



THOMAS HOPE: REGENCY DESIGNER

21 March – 22 June 2008

A new exhibition at the V&A will show the work and collections of Thomas Hope (1769-1831), one of the most influential designers and patron of the arts in Britain in the early 19th century.

Hope played an important role in establishing the Regency style in England. His London townhouse in Duchess Street was described as '*the finest specimen of true taste in England or France*'. Wanting to improve British taste, Hope opened the house to the public and published a monograph in 1807 – *Household Furniture and Decoration* – which became the style bible par excellence.

The exhibition will recreate the atmosphere of three rooms from the Duchess Street house, originally built by Robert Adam. Each room had a different character designed to appeal to all the senses. The V&A exhibition will show objects from one of the Vase Rooms which displayed Hope's collection of ancient Greek and Roman vases; the Egyptian Room which combined ancient Egyptian antiquities with modern pieces of Egyptian inspired furniture; and the dramatic Aurora Room designed as the setting for Hope's *Aurora and Cephalus* statue. To evoke the sensation of dawn the walls of this room were covered with mirrors edged with black velvet over which were draped curtains of black and orange satin.

The exhibition will examine Hope's creative talents from designer of interiors, furniture and metalwork to painter and writer. On public display for the first time will be Hope's watercolours of classical sites and scenes of contemporary life from Greece, Turkey and Egypt, countries he visited on his Grand Tour. Another section will look at Hope's numerous publications on architecture, design and costume.

The exhibition will also show Hope's role as a collector and patron of art and design through the sculpture, paintings and furniture he commissioned. These include Antonio Canova's statue of *Venus* and busts of Hope and his family by Bertel Thorvaldsen and John Flaxman.

The final section will examine Deepdene, Hope's country residence in Surrey. One of the most inventive and arresting country houses of its time, it provided a unique setting for Hope's impressive collection of sculptures. On display will be the only surviving record of Deepdene – a set of watercolours and drawings from the 1820s. These will be shown alongside the original sculptures and furniture exhibited there, including an Egyptian revival chair designed by Denon and a neo-antique tripod table designed by Hope.

Philip Hewat-Jaboor, co-curator of the display, said: “This exhibition will examine for the first time the flamboyant and creative personality of Thomas Hope. Wishing to improve the standards of design and craftsmanship in England, Hope reinterpreted ancient classical forms and incorporated them into his astonishing contemporary interiors. Hope’s designs and interiors played a pivotal role in the formation of the Regency style.”

Notes to Editors

This exhibition was organised by The Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design, and Culture, New York, in cooperation with the V&A. Support for this project has been generously provided by: Hyde Park Antiques, Ltd.; the Leon Levy Foundation; Lord Rothschild; Mr. and Mrs. Raphael Bernstein, Dr. H. Woody Brock, and members of the Levy family, in honor of Wendy Levy; Friends of the BADA Trust; and an anonymous donor.

The exhibition in London has been generously supported by: Hotspur Ltd; Jeremy Ltd; John Keil Ltd; Mallett & Son (Antiques) Ltd; Pelham London and Paris; Ronald Phillips Ltd.; and with kind support from Christie's.

After being shown at the V&A *Thomas Hope: Regency Designer* will be shown at the Bard Graduate Centre 17 July – 26 October 2008.

The exhibition has been curated by British architectural and design historians Philip Hewat-Jaboor and David Watkin together with Daniella Ben-Arie, independent curator and researcher. Frances Collard is curator of British Furniture 1800 to 1900 at the V&A and is curatorial liaison.

An accompanying book of the same title – *Thomas Hope: Regency Designer* – has been published for The Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design, and Culture by Yale University Press, New Haven and London. Edited by Philip Hewat-Jaboor and David Watkin, the book is available in hardback – £50.

For press information about the book please contact Katie Harris, Yale Publicity Manager on 0207 079 4901 or email katie.harris@yaleup.co.uk (not for publication).

Admission to *Thomas Hope: Regency Designer* is £5 (children under 12 – FREE)

To book call: 0870 906 3883 or visit: www.vam.ac.uk

Open daily 10.00 – 17.45 and until 22.00 every Friday

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A selection of high resolution press images are available to download from www.image.net (Not for publication)