



AMERICAN FRIENDS OF THE ATTINGHAM SUMMER SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

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SUMMER SCHOOL CLASS OF 2007 AT CHATSWORTH



REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR OF THE SUMMER SCHOOL

The following is an excerpt from Lisa White's report to the Attingham Trust on the 2007 Summer School

The 56th Attingham Summer School went at its legendary cracking pace for another 18 days, visiting and studying 28 historic properties and deepening understanding of them through a series of twenty formal lectures and numerous seminars. In all, 60 lecturers, tutors, curators, conservators and property managers were involved in delivering the academic programme, while administration of the course was ably conducted by Emma Ryder-Richardson.

Our 48 scholars formed an excellent, cohesive group who quickly overcame the disparities of age, nationality, language and professional background. Participants came from the USA, UK, other European countries, Australia, New Zealand and for the first time the course included a scholar from India.

The programme followed its usual schedule for two-thirds of its duration, based firstly at West Dean College in West Sussex ... then at the University of Nottingham... . In Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire

our programme explored in greater depth the complexities and challenges of interpretation, conservation and education in historic country houses

The final part of the Summer School took the scholars to Norfolk, where the impressive scale and wealth of historic houses and collections provided everyone with an unparalleled opportunity to deepen their knowledge and understanding of houses, parks, gardens, and works of art from the fifteenth to the twenty-first century. ... Excellent accommodation at the University of East Anglia also gave us a memorable venue for the final party of the course, celebrated in true Attingham style with inspired costume, in Norman Foster's magnificent Sainsbury Centre for the Visual Arts.

REPORTS FROM THE STUDENTS OF THE 2007 PROGRAMS

SUMMER SCHOOL

Michelle Hargrave '07, Research Associate, Bard Graduate Center for Decorative Arts, Design, and Culture

I am beginning to understand, as one classmate called it, the "Power of Attingham." As a graduate of this program, I feel that I have a connection not only with my classmates, but also with members of previous classes as well. It seems that this shared experience immediately establishes a rapport and facilitates the exchange of ideas.

Finally, one of the greatest gifts Attingham gave me was to reinvigorate me professionally. Spending three weeks in concentrated study of the architecture and interiors of country houses surrounded by accomplished colleagues reaffirmed my passion for the decorative arts and reinforced my commitment to the field. Upon my return, I found myself reenergized in my studies of eighteenth-century British decorative arts: I spent time my free time looking at English period rooms at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, working on previously set-aside articles, and brainstorming for lecture ideas. I am grateful to the Attingham Summer School and the Royal Oak Foundation for this wonderful experience, the lasting effect of which was not only to increase my knowledge and forge contacts all across the United States and around the world, but also to refocus my professional goals and motivate me into realizing them.

J. Christopher Young '07, architect at Atkin, Olshin, Schade Architects, Philadelphia

The Summer School provided an unparalleled opportunity to gain an understanding of historic houses: from precedents as seen at the Weald and Downland Museum with germinal great halls, to traditions and building practices that related to local geology and readily available materials, to stylistic changes for exteriors and interiors that came of the many 'Grand Tours' in Italy, of muddled understandings of the orient, or of connections with the Netherlands as seen regionally in Norfolk. While it is one thing to study famed and well-documented houses such as Houghton Hall — even to spend time absorbing their plans and reading up on their provenance — it is entirely another to actually be there and inhabit their rooms. It was impressive to stand in Holkham's Marble Hall and be transfixed by its coffering; to be allowed access into the interstitial spaces of Brighton Pavilion's domes; to experience Standen's comfortable rooms by their dim electric lights; to decipher the construction methods of the 16th century in the remains of Old Hardwick Hall or amid renovation efforts at Apthorpe.

I must also note the afternoon we spent at the library at Blickling Hall when Mark Purcell shared with us a book of bound Italian prints from a Grand Tour. Among our small group pouring over the select, rare books was fellow-student Hillary Hunt, whose studies are directly in line with such prints and collections. For all her studies, however, she had never seen an extant example before, as so many have been disassembled and sold off piecemeal. This was one of those special Attingham moments: witnessing a classmate-scholar coming upon what turns out to be the pinnacle of her own Summer School experience.

