

sample & hold
collections

the fredrick parker collection



At sample & hold we use a Mephisto EX; a flexible, high accuracy 3D scanner based upon structured light technology. It utilises a machine vision camera running at HDTV (1920 x1080) combined with a high contrast ratio data projector to capture 3D geometry and a canon DSLR camera to obtain high resolution colour images.

The task for this project was to 3D scan five examples from the Fredrick Parker collection; maintained by London Met University. The data would be used by MA student Cathy O'Donnell as part of her thesis exploring how digital data can aid conservation.

The brief asked for as high resolution data sets as possible and we delivered fully water tight meshes in the region of 35 million triangles per chair, which works out as a point to point resolution of 0.3mm. This meant it was possible to see small features such as woodworm damage and textile deterioration.

We are looking forward to reading Cathy's disertation and will update this Case Study as soon as we recieve her conclusion.



sample & hold
collections

the fredrick parker collection



38

41

42

36

39

40

FP002

A turned, carved and moulded caned walnut single chair William III, circa 1700 Replaced finials; restoration to back-posts and stretchers.

When purchased, the centre of the back and seat frame were upholstered. They were re-caned in 1984. Weaving cane for chair panels is thought to have commenced by about 1664, the date recorded in a defence made to Parliament by the Cane- Chair Makers in response to an attempt by their competitors, the Woollen Cloth Manufacturers, to have their trade outlawed in 1689. In their defence, the Cane-Chair Makers claimed that they too were an important industry, employing many carvers and producing 72,000 chairs a year, many of them for export, cane being preferred to woollen upholstery, or Turkey-work, in hot climates. These Guild references relate to London where caned chairs were almost exclusively made, with the added boost to manufacture brought about by the major rebuilding after the Great Fire of 1666 and the consequent demand for new furniture.

The cane panels in these chairs were made of rattan, brought from the rain forests of South East Asia and Indonesia as part of the East India trade. Traditionally rattan was used for baskets and ropes and the earliest references to the material coming into England appear to be in the accounts of the East India Company for 1644, when it is recorded as being used for tying up bales of cotton.

The making of a caned chair such as this one would involve three trades - the frame-maker, the carver and the caner. Stamped initials, the marks of the carver or frame-maker, are often found on them and are evidence of piece-work in production. Sometimes the initials are found on tenons which are invisible once the chair has been assembled. These chairs were the production of thriving and commercially sophisticated English businesses rather than being the work of single craftsmen. Caned seats would usually be used with squab cushions.

By the end of the 17th century the fashion was for tall narrow backs and legs of broken scroll or 'horsebone' form. This chair, with its turned and moulded frame and complex carved details of a peacock, eagles and leafy scrolls, is a fine example. The displayed peacock is also an unusual motif, although the inventory of Thomas Warden, chairmaker (d. 1701) records both phoenix and peacock chairs, implying that they were standard decorative features at the time. There are two similar sets at Montacute House, Somerset.



sample & hold
collections

the fredrick parker collection

FP002



FP112

A carved mahogany armchair with upholstered seat and cabriole legs

George II, circa 1745

Exhibited at the British Antique Dealers' Association's Exhibition of Art Treasures at the Grafton Galleries, London, 1928, no. 117

Crest rail and splat shoe replaced This exceptional chair with its fine carving has been designed with a lightness not usually found on chairs of this type and date. The quality of the mahogany used has allowed the chairmaker to reduce each member to the smallest possible section without sacrificing strength. The piercing of the splat in particular is extreme and the carving and interlace have further reduced its thickness. The decorative theme of eagles, the symbol of Jupiter, is continued from the crest rail to the out-scrolled arm terminals and the front legs. Here the scrolling ears carved with feathered eagles' heads again seem to have been designed to emphasise the feeling of lightness, as do the claw and ball foot details, where the talons and claws are pierced through and carved in full relief. This piercing is a considerable rarity. The type of mahogany, the cabriole legs, the design and vocabulary of Roman decorative detail such as eagles' heads and acanthus, all date this chair to the 1740's. It also retains an excellent colour and patination.

