



## JAMES 'ATHENIAN' STUART

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[www.vam.ac.uk/stuart](http://www.vam.ac.uk/stuart)

The work of James 'Athenian' Stuart, the influential 18th-century Neo-Classical architect best known for his interiors of Spencer House, London, will be on display at the V&A this spring.

This will be the first display devoted solely to the work of Stuart (1713-1788), who was known as the 'Athenian' due to his key role in the development of the Neo-Classical style in England. The display will reveal his talents across the visual arts – from paintings to garden monuments and from interior decorative schemes to medals. Over 200 items drawn from private and public collections in Britain and the USA will be on display, including rarely seen sketchbooks, paintings, ornamental objects, furniture and architectural designs.

Stuart's career paralleled that of the celebrated architect Robert Adam. His influential book *Antiquities of Athens* (first published 1762) was the first accurate record of Classical Greek architecture and served as a principal source book for architects and designers well into the 19th century. Inspired by antiquity, Stuart created influential buildings such as the Doric temple at Hagley (1758), the earliest Greek-revival style building in Europe.

Today Stuart is best known for his innovative interior decoration at Spencer House, St James' Park (1756-66) – one of the few great 18th-century town houses to survive in London. Here he was responsible for the painted decorations and architectural details of Lady Spencer's elegant private drawing room, the Great Room and the famous Painted Room. The V&A display will include some of the furniture Stuart designed for Spencer House together with the original designs for the rooms and specially commissioned photographs of the complete interior schemes.

Dr. Susan Weber Soros, Director of the Bard Graduate Center, New York and curator of the display, said: "James Stuart was one of Britain's most important architects and designers of the 18th century. He saw the ancient world with fresh eyes. By taking ancient design details and adapting them to modern customs and homes he played a central role in the development of the Neo-Classical style. This display will reveal Stuart's scholarship, creativity and versatility."

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

The display comes to the V&A from The Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design and Culture, New York. It has been curated by Dr. Susan Weber Soros, Founder and Director of the Bard Graduate Center, and a specialist in British design.

An accompanying book, *James 'Athenian' Stuart 1713-1788 – The Rediscovery of Antiquity*, has been produced by the Bard Graduate Center and Yale University Press. It includes more than a dozen essays on Stuart's life, architecture, designs and decorative arts and has contributions by leading scholars in the field, Julius Bryant and Michael Snodin from the V&A. It will be available in hard back for £60

For PRESS information about the book contact Hazel Hutchinson at Yale University Press 0207 079 4900 (not for publication).

Admission to James 'Athenian' Stuart is FREE as is entry to the V&A

Open daily 10.00 – 17.45 and until 22.00 every Friday

For public enquiries: 020 7942 2000 or [www.vam.ac.uk](http://www.vam.ac.uk).

**For further PRESS information, please contact Abi Jones in the V&A press office**

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