

The Furniture History Society

# Newsletter 215

August 2019



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# *Pietre Dure* — A Palette Made of Hardstones

In founding the *Galleria degli Lavori*, later known as the *Opificio delle Pietre Dure*, Grand Duke of Tuscany Ferdinando I de' Medici (1549–1609) strove to rival paintings. He wanted mosaics that 'like painting could treat a nearly limitless array of subjects',<sup>1</sup> but would defy time for, unlike paintings, they would not fade. These masterpieces in hardstone have been praised and prized by the most influential connoisseurs, from sixteenth-century monarchs and emperors to twentieth-century private collectors, including Sir Arthur Gilbert (d. 2001). Alongside renowned collections of silver, gold boxes and micromosaics, Gilbert acquired an interesting array of *pietre dure*. His celebrated collection, from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, has featured in milestone exhibitions and catalogues. For the first time since the Gilbert Collection came to the Victoria and Albert Museum, a display in the Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Galleries presents highlights from the *pietre dure* collection.

The display explains how these remarkable objects were created, the process of selecting and working the stones to render this painting-like effect. The Gilbert Project conservator, Mariam Sonntag, with help from external consultants listed below, identified and mapped the stones used in each object;

information that is now available online. Identifying the stones proved to be complex, and sometimes inconclusive, for the stones have been polished, cut into minute segments and sometimes even heated to alter their natural shades. This made comparison with natural specimens ambiguous. Yet the exercise enhanced our appreciation of the incredible talent of these craftsmen.

It is known that by the sixteenth century the Medici had an important stock of hardstones for their workshops. This included, notably, lapis lazuli imported from the Persian Empire, jaspers from the Holy Roman Empire, newly discovered Tuscan stones and blocks of Roman ruins. The focus, however, in this article is on the use of these stones, regardless of their origin, to achieve the most remarkable effect: there was no stone too expensive to create these precious pictures and to make Florentine creations unsurpassed for centuries.

Talented Florentine craftsmen created fashionable pictures in hardstone, which superseded the original source. The Grand Ducal workshops sought new sources of inspiration. In the late eighteenth century, Antique Roman sites were much in favour across Europe, popularized by Giovanni Battista Piranesi's engravings. The plaque on the front cover of this *Newsletter* shows

the tomb of Cecilia Metella, one of the most visited Roman sites by the 1780s. It was conceived by the director Luigi Siries as the first in a series of six views of Rome for the Palazzo Pitti, based on Piranesi's engravings and inspired by the series realized for the Grand Duke Francis Stephen of Habsburg-Lorraine in the 1760s (Fig. 1).

The preliminary paintings were commissioned from the obscure artist Francesco Partini (d. 1792). The painter embellished classical figures of shepherds from Piranesi's source and produced a clear view of the celebrated Roman ruin on a sunny day instead of showing the ruin overgrown by vegetation (Fig. 2).

When translated into hardstones, the tranquil diffused light is transformed into an incandescent sunset beaming across the

clouds. The bright yellow *Pietra Paesina*, used on part of the building, renders the intensity of the last burning sun rays of the day, while the pink glow of the setting sun is portrayed with different pink and brown tones of petrified wood, used for the top of the building and the left arch (Fig. 3).

Flint — a stone which can be sourced in Tuscany — has been used in its various tones to enhance the contrast: white flints on the sunny part of the building and arch, grey flints for shadow. Intense blue-green Bohemian jaspers — imported from Prague since the sixteenth century<sup>2</sup> — contrast with a brighter green and yellow local jasper from Giuliana (West Sicily) for deep shades of grass and vegetation growing over the ruins.



Fig. 1 Engraving of the Tomb of Cecilia Metella, Giovanni Battista Piranesi, 1762





Fig. 2 Ferdinando Partini, *Veduta della Tomba di Cecilia Metella*, 1795, oil on canvas, Museo dell'Opificio delle Pietre Dure (Florence), 52 × 72 cm, inv. no. 932



Fig. 3 Detail of the Gilbert hardstone plaque: pink and blown petrified wood. Gilbert.77-2008

Even more remarkable are three-dimensional effects in the garments, achieved by using for each fold a separate cut of stone, either natural different tones of the same stone or from different stones. The local Tuscan stone called *Calcedonio di Volterra*, discovered in the sixteenth century, has been used in intense yellow shades for the dress on the right and in off-white tones for shirts and aprons. The pink skirt is composed of red *Calcedonio di Volterra* and a banded jasper from Sud Baden (Fig. 4).

The latter was part of the array of jaspers used and traded by the Imperial court in Prague and is confusingly known as 'Bohemian Jasper', although sourced in the western part of the Holy Roman Empire.<sup>3</sup> Finally, rare and precious cuts of lapis lazuli have been inserted, for their iconic deep blue. The sky, with its white and pink clouds and array of blue shades, presented the greatest challenge. To achieve this, Florentine

mosaicists painted the reverse of a large but very thin slate of so-called alabaster.<sup>4</sup> A similar technique recurs on other landscape panels mounted on a cabinet in the Gilbert collection (Fig. 5).

While other European hardstone workshops proudly use locally sourced stones, such as the Castruccis in seventeenth-century Prague or Johann Christian Neuber in eighteenth-century Dresden, Florentine mosaicists had access to an incredibly wide choice of local and traded stones from different parts of the world. They were encouraged to constantly develop their technical virtuosity and to use as many stones as needed to achieve the perfect illusion of a painting.



Fig. 4 Detail of the Gilbert hardstone plaque: natural shades of stone used for the garments. Gilbert.77-2008

The Cecilia Metella plaque has been the pride of its owners: after it was completed and delivered to the Grand Duke in 1797, it was confiscated by the French after their invasion of Italy in 1799. Restituted in 1815

Fig. 5 Details of cabinet, England, 1775–99, with earlier *pietre dure* plaques, Opificio delle Pietre Dure, Florence, 1700–35. Loan: Gilbert.1021-2008. © The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Collection, Victoria and Albert Museum, London





after the fall of Napoleon, it remained in the Palazzo Pitti until given as a diplomatic gift to Pope Pius IX during his visit to the Grand Duke in 1857. A second version was then commissioned and presented in 1867 at the Universal Exhibition in Paris,<sup>5</sup> but the rendering never achieved the same effect: bathed in a yellow haze, the picture has lost its spectacular colourful intensity, as if the skills themselves had been lost through generations (Fig. 6).

The original picture became the pride of Arthur Gilbert and can now be admired in the Gilbert Galleries at the Victoria and Albert Museum, until December 2020.

This project was only possible thanks to the hard work of Mariam Sonntag, 2018–19

Gilbert Project Conservator, and Chloe Kellow, Gilbert Curatorial Assistant. We benefited hugely from the generous help and advice of countless specialists, including Anna Maria Massinelli, Dr Monica Price (Corsi Collection, Oxford University Museum of Natural History) and Dr Ruth Siddall (UCL), Dr Ludmila Budrina (Head of Decorative Arts Department, Ekaterinburg Museum of Fine Arts), Ralf Schmidt (Naturhistorisches Museum Schloss Bertholdsburg Schleusingen), Dr Sonia O'Connor (University of Bradford), Dr Epifanio Vaccaro (Natural History Museum London), Stefan Klappenbach and Lutz Schummel (*pietre dure* conservators Stiftung Preussische Schloesser und



Fig. 6 *Veduta della Tomba di Cecilia Metella*, Commesso di pietre dure, Museo dell'Opificio delle Pietre Dure (Florence), 54 × 76 cm, inv. no. 680

Gaerten Potsdam), Thomas Greenaway (Greenaway Mosaics) and Filippo Bencini (a *pietre dure* artist based in Florence), and Dr Sandra Rossi and colleagues (Opificio delle Pietre Dure).

ALICE MINTER

*Victoria and Albert Museum*

- 1 Anna Maria Giusti et al., 'Roman Inlay and Florentine Mosaics: The New Art of Pietre Dure', *Art of the Royal Court*, Catalogue Exhibition Metropolitan Museum of Arts (2008), p. 20.
- 2 Before the Castruccis established their workshop in Prague (c. 1592), Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II sent Bohemian stones to be

worked in Florence. After establishing their workshop, the Castruccis were leading the trade of stone between Bohemia and Florence.

- 3 The majority of the stones worked in the Castruccis' workshops was from the Kozakov mountains (Bohemia), but the Emperor also dispatched emissaries to other territories such as Baden and Alsace (A. M. Giusti, *Pietre Dure and the Art of Florentine Inlay* (London, 2006), p. 109.
- 4 The geological term is, in fact, a transparent veiny calcite stone imported from Egypt or the eastern Mediterranean borders.
- 5 This plaque was meant to be presented at the 1862 Universal Exhibition in London but was not ready then. It was presented at the 1867 Universal Exhibition instead.

## The Techniques of 'Nonsuch' Marquetry: A Remarkable Survival

A block of uncut marquetry (Fig. 1) — discovered forty years ago in a redundant Suffolk workshop — offers vivid insights into the techniques of early English furniture-making.

