

MACKINNON

FINE FURNITURE



A George III Chinoiserie Giltwood Mirror

England, *circa* 1760

Thomas Johnson (1723-1778) was one of the most skilled carvers and furniture designers in Georgian England. He was a champion of both the rococo movement and chinoiserie taste, and his elaborate designs often wove the two styles together.

Johnson was born in 1723 as one of twelve children to a London builder and developer, Joel Johnson. At 13, he began working as an apprentice to his cousin, Robert Johnson, who was a carver and gilder in Frith Street, Soho. Once he finished his apprenticeship he joined the workshop of the carver and gilder James Whittle, which is where Johnson first met Matthias Lock. Johnson refers to Lock as 'the famous Matthias Lock, a most excellent Carver, and reputed to be the best Ornament draughts-man in Europe.'

In addition to its relation to Johnson's designs, this mirror also reflects the influence of Lock. Lock

published many sketches and pattern books, including *A NewBook of Ornaments for Looking Glasses* in 1752, which features a design for a mirror with similarly intertwined branches climbing up each side of the mirror frame and pagoda cresting with hanging bells.

Johnson first produced his designs in 1755 in a publication entitled *Twelve Girandoles*. He followed up with a more ambitious set of designs published monthly in 1756 and 1757 entitled *A NewBook of Ornaments* that were fashioned 'in the Chinese, Gothick, and Rural Taste.'

In addition to his work with Whittle, Johnson also provided a great number of designs to the carver Thomas Vials of Great Newport Street, who had prestigious patrons including the Earls of Radnor at Longford Castle, William Constable of Burton Constable, and the 3rd Duke of Dorset.

Johnson was widely admired by his contemporaries. In Mortimer's *Universal Director* on 1763, Johnson was described as a 'Carver, Teacher of Drawing and Modelling and Author of a Book of Designs for Chimney-pieces and other ornaments and of several other pieces.'

An exceptional George III Chippendale period giltwood mirror of the finest quality. In the manner of Thomas Johnson and carved throughout in outstanding detail with chinoiserie decoration. The cresting with a carved pagoda mounted with bells housing an elaborate fountain, the frame with fantastic intertwined foliate branches further decorated with acanthus leaves, C-scrolls, cabochons and icicles. With a bevelled mirror plate.

Height: 55.12 in (140 cm)
Width: 27.17 in (69 cm)

Stock Number

AD.121

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