

The Winterthur Library
 Revealed: Five Centuries
 of Design and Inspiration
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Only a few copies of Thomas Sheraton's *Cabinet-Maker, Upholsterer, and General Artists' Encyclopaedia* contained the brilliant hand colored engraved plates, as seen here in "Book-Case," published August 11, 1806. NK 2542 S55e F Printed Book Collection, Winterthur Library, gift of the Friends of Winterthur.

THE WINTERTHUR LIBRARY REVEALED

Five Centuries of Design and Inspiration

by Jeanne Solensky

What began as a family library for the du Ponts has since grown into a world-renowned research center housing rare books, manuscripts, and ephemera pertaining to the study of American art and material culture. Today the Winterthur Library includes more than 87,000 volumes and 500,000 manuscripts and images. *The Winterthur Library Revealed: Five Centuries of Design and Inspiration*, the first-ever Winterthur exhibition focusing on the development of these rich collections, will be on view in the Galleries from May 1 to July 25, 2004. By pairing library materials with objects from the museum collection, the exhibition clearly

demonstrates how the library's rich resources contribute significantly to the identification and interpretation of the decorative arts.

The exhibition begins in France with Pierre Samuel du Pont, the family patriarch who avidly collected books. The existence of a library in a country house conferred a certain elite status on estate owners like du Pont, demonstrating an ability to afford the high cost of books and the leisure time to read them. At Pierre Samuel's death in 1817, his library of 8,000 books was divided between his two sons, Eleuthère Irénée and Victor Marie, who had emigrated to America and were living in the Brandywine Valley. These volumes became the foundation of the du Pont family library, which subsequent generations enjoyed and expanded.

The du Pont family's collection included an assortment of subjects. In addition to the essential classical titles (Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and Horace's *Epodes* and *Satires*), each generation collected popular novels and works on architecture, art, history, travel, science, genealogy, agriculture, horticulture, and animal breeding, attesting to the family's wide-ranging interests.

Henry Francis du Pont (1880–1969), founder of Winterthur Museum, inherited the estate in 1927