The block, about the size of a *ciabatta* loaf, consists of over 200 rods of oak and other woods, probably including apple, bog oak and sycamore. The precisely cut rods have been assembled and glued between top and bottom sheets to present a geometrical design of pedimented windows ready to be sliced into thin sheets. One long side (Fig. 2) is irregular and clearly shows residues of dried glue (analysed as animal skin glue by Brenda Kenegan, Science Conservation, V&A). The other presents a smooth surface, which would have been the cutting side, planed smooth after each cut, probably made with

a frame saw against a fence guide. The planed side of the veneer would have been glued to the substructure, and its sawn face smoothed with a scraper. Making up a block or 'loaf' in this way allows many veneers of the same design to be cut by a skilful craftsman, and produced much more economically than assembling the same design from individual pieces. A very similar technique was in use by the fifteenth century in Italy where it was known as '*tarsia a toppo*' (log marquetry), and produced small designs of inlay that are sliced, like a salami, from long grain rods bundled and glued together.

However, in the case of the newly discovered 'Nonsuch' block, the individual rods are cut short grain and assembled so that the much larger slices show long grain on the surface. In this method the precise cutting of the individual short grain rods would be very demanding, but the veneer slice would be less likely to break and would display the attractive figure of the long grain.



Fig. 1 Block of 'Nonsuch' marquetry, oak and other woods, HWD: 6.35 × 36.8 × 7.6 cm (2½ × 14½ × 3 in.); English, c. 1600 or c. 1900; V&A museum no. W.4-2019. Given by John Mercer. <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1462021/> © Victoria and Albert Museum, London





Fig. 2 Back view of W.4-2019. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

This design of windows (in the same dimensions) is commonly seen running along the top of large 'panels' on marquetry chest fronts made in England c. 1580–1620 (Fig. 3), which have come to be known since about 1900 as 'Nonsuch' because the towers customarily depicted were erroneously associated with Henry VIII's palace of Nonsuch in the Thames Valley.

Such woodwork is close in style to German work of the second half of the sixteenth century and must have been introduced to England by German and Dutch immigrant woodworkers whose workshops were mainly based south of the Thames in Southwark, as described in Edmund Maria Bolton's *Elements of Armories* (1610): 'At St. Olaves in



Fig. 3 Chest with 'Nonsuch' marquetry, oak and other woods, HWD: 59.4 × 122.8 × 58 cm (23 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 48 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 22 <sup>13</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.); English, c. 1600. V&A museum no. 342-1905. <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O109339/> © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Southwark, you shall learn, among the joyenrs what Inlayes and Marquetrie meane. Inlaye [...] is a laying of colour'd wood in their Wainscot works, Bedsteads, Cupbords, Chayres and the like.'

The block was discovered in about 1980 among other fragments of mainly seventeenth- and eighteenth-century woodwork in a disused workshop store that had belonged to the antiques dealer Harold Lanman (1893–1979), active in Framlingham, Suffolk, from the 1930s. John Mercer, who found the block, has now generously presented it to the V&A Furniture and Woodwork Collection. Lanman's business included making up pieces of furniture using fragments from old, broken pieces, and it is possible that the block was made for the restoration of an early chest during the period c. 1880–1940 when 'Nonsuch' chests and other Elizabethan furniture were particularly fashionable with collectors. On the other hand, there is nothing inherently modern about the laborious way the block has been made, apparently entirely by hand, and using traditional glue. The topmost layer is a single thin sheet or facing of oak which bears various hand saw marks and exposed insect channels, suggesting perhaps that the block stood undisturbed for a considerable time, or that the thin layer was cut from old wood. Along the underside runs a slightly thicker sheet formed of two strips bearing angled striations and judder marks consistent with the use of a metal scraper. Unlikely as it might seem, it is surely possible that the block was made during the relatively short period during which geometrical marquetry was fashionable (c. 1580–1620),

and preserved amid workshop stock as a potentially useful piece or curio — and passed on from workshop to workshop. Whenever it was made, it neatly demonstrates the ingenuity, labour and skill that lies behind early marquetry.

For their observations on the block, I am very grateful to John Mercer and Peter Holmes, and to V&A colleagues Sarah Medlam, Dana Melchar and Yukiko Yoshii Barrow.

NICK HUMPHREY  
*Victoria and Albert Museum*

## BIFMO

The British and Irish Furniture Makers Online (BIFMO) project is working to develop a one-stop definitive site for people interested in the history of British and Irish furniture-makers. Currently, we are making major developmental changes to the content and functionality of the online resource that we would like to tell you about.

A small team of editors are revising and updating the contents of several hundred biographies first published in the *Dictionary of English Furniture Makers* and writing several thousand first-time accounts of more recently discovered artisans and craftspeople not included in the original collection. Accuracy and scholarly judgement are central to this endeavour, and BIFMO is most fortunate to have Adam Bowett as editor, developing its coverage of the furniture trade to keep in step with recent research and discoveries in the field.

Further content will also soon be published in the form of three previously

published sources: Francis Bamford's *Dictionary of Edinburgh Furniture Makers 1660–1840*, John Stabler's *A Dictionary of Norfolk Furniture Makers, 1700–1840* and Cliff Webb's transcription of London Upholders' Company apprenticeship bindings, 1704–72. By the end of 2019, the database will contain the details of at least 70,000 furniture-makers from the late medieval period to the early twentieth century.

Over the coming months, new biographical entries will be periodically published and work is currently ongoing to develop social network diagrams and maps, making it possible to visualize and engage with aspects of the historical furniture trade in new ways. We will be introducing interactive maps that chart connections between the craftspeople, artisans, architects and designers who gave their services to notable commissions at Ham, Burghley and Boughton in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. These visual representations of the relationships between tradespeople and their networks of manufacture and supply provide researchers with innovative ways of exploring how, and by whom, stately homes were maintained, renovated and supplied at specific points in time.

A second visualization programme is being undertaken in collaboration with IHR's Layers of London, a map-based history project comprising twelve

interactive historic maps dating from 1520 to 1945. BIFMO is mapping the details of 10,000 London furniture-makers onto their maps, 1660–1900. In some instances, household and shop inventories, probate wills, trade cards and published case studies will also be attached to furniture-makers' geographic pinpoint, so providing easy access to documents relating to makers and their premises. Layers of London maps and BIFMO biographies will be linked, enabling users to move seamlessly from source to source.

BIFMO is also making significant enhancements to the database functionality to facilitate both simple and advanced searches, thereby transforming the information in the database from a collection of digitized texts to a repository of research data, of which historians can ask increasingly sophisticated questions. In this way, the BIFMO site will also move from being a collection of established facts to a starting point for new research.

We are holding a conference on the afternoon of 17 October in the University of London, followed by a reception, to give our BIFMO audience the opportunity to discover and engage with our online resource and participate in a discussion about future developmental plans. Please see the 'Other Notices' section of this *Newsletter* for details on how to reserve a place.

LAURIE LINDEY  
*BIFMO Research Officer*



## FHS Annual Lecture

### 'Fait à Paris' and Made for Dresden. The Furniture of the *Ébéniste* Jean-Pierre Latz in the Saxon Court Collection

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

TUESDAY 29 OCTOBER 2019

6 PM FOR 6.30 PM START

Christiane Ernek-van der Goes, Research Assistant at the Kunstgerwerbemuseum (Museum of Decorative Arts) in Dresden will give this year's lecture, drawing on the work of the research and restoration project 'Jean-Pierre Latz. Fait à Paris' that she is conducting in a team together with conservators and natural scientists.

Jean-Pierre Latz (c. 1691–1754), a native of the Cologne region, became one of the best-known furniture-makers of the Rococo period in Paris. He had a strongly personal style, producing flamboyant pieces in wood and Boulle marquetry; he defied Parisian guild regulations to make his own gilt-bronze mounts, often elaborately sculptural in form.

Though working in Paris and having purchased the status of a 'Marchand ébéniste-privilégié du roi suivant la Cour et

des Conseils', no direct connection to the French court can be drawn. However, he supplied highly luxurious pieces to courtly patrons in other European states, including the Elector Augustus III of Saxony (also King of Poland) and his first minister, Count Brühl, as well as to Frederick II of Prussia and to Marie Louise Élisabeth de Bourbon, Duchess of Parma. The Dresden Collection — unique in its composition and quality as well as its well-preserved authentic condition — includes some of his most dramatic pieces, some of them authenticated by handwritten short messages, including his signature and the date of manufacturing.

Admission to the lecture is free, but attendance is by ticket only, which must be acquired in advance. Please apply to the Events Secretary by 18 October. Numbers are limited to 90.

## Annual General Meeting and Works in Progress

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

SATURDAY 23 NOVEMBER 2019

11.00 AM–1.00 PM (COFFEE FROM  
10.30 AM)

The Annual General Meeting for the year ending 30 June 2019 will be held in the East India Club. Tickets for a sandwich lunch with a glass of wine at the price of £20 per head should be booked with the Events

Secretary at least seven days in advance.

Talks include the following:

The Geffrye Museum of the Home is entering a new era. It is currently closed for a huge £18 million redevelopment, the 'Unlocking the Geffrye' project. Lucy Littlewood, Director of Development, will be giving us a sneaky peak of what we can expect to see when the doors reopen in spring next year. While the period rooms will remain, new spaces and galleries will be asking us to reveal and rethink the ways in which we live in order to live better together.

Dr Esmé Whittaker, Curator, Collections & Interiors, North London, for English Heritage, will speak on the redisplay project at Marble Hill. English Heritage is engaged in a major project to conserve and re-present the eighteenth-century Palladian villa, Marble Hill House in Twickenham. Dr Whittaker will focus her talk on the conservation of a marble-topped pier table with peacock carving, placing it in the context of the wider redisplay plans. The table, which was rediscovered in Australia in 1987, was one of four side tables made for Marble Hill's Great Room c. 1730. English Heritage has also commissioned a newly carved replica table to be displayed alongside the historic example.

