

MACKINNON FINE FURNITURE



FOUR CHIPPENDALE SIDE CHAIRS

England, *circa* 1765

This fine set of mid 18th century side chairs successfully combine both gothic and rococo decoration, two of the predominant styles that informed *The Gentleman and Cabinet-Maker's Director* first published by Thomas Chippendale in 1754. The design of these chairs follows almost exactly Chippendale's pattern issued in the first edition, pl. XII, and it proved to be one of his most popular and long-lived designs, being reproduced twice in the third edition of the *Director* in 1762, pls. XIII and XIV. The carving of these chairs is of a quality commensurate with Chippendale's work.

Described in the 1754 *Director* as 'new pattern' chairs, Chippendale instructed "if you think they are too much ornamented, that can be omitted at pleasure", perhaps in recognition that the highly carved rococo decoration was becoming slightly old-fashioned, as the clean lines of neo-classicism came to the fore, or else he was simply signalling that he was able to simplify the pattern for clients of a more parsimonious nature. By 1762, he further stated, as with our chairs, that "The Seats look best when stuffed over the Rails, and have a brass border neatly chased, but most are commonly done with Brass Nails, one or two Rows".

A set of chairs supplied by Chippendale survives at Nostell Priory with a similar back pattern but much plainer, simpler legs, one of which was exhibited at *Thomas Chippendale 1718 - 1779 - A Celebration of British Craftsmanship and Design*, in Leeds celebrating Chippendale's tercentenary. There is quite some variation in the leg design: a pair in the Noel Terry Collection in Fairfax House, York are very closely related with only minor differences in the carving of the cabriole legs (these had been acquired from Mallett in 1937). Another pair in the collections of the Victoria & Albert Museum in London has cabriole legs with pad feet, while a further pair at Temple Newsam, Yorkshire has square legs.

A closely related set of chairs, but with drop-in seats, and arguably inferior carving, from Winkburn Hall near Newark in Nottinghamshire, was sold at Christie's London, Thomas Chippendale - 300 Years, 5 July 2018, lot 14 (£296,750). These had previously been sold at Christie's New York, 22 April 1999, lot 180, where they were purchased by Ruth and Theodore Baum for \$420,500.

A superb set of George III Chippendale period carved mahogany side chairs. Each with a serpentine crest rail rising to foliate clasps above slightly curved detailed uprights, the foliate and pierced carved back splat with confronting moulded C-scrolls with foliate ruffled detailing, flanked by C-scrolls above further elongated C-scrolls, centred above the shoe by foliate carved stylised gothic-form pierced strapwork, above silk damask upholstered stuff-over seats with brass button detailing, standing on elegant cabriole legs profusely carved to the knees and terminating in exaggerated ball and claw feet, the back legs elegantly outswept.

Literature:

Thomas Chippendale, *The Gentleman and Cabinet-Maker's Director*, plate XXVII

For related chairs:

International Studio, September 1950, 'The Importance of English Chair Design', R.W. Symonds, p.46, fig 8

C. Claxton Stevens and S. Whittington, *18th Century English Furniture - The Norman Adams Collection*, Woodbridge, 1983, pp 48 - 49,

Height: 3' 11¹/₂" in (94.5 cm)

Width: 2' 11¹/₂" in (64 cm)

Depth: 2' 0³/₄" in (62 cm)

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