STUDY WEEK

This year the American Friends of Attingham, and Dick Button '71, provided two scholarships for specialists in Irish art and gardens to attend the Study Week in Northern Ireland.

Bridget Garrity O'Brien SW '07, MA Candidate in Art History, Boston University

Receiving the American Friends of Attingham Scholarship allowed me to pursue my studies of Irish painting and history from a fresh perspective. I had previously viewed the 17th-century country house in Northern Ireland and the plantation project from which it emerged as a socio-political phenomenon, but the Study Week destinations helped me to consider the country house as a total work of art, worthy of study from an aesthetic standpoint. I want to thank the American Friends for funding my participation; without your help I definitely would not have been able to attend. I am so appreciative of the opportunity you provided me and I hope the American Friends will continue to sponsor young (poor) students in the future!

ROYAL COLLECTION STUDIES

Libby De Rosa '05, AFA Administrator

This fall I had the great privilege of attending the Royal Collection Studies program at the invitation of the Attingham Trust. The course, based near Windsor, is structured around a sequential study of the palaces and art collections of the kings and queens of Great Britain from the Middle Ages onward, and is led by the indomitable Giles Waterfield.

For me, one of the wonderful surprises of the course was to discover how relevant it is for those engaged in the study of 19th-century art and collecting. Two of the most important and prolific royal collectors and builders lived during the 19th century: King George IV (1820-1830) and his niece, Queen Victoria (1837-1901). Many of you have encountered George IV at Brighton Pavilion, where the Summer School is privileged to explore the building from rooftop to kitchen. What I had not realized was George's impact on the present-day appearance of Windsor Castle and Buckingham Palace. His building and decorating projects were endlessly exuberant and give new meaning to the word "bling."

Queen Victoria's collections were a different sort of revelation. This year for the first time in many years, RCS went to the Isle of Wight to visit Osborne House and its extensive gardens. There we experienced the intimate domestic enthusiasms of Victoria and Albert, from the corridors lined with the full-scale sculptures that they gave one another as Christmas presents, to the gardens and the Swiss Cottage where their many children had their own garden plots, and prepared dinners for their parents in the Cottage kitchen.

Like all the Attingham courses, connoisseurship plays a central role in the teaching and learning experience. On the RCS course the tutors are staff members of the Royal Collection Trust. They spent whole days and evenings with us, even accompanying us to the Isle of Wight. These curators oversee vast collections and spoke of them with enthusiasm and erudition. They challenged us to look closely and exchange ideas about what we were seeing. Who could resist the fun of trying to sort out which commode George IV had purchased in France, and which was the copy made in England to produce a matched pair?

If your field of expertise is 19th-century painting or sculpture, or indeed Old Master drawings, Italian or Dutch painting, portraiture, ceramics, furniture or architecture, the Royal Collection Studies course will give you fresh insights, renewed enthusiasm for your work, and an introduction to colleagues who will share your interests and who are working at the highest level of their professions. Information and application forms are available on the new AttinghamTrust.org Web site.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The summer and fall have been busy for the American Friends and the Attingham Trust. Elsewhere in the newsletter, are reports on the Study Week, the Summer School, and the Royal Collection Studies, all of which occurred this summer in various locations in the UK.

On this side of the pond, activities resumed in the fall with events in Boston, New York City, Philadelphia, and San Francisco. In Boston there were lectures by Ian Gow, head curator of the National Trust for Scotland, on the topic of his recent book, *Lost Houses of Scotland*, and Giles Waterfield, director of the Royal Collection Studies Program, on "George IV, King of Collectors." We are fortunate to have had the co-sponsorship of the Royal Oak Foundation and the National Trust for Scotland Foundation for the first event. The second event was sponsored by Historic New England.

