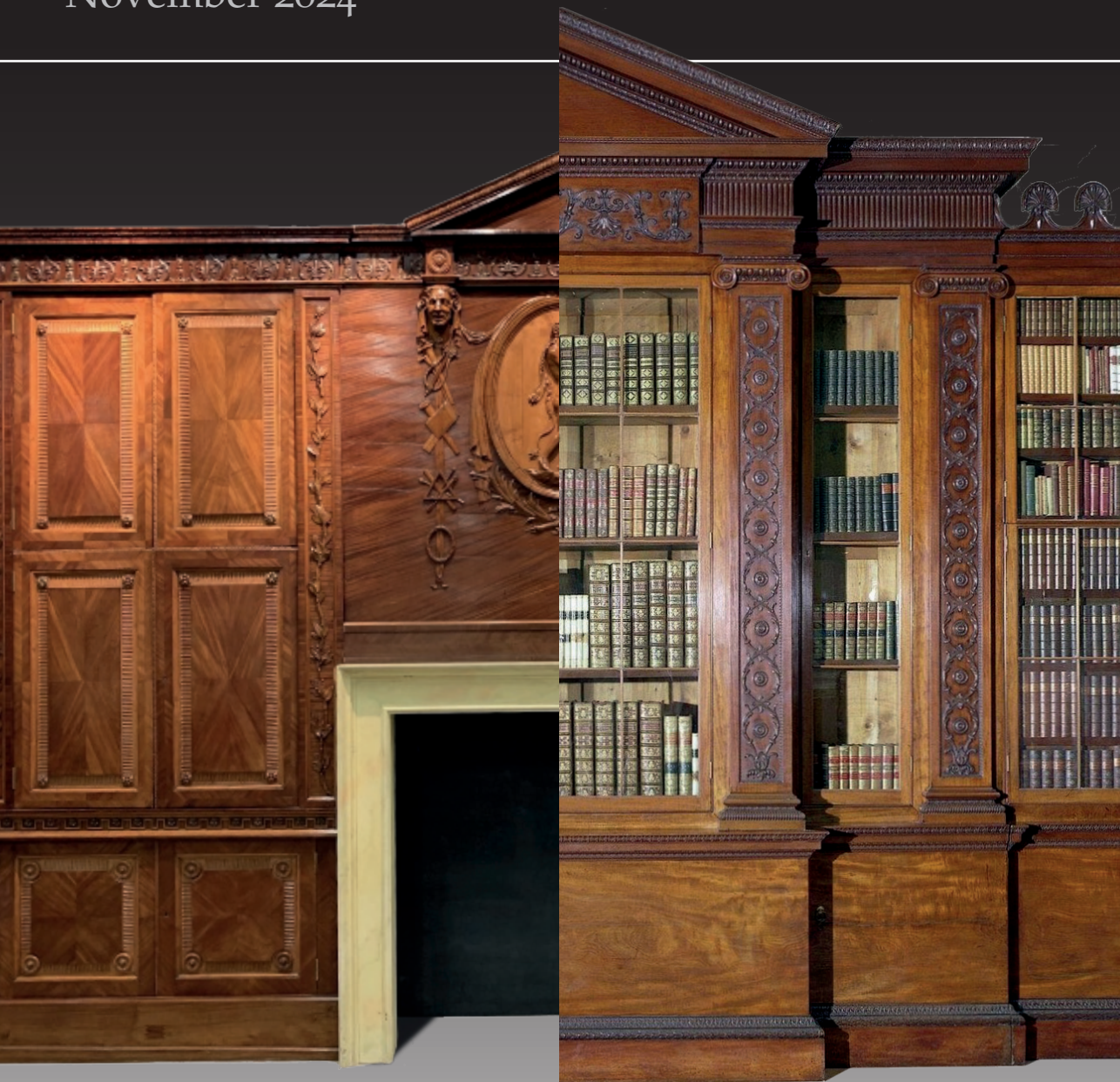


The Furniture History Society

Newsletter 236

November 2024



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Cabinet Reshuffle

Fig. 1: William Chambers medal cabinet for Charlemont House, c. 1767, with carving by Sefferin Alken and mounts by Diederich Nicolaus Anderson. The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust), F.1986.XX. © Courtauld



In 2015 the Courtauld Gallery's Curator of Sculpture and Decorative Arts, Dr Alexandra Gerstein, and its chief Conservator, Graeme Barraclough, organised a study day to look at the Courtauld's William Chambers' medal cabinet (Fig. 1).¹ They invited a group of furniture historians and other interested parties to meet at Buckingham New University, where the cabinet had been reassembled by Dr Paul Tear and his woodwork and furniture conservation students. During conversation at this event, Leela Meinertas, former Senior Curator of Furniture and Woodwork at the V&A, realised this medal cabinet represented the potential to achieve two wonderful interconnected events: it might offer a way in which the V&A's Robert Adam bookcases (Fig. 2) could be returned to their original

home at the National Trust's Croome Court, Worcestershire, which would, in turn, create an opportunity to display the Chambers' medal cabinet in the most appropriate of contexts at the V&A – thus filling the large gap left by the Croome bookcase.² Leela Meinertas and Christopher Rowell, FHS Chairman and former Curator of Furniture at the National Trust, seized the day and set the cogs turning to this end at their respective institutions. It has been my great pleasure to oversee the realisation of this wonderful plan and announce the news that the bookcases have returned to Croome and, in their place, the V&A will be displaying the medal cabinet. It is thanks to the extraordinary generosity of a small but determined group of anonymous supporters that this visionary plan has now been carried through to completion.

These museum objects are two of the finest examples of surviving large-scale neo-classical architect-designed furniture in existence. Aside from their shared scale and design language, they are examples of the highest status cabinet making of their time, in terms of design, material, construction and technique. No expense was spared in their production; both include great expanses of the most highly valued flame mahogany. The renowned carver Sefferin Alken (active 1751-64) worked on both projects, so they are well matched in terms of having the highest quality ornament, and both were designed by leading architects of the time. Both, being designed for libraries, also stood as monuments to the acquisition of knowledge. These are creations that were always intended to be showpieces, celebrations of design and craftsmanship which would inspire awe and wonder in those who encountered them.

The bookcases were made for George Coventry, 6th Earl of Coventry (1722-1809), for his library at Croome in about 1763. They were designed by Robert Adam and made in London by the firm of William Vile and John Cobb (cabinet makers and upholsterers to George III). The finer details of the carving were carried out by Sefferin Alken. The library was one of three Robert Adam rooms at Croome, the other two being the still-in-situ gallery and the magnificent pink tapestry room – now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, complete with its matching suite of tapestry-upholstered furniture. For more than 200 years at Croome, during which time the building was requisitioned for war efforts and then served as a school, the bookcases remained in the library. They finally came to the V&A in 1975, thanks to the help of an anonymous benefactor, during the long period of time in which the original interiors of the



Fig. 2: Bookcase made for Croome Court Library, c. 1763, designed by Robert Adam, produced by Vile and Cobb with carving by Sefferin Alken. V&A: W.76-1975.

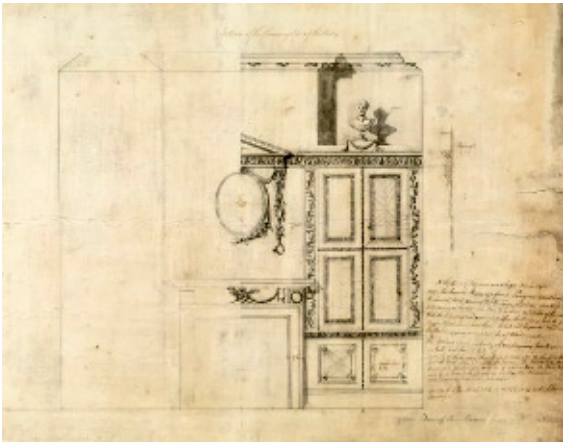


Fig. 3: 1 of 3 William Chambers design drawings for the medal cabinet, 1767, The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust), D.1986.XX.4. © Courtauld

house were gradually being dispersed and finding new homes.

The medal cabinet was commissioned by James Caulfield, first Earl of Charlemont, as part of the building of Charlemont House in Dublin in 1763.³ He had previously employed Chambers to work on his main residence, Marino House, including Chambers' famous garden pavilion, the Casino at Marino. Charlemont House, however, was to be Charlemont's townhouse, which would hold his celebrated collections in a Chambers-designed neo-classical sanctuary and temple to scholarship.⁴

The library was a complex of four rooms linked to the main house by a long corridor lined with sculpture. The first room of the complex was the 'Venus' library, which took its name from Joseph Wilton's statue of the Medici Venus, displayed in a niche and framed by Ionic order pilastered bookcases. The next room, the main library, was double the size of the first and had bookcases with Corinthian pilasters that were twice the height of those in the Venus library. At the far end of this main library room, entered by doorways on either side,

there were two further rooms of more intimate proportions. The one to the left was for 'pictures and antiquities' and the one to the right held the Earl's extensive medal collection.

As a visitor entered this medal room, they would have been faced with Chambers' medal cabinet, which spanned the width of the room and incorporated the fireplace. Extant drawings (Fig. 3, which will be displayed alongside the cabinet at the V&A) show all the detail of the design, including the carving to be carried out by Alken (Fig. 4). The doors on either side of the cabinet open to reveal gilded ornamental cartouche title plates



Fig. 4: Detail of William Chambers medal cabinet for Charlemont House, c. 1767, with carving by Sefferin Alken and mounts by Diederich Nicolaus Anderson. The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust), F.1986.XX. © Courtauld



Fig. 5: Interior detail of the medal cabinet made for Charlemont House, c. 1767, designed by William Chambers with carving by Sefferin Alken and mounts by Diederich Nicolaus Anderson. The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust), F.1986.XX.1. © Courtauld.

(Fig. 5) from the workshop of the famed gilder Diederich Nicolaus Anderson. Beneath these are multiple rows of shallow ebony-fronted drawers for storing medals.