Leela Meinertas, Curator, will also give an update from the V&A.

Full details of the meeting and all accompanying talks will be published in the November *Newsletter* and on the FHS website.

## The 44th Annual Symposium George IV — 1820 to 2020: Fresh Perspectives on the King's Furniture

THE WALLACE COLLECTION,  
MANCHESTER SQUARE,  
LONDON W1U 3BN  
SATURDAY 28 MARCH 2020  
10.00 AM–5.00 PM



George IV by Thomas Lawrence, 1822.  
© Wallace Collection, London

In the bicentenary year of George IV's accession, the Furniture History Society Symposium will present new lines of research on the king's long career as a patron and collector of furniture and furnishings. It aims to re-examine the driving forces behind his activities in this field, relationship with makers, actions as a collector, as well as his contemporary impact and longer-term legacy.

Further details will be published in the November *Newsletter* and on the FHS website.

Tickets to the Symposium will be available on Eventbrite in early February 2020. A detailed programme for the day will be available on the website in the New Year.

# 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. 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.

## Autumn Study Trip: South Hams in Devon

FRIDAY 11 OCTOBER–SUNDAY 13  
OCTOBER 2019

This study trip to Plymouth will be led by Lisa White and Christopher Overton.



Dorothy and  
Leonard Elmhirst



We will be staying at Dartington Hall in Totnes where, in 1925, Dorothy and Leonard Elmhirst started the Dartington Experiment, attracting some of the greatest artists, educators and political philosophers of the twentieth century. The rooms face the medieval listed courtyard with easy access to the gardens.

Planned visits include specific furniture-focused study mornings at Saltram and Antony, the latter with the current donor family. Visits to several private collections, including those at Bowringsleigh and Ashcombe Tower — the Art Deco house built for Sir Ralph and Lady Rayner by Brian O'Rorke — are also in the programme.

This visit was advertised in the February and May 2019 *Newsletters*. At the time of publication there may still be places available. Please contact the Events Secretary for details.

## Spring Study Trip: North Wales

FRIDAY 15 MAY—SUNDAY 17 MAY 2020

This Spring Study Weekend will be led by Dr Tessa Murdoch, Research Curator, The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Collection, V&A. We shall be staying in Llandudno.

Further details in the November *Newsletter* and on the website.



Penrhyn Castle, North Wales

# Occasional and Overseas Visits

## Visit to Aston Hall and St Mary's College, Oscott

ASTON HALL, TRINITY ROAD,  
ASTON, BIRMINGHAM B6 6JD

ST MARY'S COLLEGE, OSCOTT,  
CHESTER ROAD, SUTTON  
COLDFIELD, BIRMINGHAM B73 5AA

MONDAY 11 NOVEMBER 2019

11.30 AM–4.00 PM

We will start our day at Aston Hall, a leading example of the Jacobean prodigy house situated in a picturesque public park. Designed by John Thorpe, it was built between 1618 and 1635 for Sir Thomas Holte and was home to James Watt Junior from 1817 to 1864. The house contains outstanding panelling and plasterwork. In 1864, the house was bought by Birmingham Corporation,

becoming the first historic country house to pass into municipal ownership. It is still owned by Birmingham City Council, managed by the Birmingham Museums Trust, and a major renovation project was completed in 2009. The furniture reflects collecting of the last 150 years, with much early oak furniture and other pieces illustrating the different periods of alterations and additions to the house.

After lunch at Aston Hall, we will visit St Mary's College, Oscott, the Roman Catholic seminary of the Archdiocese of Birmingham in England and one of three seminaries of the Catholic Church in England and Wales. During our tour with the curator Naomi Johnson, we will learn about its fascinating history and see the chapel, library, cloisters and museum. In 1837, A. W. N. Pugin was introduced to Oscott and replaced the previous architect, Joseph Potter of Lichfield. His work in the



St Mary's  
College, Oscott

chapel includes the altar constructed from medieval fragments, wooden sculptures and the pulpit where John Henry Newman preached his sermon, later known as 'The Second Spring', during the first synod of the restored Catholic hierarchy in 1852.

**COST: £60 (INCLUDES LUNCH)**

**LIMIT: 20**

**CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS:  
FRIDAY 13 SEPTEMBER 2019**

## Visit to the Frederick Parker Collection

LONDON METROPOLITAN  
UNIVERSITY (SPECIAL COLLECTIONS  
BUILDING), 25 OLD CASTLE STREET,  
LONDON E1 7NT

(ENTRY VIA THE UNIVERSITY  
ENTRANCE AT CALCUTTA HOUSE,  
OLD CASTLE STREET)

**JANUARY 2020 (DATE TBC)**

The Frederick Parker Chair Collection comprises a fascinating collection of around 200 chairs, almost all made in Britain over the past 350 years, showing a wide variety of materials, forms, decoration and design. The earliest is an oak-framed chair with a leather-covered seat and back, made in about 1660, and the latest is the Femur Stool, designed by Assa Ashuach in 2013, based on human bone structure and made as a prototype by 3D printing.

Most of the chair collection was formed in the early decades of the twentieth century by Frederick Parker (1845–1927) and Sons. This was a time when antique styles were popular and Parker bought antiques in order to copy or adapt them as



The Frederick Parker Chair Collection and Archive

reproductions, less expensive than antiques and better suited to daily use. Most of the chairs collected by the Parker firm date from between 1660 and 1830, and include Queen Anne, Georgian and Regency styles.

In 1997, the Frederick Parker Foundation was formed and acquired 170 of the most significant chairs to ensure their future use for handling and educational purposes. In 2013, ownership was transferred to the Worshipful Company of Furniture Makers. Our visit comprises of a specialist half-day study session, including the archive, which covers over 100 years of furniture manufacture by Frederick Parker and Parker Knoll, and includes designs, furniture, fabric samples, advertising material and business records, thousands of documents in hundreds of archive boxes, now catalogued and accessible online.

Full details including the confirmed date will be published in the November *Newsletter* and on the FHS website.

**CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS:  
FRIDAY 6 DECEMBER 2019**



## Visit to Hatfields Restoration

26/28 SIDNEY ROAD,  
LONDON SW9 0TS

WEDNESDAY 4 MARCH 2020

John Ayres Hatfield founded his company in 1834, referring to himself as a 'bronzist', one of only a handful in London in the nineteenth century. By 1850, the company was working at Windsor Castle and described as 'J. Hatfield, Bronze & Ormolu Manufacturer, Groups-Statues [...] and all kinds of Works of Art from Models, Designs or Originals cast and executed to the Antique'. In 1882, the firm was granted a Royal Warrant by Queen Victoria. Later the Hatfield family was given an apartment in the Louvre and employed to work on the bronzes there.

The company today continues to produce bronze, ormolu and brass objects and specialize in working with brass marquetry (Bouille) and its care and cleaning. The team consists of cabinet-makers, conservators and polishers, with a lacquer worker, gilder and an upholsterer.

COST: £28 (INCLUDES TEA/COFFEE)

LIMIT: 15

CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS:  
10 JANUARY 2020

## Visit to Syon House

SYON PARK, BRENTFORD,  
MIDDLESEX TW8 8JF

TUESDAY 11 FEBRUARY 2020

2.00-4.00 PM

This visit to Syon will focus on the dramatic Robert Adam interiors and key

pieces of furniture. In the State Dining Room, we will see the clock acquired by the 2nd Duke and made in England by Swiss clock-maker Benjamin Vulliamy, and the ornate Adam-designed pier tables and remnants of the state dining table. In the Long Gallery, we will see the false bookcase within Adam's design of sixty-two Corinthian pilasters, gilded and painted, along with classical trailing stucco mouldings which replaced the heavy Jacobean panelled walls. The Print Room contains important pieces of furniture from the seventeenth century, including a secretaire and desk with tortoiseshell and brass inlay, designed by André-Charles Boulle. This visit will include Queen Victoria's room where she stayed when young, plus that of her mother the Duchess of Kent, also the store rooms, which are not on view to the public. The visit ends with tea in the Drawing Room with a member of the Percy family.

COST: £28 (INCLUDES TEA/COFFEE)

LIMIT: 20

CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS:  
FRIDAY 29 NOVEMBER 2019



The Print Room at Syon House

## Overseas Study Trip: The Netherlands

THURSDAY 19 SEPTEMBER–SUNDAY  
22 SEPTEMBER 2019

This Autumn Study Trip to the Netherlands will be led by Steven Coene, Head of Collections and Presentation at the Royal Collections of the Netherlands, and Saskia Broekema, and will cover traditional country-house furniture collections with an international touch in the provinces of Utrecht and Gelderland, as well as early twentieth-century interiors.

We will start with a visit to the Atelier Building of the Rijksmuseum, where conservation and restoration is in progress on two important seventeenth-century Japanese lacquer cabinets from the Dutch Royal collection and a famous Japanese lacquer chest, the so-called Mazarin chest, from the collection of the Rijksmuseum. Over the four days, we will visit the castles of Rosendaal, Biljoen, De Haar, Huis Doorn and Amerongen, the hunting lodge of Jachthuis St Hubertus in the Hoge Veluwe National Park, Rietveld Schröderhuis and the Raadhuis (Town Hall).

