



A highly Important museum-quality fireplace and matching panelled room exhibited at the Paris Universal Exhibition in 1878. Winning a Gold Medal. Made by George Trollope and Sons

Ref: George Trollope Suite

Price on Application

MAKER	George Trollope and Sons
PERIOD	Queen Anne , 1870-1879
YEAR	1877
STYLE	Queen Anne
ORIGIN	United Kingdom
MATERIALS	Cedar
DIMENSIONS	H: 143.7 in (365 cm) W: 251.97 in (640 cm) D: 203.94 in (518 cm)
CONDITION	Excellent

About this piece

George Trollope & Sons – Paris Universal Exhibition 1878 – Panelled Boudoir Room with Rosso Antico Marble Fireplace

Description

George Trollope & Sons. Exhibited at the *Paris Universal Exhibition* in 1878, winning a Gold Medal for Excellence.

The set forms the four sides of a complete panelled room that was exhibited as a boudoir room or *petit salon* at the *Paris Exhibition 1878*.

The main feature and centrepiece of this boudoir room is the Rosso Antico marble fireplace surmounted by an open display niche carved in cedar wood.

Features

Each side of the room is composed of various panels as follows:

One side with a grand Rosso Antico marble fireplace flanked by two doorways.

One side with French doors originally opening onto a balcony, flanked by two large bookshelves.

One side with a window flanked by two mirrors. The opposite side with three large mirrors.

The room could also be used in a number of different combinations to suit various layouts. The mirrors could be replaced with windows or further bookcases.

Each side is decorated with various sizes of finely carved panels and holds ornate Corinthian-style columns surmounted with cherubim on the capitals. Three cherubs are formed at the top of each corner with three columns. At the column bases there are circular carved pedestals to display statues.

Measurements

Width: **21 ft / 6.4 m**

Depth: **17 ft / 5.18 m**

Height: **12 ft / 3.65 m**

Literature and Illustration

Published and illustrated in the *Illustrated Catalogue of the Paris International Exhibition*.

The main part of this room, the Rosso Antico marble fireplace surmounted by a large open display niche carved in cedar wood, is illustrated with a line drawing in the *Paris Universal Exhibition Catalogue* on page 209.

The whereabouts of the semi-naked caryatids and the marble bust of **Alexander Pope** are unknown. The bust of Pope was copied from the original in Westminster Abbey, London.

The Corinthian columns now flanking the niche above the fireplace are also in cedar wood, having the identical carved fluting to the rest of the room. They were made to replace the caryatid figures. These Corinthian columns are period to the room and can only have been made shortly after it arrived back to London and before it was reassembled and fitted into the house built by **George Trollope & Sons** in the 1880s, and where it was later removed from.

Thematic Inspiration

George Trollope made clever use of *Alexander Pope's* early 18th-century poetical successes in Great Britain and France by using *The Rape of the Lock*, a mock-heroic narrative poem Pope wrote in 1712 about Petre who cut off a lock of Arabella's hair without her permission, as the theme of the boudoir room or *petit salon* at the *1878 Paris Exhibition*.

In the original exhibition display of the room set, tapestries depicting *The Rape of the Lock* were hung where the mirrors are now positioned.

The Rape of the Lock is a humorous indictment of the vanities and idleness of 18th-century high society. Basing his poem on an actual incident among two families of his acquaintance, Pope intended his verses to quench hot tempers and to encourage his friends to laugh at their own foolishness.

The poem is an outstanding example in the English language of the genre of mock-epic. The epic was considered one of the most serious of literary forms, applied in the classical period to the trivialities of love and war. Pope's mock-epic is not to mock the form itself, but to mock his society in its failure to rise to epic standards, exposing its pettiness by casting it against the grandeur of traditional epic subjects and the bravery and fortitude of epic heroes. Pope's mock-heroic treatment in *The Rape of the Lock*

underlines the ridiculousness of a society in which values have lost all proportion, and the trivial is handled with the gravity and solemnity that ought to be accorded to truly important issues. The 18th-century society in this poem fails to distinguish between things that are important and things that are not. The poem mocks the men it portrays by representing them as unworthy of a heroic culture. Therefore the mock-epic follows the epic in that its main concerns are serious and moral. The point that the theme must now be satirical rather than earnest is symptomatic of how far the culture has fallen.

Provenance and Original Labels

The back of the panelling still retains two original labels printed with the Union Jack and adjacent text: The Secretary Royal British Commission for the Universal Exhibition 1878 Champ de Mars Paris.

Below, printed and written in ink vertically:

Exhibitor: (signed in ink) **George Trollope & Sons**

Address: (written in ink) Halkin Street West, London

Allotment in Block: (written in ink) a2

In the printed floor plan, a2 square is in the very first line to the right of the plan, annotated with a diamond shape marked 101. This pinpoints where **George Trollope's** stand was located.

