

Understanding English Period Furniture Part 1

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Beverly Vosko's InteriorDesign-ED

Understanding English Period Furniture Handouts .3 CEU

Welcome to our Seminar!

In America, a furniture item is considered to be an Antique if it is **100 years** old. The best Antiques are Period Furniture Pieces. Period Furniture is furniture manufactured during the time period that its design style was invented, during the Golden Age of English Furniture 1703-1830. After 1830, furniture was never again handcrafted to the same standard of technical excellence and never retained the caliber it achieved during the Golden Age.

Antiques are Special to Everyone based upon their:

Design, Handcraftsmanship and Time

Design: Period furniture is the combination and culmination of the 5000 years of great design styles that preceded it, and was especially influenced by the following civilizations:

1. Ancient Egypt 3500 BC-1352 BC

Provides us with earliest furniture specimens known to date

Used mitered joints and dove tails

Developed the art of inlay

Developed the drawer

2. Ancient Greece 650 BC-80 BC

Developed the concept of people (other than the ruler) owning furniture

Perfected the art of carving and became masters of proportion

Invented the Klismos Chair

3. Ancient Rome 200 BC-400 AD

Developed the concept that furniture was designed for its esthetic value

The Greco/Roman civilization utilized Classical motifs such as wreaths, swags, urns, garlands, rounded arches, rosettes, acanthus leaves, cherubs and mythological figures

Handcraftsmanship: utilizing Specialization of Labor

Time: The English didn't care how long it took to make a piece of furniture

They were interested in perfection and that is what they achieved

Antiques are Extra Special to me because:

4. The Story of how I found each piece

5. The History of the piece itself

Roman Empire fell – all the design and construction techniques were forgotten

For 1000 years, during the Dark Ages, people lived in hovels with no furniture
Until The Renaissance began in Italy around 1500

Henry VIII Furniture – 1509-1547

- was influenced by Italian Renaissance
- was furniture crudely made of oak from surrounding trees
- Typical motifs were Profile Portrait heads and Medallions
- This was the beginning of the process of learning how to build furniture

Elizabethan Furniture – 1558-1603

-was an era of copious overall decoration – the cabinet makers didn't discriminate between what to use and what to discard so they used all types of decorative motifs

- was still furniture made of oak from surrounding trees but the cabinetmakers were learning how to build better furniture

-was completely covered with inlaid and carved Renaissance motifs which were mostly Flemish Renaissance motifs from the book "Architectura" by Johann Vreidman de Vries such as egg and dart moldings. Rounded arches, gadrooning and fluting

This furniture is covered with too much decoration to be popular today with today's clean lined look – but the furniture forms are used without any decorative motifs.

Jacobean Furniture – 1603-1660

-was similar to Elizabethan, but became less covered with decoration and the drawer came into use

Charles II Furniture – 1660-1688

-Walnut replaced Oak as wood of choice

-was noted for its twist turned arm and leg supports, and after 1675 Flemish scrolled arm and leg supports

This was the first time that we see veneering

Charles II was king and he had lived in Holland so was enamored with Rembrandt and flowers, so therefore floral marquetry was popular and it either covered the entire piece of furniture or was placed in roundels – or round formed shapes

Updated Versions of this furniture are reproduced and copied today

William and Mary Furniture – 1688-1702

-Walnut still was wood of choice

- was noted for its tall, thin furniture decorated
 - was noted for its round tapered legs topped with gadrooning that resembled the Louis XIV legs,
- Furniture was still veneered and was now decorated with seaweed marquetry that supposedly resembled the Boule Marquetry made by Andre Boule, the Ebenist du Roi of Louis XIV – or Louis XIV’s cabinetmaker
- ergonomically, this furniture is too thin to be viable today

Queen Anne Furniture - 1702-1730

- was an era of simple elegance where the beauty of the finely figured walnut rendered any other decoration superfluous
 - was noted for its hoop back, vase shaped splat and cabriole leg
 - subdivided into Early Queen Anne and Decorated Queen Anne eras
 - Early Queen Anne is noted for its pad feet and utter simplicity
 - Decorated Queen Anne is noted for its ball and claw feet
- Especially the Queen Anne chairs are still reproduced today

Early Georgian Furniture - 1720-1745

-Mahogany becomes the wood of choice because there is a blight on the walnut trees and mahogany was being brought in from the Colonies in great quantities and was very reasonable.

