



A Fine Pair of Mahogany Open
Armchairs or Gainsborough Chairs
Attributed to Thomas Chippendale
c.1765

Inventory Number :240-103

Price :\$125,000

Size: 28 ins wide, 26 ins deep and 39 ins high; Seat 17
and 1/2 ins high

Provenance

With Stair & Co., New York, 1980.

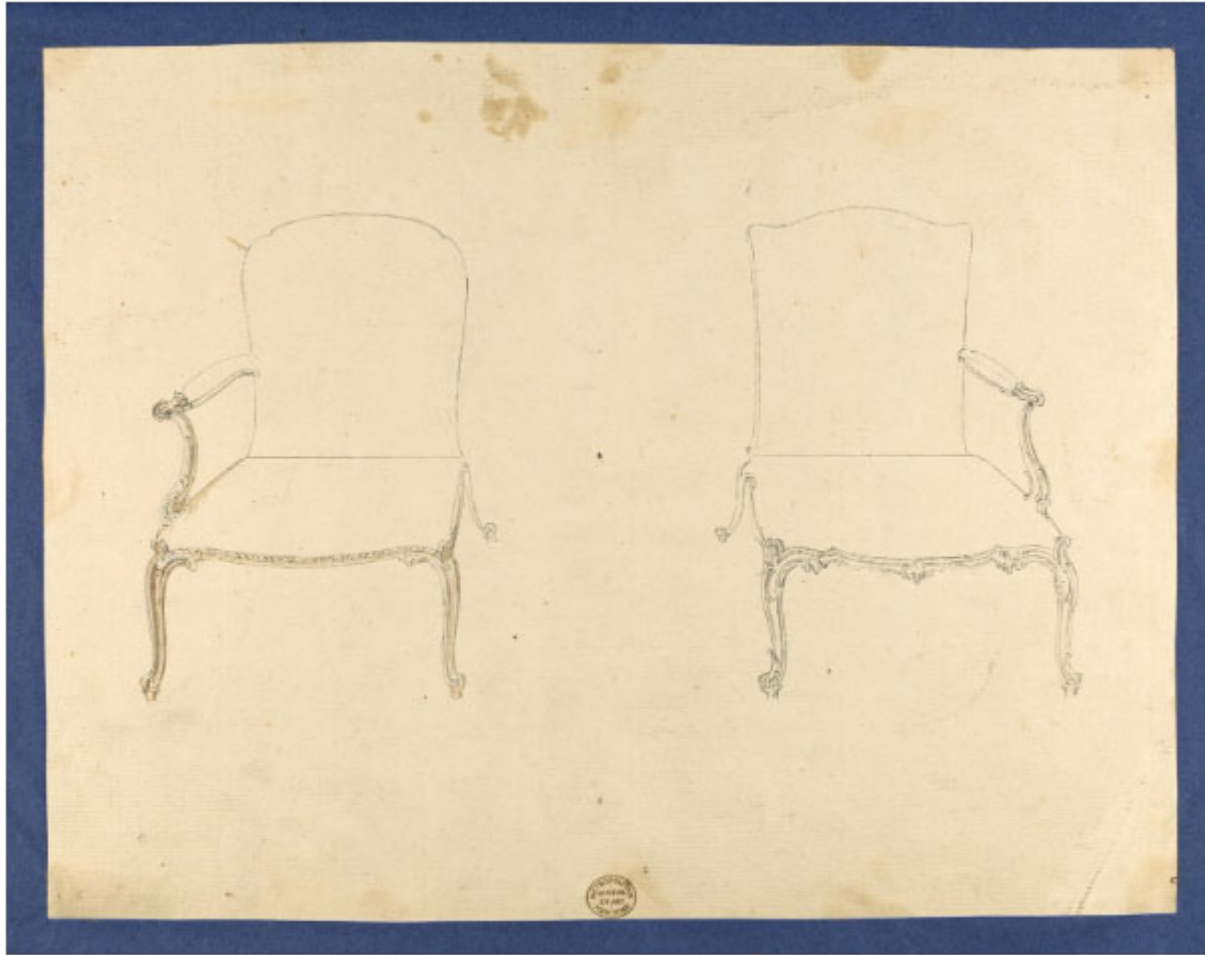
Literature

Advertised by Stair and Company in the June 1980 issue of *Connoisseur* magazine.



(Connoisseur June 1980)

These fine chairs are related to several very important suites of seat furniture. In their basic form, barring the design of the feet and toes, the chairs are highly reminiscent of a set of chairs supplied to the Camrose family at Hackwood Park and discussed in detail in the Christie's catalogue for the sale of the majority of that collection on the 20th-22nd of April 1998. There the catalogue notes that although no bills or other documentation survives to enable a definite identification of the maker, the chairs bear a close similarity to a more elaborate set supplied by Chippendale to Dumfries House and they therefore advance a Chippendale attribution for the Hackwood commission. Further supporting evidence for this claim comes in the form of one of Chippendale's drawings preserved in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The drawing, for two "French" chairs, is crucial in that it was not published in the *Director* and, therefore, the design would not have been circulated amongst all of the major workshops of the time in the way that those that were engraved would have been. This strengthens the connection between the Chippendale workshop and any pieces that have close affinities to the drawing and, as will be seen below, the design of the chair on the left hand side of the sheet bears close resemblance to our chairs with the exception of the shaping of the back.



(Chippendale drawing in the Met., accession number 20.40.1 (18))

The toes on our chairs are a relatively unusual “peg” design, unlike the more typical scroll feet seen on the Hackwood set and the related set of chairs from Tabley House in Cheshire. Interestingly, our research has turned up another related set that was previously at Ragley, another of the great English houses. The Ragley set is again undocumented sadly but the similarities between that set and our chairs are also obvious as is demonstrated by the photograph below.

unusual escritoire section introduced between the top and bottom sections. Height, 9ft. ; width, 5ft. 6ins. *Circa 1741.*



4.—AN ARMCHAIR, one of a set of two armchairs, six small chairs and large and small "rout" stools with woodwork of French form covered in hand-painted silk. *Circa 1760.*

5.

(the set of chairs previously at Ragley, published in *Country Life* on the 29th of March 1924)

Gainsborough chairs of the mid to late 18th century tend to be slimmer and more elegant in their proportions than earlier examples but our set and the aforementioned comparatives are delightful even by the standards of the time. The sinuous curves of the legs, so perfectly balanced, and the restrained carving suggests the hand of a master designer content to allow the fine materials used to shine without the need for elaborate carving or other ornamentation. The clean lines of these chairs are years ahead of their time.

These outstanding chairs would enhance even the finest collection.

Research and essay by Christopher Coles.

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