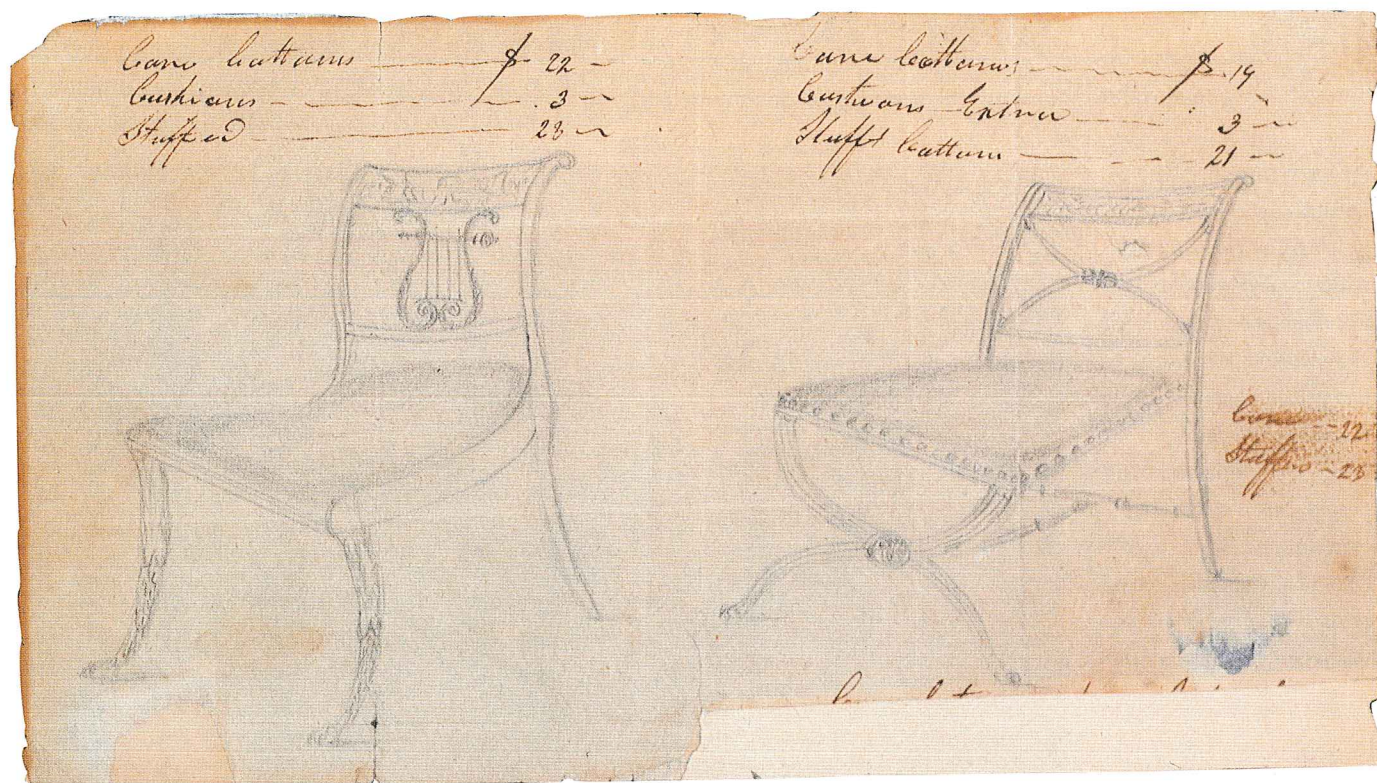
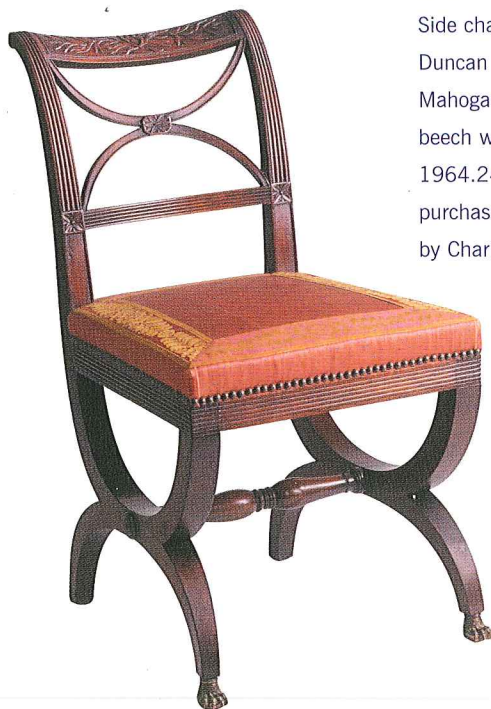
Duncan Phyfe sent sketches of new designs for chairs with corresponding prices to Charles Bancker of Philadelphia. In the exhibition, two similar chairs attributed to Phyfe from the Winterthur collection are displayed with the drawing.

Bottom:

Drawing of chairs, Duncan Phyfe, 1816. Iron gall ink and graphite. 56x6.4 Downs Collection, Winterthur Library, gift of the Friends of Winterthur.

Left:

Side chair, attributed to Duncan Phyfe, 1810–15. Mahogany, white pine, maple, beech with silk upholstery. 1964.24.2 Museum purchase with funds provided by Charles K. Davis Fund.



and continued the family tradition of collecting books, using them in innovative ways. He considered rare books to be decorative arts objects themselves, and he removed many from the library and placed them in period rooms to complement the furnishings. Du Pont's 1939 correspondence with Goodspeed's Book Shop in Boston reflects this intent: "I was particularly interested in the old binding inasmuch as I want to put the book in a room of that period." Through his membership in the Walpole Society, an organization dedicated to the appreciation and study of American decorative arts, architecture, and history, du Pont kept abreast of the latest scholarship and was introduced to leading collectors and scholars. In fact, many of the society's publications helped guide du Pont's early decorative arts collecting decisions.

But his vision extended beyond merely accumulating a personal collection of outstanding rare books.

