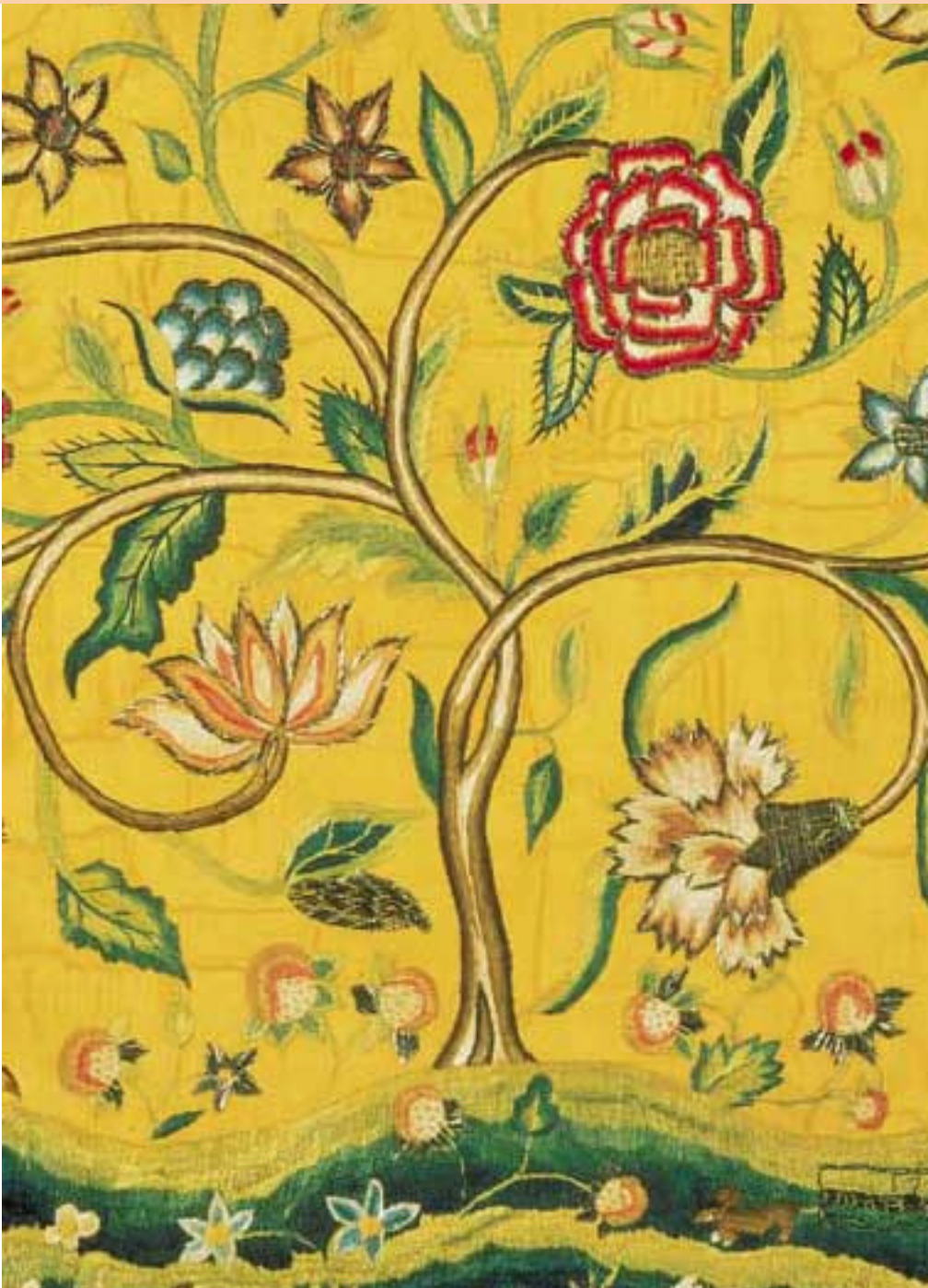


An American Vision

Henry Francis du Pont's Winterthur Museum



National Gallery of Art, Washington • 5 May–6 October 2002

The exhibition is made possible by Louisa and Robert Duemling.

In celebration of our 200th anniversary, DuPont is proud to sponsor this exhibition.

Winterthur Museum, Garden and Library, located near Wilmington, Delaware, in the beautiful Brandywine Valley, was founded in 1951 by the great American collector Henry Francis du Pont. Set on nearly one thousand acres of rolling countryside, this American country estate has been home to du Ponts since 1837. Born at Winterthur in 1880, Henry Francis du Pont distinguished himself as an astute connoisseur and collector of American fine and decorative arts. By acquiring many of the finest and rarest items made or used in America between 1640 and 1860, he chronicled American history through the objects Americans owned. Although du Pont's collecting was by his own admission driven by personal interests, he recognized the importance of building a representative collection, which today comprises over 85,000 works. This exhibition presents du Pont's preferences—the greatest strengths of Winterthur's collections—in both thematic and chronological groupings: Early Settlement and Sophistication, A Passion for Rococo, East Meets West, The Arts of the Pennsylvania Germans, and American Classicism.