The medal cabinet spent around 100 years in its original setting until the house was stripped of its interiors and contents in the 1860s. It was in private hands for some years and, when it did reappear on the market in the 1980s, then President of the FHS Sir Nicholas Goodison immediately grasped its significance and set about securing its future. The Courtauld acquired the medal cabinet with assistance from The Art Fund, V&A Purchase Grant and the National Heritage Memorial Fund in 1986.

Just over a decade earlier, in 1975, the V&A had acquired the Croome bookcases, a year after its seminal 1974 exhibition, 'The Destruction of the Country House'. This was a moment at which the dismantling and sale of such interiors was deeply felt by those with a special interest in country houses and it was hoped that the exhibition would raise wider public consciousness. In this context, the V&A acquired the bookcases with a fervent hope that, eventually, they could be returned to their original setting. V&A furniture curator of the day John Hardy noted in his 1975 acquisition press release that the V&A would act as guardians of the bookcases. At the time, this may have seemed fanciful,

but passions had been stirred and the course was set. All the evidence showed that the viability of maintaining huge and complex country houses such as Croome was low. The sale of contents and architectural and interior fittings, such as the bookcases, was a practical way of providing essential revenue for keeping roofs in working order, so the trend for dismantling such buildings continued. Now that Croome is in the care of the National Trust, thankfully, the V&A's long-term plan to act as guardians has proved to be well judged.

The return of Adam's bookcases will be a celebratory moment in the long history of Croome and a significant event for this exquisite example of neo-classical cabinet making. For five decades, the bookcases have played an important part in narrating a chronology of Britain's design history in a national museum in London. They have been continuously on display during that time, representing the epitome of neo-classical design in various V&A displays, providing several generations with a valuable visual education in architectural interiors of the later eighteenth century. Now they are going to meet new audiences in a different, regional context and, returning to a building that has lost the greater part of its original eighteenth-century interiors, they will stand out as a jewel. Their reinstallation at Croome over the coming

years will be very well worth a visit.

Likewise, the display of Chambers' medal cabinet at the V&A is a moment of significance. This stunning example of neo-classical design has been cared for – displayed, researched and conserved – by the Courtauld Gallery since its acquisition in 1986. When additional space was needed to hang paintings in 2002, it was taken off display and has not been on public view since. Now, thanks to a generous loan by the Samuel Courtauld Trust, the medal cabinet and its associated design drawings will take their place in the chronology of the V&A's British Galleries, becoming available to a whole new generation of museum visitors.

This cabinet reshuffle is an exciting moment, so let it be remembered that the project has been made possible by a combination of several key factors, and my thanks go to the following: curators of the

1970s who dared to dream, bright ideas born from a meeting of furniture historians and generous supporters who came forward exactly when and where they were needed.

DR JENNY SAUNT

Senior Curator of Furniture and
Woodwork, V&A

1 William Chambers medal cabinet for Charlemont House, 1767, The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust), F.1986.XX.

2 Robert Adam Bookcase made for Croome Court Library, c. 1763, V&A: W.76-1975.

3 Sir Nicholas Goodison, 'Hercules Musuarum', *Furniture History*, 2007, Vol. 43, pp. 155-160; Paul Tear, Charlemont Medal Cabinet (1767–68) Designed by Sir William Chambers – A Consideration of its Past and Future, ICOM-CC Publications Online, 2016: ICOM-CC Publications Online (icom-cc-publications-online.org).

4 Sean O'Reilly, *A Critical History of Charlemont House* (The Hugh Lane Gallery, 2013); John Harris, 'Furniture designed by Sir William Chambers', *The Burlington Magazine* (July, 1963), Vol. 105, No. 724. P.327; Cynthia O'Conner, 'The Charlemont House Medal Cabinet', *The Irish Arts review* (Summer 1984), Vol. 1, No. 2.

FHS Events Calendar

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

2024

12-26 NOVEMBER

BIFMO-FHS Online course, Tuesdays, see p. 15

13 NOVEMBER

Visit to Christopher Howe (postponed from 2023)

23 NOVEMBER

AGM & Talks

2025

25 JANUARY

Visit to John Hardy's Collection

13 FEBRUARY

Visits to Brooks's Club and the Athenaeum

22 MARCH

Annual Symposium

25-27 APRIL

Study Trip to Northern Ireland

9-11 MAY

Spring UK Study Trip to Leeds



A wooden spinning wheel inlaid with shell decoration and lacquered, Shahpur District (probably Bhera), c. 1880.
© Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

FHS Annual General Meeting and Works in Progress Talks

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

SATURDAY 23 NOVEMBER 2024

11.00 AM – 1.00 PM

The Annual General Meeting for the year ending 30 June 2024 will be held at the East India Club. The AGM will start at 11.00 am (coffee from 10.30 am).

Talks will follow the business of the day and will include Dr Anne Stutchbury, Independent Researcher/Consultant, and Dr Alice Strickland Curator for the National Trust on 'Furnishing Standen's interior in the 1970s'.

Amreet Kular, Objects Conservator at the V&A, will discuss the conservation

treatment of a spinning wheel for the opening of Young V&A in July 2023. This talk will examine the importance of the spinning wheel, or *charkha*, in Indian and Pakistani culture. The conservation treatment included cleaning the organic surfaces and decorative metal elements, as well as extensive consolidation of the flaking paint.

There will also be updates from the V&A Furniture and Woodwork section and BIFMO.

Admission to the AGM is free for members but all members wishing to attend should notify the Events Secretary at least 7 days in advance. Tickets for a sandwich lunch with a glass of wine at the price of £24 per head should be booked with the Events Secretary at least 7 days in advance. We plan to record the talks for those who cannot attend in person.

Visit to John Hardy's Collection

BATTERSEA, LONDON

SATURDAY 25 JANUARY 2025

6.30 PM – 8.30 PM

John Hardy, a founder member of the Furniture History Society, was a Furniture Consultant at Christie's London. Before joining the auction house in the late 1980s, he spent almost thirty years as a curator in the Victoria & Albert Museum's Department of Furniture, where he specialised in the study of English eighteenth-century furniture and decoration. His collection is eclectic from the remains of the Hatfield State Bed to 'Shakespeare's table'.

COST: £25 (INCLUDES A GLASS OF WINE)

LIMIT: 14

CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS:

FRIDAY 29 NOVEMBER 2024

Two visits to London Private Members' Clubs

These are bookable as two separate visits because London Clubs can only take visitors at quiet times. FHS members are free to book one or both visits; please inform the Events Secretary if you wish to attend both visits when you apply.

Visit to Brooks's Club

ST. JAMES'S STREET, LONDON SW1A 1LN

THURSDAY 13 FEBRUARY 2025

9.00 AM – 11.00 AM

Brooks's was founded in 1764 and its clubhouse, designed by Henry Holland, was completed by 1778. It was built



'Shakespeare's table' The Fine Art and Industrial Exhibition, Wolverhampton 1884.

of yellow brick and Portland stone in a Palladian style similar to Holland's early country houses. The main suite of rooms on the first floor consists of the Great Subscription Room, Small Drawing Room and the Card Room. The interiors are neoclassical in style, the Great Subscription Room, with its segmental barrel vault ceiling and large Venetian window, being the chief architectural glory, and used in the eighteenth century for gambling. A Victorian extension was designed by John MacVicar Anderson in the 1880s to accommodate a new, larger dining room with a library above it. Brooks's became the leading Whig club in London and portraits and busts of Charles James Fox abound.

The Society of Dilettanti (founded in 1732) placed its celebrated collection of portraits in Brooks's in 1976. These comprise

a group of twenty-three portraits by George Knapton, masterpieces by Sir Joshua Reynolds and Benjamin West, and other works by Sir Thomas Lawrence, Sir Martin Archer Shee, Lord Leighton, Sir Edward Poynter, John Singer Sargent, Sir James Gunn and John Ward. The tradition of portraiture has been extended by the commission of a new group portrait of forty-two members of the Society, painted by Stuart Pearson Wright and completed in 2020.

Our guide will be FHS member Charles Sebag-Montefiore, who is a Trustee of Brooks's and Joint Secretary of the Society of Dilettanti. Visitors are requested to reach Brooks's between 9.00 and 9.15am. Coffee will be served in the Bar: the tour will start by 9.30am and will take approximately an hour and a half.

COST: £25 (INCLUDES TEA/COFFEE)

LIMIT: 20

**CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS:
FRIDAY 6 DECEMBER 2024**

Visit to The Athenaeum

107 PALL MALL, ST. JAMES'S, LONDON SW1Y 5ER

THURSDAY 13 FEBRUARY 2025

3.00 PM – 4.30 PM

The Athenaeum, founded in 1824 has nearly 2,000 members drawn from a wide range of professional worlds including literature and the arts, education, the church, business, law, medicine and healthcare, public service, politics, science, architecture, engineering and technology. The Library is regarded by many as the finest club library in London and, with about 70,000 volumes, it is also the largest.

The Clubhouse, located at the corner of Waterloo Place, was designed by Club member Decimus Burton in 1830 in the Neoclassical style. Some of the original mahogany furniture designed by Burton is still in use today. The house was built on a portion of the courtyard of the demolished Carlton House on lease from the Crown. A



Brooks's Club façade.



Drawing Room at The Athenaeum © Dr Ian Cooper.

gilded statue of Athena, Goddess of Wisdom, looks out from a front balcony as the Club's tutelary spirit and guide.

Our visit will be led by Joanna Norledge, Collections Manager.

COST: £25 (INCLUDES TEA/COFFEE)

LIMIT: 20

CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS:

FRIDAY 6 DECEMBER 2024

Study Trip to Northern Ireland

FRIDAY 25 APRIL TO SUNDAY 27 APRIL 2025

Following the success of the 2018 trip to Northern Ireland, the FHS is organising a second two-night, three-day Study Weekend including visits to Seaforde, Clandeboye House and Ballywalter Park. We are also hoping to return to Mount Stewart, the Irish seat of the Stewart family, Marquesses of Londonderry, which was remodelled and enlarged in the 1840s, and where much has happened since the FHS visited in 2018.

Clandeboye was built in the early nineteenth century by James, second Lord Dufferin (1755-1836). It was altered and enlarged by his great great-nephew



Clandeboye House. By courtesy of the Dufferin Foundation.