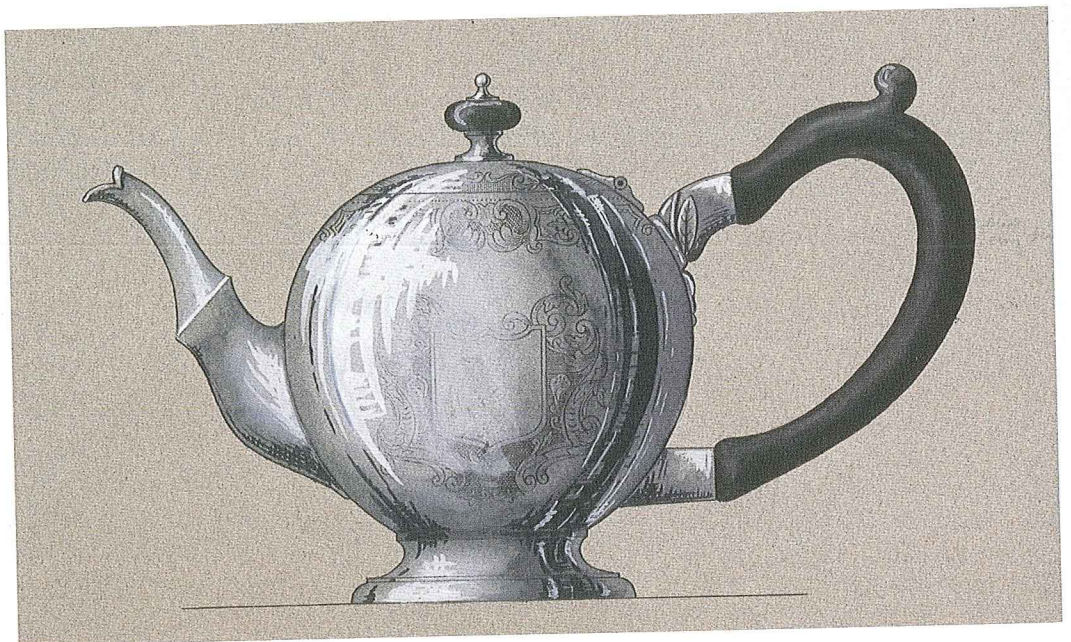
In the late 1940s, he began to amass material for a scholarly research library as part of his plan to turn his private home into a museum. Intended to be a teaching institution, Winterthur (in partnership with the University of Delaware) would train students in the study of American decorative arts to become museum professionals. The Winterthur Program in Early American Culture (WPEAC) welcomed its first class of graduate students in 1952, a year after the Winterthur Museum opened to the public.

The Winterthur Library is one of a select few repositories in the United States that focuses on the material surroundings of everyday life in America

from colonial times through the early 20th century. In *The Winterthur Library Revealed*, a selection of works from the library's extensive holdings reveals how objects were designed and crafted, advertised and sold, and used by consumers. A number of objects from the museum collection will be displayed alongside the corresponding library resources to show the synergy between the collections. For example, a coverlet by a Pennsylvania weaver is shown with the well-known German pattern book that was used as a design source; Duncan Phyfe's drawing of two chairs and an invoice to a Philadelphia client are matched with two similar chairs from the museum collection (*see page 5*); and George Washington's list of purchases and a soup plate from his Chinese export porcelain dinner set show that he used his own possessions in the president's residence.

In a section of the exhibition titled *Revealing the Object*, the study of objects begins with the examination of their manufacture and design. To document how an object was created, from its sources of inspiration to its actual production, the Winterthur Library collects craft manuals, design volumes, and original drawings. These items allow experts to study the designers who invented and popularized new forms and styles as well as the craftsmen who made the objects. The published designs of artisans enhanced their reputations and extended their influence beyond urban centers and national borders. The sources in this section document the forms of certain objects and designs for ornamenting their surfaces. Even rarer than printed and published design books

American silversmith George Christian Gebelein opened his shop on Chestnut Street in Boston and specialized in custom and commissioned silver work for individuals, universities, churches, and businesses. Winterthur Library owns a number of his beautiful ink and watercolor drawings. 94x1.77 Downs Collection, Winterthur Library, gift of the Friends of Winterthur.