In New York City we enjoyed several events, including a lecture at Christie's by John Wilton-Ely, professor emeritus of Hull University and a former director of the Summer School, on "Piranesi and the British Country House" sponsored by the Royal Oak Foundation, a reception and private tour of the *Piranesi as Designer* exhibition at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum, lead by Sarah Lawrence, RCS '06, the exhibition's co-curator (with John Wilton-Ely), and a private tour of the *Tapestry in the Baroque: Threads of Splendor* exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, lead by curator Thomas P. Campbell, RCS '99.

In Philadelphia, there were four lectures co-sponsored by the Royal Oak Foundation and held at the Union League, courtesy of Jim Mundy '06. The speakers and topics included Ian Gow, on Scottish architecture; Adrian Tinniswood on the Verney family; Desmond Fitzgerald, the Knight of Glin, on Irish furniture; and Anne Sebba on her recent book on Jennie Jerome Churchill.

On the West Coast, there was a pre-opening breakfast and tour of the San Francisco Fall Antiques Show, including a lecture by Martin Wood on the topic of his new book, *John Fowler and English Country House Style*. Lisa Podos '92, Jennie McCahey '06 and Robert Domergue '87 brought skill and creativity to making this "standing room only" event a success. We thank them all.

The Board of the American Friends has been working in recent months on developing its own Web site, which is expected to be launched in early 2008, and on November 3 held a day-long retreat in New York City to plan for the future. More information on the latter efforts and on ways of becoming involved will be communicated in coming months. As you consider your involvement, please remember that being an active member of the American Friends of Attingham means being a contributor to the Annual Fund. Your contribution to this once-a-year appeal supports the academic programs of the Attingham Trust and is essential to our educational mission. As always I am thankful to all our generous and dedicated donors.

Our next event, the Mid-Winter Reunion, is scheduled for January 18, 2008 at Bonhams in New York . I hope to see you all there!

Molly Seiler '87

WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

We welcome three new directors to the American Friends of Attingham Board. *Judith Barter* '75, Field-McCormick Chair of American Art at the Art Institute of Chicago; *Melissa Gagen* '93, Senior Vice President and Head of the European Furniture Department at Christie's, New York; and *Gail Kahn* '96, who has been for many years an active volunteer at the Winnetka Antiques Show and at the Art Institute of Chicago. Judith and Gail will work to bring a stronger Attingham presence to the mid-west. Melissa is Co-Chairman of the Programs Committee.

New officers approved by the Board at the September meeting were *James Mundy* '06, Vice President, and Co-Chairman of the Development Committee; *Jeff Groff* '92, Vice President and Chairman of the Board Retreat held November 3rd in New York ; and *Missy McHugh* '98, Secretary.



SAVE THE DATES FOR SANTA FE

MAY 15-18, 2008. Three cultures have blended in a unique combination of circumstances to create Santa Fe, NM the site of American Friends of Attingham's next weekend trip. We will study the artifacts and architecture of Native American, Spanish, and Anglo inhabitants ranging in date from ancient to modern, all set with the stunning landscape and clear skies of the Southwest.

WINNER OF THE E-MAIL ADDRESS CONTEST

We are pleased to announce that Tracy Kamerer '03 of Lake Worth, FL was the winner of the prize drawing among the new submissions of e-mail addresses. Tracy received a copy of the catalogue of the Bard Graduate Center exhibition on James 'Athenian' Stewart.

Thanks to all of you who sent your e-mail addresses. Even without the inducement of a prize, we would like to hear from those of you for whom we have no e-mail address. We are going digital and don't want you to miss out on our program news.

REMEMBRANCE OF JOHN A. H. SWEENEY

Attingham Class of 1960
(May 7, 1930 – May 17, 2007)

The Winterthur Museum & Country Estate produced the statement from which this is drawn.

"John Sweeney was central to the transformation of Henry Francis du Pont's personal collection of American decorative arts into a museum collection that stands today as the world's finest of its kind," said Leslie Greene Bowman, director and CEO of Winterthur Museum & Country Estate. "John's scholarship and leadership were tremendously significant both ... at Winterthur and for the American decorative arts community as a whole. During his long career, John distinguished himself as an outstanding scholar, an exceptional museum professional and educator, and a true gentleman."