Frederick Temple Hamilton-Temple-Blackwood, first Marquess of Dufferin and Ava (1826-1902) and contains his eclectic collection from his years spent abroad as Governor General of Canada and Viceroy of India, and ambassador to Russia, France, Italy and The Porte. In the twentieth century the fifth and last Marquess, Sheridan Hamilton-Temple-Blackwood (1938-1988), and his wife, artist Lindy Guinness (1941-2020), contributed a significant collection of Irish furniture. Today Clondeboye Estate is looked after by the Dufferin Foundation which they founded.

Ballywalter Park is the seat of Lord and Lady Dunleath. The original house was extensively remodelled and extended in the Italianate Villa style after 1846 and contains interesting eighteenth and nineteenth century furniture and a superb conservatory.

The trip is being organised by Willie Lorimer with the support of Sara Heaton,

and with Cristina Alfonsin, FHS Overseas Events Manager, in charge of the logistics. To express interest, please contact Cristina at overseasevents@furniturehistorysociety.org

Spring UK Study Trip to Leeds

FRIDAY 9 MAY – SUNDAY 11 MAY 2025

This two-night, three-day Study Trip is organised and led by Adam Toole, Curator - Temple Newsam and Decorative Art, Leeds Museums and Galleries. It will include visits to Birdsall House, Castle Howard and Harewood House, as well as Temple Newsam and Lotherton Hall. There will also be an evening lecture by James Lomax, previous curator at Temple Newsam for thirty years. To receive further details and an application form please contact events@furniturehistorysociety.org.



The Temple Newsam Picture Gallery suite, by James Pascall, 1745-46 © Leeds Museums & Galleries (Temple Newsam). Photography Norman Taylor.

The Palladian-style
dolls' house at
Uppark, West Sussex.
© National Trust
Images/Nadia
Mackenzie.



The 49th Annual Symposium

**In association with the National Trust
and the Royal Collection Trust**

The Art of the Dolls' House

THE LYDIA AND MANFRED GORVY LECTURE
THEATRE, VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM,
LONDON

SATURDAY 22 MARCH 2025

10.30 AM – 5.00 PM

Confirmed speakers include Dr Heike Zech, Deputy Director, Germanisches Museum, Nuremberg, Sara van Dijk, Curator of Textiles, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Kathryn Jones, Senior Curator of Decorative Arts, Royal Collection Trust, and William Newton, Curator at Young V&A.

The symposium will be led by Dr Tessa Murdoch and will be co-chaired on the day by Dr Megan Wheeler, Assistant Curator, Furniture, National Trust and others.

During conference breaks there will be demonstrations of miniature furniture making by Terence Facey.

There will be an opportunity for delegates to visit the exhibition *Sarah*

Lethieullier's 1730s Dolls' House at the Huguenot Museum, Rochester, Kent on Friday 21 March 2025

A detailed programme for the day will be available on the FHS website and more details on speakers published in the next Newsletter.

Tickets for the Symposium will be available on Eventbrite in early 2025.

Bookings

For places on UK visits please apply by email or letter to the Events Secretary, Beatrice Goddard indicating that you wish to pay by card or online or providing separate cheques for each event. The email address is events@furniturehistorysociety.org, or telephone 0777 5907390. For online payments you will be provided with a link to a payment page and an event reference. Where possible, joining instructions will be dispatched by email, so please remember to provide your email address if you have one.

Applications should only be made by members who intend to take part in the whole programme. No one can apply for more than one place unless they hold a

joint membership, and each applicant should be identified by name. If you wish to be placed on the waiting list, please provide a telephone number. Please note the closing dates for applications printed in the *Newsletter*. Applications made after the closing date will be accepted only if space is still available. Members are reminded that places are not allocated on a first-come, first-served basis, but that all applications are equally considered following the closing date.

Cancellations

Please note that no refunds will be given for cancellations for events costing £20.00 or less. In all other cases, cancellations will be accepted up to seven days before the date of a visit, but refunds will be subject to a £10.00 deduction for administrative costs. Separate arrangements are made for study weekends and foreign tours; terms are clearly stated on the printed details in each case.

In many cases there is a wait list so please let the Events Secretary know even on the day if you are unable to attend in case the place can be offered to another member.

Online Events

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

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

Recordings of many of our past lectures are freely available to members via accessing My Account on the FHS website using the following link:

www.furniturehistorysociety.org/membership/account/login/

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

www.furniturehistorysociety.org/accountforgot-your-password/

If you have any enquiries, or suggestions for future speakers or topics, please email the Events Secretary.

Opportunities for advertising

The Furniture History Society, a registered UK Charity, now accepts advertising in its quarterly *Newsletter*, a well-illustrated and informative publication with a broad reach of over 1,000 furniture-lovers. The *Newsletter* is published in February, May, August and November of each year.

Current rates are £200 for a half page, £400 for a full page, and £600 for the inside back cover.

Further information, including deadlines for copy, is available from the co-Editor, Iain Stephens, via email: **Iain.Stephens@royal.uk**.

FHS Finance & Membership Officer

Keith Nicholls

After nine years of dedicated work for the Society, Keith Nicholls has retired from the post of Finance Officer. During his time with us, he updated the accounting systems and overhauled the membership records as well as introducing quarterly management accounts. In addition, the year-end procedures have been streamlined enabling the Society to opt for a simpler and less costly independent review of its annual accounts. He has done all this with pragmatism, good humour and efficiency. The Society is much indebted to him for his service, and we wish him a long and happy retirement.

If individual members would like to make a contribution to a leaving gift for Keith, please send a cheque, payable to the 'Furniture History Society', to the Hon. Treasurer, 20 Rutland Terrace, Stamford, Lincs. PE9 2QD, or you may make a payment by bank transfer to the Society's account numbered 00009854 with CAF Bank with sort code 40-52-40. Please quote the reference 'Nicholls Presentation'.

Anna Clarke

The role was advertised in the charity press and, after an open selection process, we were very pleased to appoint Miss

Anna Clarke as the Society's new Finance and Membership Officer with effect from 1 July 2024.

Miss Clarke has wide-ranging financial experience gained mostly in the education and charity sectors. She says 'I am happiest when working in an environment where the people are truly passionate about the organisation and knowing that the time I spend at work makes a difference to others. I am much looking forward to working with the FHS.'

'When I am not working for the Society, I may be found in a similar role at one of the Halls in Oxford University. I also volunteer for Cruse—the Bereavement Charity. I find it rewarding and it adds an important balance to my life. I am very slowly learning Greek and am the owner of a House Rabbit.'

With immediate effect, the contact details for the Finance Officer are: Anna Clarke ACCA, Finance Officer, Furniture History Society, Stable End Flat, 2 The Square, Ducklington, Witney OX29 7UD.

Emails may be addressed to: finance@furniturehistorysociety.org or membership@furniturehistorysociety.org

and Anna's mobile number is: +44 (0)7904 765 725.

BIFMO UPDATE

British and Irish Furniture Makers Online

BIFMO-FHS Online Course: November

On three consecutive Tuesdays this November (12, 19 & 26) we are offering an online course *British Furniture abroad in the Eighteenth Century: its Impact and Influence*. Each week three experts will explore the influence of British furniture abroad and the ways furniture makers in other countries both copied and transformed British models to suit local traditions and tastes. Please see the FHS website events page for more information.

From our Editors:

An apprentice of Peter Miller

The cabinet maker Peter Miller of the Savoy, London (c. b.1665- d.1729), was all but forgotten in the annals of history until the discovery in 1982 of a walnut-veneered desk and bookcase in Barcelona, inscribed '*Peter Miller Cabenet Macker in the Savoy in London the 13 June Ao 1724*'.¹ Today Miller's cabinetware is renowned for being beautifully constructed with the finest of materials and consequently, furniture of this type of the period is oftentimes attributed to him, along with his contemporaries, for instance, John Belchier. An online search for Peter Miller demonstrates this regard; scores of attributions are made to him by British,

American and continental European auction houses and antique dealers.

Despite the current popularity, there has been scant evidence found of the man's origins and life, other than documentation of his residence in the Savoy on a marriage allegation in May 1715, describing him as 'Batchelor aged about fifty years'; a 1723 household insurance policy; and his probate will, proved on 3 October 1729.²

A 1720's drawing of a bureau-cabinet was included amongst designs made by Russian craftsmen who were sent to London for training by Czar Peter the Great. It is said that the Czar gave personal attention to the despatch of apprentices to foreign master craftsmen and that in 1717, he ordered nine to join furniture workshops in London. One of these young men was Fedor Martynov, responsible for the drawings of the 'cabinets' mentioned above.³ It has been suggested – but not proven – that he was under Miller's tutelage. Recently I came across the name of someone who was Miller's apprentice, Jean de la Fontaine, bound on 9 March 1716.⁴ Could he have been a relative of the seventeenth-century French poet and fabulist of the same name and was he somehow connected to Czar Peter the Great? I just thought I'd put this out in the hope that someone might connect the dots, as it were.

Please see BIFMO for further details about Peter Miller.

LAURIE LINDEY

- 1 C. Gilbert, *Marked London Furniture, 1700-1848* (1996), pp. 41, 336, 337; A. Bowett, *Early Georgian Furniture, 1715-1740* (2009), pp.13,65-7, 71-2, 93, 142-3.
2 London Metropolitan Archive (LMA) London marriage bonds and allegations, 28 May 1715; LMA, Sun MS vol. 15, ref. 28208 ; The National Archives (TNA), Prob 11/632/295, 3 October 1729.
3 N. I. Guseva, 'Fedor Martynov, Russian Master Cabinet Maker', *Furniture History* (1994), p. 95.
4 LMA. Register of duties paid for apprentices' indentures, 1716-17, Series and Class 1R 1; *Piece*: 5.

From Ship to Royal Household – an interesting anecdote from the catalogue of the Arts & Crafts Exhibition, London, 1888

As reported in the August 2024 Newsletter, transcriptions of the Arts & Crafts Exhibition Society catalogues from 1888 to 1916 are now available to read on the BIFMO website, where there is a web page dedicated to the project. Names brought to light by the project have enabled the team to add fresh entries to the BIFMO Furniture Makers database, including the carver James E. Hellyer.

