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Exhibition Dates:  
May 14, 2018–January 9, 2019

Exhibition Location:  
The Met Fifth Avenue, Galleries  
751–752, Anthony W. and Lulu C.  
Wang Galleries of Eighteenth–  
Century American Art, Floor 2

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**For Immediate Release**

## Exhibition at The Met to Focus on Legacy of Thomas Chippendale

Thomas Chippendale (1718–1779) has been a household name in the furniture world since the mid-18th century. He is remembered today for the furniture produced by his successful London workshop as well as his influential book of furniture designs, *The Gentleman and Cabinet-Maker's Director*. To celebrate the 300th anniversary of Chippendale's birth, the exhibition **Chippendale's Director: The Designs and Legacy of a Furniture Maker** will open at The Metropolitan Museum of Art on May 14 and look closely at how the unprecedented publication cemented Chippendale's name as England's most famous cabinetmaker and also endured to inspire furniture design up to the present day. Built around works in The Met collection, the exhibition will combine the original preparatory drawings from the Chippendale workshop with a selection of British and American furniture inspired by Chippendale's designs and aesthetic. The legacy of Chippendale will be presented through representations in portrait painting and revival pieces from the 19th and 20th centuries. The Chippendale-inspired chair, designed in 1984 by the architects Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, will be one of the highlights.

Born and trained in the north of England, Thomas Chippendale had moved to London to start his own workshop by 1748. One of many cabinetmakers in the thriving metropolis, he devised an innovative business plan to market his furniture by creating a book of design, issued in 1754 as *The Gentleman and Cabinet Maker's Director*. The book had a dual function: to show prospective clients what he could design and make, and to inform the tastes of both "gentlemen" and his colleagues. With 160 designs for seating, beds, tables, cabinets, shelves, and other furnishings in a wide variety of styles, from Rococo and Chinoiserie to Gothic-Revival, the *Director* was the most extensive publication of its kind. Copies of the book quickly appeared beyond the British market in the American Colonies, where those in the aspiring mercantile class sought to fill their homes with furnishings in the latest fashion.

The exhibition will be arranged thematically in two adjoining rooms (galleries 751 and 752, the Anthony W. and Lulu C. Wang Galleries of Eighteenth-Century American Art, on the second floor of The American Wing). The exhibition will open with the first edition of Chippendale's *Director* paired with three chairs signifying the geographic and continuing reach of his work—one made in Chippendale's London workshop; one made around 1769 for General Cadwalader's posh townhouse by Philadelphia craftsmen; and one designed by Venturi and Brown as a modern reflection on the Chippendale chair. The gallery will also feature printed works illustrating the context in which Chippendale conceived his book, including popular publications by furniture designers on the European continent, such as Daniel Marot and François Cuvillies, and the few English publications that preceded Chippendale's work. Alongside the *Director*, publications of the works of Inigo Jones and Sir Christopher Wren will denote how England embraced print culture as a way to celebrate its own artistic achievements, and how artists and craftsmen used the medium as a promotional tool. The works in this gallery will stand against the backdrop of the permanently installed Rococo-style architectural woodwork and wallpaper from the Great Hall of the Van Rensselaer House, allowing the visitor a direct window into the early impact of European print culture in America.

For the unique occasion of this exhibition, the second gallery will feature a selection of original drawings dismounted temporarily from The Met's two Chippendale albums for the first time since their acquisition. Approximately 20 of a total of 200 drawings will be on view, and images of the complete collection of The Met's Chippendale drawings will be digitally projected in the gallery. The drawings provide an intimate behind-the-scenes view of the creation of the *Director* and highlight aspects of the drawing techniques, variety in forms and decorations, and the practical information Chippendale incorporated into his furniture designs. The drawings will be accompanied by groupings of furniture and paintings that focus on the different styles in which Chippendale worked, new forms of furniture that emerged during his lifetime, and the ways in which Chippendale's designs were absorbed by furniture makers in various regions and at different moments in time.

The exhibition is organized by Femke Speelberg, Associate Curator, Drawings and Prints, and Alyce Englund, Assistant Curator, The American Wing.

The exhibition will be featured on The Met [website](#) and on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) and the special "[Chippendale300](#)" website.

Blog posts for the website's "Now at The Met" section will be written by the exhibition's curators.

A Metropolitan Museum of Art *Bulletin* on Chippendale's *Director*, by Morrison H. Heckscher, Curator Emeritus of The American Wing, will be published in concert with the exhibition. The publication will be available in The Met Store (paperback, \$14.95). The Met's quarterly Bulletin program is supported in part by the Lila Acheson Wallace Fund for The Metropolitan Museum of Art, established by the cofounder of Reader's Digest. This

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**March 19, 2018**

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