EARLY SETTLEMENT AND SOPHISTICATION

In seventeenth-century America, the more affluent settlers did not lack for richness and finery. Well aware of the taste and fashions preferred in England and Europe, early colonists with means often chose to acquire for their homes objects that reflected the material comforts and aesthetic style of their counterparts abroad. While valuable foreign-made objects found their way to American shores, emigré and native-born artisans also responded to the demands of prosperous settlers. Massive, carved furniture, elaborately wrought silver, and richly fashioned garments and textiles were all available to those who could afford them. The rarity of these early objects made them highly desirable to collectors of American decorative arts, and Henry Francis du Pont was no exception. He sought the best examples of early American furniture, continental and British metalwork used in the colonies, and superb (often imported) textiles, all

fig. 1: Cupboard, possibly made by the Emery Shop, probably Newbury, Massachusetts, 1680, Bequest of Henry Francis du Pont 1966.1261



of which convey the affluence and luxury of the wealthy colonial household. The great cupboard made in 1680 in Essex County, Massachusetts, for the farmer and landowner Peter Woodbury (fig. 1) is representative of some of the most sophisticated furniture fashioned in seventeenth-century New England. With its geometrically organized central door with applied moldings, flanking arched panels, and bold overhanging upper section with pendant drops, this cupboard was a significant purchase even for someone of means. Presumably laden with various pieces of pewter, silver, brass, china, and tin-glazed earthenwares, this cupboard would have proclaimed both Woodbury's status and wealth. That few examples of cupboards of this stature survive today indicates their costliness and hence their limited production.

Silver sugar boxes were another highly prized and costly form found in the American colonies. Dating from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, such boxes were often fashioned as special presents marking an important event. Only nine American examples survive today, including the sugar box (fig. 2) made by Edward Winslow of Boston and presented to Daniel and Elizabeth

fig. 2: Sugar box,
Edward Winslow,
Boston, 1702, Gift
of Henry Francis
du Pont 1959.3363



Belcher Oliver upon the birth of their son in 1702. The imagery on the sugar box represents courtly love, chivalry, marriage, and fecundity.

A PASSION FOR ROCOCO

Drawn directly from nature, the eighteenth-century rococo style derived its name from *rocaille*, a French word referring to the rocklike creations that ornamented fanciful grottoes. This style was so successfully popularized by London cabinet-maker Thomas Chippendale and his furniture design book *The Gentleman and Cabinet-Maker's*



fig. 3: High chest,
Philadelphia,
1760–1770, Gift of
Henry Francis du
Pont 1957.506

Director (1754, 1755, and 1762) that it is now frequently referred to as the Chippendale style. Flowers, shells, trees, and land formations served to inspire the wildly creative, sculptural, and often curvilinear forms, which were incorporated into everything from textile patterns and chased and engraved silver tea sets to foliate ornament on furniture and other decorative arts. A high chest owned by Michael and Miriam Gratz (married 1769) of Philadelphia stands as one of the most florid expressions of high-style rococo taste in pre-Revolutionary America (fig. 3). The asymmetrical shell, bold naturalistic carving, and pierced central cartouche reveal the carver's skill and understanding of rococo design. In 1930 Henry Francis du Pont acquired this high chest, as well as a companion dressing table, directly from Gratz descendants. In 1997 Winterthur acquired a similarly ornamented side chair from a larger set commissioned by the Gratz family—a rare instance of eighteenth-century seating furniture made en suite with case furniture.

Although the ornately carved frames surrounding many mid- to late-eighteenth-century paintings often evidenced more rococo decoration than the paintings themselves, portraiture also reflected the status and taste of those who could afford and appreciate this fashionable style. In 1771 noted Philadelphia artist Charles Willson Peale traveled to Maryland to execute several paintings for Edward Lloyd IV, including *The Edward Lloyd Family* (fig. 4). This rare family group portrays the Lloyds' gentility, position, and wealth through their

fig. 4: Charles Willson Peale, *The Edward Lloyd Family*, Maryland, 1771, Museum purchase 1964.124



rich dress and poses: Edward assumes a leisurely stance, Elizabeth plays the English guitar, and daughter Anne endearingly clasps her father's hand. Peale painted only five such family portraits.