This visit was advertised in the February and May 2019 *Newsletters*. At the



Amerongen Castle

time of publication there may still be places available. Please contact the Events Secretary for details.

## Spring Overseas Trip: New York

FRIDAY 17 APRIL–SUNDAY 19 APRIL  
2020

The year 2020 will mark the 150th anniversary of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. To mark the occasion, the museum will reopen its completely remodelled British Galleries. The FHS will be given a private tour of the new space by the Galleries' newly appointed curator, Wolf Burchard. Please keep an eye on the website for further details, which will also be in the November *Newsletter*.

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

# Other Notices

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

## 'One rich stone table inlaid'

In 2018 a superb exhibition, *The Paston Treasure* (Yale Center for British Art, Newhaven; Norwich Castle Museum), brought into focus the painting so titled in Norwich, an unparalleled representation of an English *Kunstammer*, and assembled surviving treasures from Oxnead Hall, the great Paston mansion north of Norwich, of which only fragments remain. A star was an armorial Florentine table top, a unique and princely pre-Civil War survival. Hitherto in a private collection, its purchase is now being pursued by Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery. So far an appeal has raised £877,250, through the generosity of national grant-making bodies, local charities and private donors, leaving a shortfall of £16,850.

**Members are strongly urged to support this appeal** (cheques, made out to Norfolk Museums Development Fund, to Francesca Vanke, Keeper of Art, Norwich Castle Museum, 24 Castle Meadow, Norwich NR1 3JU).

The magnificent table top (sold Christie's, London, 1992; Sotheby's, London, 2006) resembles one in the

Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, previously in the Schatzkammer. They differ in that the array of flowers, fruit, leaves, birds and butterflies on the Vienna example is denser, exposing less black background, and the Paston top incorporates four oval reserves containing coats of arms around the central garland, on areas of black which in Vienna contain single flowers.

These reserves display the Paston arms (argent, six fleurs-de-lis, three, two and one, azure, a chief indented, or), crest (a griffin sejant), supporters (a bear and an ostrich: the Paston family long used supporters as gentry, not peers) and motto ('DE MEIVX • ENMEIVX IE • PENSE'). The absence of a coronet suggests that the top was made before Sir Robert Paston (1631–83) was raised to the viscountcy of Yarmouth in 1673. The 1992 and 2006 catalogues proposed that he commissioned the table before this elevation. But its style is early seventeenth century and, although Robert Paston reputedly travelled to France in the late 1640s, there is no evidence that he visited Italy. His father, William Paston (1610–63), created a baronet in 1641, is the more plausible candidate. He arrived in Florence in 1638, and was met by Nicholas Stone (1618–47), son of the sculptor of that name, employed by the Pastons since 1629. Stone, who attempted to gain the secrets of the *pietre dure* manufactory, the Galleria dei Lavori, but was kindly received by the Grand



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

Duke Ferdinando, acted as Paston's bear-leader and Paston gave him 'a case with a knife with an agate halft to give to Sr Bastian Keper of the Gallery'.

Given the relationship that Paston, a wealthy gentleman, had established with the keeper of the Galleria and, probably, with the Grand Duke ('The modell of ye Duke of Florence diamond, laying upon agat pedestall', in the pre-1673 Oxnead Hall inventory, may be a grand-ducal present), he was well placed to acquire the table. It fits into a group whose design is derived from Jacopo Ligozzi (1547–1627). The ovals with the Paston coats of arms read as later insertions. William Paston seems to have picked out an existing table, possibly incomplete, with sufficient black

space for their inclusion and had it converted into a Paston heirloom. Whether this was a gift from the Grand Duke or transformed with his approval (the Galleria was a princely monopoly) or by some backstairs arrangement is unknown.

Unique in its English context, it must be the 'one rich stone table inlaid' listed in the best closet in the new buildings in the 1683 inventory of Oxnead Hall, then supplied with 'one blew damask carpet', a protective table carpet, as was normal. Norwich Castle Museum owns not only the *Paston Treasure* painting but also a strombus shell mounted in enamel, the only object in the painting publicly owned in the United Kingdom. It would be wonderful if the table top could be shown alongside, demonstrating the



international richness, quality and ambition of the Paston collection.

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Alvar González-Palacios, *Il Tempio del Gusto*, II (Milan, 1986), figs 169–72.

SIMON SWYNFEN JERVIS

## Participate and Explore British and Irish Furniture Makers Online

CONFERENCE TO BE HELD IN THE  
CRUSH HALL, SENATE HOUSE,  
MALET STREET, LONDON WC1E 7HU  
ON THURSDAY 17 OCTOBER 2019,  
2.30–6.30 PM, FOLLOWED BY  
DRINKS RECEPTION

Please join us for an afternoon to discover and engage with this innovative, free-to-use online resource (see latest progress report in this Newsletter, p. 10). The programme will include talks by the BIFMO Research and Digital teams, before moving on to consider case studies of individual furniture-makers. This session will include as guest speaker

Dr Robert Leith (Chief Curator, MESDA and member of CODA (Consortium of Online Decorative Arts)). The second half of the afternoon will be a round table discussion and will include speakers from a variety of areas of interest such as Andrew Cox-Whittaker (furniture restorer and researcher on Wright & Elwick), Sarah Medlam (Victoria and Albert Museum), Crispin Powell (archivist, Boughton), Amy Todd (Layers of London) and others involved with history from various points of view. The organizers of this conference hope that attendees will participate and help form future plans for the resource.

This conference is sponsored by the Foyle Foundation. There is no charge for entry to this event, but booking is essential. Please register on <https://www.history.ac.uk/events/event/20021> or call 07766 760825. For a full programme, please email: <mailto:bifmo.research@gmail.com>



Joshua Reynolds talking to Thomas Chippendale, English School, lithograph, twentieth century. Private collection at Look and Learn/Bridgeman Images

## The Bauhaus in Bristol

The Ken Stradling Collection in Bristol is organizing an exhibition in the autumn of their iconic Breuer-designed pieces to celebrate the centenary of the Bauhaus, and are planning a seminar in November on *The Bauhaus in Bristol*. The morning will cover Breuer first at the Bauhaus then in Bristol, with a session on the Gane Pavilion of 1936. The afternoon will look at legacy — the Bristol Guild, which flew the flag for modern design after the war, a quirky Bauhaus programme at Bristol Polytechnic in the 1960s and the Product and Design course at UWE today, which is run on Bauhaus lines. For further details, see: [www.stradlingcollection.org](http://www.stradlingcollection.org)

## Study Day: Eighteenth-Century Furniture at Blair Castle, led by David Jones

BLAIR CASTLE, PERTHSHIRE

FRIDAY 1 NOVEMBER 2019

10.00 AM–4.30 PM

Blair Castle, Perthshire, was transformed in the first half of the eighteenth century, employing the most fashionable craftsmen to create a Palladian mansion furnished with pieces by the leading English and Scottish cabinet-makers. James Murray, 2nd Duke of Atholl (1690–1764) spent over ten years working on the interior, creating new State Rooms, installing marble chimneypieces by Thomas Carter, rococo plasterwork by Thomas Clayton and a

new staircase designed by Abraham Swan, who was also responsible for chinoiserie garden architecture in the surrounding designed landscape. Between 1748 and 1761 a varied roll-call of cabinet-makers supplied items to the house. The list includes Thomas Chippendale the Elder, Chipchase & Lambert, John Gordon (of Gordon & Taitt), William Masters, John Hodson, John Schaw and George Sandeman. Their work is fully documented and supported by a series of bills kept in the castle archive. Highlights of the collection are undoubtedly the Chippendale pieces, which are the earliest documented (pre-Dumfries House) items in the Director style and the furniture made from estate materials. These include the striking broom wood desk and bookcase (1758) by George Sandeman and the pair of larch and Glen Tilt marble cabinets made by George Bullock for John, 4th Duke of Atholl, in 1817/18. The study day will be based in the Private Library of the castle, where it will be possible to scrutinize pieces and their associated documentation in some detail. Other furniture will be studied *in situ*. There will be the opportunity (weather permitting) to see over the extensive rococo gardens — the most northerly in Britain.

**COST: £80.00 (INCLUDES A SOUP AND SANDWICH LUNCH, TEA / COFFEE)**

Accommodation if required is available: [helen@atholl-estates.co.uk](mailto:helen@atholl-estates.co.uk)

To book, email [archive@blair-castle.co.uk](mailto:archive@blair-castle.co.uk)

# Book Reviews

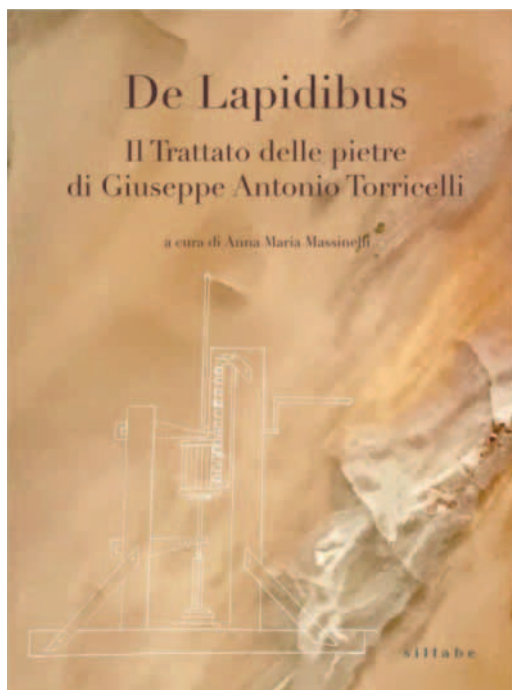
Suggestions for future reviews and publishers' review copies should be sent to Simon Swynfen Jervis, 45 Bedford Gardens, London W8 7EF (tel. 020 7727 8739; email: ss.jervis@btopenworld.com).

