarly essays devoted to Thomas Chippendale published in the splendid 2018 volume of *Furniture History*, available for £20 plus postage and packing, there remain a few issues of the May 2018 *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*. The *Bulletin* is an impressive forty-eight-page booklet on the designs of the furniture-maker and is available from the Society at £15, plus postage and packing.

Also on offer from the Society are additional copies of the booklet *Thomas Chippendale 1718–1779: A Celebration of British Craftsmanship and Design*, published by our sister organization, the Chippendale Society, and these are available at £5 each plus post and packing.

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

# Grants

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

## Tom Ingram Memorial Fund

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

## Oliver Ford Trust

The Oliver Ford Trust supports research by emerging scholars and junior museum professionals in the fields of furniture history, the decorative arts and interior design, mainly by sponsoring places on the Society's study weekends or foreign tours. Recent awards have included grants to enable participation in the Society's symposium at the Frick Collection in New York; a weekend visit to 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/](http://www.furniturehistorysociety.org/grants/) enquiries. Enquiries should be addressed to the Grants Secretary, Jill Bace, at [grants@furniturehistorysociety.org](mailto:grants@furniturehistorysociety.org) or at 21 Keats Grove, Hampstead, London NW3 2RS.

## Grants News

In addition to a second mailing to universities and arts institutions outlining the benefits of Furniture History Society membership, a series of specialized Early Career Development workshops on furniture-making techniques is currently underway. Evening events have included an introductory talk in November on joinery and hilling by Peter Holmes at Christie's, Yannick Chastang on marquetry in December and a January session on the history and techniques of carving with Ada de Wit, Clunie Fretton and Felix Hadley.

Workshops coming up in 2019 include:

11 February, Dr Adam Bowett, 'Recognizing Woods', 6 pm at the Art Workers' Guild, 6 Queen Square, London WC1 N3A

11 March, Helen Jacobsen, 'French Furniture', 6 pm at the Wallace Collection, Manchester Square, London W1U 3BN

15 April, Guy Apter, 'Highlights of Eighteenth-Century English Furniture-Making', Apter-Fredericks, 265-67 Fulham Road, London SW3 6HY

For more information, email [escdvisits@furniturehistorysociety.org](mailto:escdvisits@furniturehistorysociety.org)

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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 15 March 2019.

Copy should be sent, preferably by email to Sharon Goodman, email:

[sctgoodman@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:sctgoodman@yahoo.co.uk), or by post to 26 Burntwood Lane, London SW17 0JZ.

Tel. 07855 176779.

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COVER PICTURE *The Schiele Chair* (2018) by Colin Harris. Photography courtesy of the Fitzwilliam Museum © The Artist