EAST MEETS WEST

For centuries, Europeans and Americans were intrigued by the arts of the East, such as luxurious silks, precious porcelains, and lacquerwares crafted in Asia. From the seventeenth century, Dutch and English trading companies generated huge profits by exporting items from the East for Western markets. In addition to Eastern objects imported for use in colonial America, objects incorporating Asian motifs and aesthetics were made domestically and in Europe, resulting in a fusion of Western craft techniques and materials with Asian inspiration. A number of how-to books written for the Western market detailed Eastern ornament and design. In 1688 English artisans John Stalker (of London) and George Parker (of Oxford) published *A Treatise of Japanning and Varnishing*, which included not only Eastern designs, but also instructions on japanning, a process in which decorative motifs are applied to wood in a style imitating Chinese and Japanese lacquerwork. Winterthur's impressive tall case clock made in Boston by Gawen Brown is representative of japanning produced by a small number of artisans working in Boston in the second quarter of the eighteenth century (fig. 5). Attributed to the multitalented engraver and japanner Thomas Johnston, this clock case is a rare survival displaying some of the most complex and aesthetically pleasing japanned ornament produced in colonial America.

By the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, exports shipped from India to America were almost as plentiful as those shipped from China. "India cottons," the most sought-after commodity, were often colorfully hand-painted with twining tree-of-life motifs and other floral and foliate themes. Large bed coverings known as palampores were especially popular imports, and they occasionally inspired the needlework of Americans such as Philadelphian Mary King,

fig. 5: Tall clock, Boston, works by Gawen Brown, japanning attributed to Thomas Johnston, 1749–1755, Museum purchase 1955.96.3



whose depiction of a tree of life flanked by a lion and leopard is worked in silk and metallic yarns on a silk moire ground (see cover and program panel).

THE ARTS OF THE PENNSYLVANIA GERMANS

The German-speaking people who settled in America in the eighteenth century brought with them a distinct ethnic set of values and aesthetic standards that permeated the material culture and society of the areas of Pennsylvania they inhabited. The vibrant material culture brought by these settlers influenced not only their decorative arts, but also those of others in the areas in which they settled. Today these settlers are often incorrectly referred to as Pennsylvania Dutch, a misunderstanding of the word *Deutsch*, which means German, not Dutch.

Pennsylvania Germans sought to imbue their lives with color and creativity, and they incorporated these attributes into objects they owned, particularly those of special significance. Chests, which provided valuable storage space, were often the most essential piece of household furniture. Embellishing them was a wide variety of painted ornament: from flowers to fanciful animals such as the unicorns adorning the façade of a chest from Berks County in southeastern Pennsylvania (fig. 6). Many *fraktur* (documents commemorating important family events, such as births, marriages, and deaths) were ornamented with the same decorative motifs, often tulips, hearts, and birds. Frequently these paper records were affixed inside the lids of

fig. 6: Chest, Berks County, Pennsylvania, 1765–1810, Museum purchase 1955.95.1



fig. 7: Flask,
Pennsylvania,
1800, Bequest of
Henry Francis du
Pont 1960.644

fig. 8: Lion,
John Bell Sr.,
Waynesboro,
Pennsylvania,
1840-1865,
Bequest of Henry
Francis du Pont
1967.1630



chests, though today most have been removed from that original context. The rare surviving example inside the lid of Winterthur's unicorn chest incorporates some of the same naturalistic decoration found on the chest's painted exterior into its depiction of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The verses on this fraktur relate to betrothal and marriage, suggesting that the chest may have been a wedding gift.

Du Pont's collection of Pennsylvania German objects includes various media, such as textiles, metalwork, and ceramics. Within these categories are highly decorated utilitarian objects, including door locks and fat lamps, elaborate locally made sgraffito wares (earthenwares with incised decorative motifs) (fig. 7), and colorful imported English spatterwares (lead-glazed earthenwares). The Pennsylvania Germans also incorporated individual creativity and whimsy in many of their nonutilitarian objects, as shown by the toothy lion made by John Bell Sr. (fig. 8).

AMERICAN CLASSICISM

The dramatic political changes in America during the Revolutionary period are often thought to have been the impetus for changes in style and ornament that occurred as the curvilinear rococo gave way to the more chaste and linear early classical style. However, the fact that these changes happened as America gained her independence from England is simply a coincidence. Early classicism began in Europe and was quickly carried to America by fashion-conscious travelers and ambitious artisans and merchants even before the war began. European interest in classicism was peaked in the 1740s as Roman and Grecian archaeological sites were excavated, including Pompeii. The treas-

fig. 9: John Trumbull, Washington at Verplanck's Point, New York, 1790, Gift of Henry Francis du Pont 1964.2201



ures unearthed inspired a revival of classical designs and ideals in the decorative arts by the mid-eighteenth century in Europe and by the late eighteenth century in America. During the early decades of the new American republic, ancient classical motifs served as models for national emblems: the Roman eagle became the central figure in the great seal of the United States, and new national heroes such as George Washington and Benjamin Franklin were often depicted draped in classical garb.