With thousands of items being displayed at the Exhibition, this label would have acted as the installation plan for craftsmen assembling the boudoir room or *petit salon*.

Expansion of the Firm

The firm expanded its house-building and interior decoration activities, and by 1849 was also trading as an estate agency, managing property for the Grosvenor Estates. A separate cabinet-making branch opened at West Halkin Street, London, became known as *The Museum of Decorative Arts*, overseen by **George Robinson**. Here **Trollope & Sons** sold high-class antique furniture as well as their own work.

By 1851 the firm was formally known as **George Trollope & Sons**, with the West Halkin Street address recorded in *The Furniture Gazette Directory* of 1876 and 1877.

Period Press Coverage and Art Criticism

Several newspapers described **George Trollope & Sons'** stand, noting the tapestries illustrating *The Rape of the Lock*.

Marius Vachon, French art critic and journalist for *La France*, published an extensive review of the stand in *Les Merveilles de l'Exposition de 1878 (The Wonders of the 1878 Exhibition)*. This was later translated by the website www.worldfairs.info.

Marius Vachon wrote:

"English furniture is very curious to observe, irreproachable from the point of view of execution, the furniture of our neighbours always reaches the last degree of respectability and comfort. One thing to be noticed is that for large pieces of furniture, the English upholsterer is transformed into a sort of architect, everything he makes takes on a monumental aspect.

The first object that catches the eye when one enters the furniture class is the beautiful boudoir-salon exhibited by Mr. Trollope. The boudoir, or petit salon, of carved cedar wood, is an attempt to reproduce the style which prevailed in England during the first decade of Queen Anne's reign, and all the details have been studied, but not copied, from examples of decorative work of the time. The fireplace is in rosso antico, and the ceiling is in portable plaster. The panels painted on canvas represent scenes from the heroic-comic poem *The Rape of the Lock* written by **Alexander Pope** in 1712, the eighth year of Queen Anne's reign, in which the customs and mores of the time are satirized in a pleasing manner.

The apotheosis of the Loop and its sidereal transformations will form the decoration of the ceiling. In these illustrations of Pope's charming poem, the costumes and accessories have been taken from models of the time, and the bust of the poet, copied from his tomb in Westminster Abbey, occupies the niche in the centre of the mantelpiece."

Further References and Scholarship

The boudoir or *petit salon* is mentioned again by the *Decorative Arts Society*:

"Trollope did not exhibit such highly rated objects at the 1878 Paris Exhibition as at previous exhibitions, items included a large mirror frame carved in limewood in Renaissance style and a satinwood cabinet in Adam revival style, with a similar armchair (illus. Meyer 2006, p. 242) and probably two rooms, one was a boudoir in cedar wood in Queen Anne style and the other a boudoir decorated by the firm in the theme of Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*."

Jonathan Meyer, in *The Decorative Arts Society Journal* (2001, Journal 25), listed Trollope's exhibition pieces and stressed their importance. He notes a Trollope table exhibited in 1867 that sold for £40,000 in 1996, and a cabinet exhibited in 1862 that sold at Sotheby's in 1997 for £150,000.

In his book *The Great Exhibitions, London, New York, Paris and Philadelphia 1851–1900* (2006), Meyer referenced the boudoir room only briefly, not reproducing the line drawing and underestimating the quality compared to Trollope's earlier exhibitions. This was likely because he was unaware of the catalogue illustration rediscovered by Geering.

Meyer concluded in the *DAS Journal*:

"Undoubtedly they (Trollope) are a firm worthy of further research as they were right at the forefront of the furniture business in London from 1860 to 1880."

Jonathan Meyer joined Bonham's in 1977. He was Director at Sotheby's in charge of 19th Century Furniture from 1994 to June 2007. He was also chairman of the Fine Arts Faculty for The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors.

Gold Medal and Labels

Our research shows that the *petite boudoir* was awarded the Gold Medal for Excellence in 1878, as recorded in *Journal La Liberté*, 23 October 1878. This was something **George Trollope & Sons** had not achieved at the London 1862 or Paris 1867 exhibitions.

Adjacent to the original label, printed by The Secretary – Royal British Commission for the Universal Exhibition 1878, was a stencil note reading TO BE KEPT, meaning to be returned. This confirms why the set came back to London, where it was installed in a **Trollope** house as part of a high-class estate, remaining there until recently removed.

Carving Machines

The machines that carved this boudoir also carved much of the linenfold panelling and decorative work for the Houses of Parliament, London.