James E. Hellyer (1848-1918) was a

member of the renowned ship-carving family, known for work at the British Naval Dockyards over 400 years, including work on the clipper ship, Cutty Sark. Figureheads for naval ships were often elaborate, demonstrating the finest carving techniques. One such example, recently on the art market, was made in 1867 for R.Y.S. *Gelert* (Fig. 1). Carved by James E. Hellyer, it is fifty-four inches long and features the famous Welsh folklore wolfhound, commissioned by Colonel Edward Loyd, who was a member of the Royal Yacht Squadron.

The firm of Hellyer & Son was founded by James Edward Senior (the grandfather of James E. Hellyer), of Northumberland Wharf, London, in the early nineteenth century. Hellyer & Son made small replicas of their ships' figureheads for sale, and at the Great Exhibition, 1851, the firm – described as designers – displayed a group of seventeen replica figures, carved in wood (Fine Art Court, Class 30, Exhibit no. 60).

Seven years later their work also appeared in the catalogue of the Arts & Crafts Exhibition of 1888: Exhibit no.



Fig. 1: Figurehead, R.Y.S. *Gelert*, Image Courtesy of Charles Miller Ltd.

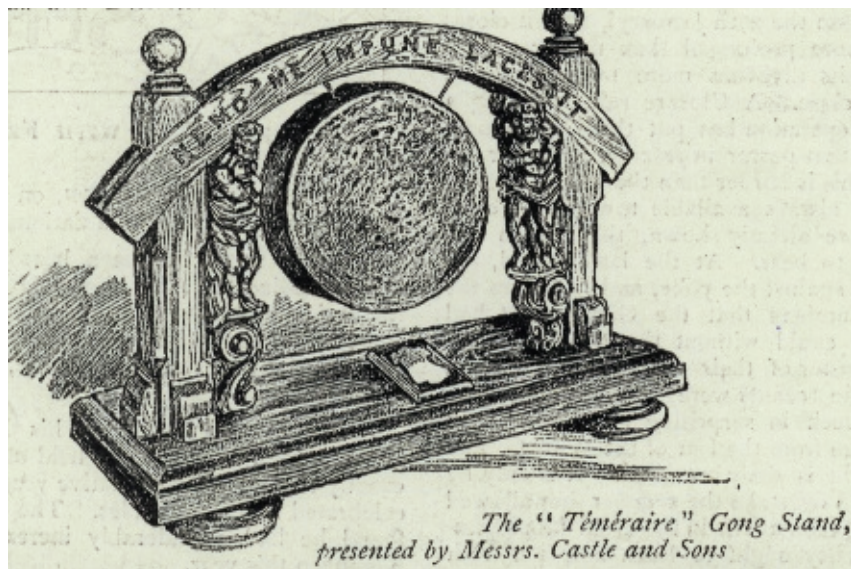


Fig. 2: Gong stand, *The Graphic*, 17 September 1887.

486 were wood carvings described as 'miniature replicas of Atlas, after the two stern figures taken off the *Temeraire*... Designed by SIDNEY N. CASTLE. Executed by J. E. HELLYER. Exhibitors Henry Castle & Son'.

H.M.S. *Temeraire*, famously painted by J.M.W. Turner on her way to a breakers' yard in Rotherhithe in 1838, was part of the fleet led by Lord Nelson in the Battle of Trafalgar, 1805. Castles were shipbreakers at Baltic Wharf, who later came into possession of the figures from H.M.S. *Temeraire*.

Versions of the Arts & Crafts Exhibition replicas by Hellyer were later incorporated into two gong stands, one shown at the Exhibition of Her Majesty's Jubilee Presents at St. James's Palace in 1887, and one given to the Duke of York (the future King George V), on his marriage in July 1893 (Fig. 2). They were recorded at Balmoral and Sandringham in the twentieth century.

There are also images of the so-called

'*Temeraire* mantelpiece', with the original Atlas sculptures from the ship, exhibited in British Naval Exhibitions in London (1891) and Liverpool (1892) (Fig. 3). It is most likely that a forebear of the Hellyer family carved these original sculptures for *Temeraire*, thus the commission to James E. to produce the late-nineteenth-century miniature copies.

CLARISSA WARD

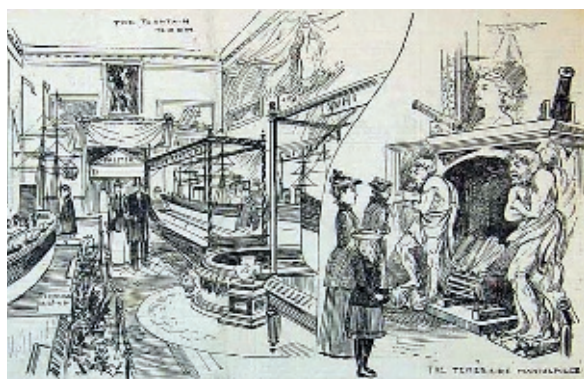


Fig. 3: Illustration of the mantelpiece with the original Atlas sculptures as displayed at the British Naval Exhibition in Liverpool.

The Early Career Development Group (ECD) busy with a considered programme of special events

On Saturday 16 March, we were expertly guided around Eltham Palace by Dr Tessa Kilgarriff, Curator of Collections and Interiors: South London for English Heritage. We learned about the long history of this property, which, saved from decline by Samuel and Virginia Courtauld, incorporated a medieval building into a 1930s Art Deco-inspired mansion designed by the architects Seely & Paget. Though little original furniture survives, the interiors remain intact and reflect stylistic and technological innovations of the age, such as the curved and inlaid walls of the entrance hall featuring a marquetry Roman and Viking by the designer Rolf Engströmer. The tour concluded in the Great Hall, constructed in the 1470s and adapted in the 1930s with a 'minstrels gallery'. The group enjoyed discussing which pieces of oak furniture were genuine seventeenth-century pieces and which were later, as the Courtaulds had seemingly purchased without discrimination to furnish this magnificent space.

Our visit to Treasure House Fair on 2 July was led by Peter Holmes. At Thomas Coulborn & Sons, Jonathan Coulborn took time to explain the conservation of a William Kent pier table which had revealed the original simulated mahogany and parcel-gilt decoration. We also looked at a pair of Regency rosewood and 'buhl' marquetry

side chairs. Jonathan explained about the marquetry style and Peter expanded with technical detail.

Ronald Phillips Ltd was our next stop. We looked at a set of twelve George III parcel-gilt and painted armchairs made by Thomas Chippendale for Harewood House. Peter took great care to explain their construction and showed us the batten carrying holes on the seat rails, often associated with Chippendale's work. We looked carefully at how the decoration of one armchair had been restored to its original scheme.

At Godson & Coles' stand, we assumed the typical FHS position and descended to the floor to look at the construction underneath an early Irish table. We then focused on a William and Mary marquetry bureau, looking at the brilliant condition of the 'arabesque' marquetry. Our fellow ECD member and exhibitor Rainier Schraepen then guided us around Butchoff Antiques' stand. We looked at the extraordinary detail and depth of carving on an astonishing ebony cabinet by Fourdinois, a masterpiece of its time. Thanks to Peter for sharing his incredible knowledge with the ECD and to the Treasure House Fair team who generously hosted us.

On the 17 July a group visited Farley Prop Hire with Christopher Payne and Peter Holmes, an event spearheaded by Christopher after the hugely successful wider FHS visit. We were pleased to meet and grateful for the hospitality of CEO Mark Farley who has worked at his family business for over fifty years. A wonderful William and Mary marquetry cabinet was

examined to understand the construction and conclude where it had been added to and adapted over time. It was fascinating to learn about individual objects and how the business works – including the extensive restoration workshops and the creation of new furniture for use in films such as *Gladiator*. This added a different dimension to the way we normally examine furniture with the Society; the significance of how use and presentation in film and television can inform understanding of historic

furniture and interiors. Though it does not fall under the remit of furniture we were all delighted to see the teapot (Canton, by Royal Doulton) from the Farley's Collection used by Paddington Bear and Elizabeth II for their turn at the Platinum Jubilee.

ECD visits are arranged in our active WhatsApp group which allows us to be agile with our planning. Please contact grants@furniturehistorysociety.org to be added to this group.

PENELOPE HINES

Other News

Courtauld Institute's Witt Library launches first phase of digitisation

Art historians, researchers and the art trade will be delighted to hear that the Courtauld Institute's Witt Library has gone live with the first phase of digitising its photographic collections. The library holds over 2.1 million photographs, reproductions and cuttings of paintings, drawings and engravings of Western art from c. 1200-2009. Sourced from private collections, catalogues and pre-internet auction records, they are mounted on A4 cards, with information on size, medium, collection, sale date and lot number. The collections are particularly useful for provenance research and tracking down lost works. The British School was the first to go live, with the French, Netherlandish, Italian, German, American and remaining

schools scheduled to go live at intervals over the next few months, to be completed by Summer 2025.

This immense project has been carried out in tandem with the digitisation of the Courtauld's Conway Library photographic collection of almost one million photographs of world architecture, architectural drawings, sculpture, decorative arts and manuscripts. The digitisation has been underway since 2017 and has been carried out by specialist contractor Picturae BV of the Netherlands, and a small army of volunteers. Many people will remember consulting the physical cards, stored in distinctive green (Witt) and red (Conway) boxes, in the Courtauld Library at Somerset House, prior to its relocation to King's Cross. Now researchers can access this treasure trove of information by simply visiting photocollections.courtauld.ac.uk.

AMY LIM

Discoveries and Research

Have you discovered or researched something you would like to share with the Society? We welcome short articles on discoveries made on Society visits, or other discoveries and developments relevant to

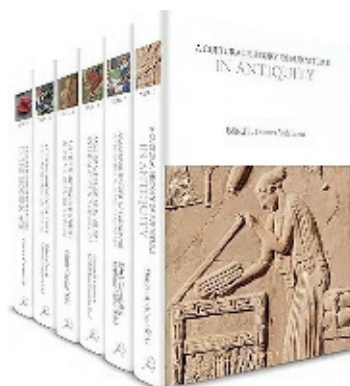
furniture history. Please send suggestions to the Editor, details on the back of this Newsletter. Articles should be about 500-800 words; a lead article 1,000-1,500; the Editor will send you our author guidelines.