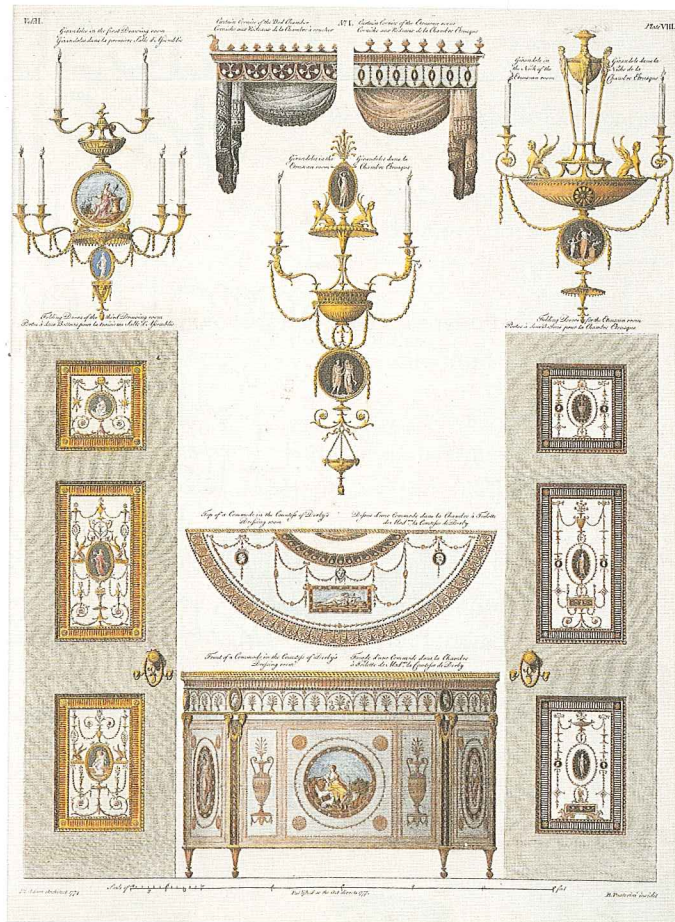


are the artists' and craftsmen's original sketches and working drawings, which provide clues to their design processes, creativity, and innovation (*see opposite*).

Another section of the exhibition, *Revealing the Market*, focuses on the advertising and distribution of craftsmen's wares. Throughout the years, manufacturers and merchants used a variety of media to promote their products—trade catalogues, trade cards and labels, and advertisements. Early craftsmen initially sold directly to customers, recording sales in account books and invoices, and these documents reveal much about the social networks, buying practices, and barter economies of the time. Distribution methods expanded as America grew, and middlemen helped craftsmen advertise and sell their wares in more remote areas using fabric swatch books, hand-painted watercolor drawings in catalogues, and engraved labels.

The next section, *Revealing the Home*, demonstrates how consumers used objects to ornament interiors and gardens. Economic growth in America in the 1700s produced a new consumer society that demanded more household goods. Many items from the Winterthur Library—from garden manuals to fashionable periodicals—document the choices available to Americans in landscape design, architecture, and interiors (*right*). But these records tell only one side of the story. To accurately represent early American domestic life, this section displays drawings, photographs, and probate inventories to demonstrate how people really furnished their domestic settings and lived with the objects that surrounded them.

Today, the library continues the vision of H. F. du Pont by supporting the scholarly work of the Winterthur staff and the students in its two graduate programs—the Winterthur Program in Early American Culture and the Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation. The library is also a premier research center for university professors, museum professionals, doctoral students, and independent scholars and collectors. Winterthur awards research fellowships in American art, history, material culture, and design, and a selection of works by scholars who have benefited from the library's rich resources is also displayed in the exhibition.



The Works in Architecture of Robert & James Adam is justly celebrated as one of the most influential publications of its day. A compilation of the completed projects of the architects, it was shown to future patrons to showcase

interior design choices. Winterthur's copy is one of a few surviving examples with hand-colored plates. NA997 A21 v.2 PF Printed Book Collection, Winterthur Library.

From its origins as a center of du Pont family learning, the library has come to stand at the heart of Winterthur's mission to inspire, enlighten, and delight its visitors. Winterthur Library is open to all interested readers without appointment or charge, Monday through Friday, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm (closed on legal holidays). ❖

A catalogue accompanies the exhibition and is available from the Winterthur Bookstore for \$24.95. Call 800.448.3883 x 4741 or 302.888.4741 to order. Members receive a 10% discount.