Mahogany was strong, and easily able to be carved, and didn’t get woodworm like walnut did, so it was superior to walnut in many ways

however, Mahogany was not as beautiful as walnut and didn’t have walnuts lovely graining, so it had to be carved to make it beautiful.

So the Age of Carving was ushered in... where all the furniture pieces were carved

-2 styles coexisted during this era:

The Decorated Queen Anne style which changed were dramatically because it was much more heavily carved and was made out of mahogany

And the Palladian, which was an architectural style led by William Kent noted for its lions paw feet and lions masks

Glossary

1. **Dove tails** – a joint used on drawers that denotes a good quality piece
2. **Patina** – the glow from within a piece developed over time from grease, grime, furniture oil etc.
3. **Tripod** – three legged or three sided
4. **“X” frame** – a stool or chair formed in the shape of an “X”
5. **Joiner** – in old England, one who cuts out furniture and puts it together
6. **Inlay** – the cutting out of a shaped recess in the carcass of a piece of furniture and its replacement with numerous woods and other materials in a jigsaw puzzle like fashion to create a design
7. **Veneer** – a 1/16” thick layer of wood or other material applied atop the carcass of a piece of furniture
8. **Marquetry** - the cutting out of a shaped recess in the veneer of a piece of furniture and its replacement with numerous woods and other materials in a jigsaw puzzle like fashion to create a pictorial design
9. **Parquetry** - the cutting out of a shaped recess in the veneer of a piece of furniture and its replacement with numerous woods and other materials in a jigsaw puzzle like fashion to create a geometric design
10. **Tester** – a wooden canopy
11. **Linenfold** – a carved design made to simulate fabric used to decorate Henry VIII furniture
12. **Scagliola** – Imitation marble made from small particles of marble, Plaster of Paris and glue
13. **Paterae** - a stylized circular motif popular in Adam Period
14. **Anthemion** – a stylized honeysuckle motif popular in Adam Period
15. **Caryatids** – Human forms in the shape of a column
16. **Animal Terminal Figures** – when heads of animals terminates arm and foot of animal terminates leg of a piece of furniture. This gives the impression of an attenuated animal
17. **Mortice and tenon joint** – A piece of wood with a protruding Tenon was inserted into a recess of the same shape called a Mortice, and it formed a joint

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This Course is based upon my knowledge gleaned from my notes taken during my studies at Sotheby's and the Inhbald School of Design

Biography

Beverly Vosko, Allied Member ASID, RID, UDCP, (Universal Design Certified Professional) CAPS, L.E.E.D Green Associate, CGP (Certified Green Professional) is a full service, Registered Interior Designer in Texas #6333. She is President and founder of both Beverly Vosko Interiors and InteriorDesign-ED; both DBA's for C. V. Design Inc. For over 25 years, she has been designing homes across the United States and Europe, specializing in creating custom residential and commercial environments, be they traditional, transitional, contemporary or eclectic, that match her design clients' every need, through her design firm, Beverly Vosko Interiors. For nearly 20 years, she has taught Interior Design: first at Rice University, then at the University of Houston, and for the last 10 years nationally, with her Continuing Education company, InteriorDesign-ED. Specifically, she has taught Interior Design, Aging in Place, Green/Sustainable Design, Lighting and Antiques. She graduated Phi Beta Kappa, Magna Cum Laude from the University of Pennsylvania, studied Art History at Harvard University, received her MBA in Marketing from NYU Stern Graduate Business School, and completed Design and Antiques training from Sotheby's, the world-renowned Inhbald School of Design and Houston Community College. Please view her websites, www.vosko.com and www.InteriorDesign-ED.com.