Book Reviews

Suggestions for reviews should be sent to Wolf Burchard at the Metropolitan Museum, 1000 5th Avenue, New York, NY 10028, U.S.A. (email: wolf.burchard@metmuseum.org; telephone +1 212 650 2208).

CHRISTINA M. ANDERSON (GENERAL ED.), *A Cultural History of Furniture*, 6 vols (Bloomsbury Academic, London 2022), pp. 1824, illus c.2000, ISBN 13: 9781472577764, £395/\$610

This six-volume series of the history of furniture aims at providing a different narrative from chronological or geographic accounts by placing furniture within a broader, cultural context, considering not only design and manufacture, but the use and display of furniture in different environments. Cultural history is defined as the 'changing cultural framework within which furniture was designed, produced and used as well as the cultural considerations of furniture itself.' The volumes thus cover the history of furniture from antiquity to the modern day. Each volume consists of an introduction, followed by the same divisions for each



volume. They are as follows: design and ornament, makers and making, the furniture trade, architecture and furniture, exhibition and display, the domestic setting and the public setting and finally visual and verbal representations. The series is intended to be read either across one volume for a more coherent view of the time period or transversally in order to follow a particular theme. Each essay is written by a specialist of the period coming from a variety of disciplines, primarily curatorial or the history of architecture and furniture and design for the twentieth century. The result is a

compendium of detailed information on furniture making and fascinating insights into the use and meaning of furniture and furnishings at different times.

These themes are very well presented in the introductions to each book. While each introduction varies, each offers thought-provoking insights into the key concerns of the age. Some mention political history; they all relate the role of furniture to the main intellectual considerations of each period. In her introduction to the first volume, *Antiquity*, Dimitra Andrianou, addresses the role of furniture in creating cultural heritage, bringing out the early awareness of furnishing as expressing prestige and power. The rarity and fragmentary nature of written sources or bills, emphasizes the problems for furniture historians in using visual sources, themes that will be discussed in later volumes as well. The introduction to the second volume, *Middle Ages and Renaissance*, by Erin J. Campbell and Stephanie Miller, provides a useful discussion on what is meant by the cultural context for furniture and tackle the question of how to define furniture at a time when new types of furniture were being created for new social uses. Interestingly, they do not attempt to define the Renaissance or the impact of such concepts as *magnificenza* and *splendori*, which is left to the essay on the domestic setting, instead emphasizing the continuous narrative of courtly representation during the long Middle Ages.

In *The Age of Exploration*, Christina Anderson and Elisabeth Carroll begin their introduction to the period 1500-1700 with the account of the conquests

of Henry the Navigator of Portugal, no doubt to emphasize how early materials and objects began to be collected and traded by all European countries during this period, rather than discussing the later explorations in the seventeenth century. Briefly covered is the importance of the classical tradition at this time and the ways in which the understanding of these new worlds was incorporated into and changed European perspectives. In the final section, they concentrate on the changing spatial environments in which furniture was placed.

The fourth volume, *The Age of the Enlightenment*, is introduced by Sylvain Cordier and Megan Aldrich, who emphasize the importance of taste during the period 1700-1800 and the enduring legacy of what was seen as good taste, with France serving as the model for the design and display of furniture. This period where literacy was valued and the knowledge of the classical world was combined with new scientific exploration, they argue, can be seen as the transition from the 'older world of received authority and strict social hierarchy and the world we recognize today.'

In their introduction to the fifth volume, *The Age of Industry and Empire* (1800-1900), Katherine Futter and Christina Anderson use the international exhibitions that became so prevalent in the second half of the century to pick out key concerns of the period, and through references to the essay by Redgrave in 1852, highlight the period's intellectual concerns with the role of ornament, function, good design and typologies of furniture in the context of growing industrial

manufacture, immigration, transportation and colonialism. The introduction to the final volume of the series, *Modern Age*, by Claire I.R. O'Mahony returns to some of the fundamental concern of the series in creating a cultural history of furniture. She outlines the twentieth-century concern with the impact of machinery and personal identity. At a time when furnishing seems predominantly domestic, she also reminds us of the continuing importance of furniture as an expression of political ideology and power in the descriptions of the furniture produced by the Nazis and Mussolini.

The editors claim that the series provides a thorough grounding in the furniture of a particular period, while following distinct themes across the volumes. The division into themes inevitably leads to some repetition and lack of context. French and English furniture makers are covered extensively in the chapter on 'Makers, Making and Materials' by Yannick Chastang and Adam Bowett in the volume *The Age of Exploration* and much is repeated in the chapter on 'Ornament and Design' in the following volume. Boulle figures largely in both volumes, which might be expected, but the information is scattered throughout several essays in two different volumes, which could be confusing and results in too much coverage of similar topics. On the other hand, Christopher Dresser is only covered under 'Verbal Representations' in volume five and not mentioned outside that chapter.

It would not be fair to complain about gaps in a series that covers so much. However, the concentration on Britain,

France and the United States in the three volumes covering the period from 1600-1900 does leave out many of the crosscurrents that took place in furniture use and design. If the series intends to represent the importance of furniture and furnishings for cultural history, then surely that history covers a wider spectrum than is suggested by this bias.

The fragmentary presentation of information and subsequent gaps are particularly noticeable in considering the longer chronological view. The cut-off point of c.1500, which separates the second and third volumes, splits up the narrative of the adoption of the classical repertoire and the significance it played in the design of furnishings. Relatively little space is given to the eighteenth-century precursors of Percier and Fontaine, among whom were Italian designers such as Asprucci and Valadier. Equally, as design of the turn of the twentieth century – including the Vienna Secessionist movement – is covered primarily in the volume on the twentieth century, the important architect Otto Wagner (1841-1918), is mentioned only once with a reference to the Post Office Savings Bank, while – as they were produced in the nineteenth century – nothing is said about his earlier work or highly influential publications.

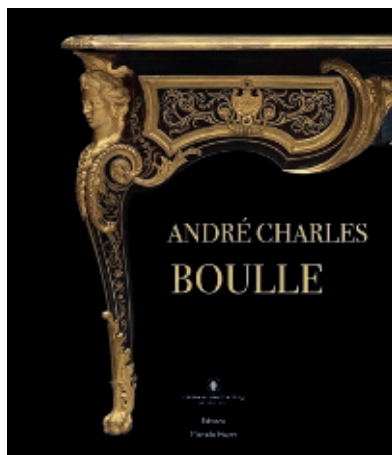
Every reader will have their own biases, but every reader will also gain many insights and new ways of thinking about furniture as they read the different volumes in this thoughtful and highly informative series.

ADRIANA TURPIN

MATHIEU DELDICQUE (ED.), *André Charles Boulle* (ex. cat.), (Éditions Monelle Hayot, Saint-Rémy-en-l'Eau, 2024), 374 pp., ISBN 979-1096561452, €39.

In his introduction, Mathieu Deldicque, Director of the Musée Condé, states that Boulle has not until now been the subject of an exhibition in France. This may be true, but one ought to acknowledge the very important international loan exhibition on Boulle, organised by the late Jean Nérée Ronfort and held at the Museum Angewandte Kunst, Frankfurt in 2009. The setting of the Chantilly exhibition is undoubtedly more glamorous; the furniture is exhibited in the early-eighteenth-century rooms of the Petit Château, the Cabinet des Singes and the Galerie des Batailles, whereas the Frankfurt exhibition was in a 1970s museum. As regards the loans, the Frankfurt show perhaps had the edge, since it included the wardrobe, with vases of flowers in wood marquetry on its doors, lent by the Hermitage, and the medal cabinet, also with wood marquetry, lent by the Staatliche Münzsammlung, Munich.

The heavily illustrated Chantilly exhibition catalogue comprises 15 chapters by 14 authors, and 37 entries. The publication focuses predominately on the development of the Boulle writing-table, taking, as its centre point, the *bureau plat* made for Louis Henri de Bourbon, prince de Condé (1692-1740). While the 2009 Frankfurt catalogue concentrated on Boulle's career, this book is more about his output and whether firm attributions can be made based on technical analysis. Indeed, a large proportion of this publication is about such technical analysis, on the basis of which, so the authors claim, all pieces of furniture discussed in the entries should be given to Boulle.



Condé's *bureau plat* was amongst the few effects saved from the fire in Boulle's workshop in the Louvre which broke out the night of 30 August 1720. In the account that Boulle addressed to the Crown in an attempt to obtain compensation, which is transcribed as an annex to the present catalogue, the *bureau* is listed as 'un bureau de 6 pieds de long couvert en maroquin'. It is thus a documentary piece. Supported on four legs, mounted at the top with female heads, with masks of Democritus on the central drawer fronts, and with emphatic acanthus scrolls flanking the kneehole, it marks the emergence of the classic French writing-table. The female heads may be compared to those on the commodes of 1708-9 for the bedroom of Louis XIV at the Grand Trianon, one of which was lent to the exhibition (no. 21), except that on the royal commodes the heads are flanked by wings, turning them into sphinxes. Such sphinxes may be derived from the front arms of Hellenistic marble thrones and are thus appropriate to a royal commission. *Bureaux plats* evidently existed at the beginning of the eighteenth century. In the Louvre portrait by Rigaud of

Jean-Baptiste Bossuet, dated 1702 (illus. p.112), the great preacher stands next to a writing-table with satyrs' masks at the tops of the legs. Such masks also appear on four legs of the six-legged console tables of a model first delivered in 1701, in doll's house dimensions, for the duchesse de Bourgogne at the Ménagerie. These consoles are represented by two lent by the Wallace Collection (no. 33; Wallace Collection F424-5). The first console has a top on which a fantastic car propelled by two oxen supports an arbour with Cupid on a swing, a design deriving from the Flemish Mannerist Cornelis Bos (c. 1515-1566). The second has a top with an elegant cage, inside which are exotic fowls, a reference to the radiating enclosures which surrounded the Ménagerie. Above, two monkeys walk the tightrope, while to the left six others take part in the German wetting sport known as *Kubelstechen*. This is taken from an engraving by Pieter van der Borcht IV (1545-1608). The catalogue does not mention how surprising these engraved sources are. Boulle lived in a country ostensibly devoted to the supremacy of the classical, yet borrowed from Flemish Mannerism. It is not surprising that in 1720 Boulle owned 'un recueil de quarante huit desseins de la main de Raphael sujets de metamorphose', since bronzes of Apollo and Daphne and of Apollo and Marsyas appear on his wardrobes. It is surprising, however, that he lost in the fire three portfolios 'de pieces noires de Smith', English seventeenth-century mezzotint portraits.

