

Chippendale Style

Thomas Chippendale – born approx. June, 1718; died approx. November 1779 – was a London cabinet-maker and furniture designer in the mid-Georgian, English Rococo, and Neoclassical styles. He went to London in 1749 where, in 1754, he became the first cabinet-maker to publish a book of his designs, titled *The Gentleman and Cabinet Maker's Director*. Three editions were published, the first in 1754, followed by a virtual reprint in 1755, and finally a revised and enlarged edition in 1762, by which time Chippendale's illustrated designs began to show signs of Neoclassicism.



Chippendale was much more than just a cabinet maker: he was an interior designer who advised on soft furnishings and even the colour a room should be painted. He worked in partnership initially with the upholsterer James Rannie and later with Rannie's assistant, Thomas Haig, but artistic control of the luxurious furnishings that came from his premises in St. Martin's Lane was firmly in Chippendale's hands.

In 1978, it was possible to identify twenty-six documented commissions where surviving furniture by Chippendale could be authenticated, much of it still in the aristocratic houses for which it was made. Chippendale furniture was supplied to Blair Castle, Perthshire, for the Duke of Atholl (1758); Wilton House, for Henry, 10th Earl of Pembroke (ca. 1759-1773); Nostell Priory, Yorkshire, for Sir Roland Winn, Bart. (1766-85); Mersham Le Hatch, Kent, for Sir Edward Knatchbull, Bart. (1767-79); furnishings for the royal family and for the actor David Garrick both in town and at his villa at Hampton, Middlesex; Normanton Park, Rutland and other houses for Sir Gilbert Heathcote Bart. (1768-78) that included the management of a funeral for Lady Bridget Heathcote, 1772; Harewood House, Yorkshire, for Edwin Lascelles (1767-78); Newby Hall, Yorkshire, for William Weddell (ca. 1772-76); Temple Newsam, Yorkshire, for Lord Irwin (1774); Paxton House, Berwickshire, Scotland, for Ninian Home (1774-91); Burton Constable Hall, Yorkshire for William Constable (1768-79); Petworth, Sussex and other houses for George Wyndham, 3rd Earl of Egremont (1777-79), to name only the most outstanding commissions. He collaborated in furnishing interiors designed by Robert Adam and at Broomfield Hall, Hertfordshire, and Melbourne House, London, for Lord Melbourne, with Sir William Chambers (c. 1772-75).



His workshop was continued by Thomas Chippendale the younger (1749-1822), who worked in the later Neoclassical and Regency styles. A bankruptcy and sale of remaining stock in the St. Martin's Lane premises in 1804 did not conclude the firm's latest phase, as the younger Chippendale supplied furniture to Sir Richard Colt Hoare at Stourhead until 1820.

Recognizably "Chippendale" furniture was produced in Dublin and Philadelphia, as might be expected, but also in Lisbon, Copenhagen, and Hamburg. Catherine the Great and Louis XVI both possessed copies of the *Director* in its French edition. As a folk-hero of English craftsmanship, he is enshrined as a full-size sculpted figure standing among other notables adorning the facade of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

His designs became very popular again during the middle to late 19th century, leading to widespread adoption of his name in revivals of his style, so much so that dealers spoke of "Chinese Chippendale", "Gothic Chippendale", and even "Irish Chippendale". Many of these later designs that attach his name bear little relationship to his original concepts.