ANNA MARIA MASSINELLI, *De Lapidibus, Il Trattato delle pietre di Giuseppe Antonio Torricelli* (Leghorn: Sillabe, 2019). 120 pp., 104 col., 21 b. & w. illus. ISBN 9788833400778. €20

Richly illustrated, densely annotated, with a fine bibliography, *De Lapidibus* is good value. It presents the best manuscript of a treatise, dated 1714, by the Florentine

hardstone craftsman Giuseppe Antonio Torricelli (Fiesole 1659–Florence 1719), the protagonist of the Galleria dei Lavori under Grand Duke Cosimo III (reigned 1670–1723). Prefaced by revelatory diagrams of machines and tools, originally drawn on a visit in 1695 to Milan which had specialized in working hardstone since the ascendancy of the Miseroni family in the sixteenth century, it comprises an anatomy of the bones of the world, as he calls its stones, starting in Florence but fanning outwards to Bohemia, Saxony, France and wider (including Persia for lapis lazuli). Details of locations, rarity, colour, price and ease of working reflect forty years searching for rare stones, and Torricelli's own technical inventions and achievements, although he is self-deprecatory about his literary skills. The notes include generous references Del Riccio's *Istoria delle pietre* (1597) and Targioni Tozzetti's works of the 1750s to 1770s on Tuscan geology, and there are generous colour illustrations both of stone specimens and of worked stones.

One essay by Massinelli presents the treatise in the contexts of earlier and later studies and the history of prospecting for stones; a second chronicles *pietre dure* sculpture in Florence, focusing on the ciborium of the Cappella dei Principi, commenced in 1603, on which Torricelli and his father, Gaetano, worked, and on Torricelli's rich and laborious productions,

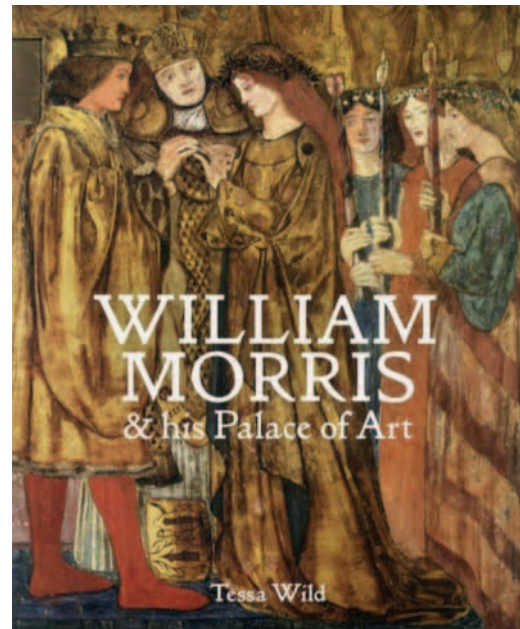


from the cherub and fruit on the *prie-dieu* of the Electress Palatine (1706) to the life-size bust of Grand Duchess Vittoria della Rovere, completed in 1713; a third (by Gabriella Tassinari) describes the substantial glyptic oeuvre of Torricelli's grandson, Giuseppe (1691–1757 or 1759), who worked for several English or Irish Grand Tourists.

SSJ

TESSA WILD, *William Morris and his Palace of Art* (London: Philip Wilson Publishers and National Trust, 2018). 272 pp., 175 col., 33 b. & w. illus. ISBN 9781 78130 0558. £35

Red House, designed for William Morris by Philip Webb in 1859, is famous. But, because its red-brick domestic Gothic was anticipated by Butterfield and Street, Webb's master, its claim to architectural originality has diminished since Aymer Vallance in 1897 and Hermann Muthesius in 1904 hailed it as initiating a new era in house design. And, since Nicholas Cooper demonstrated in 2006 that it was little known in three decades after Morris moved away in 1865, its influence has been questioned. Even so, in 1860 George Price Boyce pronounced that Morris's 'house is altogether the best designed and most interesting I know'. For the later twentieth century it was in the conscientious ownership of Edward Hollamby, a modernist London County Council architect, who published an account of the house in 1991, and inserted carefully designed fitments in a 1950s manner, following the tenets of the Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings, based on Morris's teaching. The house



demanded saving, if only for its importance as the key Morris shrine preceding Kelmscott Manor. But when the National Trust dutifully took over in 2003 it was difficult not to see it as somewhat sad, empty and pale, and diminished. What more was there to do or say?

Tessa Wild's spirited book provides the answer. There are no major revelations on Red House's architecture, of which she gives a sound account. But the National Trust's investigation of the fabric, carried out under her aegis as curator, proved fruitful and revealing and, buttressed by her own vigorous research, transforms its image, restoring a sense of its original richness of pattern, colour (she even provides 'A Red House colour chart' with sixteen colours), textiles, and figurative paintings and embroideries. A surprising amount of furniture survived *in situ*, as well as ceiling patterns and stained glass, and major elements of decoration were



discovered and some uncovered. A digital reconstruction of the south end of the drawing room dramatically demonstrates what has been lost or obscured. And Wild has gathered many images of escapees surviving elsewhere, notably at Kelmscott. By good fortune, an unfinished embroidery of Aphrodite, for the dining room, was acquired at auction in Edinburgh and a dining table identified in a private collection. Her exploration of literary sources for decoration, *Sir Degrevant*, Chaucer and Dante, and visual models drawn from medieval manuscripts and Giotto (the famous *armoires* at Noyon and Bayeux might have been mentioned for the furniture), enriches its significance. Not for nothing does her title cite Tennyson's *The Palace of Art*, as did Morris himself.

The decoration and furnishing of Red House has sometimes been perceived and

presented as incoherent. Wild makes a strong case for a unified vision, also incorporating the garden. This was never fully realized, but with Morris himself, Webb, Burne-Jones and Rossetti as key participants, it was no amateur production but rather boldly experimental. Her book presents a Red House revitalized, but the unspoken sub-text is that there is more to be done. Although later interventions have a minor interest and should be carefully recorded, the six heroic — and very jolly — years from 1859 to 1865 were Red House's apogee and the reason for its significance. This book reveals and celebrates Morris's achievement, but also suggests that the National Trust should grasp the ethical nettle and row backwards — carefully, sensitively, but inexorably — towards his vision.

SIMON SWYNFEN JERVIS

# 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)

## Visit to the Museum of Freemasonry

THURSDAY 24 JANUARY 2019  
FREEMASONS' HALL, 60 GREAT  
QUEEN STREET, LONDON WC2B 5AZ

We began our visit to with an extensive guided tour of Freemasons' Hall led by Mark Dennis, museum curator, who explained that planning for the present structure commenced in 1919, with the building reaching completion in 1933. The monolithic structure was conceived as a memorial to the 3,225 Freemasons who lost their lives in the Great War, and the design was the result of a competition, won by architects Henry Victor Ashley and F. Winton Newman.

A highlight of the tour was the Grand Temple (the main hall), accessed via colossal bronze doors, designed by Walter Gilbert (1871–1946), founder of the Bromsgrove Guild. At the far end of the

123-foot (37.49 m) room stands the monumental organ made by Henry Wills & Sons; whilst in the hall, Kathryn Haddock, a FHS member who recently completed a MA dissertation on the Masonic chair, explained the purpose of the three throne chairs in the ceremonial tradition of Freemasonry and the significance of their positioning in the east, west and south during use. Kathryn also explained that the traditional hierarchy of the classical orders is not adhered to in masonic symbolism.

Martin Cherry, resident librarian, then described the emergence of modern Freemasonry at the turn of the eighteenth-century and how the two Grand Lodges, Ancients and Moderns, joined to form the United Grand Lodge of England in 1813, with Sir John Soane commissioned to design an ark to house the articles of union. Sadly, Soane's ark burnt in 1883, but drawings survive in the collection of Sir John Soane's Museum, allowing the lost ark to be recreated for the 2017 tercentenary celebrations.

In the museum, we inspected the magnificent Grand Master's throne (with Doric capitals to the stiles), which was commissioned (along with the prerequisite attendant wardens' chairs — bearing Ionic and Corinthian capitals), from Robert Kennett in 1791 for the use of the Prince of Wales (later George IV) following his assumption of the office of Grand Master in 1790.



Office of Sir John Soane, drawing for an ark for Freemason's Hall, Great Queen Street, 1813 (ref. 14/4/6). Photo © Sir John Soane's Museum, London. Photography by Ardon Bar Hama

The chair is very much in the French fashion propagated by Daguerre and Holland and expounded by the Prince, and is recorded in an early nineteenth-century portrait of the Prince as Grand Master. The little-known maker's design had been selected via an open competition (see BIFMO record:

<https://bifmo.history.ac.uk/entry/kennett-robert-kidd-william-1766-95>). The throne, said to be 3 metres high, is designed to be dismantled for transit and its proportions

and detailing are very successful, something we would later see just how difficult it is to achieve on these large-scale chairs.