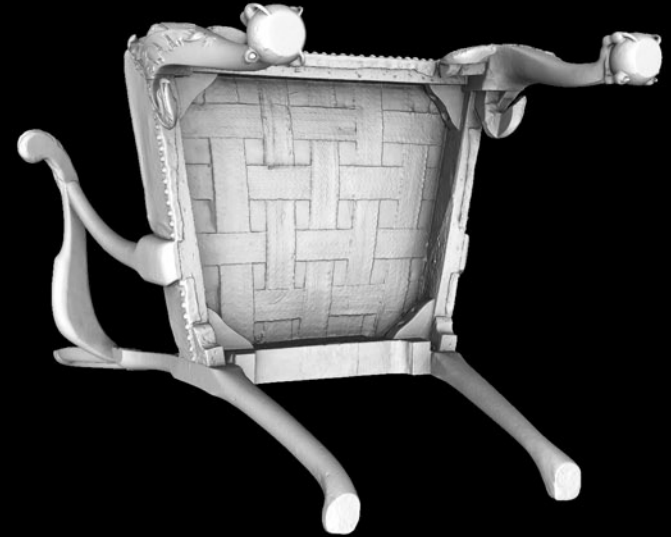
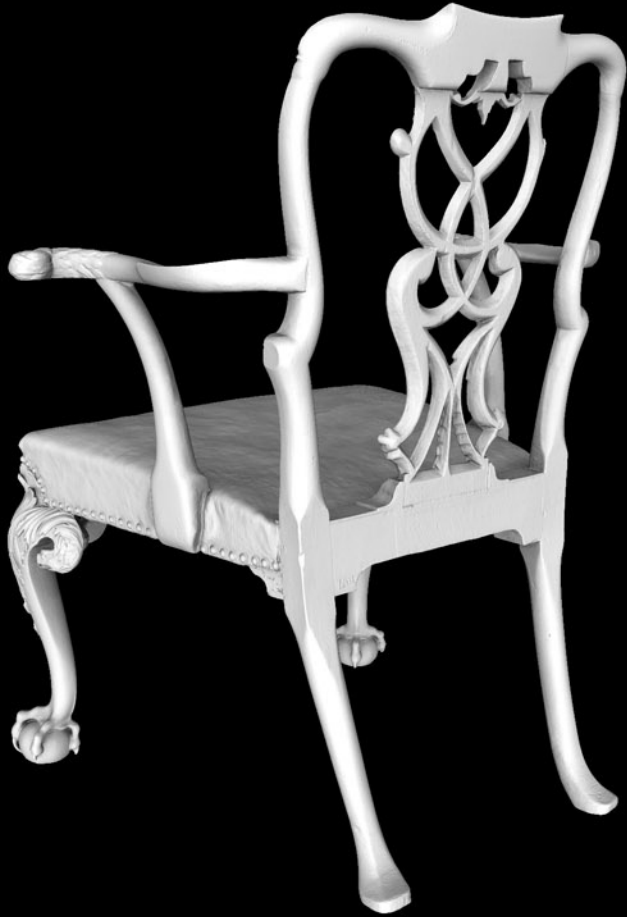
When it was purchased for the Collection, the original crest rail had been replaced with an inappropriate one of a later, eared design. This is recorded in a photograph in the archives. It was decided to replace it and careful research was carried out to determine a suitable design. The success of this, and the quality of the work, have resulted in a praiseworthy example of well-executed restoration. This was carried out before the 1928 exhibition, after which the chair became a stock model reproduced by Frederick Parker and Sons. A fine example of one of these copies, dating from the 1930's, is shown in the display of the Collection and offers an interesting comparison. It illustrates the superb quality for which Parker's were renowned.



sample & hold
collections

the fredrick parker collection

FP112



sample & hold collections

the fredrick parker collection

FP146

A good early George III walnut armchair in chinoiserie taste, circa 1763, lattice in back replaced (bt. pre 1914)



FP198

A carved white painted and gilded beech upholstered shield-back armchair

George III, circa 1780

The Collection is well represented with drawing room chairs in this neoclassical taste that was introduced to Britain by the architect Robert Adam on his return from Italy in 1758. The style came to dominate architecture and interior design during the second half of the 18th century, during which time there was a great increase in the amount of building of new houses both in the country and in towns and cities, particularly for the newly rich professionals such as bankers, lawyers and doctors, and a consequent growth in demand for furnishings. This example is a particularly elegantly shaped one with a three-dimensionally curved back and out-swept arms. It would have been made as part of a suite of several armchairs and a settee or two, for the grandest entertaining room of a substantial house. The firm of Gillows recommended in a letter of 1789 that dining chairs should be made of mahogany, the dining room traditionally having a more masculine feel to it, but chairs intended for the saloon or drawing room might be painted, unless they were to be moved from one room to the other. The white and gold decoration (part of which is original), would have matched that of the room, and the upholstery (which is modern), would probably have been covered initially with an expensive silk, as befitted the quality of the chair and its surroundings.

Beech, with its fine texture, toughness and durability, previously mainly used for seat rails and secondary work, became popular at this period as a wood of which whole chairs were made which were to be given a gilded or painted surface. It lends itself well to the complex shaping of the frame to which, in this case, some of the decorative motifs are applied in composition and some carved out of the wood. The motifs used, such as the knotted ribbon bow cresting, chains of husks, leaf-tips and acanthus foliage, are all common neo-classical ones, as is the shield shape of the back. Oval paterae are now missing from the tops of the legs.