Perhaps Boulle's most lavish patron was the Grand Dauphin (1661-1711). Boulle helped create the Cabinet des Glaces on the first floor of the Aile du Midi, built by

Mansart in 1678-82. The room was named from the panels of looking-glass on its walls and ceiling, kept in place by gilt-bronze frames supplied by Domenico Cucci. In front of the glass, carved wood consoles supported some of Monseigneur's precious objects, while the floor was of parquetry carried out by Pierre Gole. Two pairs of pedestals from the Cabinet are known, one pair in the Victoria and Albert Museum (pp.286-7, fig.5-6), veneered with brass and pewter on grounds of tortoiseshell, and another at Versailles. These were delivered in 1684, while in 1686 two octagonal pedestals by Boulle (No. 17) were added. These survive in the Domaine de Chaalis, belonging, like Chantilly, to the Institut de France. Three of their sides are mounted with aprons, veneered with marquetry of pewter and horn backed with lapis lazuli, framed with gilt-bronze fringe cast from actual textile fringe and surmounted by masks of satyrs and nymphs. Jean Nérée Ronfort suggested that they may originally have supported the two bronzes of Air and Fire in the Wallace Collection (S 161-2), given by Louis XIV to the Grand Dauphin.

It is slightly difficult to find one's place in the catalogue, since there is no index, and the entries are interspersed with the specialist essays. A minor typographical criticism is that, in each entry, the details of ownership, materials, provenance and bibliography are printed in a smaller font than the main text and in greyish type. Nevertheless, the catalogue is an indispensable *vademecum* for those wishing to know the current state of knowledge on André Charles Boulle and, at 39 Euros, it is very reasonably priced.

PETER HUGHES

HENRIETTE GRAF, *Die Braunschweiger Korallenfabrik des Johann Michael van Selow, Braunschweigisches Kunsthandwerk*, volume 5 (Braunschweig 2023), 306 pp., 252 illus., ISBN 978-3-9823115-1-7, €75.

This new publication explores the exceptional *Korallenfabrik*, a manufactory established by Johann Michael van Selow in the City of Braunschweig, Germany, which specialised in the making of tabletops, tea trays, snuff boxes and other trinkets, using multi-coloured glass beads – a technique that appears to have been entirely unique. The book discusses these unusual works through the lens of their maker and reveals a fascinating entrepreneurial history, reconstructed through thorough primary research in the Braunschweig archives conducted by Henriette Graf with the assistance of Angelika Rauch, who wrote her PhD on van Selow's manufactory.¹ Technical analyses by conservators Andreas Flöck and Garnet Rösch-Meier, specialists in the conservation of these rare and fragile objects, further backed Graf and Rauch's findings. They describe the making of the objects after analysing how to recreate some heavily damaged sections of a tabletop, as part of a conservation project.

Originally begun in the context of the exhibition *Braunschweiger Rokoko*, shown at the Städtisches Museum, Braunschweig in 2005, this publication was significantly delayed, allowing the authors to increase the number of objects discussed in the book and thus to give a much more comprehensive account of the range of products delivered by the *Korallenfabrik*.² The works fascinate because of their rich colours, which – thanks to the materials



employed – have not lost any of their saturation and luster, and therefore give a lively account of the love of bright colour schemes in the eighteenth century, which otherwise is known mostly from porcelain and glass, but seldom from furniture, where marquetry and textiles have usually faded over time.

Van Selow, originally from Amsterdam, established his workshop with the support of Duke Carl I of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, who was keen to develop local industries. The various products made by the manufactory were sold at regular sales, as well as at the annual fair at Braunschweig, which at the time was an important centre for trade in Germany, comparable to Frankfurt, Leipzig or Hamburg. Graf points out that van Selow specialized in the manufacture of table-tops but not their stands, which explains the wide range of models and the great differences in manufacture and style. A top could be acquired at a fair and then mounted by a local craftsman. As business was tough and sales did not pick up as van Selow anticipated, he received permission to organise a lottery, with some success.

Scenes represented on trays and tabletops could be of a secular or religious nature. In some cases, ornamental plates from the period directly influenced the depictions on the objects. One of the most unusual products were three-dimensional sculptural objects, such as figures of parrots. Strings of tiny glassbeads were set in a base of putty of a yet unidentified composition. The glass beads were produced in Venice and later also at Briard, in France. Van Selow might have received them through Amsterdam as they were an important currency in the triangular trade.

Even though the manufactory was short-lived: established in 1759 and, according to Graf, active only until 1771, it was a successful business, of which the production was possibly cut short by the reverberations of the Seven Years War. The present publication is an excellent example of revealing research into a local industry, which due to its unusual technique deserves to be known by a wider international audience. Van Selow is one of the few craftspeople who have regained an identity, and he presents an exemplary model of entrepreneurial initiative in the Age of Enlightenment, in one of the numerous small states which then formed Germany. Just as with the lacquer manufacturer Stobwasser, who also began his business in Braunschweig, this new book demonstrates that artists and entrepreneurs, even if they operated outside the better-known centres of production, could acquire great recognition. The academic research

conducted by Graf and Rauch was published thanks to funding from the Richard Borek Stiftung and the Museum of the City of Braunschweig, who have given their support to the study of a subject which touches on various cultural facets of society and economy. This thoroughly researched and beautifully produced publication is a monument to the excellence of an artist, much of whose output can still be found at the Städtisches Museum Braunschweig, although works by van Selow do regularly come up on the international art market.

ULRICH LEBEN

¹ Angelika Rauch, *Corallenfabrik Van Selow. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Kunstgewerbes im 18. Jahrhundert*, PhD 2008

² *Braunschweiger Rokoko*, Städtisches Museum Braunschweig, Braunschweig 2005

Reports on FHS Events

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

Visit to Beckford's Tower, Bath

THURSDAY 23 MAY 2024

Our visit was led by Beckford's Tower's enthusiastic curator Dr. Amy Frost and Marie Brewer. The tower has recently been the subject of a big restoration project which was still ongoing.

The tower gardens became a cemetery shortly after Beckford's death in 1844 and we inspected Beckford's pink granite tomb (designed by him) relocated from Bath Abbey cemetery to the spot he wished to be buried. An elaborate Gateway in the Byzantine style by Henry Goodridge was erected in 1848 as an entrance to the public cemetery. Part of the recent restoration works involved unearthing and repairing the entrance to a grotto on land at the far end of the cemetery. Beckford would ride up to the tower from his houses in Lansdown Crescent and would walk back using the grotto/tunnel on his way down the hill.

The tower, built in 1826/7 by Henry Goodridge had a history of neglect, becoming a mortuary chapel and suffering a serious fire in 1931. The original furnishings had been sold by auction in 1845-48 apart from items retained by the Duchess of Hamilton. The restoration challenge was huge. We were sadly unable



Beckford's Tower

to see the ground floor rooms which are let by the Landmark Trust, but we viewed the first floor rooms which have been restored and display some of Beckford's possessions including some furniture made for the tower. A recent exciting discovery was an oak domed coffer on stand with a glazed display window. This was one of four originally made for the tower in 1841. Tim Turner had kindly brought details of the coffer's first appearance at a small sale in Essex followed by another sale at Sworders and eventual acquisition by the Bath Preservation Trust in 2011 for display in the tower. We also viewed a massive 1828 Sienna marble side table, an oak and gilt

wall cabinet, an oak seven drawer cabinet and a mahogany marble-top cabinet made for 20 Lansdown Crescent. The climb up the cantilevered stairs and wooden staircase to the top of the tower was rewarded by magnificent views over Bath and the surrounding countryside. The lantern had been re-gilded as part of the recent restoration.

The final part of our visit was to 19 Lansdown Crescent where the owners, Michael Forsyth and Marion Harney showed us Beckford's library. An impressive room with figured mahogany breakfront bookcases flanked by scagliola Sienna columns. This is the only unaltered room designed by Beckford. We marvelled at the energy of an elderly man moving to Bath in his 60's to start from scratch after the sale of Fonthill and the treasures therein.

DAVID CARSTAIRS

Visit to Buscot Park

Following the Society's visit to 28 Brompton Square in January 2024, we explored the Faringdon Collection further at Buscot Park, Berkshire, where we were welcomed by curator Dr Amy Lim and by Lucinda Henderson, the present Lord Faringdon's daughter-in-law and a trustee of the collection, who were our guides throughout a fascinating afternoon.

Much of the furniture at Buscot was acquired by Gavin Henderson (1902-77), 2nd Lord Faringdon, one of the group of mid-twentieth century aristocratic collectors who pioneered a revival of interest in later Georgian architecture and design. It was he who removed Victorian accretions and returned Buscot largely to its original appearance of 1779-83.



The group at Buscot Park

We began our tour in the Hall, where we saw the celebrated couch, chairs and torchères that were made for Thomas Hope's Egyptian Room at Duchess Street, London, and which are illustrated in his *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration* (1807). The Egyptian clock, which stands on a splendid Regency lion-form tripod is also close to a Hope design. A Boulle clock, whose thermometer has the rare Rèamur temperature scale invented in 1730, also attracted our interest.

In the Dutch Room we examined a suite of mahogany seat furniture from Barnsley Park with *gros-point* needlework covers signed 'S. Price / Gloucester / Jany 12th 1771. Among much else, a fine pair of mid-seventeenth century Flemish cabinets, inlaid with red tortoiseshell and bone, provoked our interest. These are topped with brass galleries, which may have been added when the cabinets received their early-nineteenth century ebonised stands.