Sarah Medlam then guided us through the many other chairs held in the collection, and we were able to witness the development of the masonic chair through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. There was a clear distinction between the well-proportioned 'town-made' chairs and their simpler, more rigid provincial counterparts, with the latter generally being elongated and less successful adaptations of popular published domestic chair designs, rather than being conceived specifically for purpose. Amongst the first we inspected was a mid-eighteenth-century carved and parcel-gilt mahogany set derived from the Chippendale designs for domestic chairs. Interestingly, this master's chair incorporates Corinthian capitals and was illustrated by M. Harris & Sons in *The English Chair: Its History and Evolution* (London, 1946), p. 168, pl. XCVI.

We then witnessed the progression of provincial design through the eighteenth century as we approached a set of mahogany chairs where Hepplewhite was clearly the significant influence. The backrest to these chairs centred on Prince-of-Wales' feathers, suggesting a date during the Prince's tenure as Grand Master. Another master's chair, originating from Preston, Lancashire, was much more domestic in design with the symbolism largely confined to a panel of inlay to the top rail. Through this chair in particular the struggle with proportion was clearly evident, although the standard of

Members  
admiring the  
Kennett throne  
of 1791



craftsmanship and timber employed was high, leading Sarah to suggest it may have been produced by a Gillows-trained craftsman.

We then moved upstairs to the mezzanine level of the library where we saw a wide collection of chairs, some owned by the lodge and others that are held on behalf of other lodges. Particularly notable amongst these were two impressive sets of mid-eighteenth-century chairs of rococo design, their balanced

proportion suggesting London manufacture and their comparison to a related Matthias Lock sketch of c. 1740 in the V&A (2848.146) is worthy of note.

For those of you who have not visited, Freemasons' Hall is highly recommended. The current exhibition at the Museum of Freemasonry, *Bejewelled — Badges, Brotherhood and Identity*, continues until 24 August. Admission is free. See: [museumfreemasonry.org.uk](http://museumfreemasonry.org.uk) for details.

ADRIAN HUME-SAYER



# Report on the 43rd Annual Symposium: *Pietre Dure*

In association with the  
Rosalinde and Arthur  
Gilbert Collection, V&A

SATURDAY 30 MARCH 2019

THE WALLACE COLLECTION,  
MANCHESTER SQUARE, LONDON  
W1U 3BN

This year's Symposium, organized by Dr Tessa Murdoch, Gilbert Research Curator, was chaired by Alice Minter, Curator, the Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Collection, V&A; Rebecca Wallis, Curator, National Trust; and Philip Hewat-Jaboor, Chairman of Masterpiece Fair. The day included a demonstration of *pietre dure* materials and

techniques by Florentine-trained Thomas Greenaway and coincided with additional events at the V&A, National Trust and The Queen's Gallery.

Synopses prepared by the speakers:

CHRISTOPHER ROWELL,  
CHAIRMAN OF THE FHS,  
SENIOR CURATOR OF FURNITURE,  
NATIONAL TRUST

## *Pietre dure Masterpieces*

### *Deferred from Export 2016–17*

From December 2015 to April 2016 the UK Export Reviewing Committee considered a flurry of applications to export five highly significant pieces of Italian *pietre dure* furniture from historic British collections.

The first case was a pair of Roman cabinets from Castle Howard made in Rome around 1625 on later gilded mahogany

British stands, which was acquired by the Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge, in celebration of the bicentenary of its foundation. The value on the export licence application was £1,265,000 (plus VAT of £43,000). The cabinets were acquired with the help of significant grants from the NHMF and the Art Fund.

The other two cases, involving three more items of *pietre dure*, ended less happily, with the granting of export licences following export stops that failed to attract a serious intention to raise the necessary funds. The first involved two Florentine

Thomas Greenaway demonstration



rectangular table tops with geometric decoration framing views of the Colosseum and the Porto Mediceo at Livorno after designs by Antonio Cioci (d. 1792), the chief designer of the Florentine Opificio delle Pietre Dure. They had been provided with early nineteenth-century gilt-bronze mounted mahogany console tables for display in the picture gallery at Panshanger, the seat of the Earls Cowper. They were acquired by the Florentine resident, the 3rd Earl Cowper, one of the greatest of all British eighteenth-century expatriate collectors and patrons. The tables and the hardstone tops had a valuation of £1,500,000 and they were stopped on all three Waverley criteria. Again, despite their distinction, no British institution came forward to raise the money for their acquisition and an export licence was granted. The final case involved a magnificent and immensely rare rectangular table top made in Florence in c. 1600–20, with a neo-Elizabethan/Louis XIV gilded table support made for the Green Drawing Room at Warwick Castle between 1830 and 1847. The top bears the arms of the Venetian Grimani family and as such is one of four surviving Florentine armorial table tops of this early date. Its dramatic and colourful design is dominated by the prolific use of Sicilian orange, red and green jasper ‘diaspro di Sicilia’ and radiant blue lapis lazuli. Sold for £3,509,000 (plus VAT), no attempt to raise the funds was forthcoming and an export licence was therefore issued.

The talk described these exceptional pieces, drawing attention to the fact that the ‘flood’ of *pietre dure* into this country during the eighteenth century is now on the ebb.

ENRICO COLLE, DIRECTOR OF THE  
MUSEO STIBBERT, FLORENCE

### *Francesco Stefano di Lorena and the Manufacture of pietre dure in Florence 1737–65*

This lecture detailed the changing taste in mid-eighteenth-century Florence when the production of *commessi* in the late Baroque-style on a black ground was abandoned in favour of landscape and the human figure. Through Giuseppe Zocchi’s paintings, preserved in the museum of the Opificio delle Pietre Dure, Florence, Enrico Colle has focused his attention on thirteen panels commissioned for Emperor Francesco Stefano’s Drawing Room in his Viennese palace. Colle compared these panels with the paintings, preparatory drawings and archival documents to illustrate an important commission which took about twenty years to complete.

PROFESSOR ANNA MARIA  
MASSINELLI, ACCADEMIA DI BELLE  
ARTI, BRERA (MILAN)

### *Giacomo Raffaelli (1753–1836), a Connoisseur of Stones and Sophisticated Master of Lapidary Art*

This talk explored some of the masterworks executed in the studio of the Roman mosaicist Giacomo Raffaelli between the last decade of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth. The artist’s workshop on the corner of Piazza di Spagna, Rome, was a place of pilgrimage for European aristocrats, who

eagerly acquired plaques, tables and jewellery fashioned by the master of Roman micromosaics. His fame earned him prestige and accolades, and in 1804 he founded a mosaic school in Milan, appointed by the Napoleonic government. He remained there till 1820, and on his return to Rome he continued working with his son, Vincenzo, in a new workshop in Via del Babuino. The extensive archival documentation examined allows us to read the Raffaelli production in a new light, to add important information to some of his known pieces and to better understand the novelty in Raffaelli works, consisting of the way he integrated inlaid marbles and hardstones into a whole system of production, which included micromosaics, marble sculptures and bronzes.

JEAN-DOMINIQUE AUGARDE AND  
GRÉGORY MAUGÉ, ART HISTORIANS  
*Francesco Belloni (1772–1844), a  
‘Mosaic Artist’ in Paris from the  
Directoire to Louis-Philippe:  
Works and New Identifications*

This paper took as its subject the remarkable career of this artist, discussing marble table tops, mantelpieces, portraits of Napoleon and Louis XVIII, floor decorations and furniture, for prestigious patrons including the Emperor, Empress Josephine, Prince Eugène de Beauharnais and rich English aristocrats.

Francis William Blagdon (1778–1819) described the workshop of Francesco Belloni at the former Collège de Navarre (1772–1844) in his book *Paris as it was and as it is ...* (London, 1803):

On the same floor is the workshop of Mosaic. It is under the direction of BELLONI, who has invented methods, by means of which he has introduced Mosaic into articles of furniture, and for the pavement of rich apartments, at prices far inferior to what might be imagined. The principal articles here exhibited, as specimens, are: — 1. Superb marble tables and stands, in which are inserted ornaments and pictures in Mosaic, or incrustated in the Florentine manner — 2. A large pavement, where the beauty and variety of the marbles are relieved by embellished incrustations — 3. Small pictures, in which the painting, in very fine Mosaic, is raised on an even ground of one piece of black marble — 4. Large tables, composed of specimens of fine-grained stones, such as jasper, agate, carnelion, lapis lazuli, &c. and also of valuable marbles, distributed into compartments and after a design imitated from the antique, and enriched with a few incrustated pictures, representing animals and flowers. Besides these, here are to be seen other essays of a kind entirely new. These are marbles, intended for furniture, coloured in an indelible manner. Sometimes the figures and ornaments in them are coloured in the ground; sometimes they are in colour, but raised on a ground of white marble.

On 13 vendémiaire year V (4 October 1796), the Minister of the Interior wrote to the members of the Directoire: ‘le citoyen Belloni, romain, artiste en mosaïque, arrivé à Paris avec sa tante, sa sœur et trois enfants de sa sœur, demande à rester dans cette commune pour y exercer ses talents. Sa tante et sa sœur travaillent dans le même art’, underlining that it would be ‘intéressant de naturaliser et de propager en France les principes de cet art antique’.

Belloni’s works encompass all genres of mosaics, from copies of large canvases to the smallest miniatures, as well as intarsias in the manner of Florentine *pietre dure* and mosaics of coloured glass cubes.