John Sweeney was appointed by H. F. du Pont, to the Fine Arts Advisory Committee in 1961, where he was integral to the success of the White House restoration effort spearheaded by Jacqueline Kennedy. After H.F. du Pont's death in 1969, Sweeney began a series of oral histories with people who knew and worked closely with du Pont. The histories number in the hundreds and today are an invaluable resource for the museum. Sweeney was the author of numerous publications, including *The Treasure House of Early*

American Rooms (1963), *Grandeur on the Appoquinimink: The House of William Corbit at Odessa, Delaware* (1989), and the 1980 reminiscence *Henry Francis du Pont: 1880-1969*.

When honoring Sweeney as curator emeritus in 1991, the Winterthur Board of Trustees noted, "Mr. Sweeney has devoted a substantial portion of his life to Winterthur, conveying to staff, collectors, colleagues, and museum professionals in the decorative arts field the remarkable quality of Winterthur's collections and their evolution under the inspiration of Henry Francis du Pont."

PLANNED GIVING TO AFA

The American Friends of the Attingham Summer School initiatives, sustainability, and future depend upon your annual and special contributions, as well as your estate-plan gift. For more information regarding bequests or charitable remainder trusts, please contact Paul Parvis '85, by calling (203) 733-1497 or e-mailing him at pmparvis@sbcglobal.net. You are also welcome to contact Libby DeRosa '05. Her phone number is (212) 362-0701 and e-mail is attingham2@att.net. All inquiries will remain confidential.

NEWS FROM ALUMNI

David Maxfield '85 and *Amy Ballard '01* are planning a comprehensive private architectural and garden tour of Japan in October 2008, that will also feature performances in Japan's renowned concert halls. The thirteen-day tour will begin in Kyoto with visits planned to Okayama, Naoshima Island, Nagoya, and Tokyo as well as other cities. The group will be limited to twelve people. Those who might be interested in participating should contact David Maxfield at Dmmaxfield@aol.com for more information.

Judy Sheridan '83, owner and principal of Sheridan Interiors, Inc., has launched an advice and tips column appearing monthly on www.thefurniture.com. Judy has also completed her latest book, *How to Work with an Interior Designer*, due for publication in Spring, 2008, and has just finished a term as President of the American Society of Interior Designer (ASID), New York Metropolitan Chapter.

The Hyde Collection in Glens Falls, NY has announced the promotion of *Erin B. Coe '01*, to the position of Deputy Director and Chief Curator of the Museum. Erin has been at the Hyde since 1999, where she has curated eighteen exhibitions.

Several members of the Class of '05 met at the Attingham office on October 11 to visit with *Sasha Gerstein* while she was in New York. *Matt Thurlow*, *Maggie Lidz*, *Amy Dehan*, *Christa Capello*, and *Libby De Rosa* shared wine and news. *Sasha*, *Maggie* and *Amy* have been promoted post-Attingham, and *Amy* has become a mother as well. Congratulations to all.

SCHOLARSHIP INITIATIVE IN MEMORY OF DAVID MESCHUTT 1955-2005

Our Spring 2006 Newsletter contained a remembrance of the life and work of David Meschutt, who attended the Attingham Summer School in 1988, where he met his future wife, Dr. Sarah Bevan, an English scholar who was at the time a Keeper at the Tower of London. David was a specialist in American and British portraiture. In addition to his many publications, he received a posthumous doctorate from the University of Delaware in January 2006, for a dissertation, "The Portraiture of James Monroe 1758-1831." Material from that work is contained in the current exhibition at the Library of Virginia in Richmond that celebrates the 250th anniversary of Monroe's birth.

A group of David's friends have formed a committee to collect funds for an Attingham scholarship award to be made in his memory. If you would like to donate, contributions should be sent to the American Friends of Attingham, 1965 Broadway, #20G, New York, NY 10023, with a notation, David Meschutt, on the memo line of the check.

