

MACKINNON FINE FURNITURE



PITZHANGER: SIX CHIPPENDALE PERIOD ARMCHAIRS

England, *circa* 1770

Thomas Gurnell was a wealthy merchant and banker, a founder partner of Gurnell, Hoare & Co. In about 1760 he purchased Pitzhanger Farm, Ealing and engaged the architect George Dance to construct a country house for him and his family. The residence became known as Pitzhanger Manor (sometimes referred to as Ealing House). It is presumed that the chairs were either purchased or commissioned at this time as part of the grand furnishing scheme for the new interiors of the house. The chairs were most likely made by Ince & Mayhew who, along with Thomas Chippendale and a handful of others, were the cabinet-makers of choice to the London elite at that time. Pitzhanger Manor was sold in 1800 by the Gurnell trustees to Sir John Soane, who promptly remodelled the building. The chairs, together with family portraits by Highmore, Opie and Dance and presumably other furnishings and effects, passed down from the Gurnell family to the Armstrongs by marriage.

A number of features of these chairs have been identified as characteristics of chairs likely to have been made by the Golden Square firm of John Mayhew and William Ince. These chairs also exhibit many constructional features of chairs by Thomas Chippendale - including the exposed strut behind the upholstered back, glue cramp cuts and batten carrying holes on the underside of the seat frames - however the overall design does not quite tie in with documented Chippendale suites of seat furniture, making the attribution to Mayhew & Ince much more likely, with details and differences including the scrolled arms descending directly into the top of the legs (rather than set back into the sides of the seat rails), the very restrained base of the inverted heart-shaped backs and the distinctive profile of the legs with their reeded collars.

A very close comparison to these chairs is a set of giltwood armchairs supplied to George Greville, 2nd Earl of Warwick (sold by the Trustees of the Warwick Castle Resettlement, Christie's London, 10 April 2003, lot 25). There is a payment to Mayhew and Ince that totals £180 in the 2nd Earl of Warwick's account with Hoare's bank. In addition, comparisons can be made with chairs supplied to Chirk Castle, Denbighshire and the 3rd Earl of Darnley at Cobham Hall - Mayhew and Ince are known to have worked

extensively at both houses.

An important and very rare set of six Chippendale period giltwood open armchairs, possibly by Ince & Mayhew, each with inverted heart-shaped back, the arms rests, padded back and serpentine seat all upholstered, the channelled arm rests sweeping down and mounted above the legs, the front rails centred by a foliate oval paterae, on fluted turned tapering legs headed by a gadrooned collar and flowerhead, on turned feet. Upholstered in blue strié silk.

Each with cramp cuts to the underside and exposed single vertical splat to the backs.

Height: 3 ' 0" in (91.5 cm)
Width: 1' 11³/₄" in (59.5 cm)
Depth: 1' 11³/₄" in (59.5 cm)

Stock Number

P12.111

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