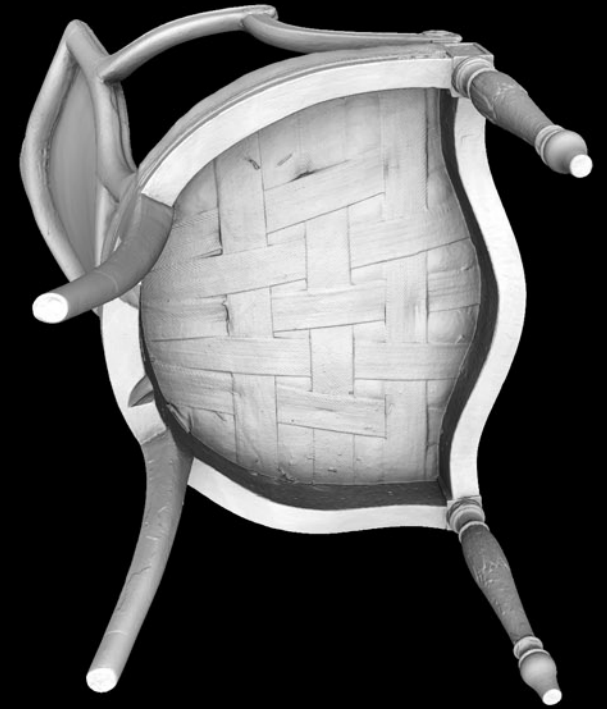
Hepplewhite's *The Cabinet-Maker and Upholsterer's Guide* of 1788, which exemplifies the spirit of Robert Adam's neo-classicism on a more domestic scale, calls such stuffed back armchairs 'cabriole chairs', the term apparently coming from the chair-like seat of the two-wheeled cabriolet carriage that was popular at this period.



sample & hold
collections

the fredrick parker collection

FP198



FP226

A carved beech armchair with upholstered seat, decorated in orange and white on a black ground

George III, circa 1780 In stock 1915, valued at £7.10.0

Although this elegant chair retains rococo cabriole legs, which are echoed in the double-curved arm supports, the large carved and profilecut motif in its oval back represents an anthemion or honeysuckle flower which derives from Greek and Roman architectural ornament, as do the flower-head paterae carved on the arm terminals and the fan motifs painted at the tops of the hipped legs. This mixture of styles was quite common in Britain, surviving longer than in France, even into the 1780's.

It is its superb japanning, which has survived in almost mint condition, that is particularly outstanding. Where the discoloured surface varnish is slightly chipped, the colours beneath remain vivid. Japanning was the term used from the 17th century for various methods of imitating prized oriental lacquer in the West by using coloured varnishes. By the late 18th century it had generally come to mean no more than painted decoration. Hepplewhite writes in *The Cabinet-Maker and Upholsterer's Guide* that 'a new and very elegant fashion has arisen within these few years, of finishing [chairs] with painted or japanned work, which gives a rich and splendid appearance to the minuter parts of the ornaments ... and by assorting the prevailing colour to the furniture and light of the room, affords opportunity to make the whole accord in harmony.'

The choice of orange and white colours on a black ground is that of Greek red-figure pottery of the 5th century B.C. The publication of Sir William Hamilton's collection of so-called 'Etruscan' vases in 1766 was very influential in spreading the neo-classical style in England. In the mid-1770's Robert Adam designed 'Etruscan' rooms at Old Derby House in London and at Osterley Park in Middlesex with furniture in this taste. The latter, which survives, was added to by Henry Clay.

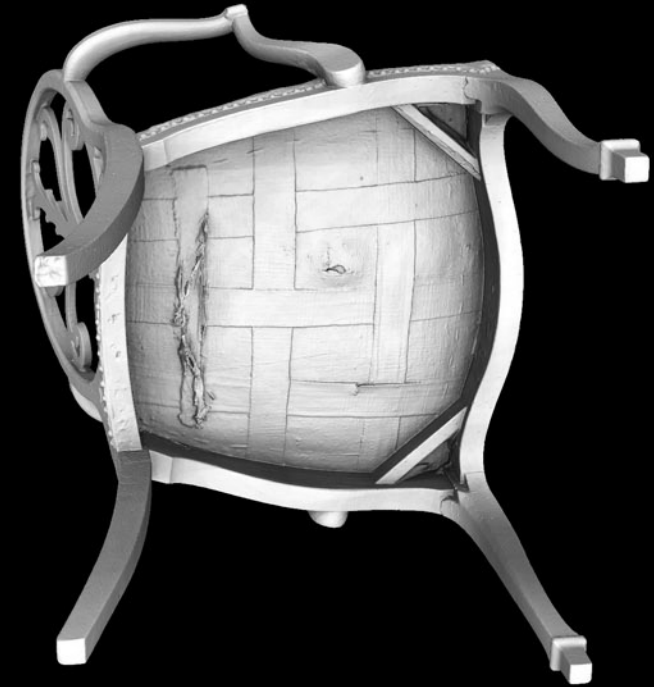
Usually light-weight japanned chairs had caned seats with cushions. This example is fully upholstered, but posterity has unfortunately not dealt kindly with the choice of covering. The use of 'French' brass nails would also have been more appropriate for a more masculine chair. However the base cloth and webbing may well be original and they retain a sample of a previous covering. The chair has a craftsman's initials TW stamped under the front rail. A pair of apparently identical single chairs was sold by Christie's at Ven House, Somerset on 22 June 1999 (lot 1050).



sample & hold
collections

the fredrick parker collection

FP226



All work copyright sample & hold Ltd 2011

For more information please visit www.sampleandhold.co.uk or email info@sampleandhold.co.uk