The large suite of leather-covered chairs in the dining room came from Clumber Park, but it was thought unlikely that two Adam sidetables in the same room were made for Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn's house in St James's Square, as they do not appear in inventories of 1789 and 1906.

Burne-Jones's great cycle of narrative paintings, *The Legend of the Briar Rose*, 1870-90, was installed in the Saloon by the artist himself, who specified their Renaissance-style frames. These complement a magnificent early-nineteenth century giltwood suite, bearing the stamp of Pierre-Antoine Bellangé. In the drawing room next door, we discussed a group of late eighteenth-century satinwood and rosewood pieces, with

painted peacock-feather decoration.

Among much else, the sitting room contained a magnificent pair of commodes made for the 5th Duke of Marlborough by Ince and Mayhew. However, perhaps the most spectacular piece we viewed was the Normanton bed of about 1705, with its crimson and blue damask hangings. Recently conserved, the bed remains in occasional use.

One final unexpected treat, not usually shown, was a cabinet made by Muir, Wood & Sons, of Edinburgh, in 1804-11, containing Ann Young's 'Musical Game', patented in 1801. This was the first patented educational game and was also intended to teach the fundamental principles of the science of music.

At the end of the visit, Sarah Medlam thanked Amy Lim and Lucinda Henderson for their generosity in sharing the collection with us.

OLIVER FAIRCLOUGH

Study trip to Brussels

FRIDAY 19 – SUNDAY 21 APRIL 2024

Hôtel Solvay

Hôtel Solvay, designed and built by the architect Victor Horta between 1894 and 1903 for Armand Solvay, is one of the most pioneering works of architecture, interior decoration and furnishings of the late nineteenth century.

Our guide, art historian and vice president of the Museum of Dynasty, Barbara de Muyser, explained that Art Nouveau first appeared in Brussels in the early 1890s, and quickly spread to France and the rest of Europe. It was based upon an innovative use of spaces, light and

The group at
Hôtel Solvay



new materials such as iron and glass. The designs were inspired by plants and other natural forms. Horta renewed the architecture of his time; he created open-plan spaces full of daylight by designing glass walls and skylights.

Thanks to Armand Solvay, his wealthy patron, Horta could spend a fortune on precious materials, such as marble, onyx, bronze and tropical woods from the Congo, but also used woods like pitch pine, ash, Hungarian oak and mahogany. He designed every detail: furniture, carpets, light fittings, tableware and the doorbell and in doing so, conceived a complete work of art, a *gesamtkunstwerk*. Electric lighting and natural climate control ensured good ventilation. The interior decoration is unique, and all the furnishings survive and are placed in the same spot as originally intended. No wonder that in 2000, Hôtel Solvay,

together with three of his other town houses including his own house and workshop, was added to the Unesco World Heritage list and that it is now open as a museum.

SASKIA BROEKEMA

Jonathan Mangelinckx collection

On arrival at the private home of Jonathan Mangelinckx we were split into two groups, led by Benjamin Zurstrassen, Curator and Director of the Horta Museum (Saint-Gilles) and Borys Delobbe, who holds a PhD in History, Art and Archeology from UCLouvain. Jonathan Mangelinckx – who runs an international graphic design studio – and Borys Delobbe publish books on furnishings, furthering their aim to raise awareness of Belgian Art Nouveau. Although loans and exhibitions

are made using the Mangelinckx collection this was not a museum but a home, so we were very fortunate to have been invited. The collection, formed over twenty years, is based 'on research into a groundbreaking form of ornamentation in the decorative arts that emerged in late nineteenth century Belgium'.

We learned about the history of Art Nouveau in Belgium and how the Arts and Crafts movement was first mentioned there in 1819. In Belgian Art Nouveau furniture-making, there are two vantage points - that of the architect and of the painter. Jonathan Mangelinckx is drawn to pieces with visible construction rather than two-dimensional geometric details such as those used by painters like Henry van de Velde.

His collection features work by Georges Hobé, Henry Van de Velde and Gustave Serrurier-Bovy among others. We heard some personal stories behind some of the acquisitions like his market discovery of a chair by Serrurier-Bovy.

The visit ended with drinks and food downstairs where we were all presented with a booklet on some of the key pieces of the collection, the first volume of the magnificent *Belgian Art Nouveau* series and the children's book *Les aventures de monsieur Artono*. The third volume in the series *Belgium Art Nouveau: Vision, Design and Craft* will be available early in 2025.

With thanks to Jonathan Mangelinckx for welcoming us to his collection.

BEATRICE GODDARD



Jonathan Mangelinckx's collection. Image credit: Maude Willaerts

Hôtel Cohn-Donnay and restaurant De Ultiem Hallucinatie

We started with a tour which introduced us to the Hôtel Cohn-Donnay's rich and colourful history. Originally built in the Neoclassical style in the 1830s, it was bought in the 1850s by famed pianist Marie Pleyel. There, Marie hosted lavish parties and private concerts – even entertaining Chopin himself. After her death in 1904, a family purchased the house and renovated it into the Art Nouveau space it is today, employing the architect Paul Hamesse. What makes this

house so interesting is its mixture of Art Nouveau renditions. For example, some rooms depict elements of the Viennese and Glaswegian approaches to Art Nouveau. All of this survives today thanks to the owners of the house from 1910 until 1980, who kept all the original Art Nouveau elements intact. Notable features include the train-like booths in the dining room, the hunting scenes and the four seasons depicted on the ground floor fireplace, the presumed in-home synagogue upstairs, and the garden room specifically made for Marie Pleyel's private concerts. After our tour, we enjoyed a fabulous Belgian dinner in the Hôtel Cohn-Donnay's authentic Art Nouveau dining room, now the restaurant De Ultiem Hallucinatie.

SKYLAR PINCHAL

Horta Museum

Business meets pleasure at the Horta Museum, the combined home and studio of Victor Horta (1861-1906), probably the best known of the Art Nouveau architects. In the centre of three interconnected terraced houses is the property that Horta designed for himself and his family between 1898 and 1906, considerably more modest than the Hotel Solvay, but just as beautiful, with mosaic floors, sinuous ironwork balustrades and palette of warm oranges, golds and browns. The adjacent, connecting building housed his workshop, where Horta employed nineteen draughtsmen as well as three sculptors making plaster models for ornament. An adjacent building (not designed by Horta) provides a space for temporary exhibitions. Its preservation as a museum is thanks to the strenuous campaigning of Horta's pupil Jean Delhay



Stained-glass skylight and mirror at the top of the Horta Museum. Image credit: Maude Willaerts



Dining Room,
Horta Museum.
Image credit: Amy Lim.

(1908-1993), who persuaded the Commune de Saint Gilles to acquire the building in 1961, then became closely involved in its restoration.

We were welcomed by Curator Benjamin Zurstrassen, who seamlessly wove together the architectural history of the building, an explanation of Horta's business practices, and the challenges of managing a compact and fragile UNESCO World Heritage site that welcomes 65,000 visitors a year. He explained how Horta was influenced by the writings of Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, who taught that architecture must be true to its purpose and materials, and to seek inspiration in nature. This is reflected in the building's transparent expression of its use, the functionality that underpins every element, in the organic curves of the decoration, and the prominent dragonfly motif on the façade. In the twentieth century, Horta's

legacy emphasised his architectural practice and downplayed the role of ornament and furnishings. Consequently, many of the fixtures and fittings have been destroyed, altered or dispersed, and whilst much of Horta's interiors does survive, the museum also displays some furnishings by other designers, taking the opportunity to tell the wider story of Art Nouveau.

The museum innovatively combines storage with display (a growing trend), displaying its collection of 600 plaster models in semi-open shelving, and stacking chairs in flexible, glass-fronted cases. It is notably self-aware, engaging visitors with curatorial decision-making and the processes of restoration. Our thanks to Benjamin and his fellow guide for a suitably enjoyable and instructive visit.

AMY LIM

Haesaerts-le Grelle Gallery

From the spacious and rarified rooms of Musée Horta, we found ourselves packed into the bijou Galerie Haesaerts-le Grelle. Run by furniture restorers Laurent Haesaerts and Alexis le Grelle, it showcases a select assortment of Belle-Epoque furniture and decorative arts. The duo joined forces in 2014, purchasing and renaming the workshop that previously employed them, and opening their eponymous gallery as a sales space. United by a shared admiration of the Belgian architect and furniture designer Gustave Serrurier-Bovy, they have spent the past decade researching his career. Haesaerts explained the rationale behind their chosen location on Avenue Albert, pointing out the building's architectural features. It was built in 1902 by the Société Anonyme des Habitations à Bon Marché, a low-cost housing initiative that aligned with Serrurier-Bovy's Socialist beliefs. An altogether different experience to the sometimes austere atmosphere conjured by historic homes and museums followed, as we were warmly invited to sit on the gallery's wares while our hosts introduced us to the life and work of Serrurier-Bovy (all via translator!) and shared photographs of the Serrurier-Bovy shops and workshops. Haesaerts and le Grelle's knowledge and enthusiasm for the work of Serrurier-Bovy and his peers is obvious and their insight and un-precious approach were refreshing, reminding us that these pieces were designed to be used and enjoyed.

JESSICA HARPLEY

Maison Hannon

Maison Hannon, completed in 1904 and recently opened as a house museum, was designed by Belgian architect Jules Brunfaut (1852-1942) for his friends Marie and Edouard Hannon. Madame Hannon was originally from Nancy, France, so the original furniture, some of which has been lent back to the house, was designed by Émile Gallé. Large frescoes by French artist Paul Baudouin (1844-1931) make the house a true union of Belgian and French Art Nouveau. It was Brunfaut's only building in the Art Nouveau style, but he followed several of Horta's architectural themes with which we were becoming familiar such as an impressive central staircase, a wintergarden, stained glass and bringing light into the house.