The machine was invented by Mr. Jordan and employed throughout the Parliament project. The Department of Woods and Forests employed five of the machines at the Government Works, Thames Bank. Later, the machines passed to **George Trollope & Sons**, who continued to use them.

Reference: <http://vintagemachinery.org/mfgindex/imagdetail.aspx?id=21904>

New Techniques

George Trollope & Sons also exhibited the new techniques of xylatechnography and sgraffito, methods of impressing coloured design into soft wood and engraving veneer to reveal the base wood.

Reference: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k47810927/f3>

Firm History

George Trollope & Sons were registered under this name in 1843 and are recorded in West Halkin Street, Belgrave Square, London, by 1864.

They undertook large-scale refurbishments of residential property and supplied furniture and decorations to only the wealthiest clients. By the 1860s the firm was highly considered, exhibiting at several International Exhibitions.

They became very successful during the second half of the nineteenth century, building the highest quality houses of the period and producing a wide range of goods and decorations for noble families and well-connected clients.

Notable works included: Her Majesty's Theatre, completed in 1869. St Philip's Church, Battersea, completed in 1870. Furnishings for Fairlawns, Tonbridge for Edward Cazalet, 1874–75. Cadogan Estates, 1876–89. Knoyle House, Wiltshire, 1880. Exhibits at the *Arts & Crafts Exhibition Society*, London, 1889 and 1890. Institute of Chartered Surveyors, 1892. Claridge's, 1897. Baltic Exchange Building, 1903.

Distinguished Clientele

As listed in *The Golden Milestone* (1910), clients included Mrs. B. E. Agar, Lord Airedale, the Earl of Albemarle, the Marquess of Anglesey, Viscount Astor, Sir Otto Beit, Sir Archibald Birkmyre, the Duke of Buccleuch, the Earl of Cadogan, C. H. Combe, Sir William Corry, Viscount Cowdray of Midhurst, the Countess of Craven, Lord Crawshaw, Lord Dalmeny, Lord D'Abernon, E. R. Debenham, Lord Devonport, Greville Douglas, Antony J. Drexel, J. Lionel Dugdale, the Countess of Dundonald, F. Eckstein, Sir J. R. Ellerman, Lord Elphinstone, Lord Faringdon, Dennis Farrer, Sir E. Johnson-Ferguson, A. W. Gilmour, Lord Glenconner, Lady Esme Gordon, Mrs Ronald Greville, R. L. Gunther, Sir Eric Hambro, H. C. Hambro, R. O. Hambro, Cuthbert Heath, Hon. A. P. Henderson, Hon. E. B. Butler-Henderson, Lord Hillingdon, Sir George Holford, Sir G. Thompson-Hutchinson, the Earl of Iveagh, S. B. Joel, E. S. Kadoorie, the Earl of Kenmare, Sir Alexander D. Kleinwort, H. G. Kleinwort, F. A. Konig, Lord Kysant, the Earl of Lonsdale, Lady Ludlow, Lady Lyle, the Mackintosh of Mackintosh, the Duchess of Marlborough, Hugh Morrison, Hon. H. D. McLaren, the Duke of Newcastle, the Duke of Northumberland, Hon. Clive Pearson, Hon. Harold Pearson, Sir John Denison-Pender, Sir Lionel Phillips, Sir William Plender, Countess of Portarlington, the Duke of Portland, the Earl of Reading, Lord Revelstoke, the Duke of Richmond and Gordon, Viscountess Ridley, the Earl of Rosebery, James de Rothschild, the Earl of Scarborough, Viscountess St. Cyres, the Duke of Sutherland, Sir George Touche, Sir John Ward, Lady Margaret Waterlow, the Duke of Westminster, Lord Wolverton, Sir Alfred F. Yarrow.

Clubs included: Carlton Club, Guards Club, Junior United Service Club, Junior Carlton Club, Royal Air Force Club, Royal Automobile Club, Union Club.

Literature and References

Illustrated Catalogue of the Paris International Exhibition, 1878

https://archive.org/details/illustratedcatal00unse_3/page/208/mode/2up

Worldfairs.info

https://en.worldfairs.info/expopavillondetails.php?expo_id=25&pavillon_id=1632

The Furniture History Society, BIFMO entry

<https://bifmo.furniturehistorysociety.org/entry/trollope-joseph-j-g-trollope-trollope-sons-george-trollope-sons-1787-1890>

Vintage Machinery

<http://vintagemachinery.org/mfgindex/imagetdetail.aspx?id=21904>

Official Catalogue of the Exhibition, in French

<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k90426m/f22.item.r=Catalogue%20officiel.zoom>

Les Merveilles de l'Exposition de 1878

<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k9600626k/f152.image.r=trollope>

La Liberté, 23 October 1878, Gold Medal list

<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k47810927/f3>