KATE HAY, ASSISTANT CURATOR,  
FURNITURE, TEXTILES AND  
FASHION DEPARTMENT, V&A

### *Pietre dure in Britain and Malta in the Nineteenth Century*

The popularity among British travellers of buying Italian *pietre dure* stimulated the establishment, in the 1830s, of marble workshops in Britain in areas which had access to the necessary materials, skills and markets. Around Matlock in Derbyshire, and Torquay in Devon, where seams of beautifully coloured and figured limestones were found, enterprising workshops made inlaid tables and smaller objects to sell to the many visitors to the health spas or the seaside. At around the same time in Malta, which had been a British colony since 1800, marble craftsmen began to diversify into making decorative table tops for the numerous British naval officers and travellers passing through the port.

PROFESSOR LUDMILA BUDRINA,  
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF THE  
HISTORY OF ART DEPARTMENT,  
URAL FEDERAL UNIVERSITY

### *Russian Imperial Furniture with pietre dure from Peterhof, 1840–70*

The Imperial lapidary factory at Peterhof was the first Russian centre for the development of coloured stones. From the time of Catherine the Great, this factory employed different mosaic techniques. The paper described the various types of mosaic made by this factory for furniture. The most fruitful period for mosaics at

Peterhof was the mid-nineteenth century when Florentine mosaic was made from coloured stones, Russian mosaic from malachite or lapis lazuli, and mosaics in relief were used to decorate tables, cabinets and fireplaces.

The lecture reviewed the origins of these types of mosaics in Russia, illustrating the most important examples and technical application.

PAUL DYSON, INDEPENDENT  
SCHOLAR

### *Malachite Furniture and Furnishings*

Malachite has always enjoyed an ability to catch the eye with its brilliant colour. Paul Dyson showed where it comes from, its different markings and how it is worked to gain maximum visual effect. He detailed the transformative skills of Leopold Joffriand's machines, which were used to create Russian 'Malachite Mosaic' and to apply malachite veneer onto forms carved in stone. From 1790 to the early twentieth century Russian furniture reflects Imperial patronage. Later, malachite was used on a smaller scale for the tourist and carriage trade. Dyson illustrated Russian interiors featuring malachite and examples in British collections acquired as Russian Imperial gifts or as a result of the Russian Revolution and collectors' obsession with this extraordinary material.

SUSAN STRONGE, ACTING KEEPER,  
ASIAN DEPARTMENT, V&A

### *An Indian Chessboard*

In 1874, the South Kensington Museum acquired a marble table top inlaid with



semi-precious stones. It was made in the former Mughal royal city of Agra, and its design was described as ‘Lady Canning’s pattern’. It seemed to be an artefact made purely to satisfy the taste of Victorian tourists who travelled in considerable numbers to the city. However, the history of *pietre dure* in India dates to the reign of Shah Jahan (r. 1628–58). The foreign technique was reinterpreted in Mughal style and used to ornament some of the most famous seventeenth-century imperial buildings. It survived the massive disruption to artistic creativity caused by the slow disintegration of the Mughal empire throughout the eighteenth century, and had a spectacular renaissance in the early nineteenth century under Sikh court patronage. Because the centre of production had always been Agra, tourists visiting the Taj Mahal throughout the nineteenth century bought small, portable artefacts made by traditional craftsmen, comprising white marble inlaid with semi-precious stones in Mughal designs, and continue to do so today.

RUFUS BIRD, SURVEYOR OF THE  
QUEEN’S WORKS OF ART

### *George IV and the Recycling of Seventeenth-Century Work*

Like some of his contemporaries, George, Prince of Wales, later George IV, was an enthusiastic collector of *pietre dure* mounted furniture. However, pieces in the Royal Collection point to a deep-rooted interest in the subject. Rufus examined how these pieces were acquired and subsequently reused by George IV. He

discussed the range of furniture with *pietre dure* plaques acquired by George IV and the interiors in which they were placed.

RACHEL ELWES, CO-DIRECTOR, BEN  
ELWES FINE ART

### *Marjorie Merriweather Post and Florentine Commissions for Mar- a-Lago*

Rachel Elwes described the astonishing interiors at Mar-a-Lago commissioned by the Grape Nuts’ heiress, Marjorie Merriweather Post (1887–1973). Post owned the Postum Cereal Company and became the wealthiest woman in the US. Mar-a-Lago was designed for ‘the Queen Bee of Palm Beach’ and her then-husband Edward Francis Hutton by the Viennese architect Joseph Urban. It cost 1.5 million dollars more than originally planned; its lavish interiors were furnished with the richest materials. The Florentine Montelatici workshop (they operated as the Società Civile Arte del Mosaico) supplied the vast dining table to Urban’s designs, which was over 16 ft (4.88 m) long with six extension leaves that added 12 ft (3.65 m) to the total length. This is now at Hillwood, Washington, DC.

Post also commissioned the Tuscan snowy landscape scene ‘The Return from Market’ from the Montelatici workshop based on a painting by Stefano Bruzzi (1835–1911) in the Bruzzi family collection in Piacenza, Italy. Acquired by Arthur Gilbert, this remarkable use of Carrara marble to represent snow was displayed from 2009 to 2014 in the V&A’s Gilbert Galleries, but is currently in storage.

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

WEDNESDAY 10 APRIL 2019

Number 2 Willow Road is a pioneering modernist building designed as a terrace of three houses by Hungarian architect Erno Goldfinger in 1939, now owned by the National Trust. Goldfinger designed most of the furniture for his own house, and the contents are still *in situ*. The furnishings are simple and functional, with folding doors, movable partitions and fitted cupboards in every room. The airy first-floor Dining Room contains a mid-1930s dining table with cream linoleum top, edged with sycamore, on a black cast-iron machine-tool base. This Surrealist juxtaposition is also seen in a 1936 sideboard, with cream lino sliding doors and heavy industrial bases. Chromed tubular-steel stacking dining chairs have pivoting plywood seats veneered in oak.

In the Studio, we saw Goldfinger's office desk, with a black laminated top, and unusual pivoting corner drawers lined in steel. This room also contains his most popular furniture design, a wood and leather Safari chair, designed in 1921.

The stylish Living Room is divided from Goldfinger's Study by a wall-sized wooden frame taken from his Paris flat. A pioneer recycler, Goldfinger repurposed his Paris wardrobe as a Living Room cabinet, with metal feet and roller shutter. Furniture includes a cabinet and small steel-framed table designed by Liz Goldfinger for the French Tourist Office in 1963.

Upstairs, Goldfinger made maximum use of space. Apart from the beds, the bedrooms are almost devoid of movable furniture; and instead have recessed fitted cupboards. Finally, the Nursery contains modernist children's wooden furniture designed by Goldfinger for Paul and Marjorie Abbatt's toy shop.

ROS ALLWOOD



The Isokon Building

After lunch we walked round to the Lawn Road Flats, and were welcomed to the Isokon Gallery by Magnus Englund, Director of the Isokon Gallery Trust. The well-presented Gallery has been converted from the garage and opened in July 2014. We settled onto Alvar Aalto stools while Magnus gave us a fascinating review of the building's history and its radical design, strongly influenced by Le Corbusier and by experiments in planned, compact living space in Germany.

Opened in 1934, the flats were the brainchild of Jack Pritchard, marketing manager of the Estonian plywood company Venesta, and his wife Molly, who used the Canadian architect Wells Coates to build what was to be the first such structure in the UK in reinforced concrete. Most of the flats were only 77 ft 5 in. × 102 ft (23.6 × 31.1 m), and were intended for young professionals. They also happened to provide a home for the Bauhaus émigrés Walter Gropius, Marcel Breuer and László Moholy-Nagy.

The Pritchards made use of Gropius and Breuer to design furniture in plywood for their Isokon Furniture Company. Some of these pieces, such as Breuer's 1936 reclining chair, are on display in the Gallery. We saw others furnishing the Pritchards' own penthouse flat, with a spectacular terrace, that its current owner kindly allowed us to visit.

It was cheering to see the current good condition of the building as a result of the major restoration project by the Notting Hill Housing Group. Before then, it had deteriorated badly since the 1970s. Reopened in 2004, and listed Grade I since

1999, it now houses key workers such as nurses and teachers.

ROBERT WILSON

## Lecture by Jay Stiefel, 'The Cabinetmaker's Account: John Head's Record of Craft & Commerce in Colonial Philadelphia, 1718–1753'

WEDNESDAY 1 MAY 2019

The Benjamin Franklin House Museum hosted a lecture for the FHS by historian Jay Robert Stiefel on the craftsman subject of his book *The Cabinetmaker's Account: John Head's Record of Craft & Commerce in Colonial Philadelphia, 1718–1753* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2019).

English joiner John Head (1688–1754) emigrated to Philadelphia in 1717 and became one of its most successful artisans and merchants. However, his prominence had been lost to history until Jay's serendipitous discovery of the significance of his account book at the Society's library.

The book was commissioned, underwritten and published by the American Philosophical Society as volume 271 of its *Memoirs*. The oldest learned society in the United States, APS was founded by Benjamin Franklin in 1743, in emulation of Britain's Royal Society.