Although John Trumbull's 1790 painting of *Washington at Verplanck's Point* depicts the great general in colonial rather than Roman garb, he nonetheless retains many qualities of the classical hero (fig. 9). Shown with his horse as he inspects his troops in New York in 1782, Washington appears strong, confident, and commanding. This depiction was described as "the most perfect extant" by George Washington Parke Custis, Martha Washington's grandson. A wide variety of such patriotic images as well as objects with specific provenances linking them with America's founding leaders were sought out and acquired by Henry

Francis du Pont throughout his collecting career. He also acquired objects symbolizing national pride, such as late eighteenth-century furniture inlaid with eagles and glassware engraved with the great seal of the United States. One of Henry Francis du Pont's greatest tributes to American patriots, heroes, and artisans can be seen in the assemblage of a superb New York Federal sideboard that he acquired in 1926, six matching silver tankards by the patriot silversmith Paul Revere, rich Chinese export porcelain made for the American market, and a pair of English urn-shaped knife boxes originally owned by one of America's earliest millionaires, Elias Hasket Derby of Salem, Massachusetts (fig. 10). To complete this tour de force, du Pont in 1944 acquired Benjamin West's unfinished painting *American Commissioners of the Preliminary Peace Negotiations with Great Britain* (1783–1784). These remarkable reminders of this nation's material, economic, political, and cultural heritage characterize the excellence and breadth of Henry Francis du Pont's Winterthur Museum, one of America's greatest collections.

fig. 10: Sideboard, New York, 1795-1805, and urn-shaped knife boxes, England, 1790-1800, Bequest of Henry Francis du Pont 1957.850 and 1957.853; tankards, Paul Revere, Boston, 1772, Gift of Henry Francis du Pont 1957.859



PROGRAMS

SUNDAY LECTURE

June 9, 2:00 p.m.

East Building Auditorium

An American Vision: Henry Francis du Pont's Winterthur Museum

Wendy A. Cooper, Lois F. and Henry S. McNeil Senior Curator of Furniture, Winterthur Museum

SUNDAY CONCERT

May 19, 7:00 p.m.

West Building,

West Garden Court

Music by American composers of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as well as contemporary arrangements of American tunes from that period will be performed by the National Gallery Vocal Arts Ensemble (four vocal soloists and piano). Admission is free. Seating (first-come, first-seated) begins at 6:00 p.m. For more information, call 202.842.6941.

BOOK

An American Vision: Henry Francis du Pont's Winterthur Museum,

Wendy A. Cooper, published by the National Gallery of Art, Washington, and Winterthur, Delaware, in association with Lund Humphries. 224 pages, 169 color illus. \$35 softcover, \$60 hardcover. Available at Gallery Shops, through the Web site and by phone at 202.842.6002 or 800.697.9350.



TOURS

For dates and times, consult the calendar of events at the art information desks or the Web site, or call 202.842.6706. No reservations are required. Tours by special appointment may be arranged by calling 202.842.6247 (adult groups of twenty or more) or by faxing 202.789.4974 (school groups of forty or fewer).

GENERAL INFORMATION

Gallery Web site: www.nga.gov

Hours

Monday–Saturday, 10:00–5:00

Sunday, 11:00–6:00

For information about accessibility to galleries and public areas, assistive listening devices, sign language interpretation, and other services and programs, inquire at the art information desks, consult the Web site, or call 202.842.6690 (TDD line 202.842.6176).

The exhibition is organized by Winterthur and the National Gallery of Art, Washington.

Brochure written by Wendy A. Cooper, prepared by the department of exhibition programs, and produced by the editors office.

© 2002 Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art

Photography by Gavin Ashworth: figs. 2, 3, 5, 6–8, 10, and Port Royal Parlor; by Lisa Himmel: Winterthur Museum. Photos Courtesy, Winterthur Museum

back panel: Port Royal Parlor, Winterthur Museum, and Azalea Woods

left and detail on cover: Needlework picture, Mary King, Philadelphia, 1754, Bequest of Henry Francis du Pont 1966.978



Winterthur, an American country estate, is situated in the Brandywine Valley, outside of Wilmington, Delaware. The creation of Henry Francis du Pont, it encompasses almost one thousand acres and includes a premier collection of over 85,000 fine and decorative American arts shown in 175 period rooms and in museum galleries; sixty-six acres of peaceful, naturalistic gardens including the Enchanted Woods, a new garden specifically designed for children; and a comprehensive research library focusing on the study of American arts and culture. Through its Historic Houses of Odessa, located twenty-seven miles south of the estate, Winterthur offers a unique opportunity to experience early American small town life while presenting and preserving some of Delaware's finest Georgian architecture.

Winterthur is located on Route 52, six miles northwest of Wilmington, Delaware, off I-95, and thirty-six miles southwest of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. For more information about Winterthur, visit the Web site at www.winterthur.org, or call 1.800.448.3883.