

An Exceptional George III Mahogany Hall Chair, Attributed to Thomas Chippendale

Description

Provenance:

Property of a lady, sold at Christieâ??s London in November of 1998

An important American private collection

Literature:

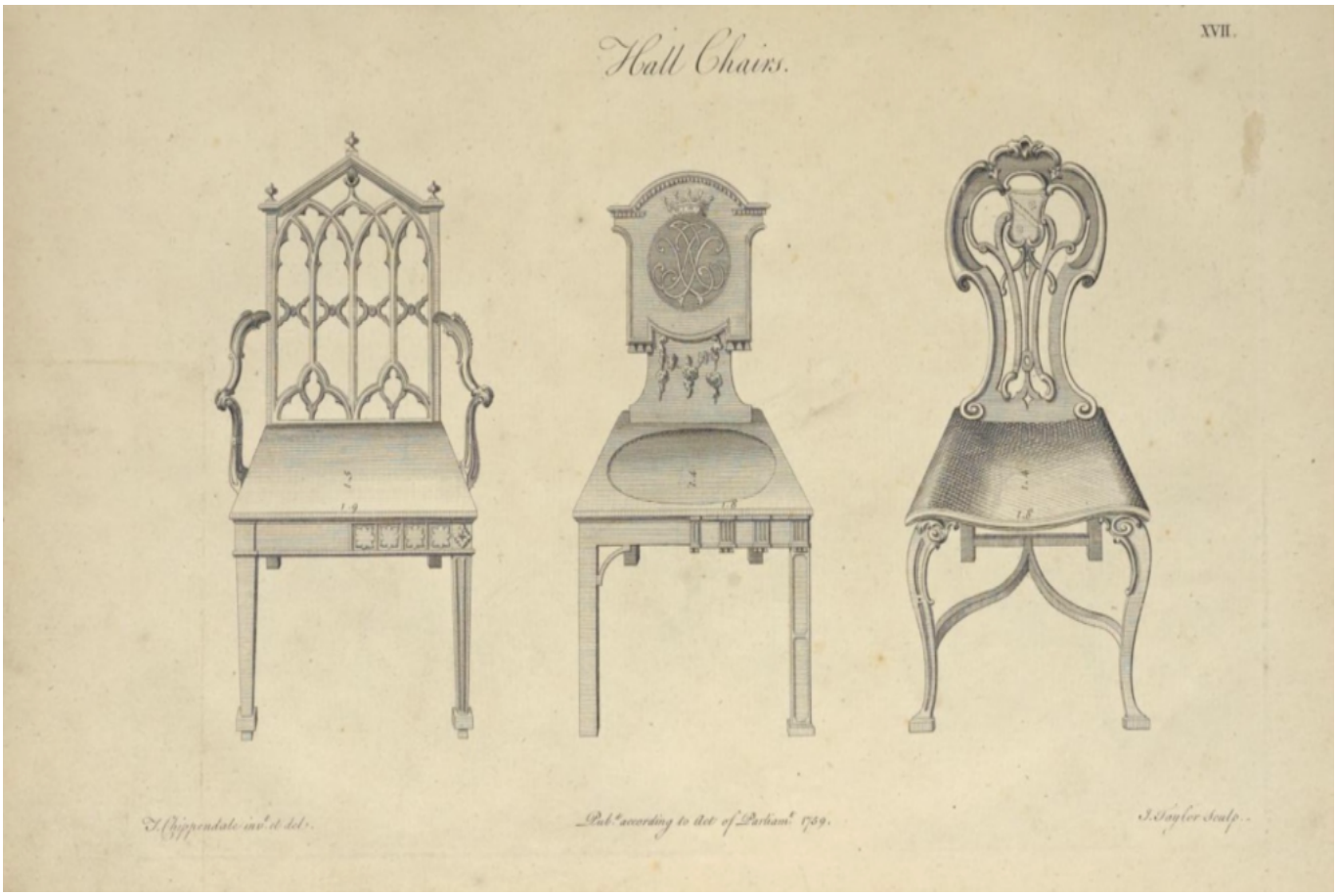
The design for the chair closely related to plate XVII in Thomas Chippendaleâ??s *Director..*, 3rd edition, 1762

Description:

This beautifully executed hall chair is an unusually sophisticated model, incorporating fine carved detailing and fretwork. Another rare feature of this design is that it is not heraldic in any way-it does not have any form of family crest or coat of arms on it at all and it has been designed in such a way that it would have been impossible to incorporate heraldry, save for perhaps by using cushions emblazoned with a crest instead. This suggests that the original commissioner of this chair was someone more concerned with fine design and the impression that that would make on their visitors than their family achievements and in a modern context this makes the chair all the more usable as a result.

The design for the back splat of the chair clearly relates to a published design in the 3rd edition of Chippendaleâ??s *Director*, published in 1762. Plate XVII, illustrated below, shows three designs for hall chairs and it is clear that the design of our piece was inspired by this initial design.

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It is often suggested that if a surviving piece of furniture is a precise copy of a Chippendale design then that is â??evidenceâ?• that it was not made by the master himself, Chippendale preferring to adapt his basic designs to each individual commission unlike some makers such as Wright and Elwick of Yorkshire who appear to have been happy to copy these designs wholesale on occasion. It is therefore very interesting to note that Chippendaleâ??s design does in fact include a shield upon which to display heraldic achievements and this has not been adopted for our chair. Other adaptations to the fretwork have been made, somewhat improving the printed design in aesthetic terms, and, of course, there are notable differences both in the fact that our chair is a hall armchair and not a side chair and in the design of the legs. Our chair does have a dished saddle seat, as in the engraving, but features straight legs and simpler stretchers rather than the more ornate design, usually seen on shell backed hall chairs, illustrated in the pattern book.

The way the design has been so skilfully adapted by the maker of our chair is one reason for suggesting a Chippendale attribution. Another is the quality of the timber used, the mahogany being of exceptional quality and lovely pattern and figure. The chair has acquired a beautiful bronze-like patina and fine colour as well. Another reason for suggesting a Chippendale attribution is the similarity of the present chairs to a set supplied to Wilton House in Wiltshire. Wilton was a Chippendale commission, the most famous piece supplied by the firm to the Earls of Pembroke at Wilton being the so-called violin bookcase and it is therefore very likely that the hall chairs also came from his workshop (see A. Coleridge, *Chippendale Furniture*, 1968, fig. 190).

The chair stands exceptionally well and is particularly elegant. Fretted hall chairs of this sort are a small subset of surviving hall chair designs of this period and this chair was almost certainly part of a one off commission for an important client. Perhaps the lack of space for heraldic decoration might suggest that these chairs could have been produced for a civic building of some sort where heraldry was not appropriate.

A pair of chairs of this same model and almost certainly part of the same original commission was sold at Sothebyâ??s in London in 2006. In addition, a set of four hall side chairs, probably from the same workshop, was sold in two pairs at

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Christieâ??s on the 25th of November 2004. One pair fetched over Â£22,000, the other over Â£17,000 inclusive of premium. These chairs were of identical pattern to a pair in David McAlpineâ??s collection at Fawley House in Oxfordshire, dispersed by Sothebyâ??s in 2003. A pair from this set were later with Mackinnon Fine Art in London and are listed amongst their notable sales.

This is a chair that will appeal to the connoisseur collector of English furniture and we are delighted to be able to offer it for sale.

England, circa 1765.

Meta Fields

Sku : 250-110

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