Hannon does not have its original furnishings, so the first-floor rooms have been turned into exhibition rooms. The current exhibition showcases the Art Nouveau designs of Henry van de Velde (1863-1957), Gustave Serrurier-Bovy (1858-1910), and Paul Hankar (1859-1901) and his disciples, as an in-depth look at those who were critical for the dissemination of the new style. We were lucky to be taken round by the curator of the exhibition and the house, Grégory Van Aelbrouck. This was an opportunity to immerse ourselves not only in furniture but also metalwork, ceramics, glass, and textiles and to start to make connections and pick out themes from objects and designs we had seen earlier.

SARAH NICHOLS

The Grégory Van Aelbrouck Collection

We then walked to the private town house that Grégory Van Aelbrouck is renovating, designed by Fritz Seeldrayers (1878-1963) as his own house in 1900. It had been divided into flats, but Grégory is undertaking a labour of love to turn it back into a single dwelling. While there remain very many Art Nouveau houses in Brussels, mostly three storeys high and on narrow plots, the majority have over the years been destroyed or changed inside. Grégory showed us his collection and kindly supplied welcome refreshments.

Grégory started to collect as he began to furnish his house and has now considerable collection including works by Leon Sneyers and Paul Cauchie, and important pieces by Gustave Serrurier-Bovy, who was an admirer of William Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement in England. Serrurier-Bovy's interpretation of the sinuous Art Nouveau line is thus more restrained than some other interpretations, especially in his earlier works, focusing on the simple craftsmanship of the piece. We particularly admired a Serrurier-Bovy settle with a shelf just above head height, upholstered in bright yellow, an elegant, restrained textile screen and an unusual swivel desk chair with plaited leather back and seat.

Belgium benefited during this period from the flourishing and relatively cheap manufacture of glass, which was eagerly taken advantage of by artists and designers. The stained-glass examples in Grégory's collection were especially beautiful, including a window panel of an

underwater scene in vivid greens, oranges and blues.

It was an inspiring collection, in the perfect setting.

NICOLA PARK

Kurtz collection

We are grateful to John and Zoe Kurtz for hosting us at their apartment, where their collection includes a variety of pieces. These included three chairs I designed, and which were made in my workshop at Parnham.

The Mitre Chair in Macassar ebony has a woven nickel silver seat and back. It was designed to go with a chess set by Malcolm Appleby for Collingwood, silver dealers in Conduit Street to mark the Silver Wedding Anniversary of the late Queen and Prince Philip. We made a chess table to house the set, and were then asked to design some chairs, one to be in ebony and the other in holly. They did not proceed with the chairs, but John and Zoe saw the drawings and ordered an ebony chair, made by Andrew Whately. John and Zoe generously loaned it for my Arts Council exhibition in 2010-11.

In 1975, Liberty's commissioned a dining table, twelve chairs and a side table to celebrate their Centenary. The tabletop comprises four interlocking oak 'leaves'. The chairs were turned, reflecting that tradition in the history of furniture. We made a prototype of the 'turned' chairs and upholstered it in yellow leather, which John and Zoe purchased subsequently.

The red-lacquered Throne Chair was carved in lime wood by Jane Putnam.

It was blocked up with all the grain running vertically to ensure consistency of movement in the timber. The piercings give a sense of lightness, and glimpses of what lies beyond.

JOHN MAKEPEACE

Cauchie House

The Maison Cauchie exterior was something of a visual surprise. The narrow house, only twenty feet wide, stands between two fairly straightforward



The interior of the Cauchie House decorated with sgraffito decoration and Glasgow School of Art-inspired furniture. Image credit: Maude Willaerts.

Brussels terraced houses. Its unique front is decorated with stylish sgraffito depicting allegorical figures and patterns much inspired by the Glasgow School and much more geometric in design both outside and in than the work of Victor Horta.

It was built in 1905 by Paul and Lina Cauchie as their family home. The front, inscribed with the words *Par Nous – Pour Nous* (by us – for us) was an advertisement for the couple's work. Paul Cauchie was a prolific sgraffito artist who decorated the fronts of over 800 buildings in Brussels, as well as an architect and interior designer. His wife too was an artist and designer. The house was designed by the couple as a 'total artwork' project, their various skills being used both inside and out – panelling, stained glass, and painted murals, which nod to the Glasgow School and the Vienna Secession.

The house is now a museum and many of the original contents have been unearthed and returned to the house. Upstairs, we had the privilege of discovering the studio of Lina Cauchie (usually not open for visits) with paintings and her easel.

Thank you to our guide Alice Graas, coordinator of Art Nouveau Brussels 2023, for a terrific visit.

KATE DYSON

Wolfers Frères jewellery shop at the Museum of Art and History

The Parc du Cinquantaire on the eastern border of the city of Brussels houses Belgium's largest museum,

the Musée Art et Histoire. Planned to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Belgian independence in 1880, the Parc subsequently housed part of the Brussels International Exposition of 1897.

At the Musée Art et Histoire we were greeted by Werner Adriaenssens, Curator of Twentieth century collections and Keeper of Decorative Arts, who guided us to the restored historic interior of Wolfers Brothers silver and jewellery shop, donated to the Museum in 1973. Commissioned by the Wolfers Brothers in 1909 and designed by Victor Horta, it was a luxurious space to display and sell their work to Belgian and international high society after it opened in 1912.

In contrast to the ornamental Art Nouveau woodwork from earlier visits, the Wolfers' display cases featured pared-back woodwork and unobstructed expanses of glass to maximise the visibility of jewellery and silverware. Manufactured in the UK by Frederick Sage & Co., museum case makers turned shopfitters, the tropical hardwood cases were equipped with sophisticated security mechanisms that could be operated with a single hand.

The cases now display part of the museum's collection of objects by Wolfers including Victor Horta's own 400-piece silverware set, Art Nouveau jewellery, and a range of chryselephantine sculptures.

A short walk through the museum brought us behind the scenes into a partially installed gallery. Due to open mid-2025, the new gallery will be one of the few public spaces in Belgium to bring together examples of the Belgian Art

Nouveau furniture and architecture by a range of designers and manufacturers.

GREGOR WITTRICK

Hotel van Eetvelde and LAB-AN (Laboratoire Art Nouveau)

Our final visit was to the Hotel van Eetvelde, built for Baron Edmond van Eetvelde, General Administrator of Foreign Affairs for the Congo Free State, who became Congolese Secretary of State in 1891. He commissioned Victor Horta to design the house, built between 1895 and 1898. Two extensions on either side, also designed by Horta, were added between 1898 and 1901. The larger housed van Eetvelde's office and a separate apartment and the smaller included a billiard room. The exterior of the central house was particularly innovative with a hanging iron construction attached to the facade. Horta noted in his 'Memoires' that Madame van Eetvelde found the visible use of iron in her home *peuple* (vulgar) and was a reminder to her of the Maison du Peuple which was then being built by Horta and commissioned by the leaders of the Belgian Labour Party.

Horta also broke with convention in the interior to produce a masterpiece of spatial ingenuity. Most Brussels town houses had virtually identical deep and narrow layouts, which meant that only the front and rear elevations could benefit from natural light. From a comparatively simple entrance hall Horta placed the staircase diagonally and the visitor ascends into a double height octagonal

Baron Edmond van Eetvelde's office in the Hotel conceived for him by Victor Horta. Image credit: Maude Willaerts



winter garden glazed with stained glass by Raphael Evaldre. Light streams onto the iron columns which fan out like palm fronds and the ethereal effect is enhanced by the sinuous vine-like iron work of the banisters. The salon and dining room open off this central space and contain some of the original in-built furniture designed by Horta and made from woods from the Congo such as mahogany and padauk. The Congo link continues in the dining room where the wall hangings have representations of tusks and the star from the Congo flag which had a gold star on a blue background symbolizing a shining

light on the African continent.

On the first floor of the adjacent 1898 house, we visited Baron Van Eetvelde's office with the exquisite original bookcases made of mahogany and padouk. The ground floor now contains LAB-AN, founded in 2023 as an exhibition and promotional space for Art Nouveau. The current exhibition explores the links between the Congo and Art Nouveau. To attract Belgians likely to invest in the new colony, the authorities decided to use the arts to make the imported Congo riches more widely known. Thus, in 1893 the Belgian state made available to artists

some of the huge imports of Congolese ivory with a view to showing it at the Antwerp International exhibition the following year. Philippe Wolfers was among the artists who responded to this initiative. Similarly, for the Brussels International Exhibition in 1897, Art Nouveau artists including Paul Hankar, Gustave Serrurier-Bovy, Henry van de Velde and Georges Hobé were recruited to create the colonial section in Tervuren, which showcased Congolese products including wood, ores, fabrics and and chryselephantine sculpture. Visitors

to the exhibition discovered both Art Nouveau and design products from the colony simultaneously, and as a result Art Nouveau was often referred to as *le style Congo* in Belgium. This provided a thought-provoking end to a magnificent tour.

GRAHAM O'NEIL

Huge thanks to Maude Willaerts, Assistant Curator, Department of Performance, Furniture Fashion & Textiles, V&A, for planning and leading this excellent Study Trip.



Stairwell, Hotel
van Eetvelde.
Image credit:
Maude Willearts.

Calling All Scholars and Museum Professionals

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

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

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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

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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.

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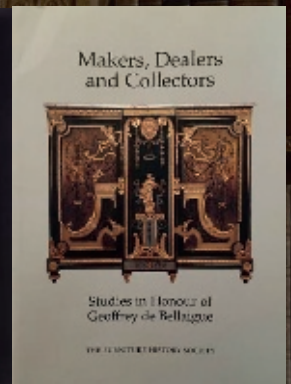
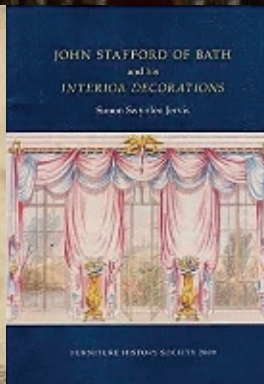
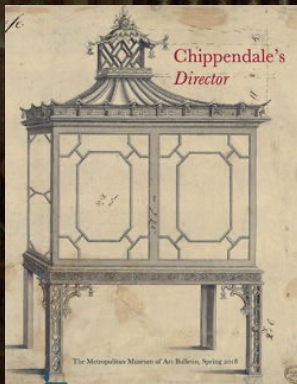
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