Head's account study is of great historical significance as the earliest and most complete to have survived from any cabinet-maker working in British North

America or in Great Britain. Thousands of transactions over a thirty-five-year period (1718–53) record the goods and services by which Head, and the hundreds of tradesmen with whom he did business, sought to barter their way to prosperity in the New World. The microcosmic level of detail in the John Head account book fills the documentary void in the lives of Colonial America's middling classes, giving voice to the historically inarticulate, those often overlooked in more traditional studies.

Jay Stiefel's book, the culmination of nearly twenty years of research, serves as an essential reference work on eighteenth-century Philadelphia, its furniture and material culture, as well as an intimate and detailed social history of the interactions among that era's most talented artisans and successful merchants.

His writings and lectures on social history have restored to the historical record many early craftsmen, artists and merchants whose accomplishments had been obscured by the passage of time. In addition to articles on John Head's account book and furniture, his publications on furniture-related themes include: *Rococo & Classicism in Proprietary Philadelphia: The Origins of the 'Penn Family Chairs'*; *Barnard Eaglesfield: A Prominent Philadelphia Cabinetmaker Revealed*; *Beyond Expectation, Beautiful, Graceful and Superb: Inlaid Miniature Chests of the Philadelphia Circus, ca. 1793* and *A Clock for the Rooms: The Horological Legacy of the Library Company of Philadelphia*.

The Society is very grateful to Jay Stiefel for offering us the opportunity to hear about his work on this most important document and its author.



# 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:

*Chippendale's Director*, Morrison H. Heckscher, *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, May 2018, £15

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

*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)

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/enquiries](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

### *ECD UK*

#### *Save the Dates!*

Encouraged by the highly successful series of Early Career workshops on furniture-making techniques during the past year (see following report by Jennifer Davies), the ECD group led by Charlotte Johnson is busy planning a new series of workshops for 2019–20. Entitled 'Beyond Wood', each Monday evening session will explore

furniture-making using a variety of materials, from age-old metalwork and lacquer to more modern synthetics such as plastic or polystyrene. An introductory get-together planned for 1 October at the PAD Art Fair, followed by workshops scheduled for 21 October, 11 November, a date in early December to be confirmed and, in 2020, 20 January, 17 February, 16 March and 6 April. Mark your calendars and stay tuned for more details!

## *ECD USA*

In New York, Kelly Konrad, who has recently taken charge of planning FHS events for Early Career Development, has been hard at work enthusiastically planning a series of exciting activities for the USA contingent. Recent events have included an April visit to Classics Week at Christie's, where the Desmarais Collection of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European furniture was on display, and in May, a private tour of Doyle New York's exhibition of 'Important English and Continental Furniture and Decoration'. Other events have included visits to the workshops of Robin Miller Antiques and Demisch Danant. Kelly is also hoping to partner with Sotheby's and the American Friends of the Georgian Group, among others, for events and is looking for imaginative ways to broaden outreach and increase membership.

## *ECD Report: Furniture Fundamentals*

Over a six-month period, those of us who are part of the Early Career Development (ECD) group were lucky enough to have

the opportunity to attend a series of lectures and workshops titled 'Furniture Fundamentals'. Meeting once a month we heard from expert restorers, curators, dealers and academics about a variety of different subjects, and were able to get up close to a range of stunning pieces during several guided visits. The sessions enabled us to expand our knowledge of the history of furniture and furniture-making, as well as giving us the valuable opportunity to meet fellow FHS members also in the early stages of their careers. If you are interested in future ECD events, please contact Charlotte Johnson at [escdvisits@furniturehistorysociety.org](mailto:escdvisits@furniturehistorysociety.org) to be added to the mailing list!

### *Joinery and Hilling with Peter Holmes*

The series began in November with a trip to Christie's King Street to view pieces from 'The Collector: English Furniture, Clocks & Works of Art' sale. We were guided around the showrooms by Peter Holmes, who highlighted specific pieces and talked through the process of 'hilling'. We discovered that, before pieces go on sale, they are thoroughly examined to determine as accurate an attribution as possible before they are written up in the auction catalogue. This process is known as 'hilling' due to the slight incline, or hill, of the floor in the Christie's storage areas. The session really highlighted the attention to detail that goes into examining a piece. One object we focused on was a George IV rosewood open bookcase which, when looking at it more closely, had certain peculiarities that indicated that it may have originally had doors. We also examined a pair of George II walnut

armchairs with unusual curved eagle head arms and discussed whether we thought the arms were a later addition.

#### *Marquetry with Yannick Chastang*

Our second session was the first of a series of lectures to take place on the first floor of the Art Worker's Guild in Queen Square. Yannick Chastang talked us through the history and process of marquetry, ending with examples of his re-creations and original pieces. The invention of the piercing saw c. 1550 and a foot-operated vice known as the 'marquetry donkey' led to the development of the marquetry technique whereby layers are sandwiched together, cut out and then assembled. The earlier technique of inlay was also often used to insert marquetry elements into a veneer, using a shoulder knife and chisel. We also learnt about the different materials used in marquetry furniture, from the combinations of tortoiseshell, ivory and metal that characterized Boulle marquetry in the seventeenth century to the different types of wood utilized by makers such as Riesener and Chippendale. It was particularly interesting to hear about how large workshops in the eighteenth century would pre-make standard marquetry designs such as flowers to be used in pieces of furniture as required.

#### *Carving with Ada de Wit, Clunie Fretton and Felix Hadley*

Ada de Wit from the Wallace Collection began our next session, talking about the history of wood carving. Wood carving was particularly important in the seventeenth century, with carvers such as Grinling Gibbons (1648–1721) becoming



Selection of tools used for wood carving

very prominent in England. Gibbons introduced limewood as a material suitable for carving, and it was this that aided the greater realism in his designs. He had a large workshop employing up to fifty people, which makes it difficult to give a firm attribution to carving in the style of Gibbons without documentary evidence. Documents have also disproved the myth that an open or closed peapod indicates whether or not Gibbons was paid for his work! The second part of the session was led by Clunie Fretton and Felix Hadley, fellow ECD members who discussed their work as carvers. They showed us their preparatory sketches and models, as well as a selection of tools that are used during the process. They explained that, rather than the percussive technique of carving stone, wood carving requires a smoother pushing technique.



### *Woods with Dr Adam Bowett*

This fascinating talk focused on exotic woods and the growth of Empire in the period of 1600–1900. It was interesting to see how access to certain countries and their natural resources had an impact on the types of wood being used in furniture-making at different points in history. For example, the neo-classical wood palette of satinwood, tulipwood and purplewood all came from the West Indies, where Britain had emerged dominant after the Seven Years War (1756–63). In contrast, woods from areas outside of British control were less common in British furniture, for example ebony from areas such as Mauritius and Sri Lanka. A particularly interesting piece that was highlighted in the talk was a British table cabinet from c. 1620, made from the Australian hardwood eucalyptus. The early use of wood from this region can be explained by the brief participation of Britain in the spice trade centred around the island of Ambon (today Maluku, Indonesia), which ended in 1623 following the Amboyna Massacre.

### *French Furniture with Helen Jacobson*

In our penultimate session we were treated to an after-hours tour of the Wallace Collection by Senior Curator Helen Jacobson. Linking back to our session on marquetry, we looked at several key pieces and discussed their history, design and construction. The first was a magnificent armoire, recorded as being in the workshop of André-Charles Boulle (1642–1732) in 1715. We discussed how during the marquetry process two versions of a design are created with the opposite materials, the more desirable combination



The Riesener secretaire at the Wallace

known as ‘première-partie’ and the other as ‘contre-partie’. The armoire has the contre-partie veneer of a tortoiseshell design on a brass background, indicating that it would have been the less expensive of a pair. We also had a close look at the mounts and how they interact with the marquetry as part of the overall design. Another highlight was a secretaire by Jean-Henri Riesener (1734–1806), delivered to Marie Antoinette in 1780. It was interesting to hear that the style of the piece dates to around 1760, and therefore was quite an outdated piece of furniture at the time.

### *Wow Factor Furniture with Guy Apter*

The series drew to a close in April at the Apter-Fredericks showroom in Chelsea.

Guy Apter gave us an amazing insight into the dealing of antique furniture and showed us some of his favourite pieces on sale. It was interesting to hear about what was important from a dealer's perspective, with great emphasis on beautiful craftsmanship and authenticity. A rich patina derived from age is also something that is particularly valued. For example, we had a look at a George III Pembroke table made from mahogany, which has lightened over time to develop a lovely honey-coloured patina. Other highlights were a sofa from Spencer House, and a pair of marquetry corner commodes, made for the 2nd Duke of Leinster for Leinster House in Dublin and possibly by Chippendale. We wrapped up the session

with drinks and a chance to ask more questions and reflect on everything we had learnt over the past six months — a great end to the series!

JENNIFER DAVIES

## Don't Forget!

The Early Career Development Symposium will be held at the Wallace Collection on Friday, 22 November, the day before the AGM, and will feature a diverse programme of papers ranging from the silver furniture of Louis XIV to twentieth-century office furniture. The full programme will be put on the FHS website and will also be circulated by email. So mark your calendars! We look forward to seeing you there.

## Officers and Council Members

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## Copy Deadline

The deadline for receiving material to be published in the next *Newsletter* is 15 September 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.

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COVER PICTURE Tomb of Cecilia Metella, *pietre dure* plaque, Opificio delle Pietre Dure, 1795–97 (Loan: Gilbert.77:1, 2-2008). © The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Collection, Victoria & Albert Museum, London