The capricious extras and freehand sinuosities of the English rococo designers regale the eye but invite sheer disbelief of their application to furniture. The pieces in designs published by Chippendale, Thomas Johnson, Matthias Lock, Ince and Mayhew, and others seem to contain the seeds of their own destruction: chairs stand on spindling scroll-carved legs, the cornices of cabinets break up into diminishing crockets, tables are braced by hair-raising, hair-thin frets. In theory these books of designs provided linear samples which any capable artisan should follow if he hoped to produce furniture in a “genteel taste.” At least such was the theory held by the designers themselves and the publishers of designs, before consulting the woodworking trade. In the preface to the first edition of the Director, Chippendale shifts his burden quite neatly to the woodworker. “Upon the whole,” he writes, “I have here given no design but what may be executed by the hands of a skilful workman, though some of the profession have been diligent enough to represent them (especially those after the Gothic and Chinese manner) as so many specious drawings, impossible to be worked off by any mechanic whatsoever. I will not scruple to attribute this to malice, ignorance and inability.” The cabinetmaker’s rebuttal takes the shape of the furniture itself. Extant pieces inspired by a designer’s virtuosity often owe their survival to a cabinetmaker’s good judgment.

The pair of mirrors from Shillinglee Park recently acquired by the Museum are evidence of the sound and careful editing of a design by the furniture-maker. The left half of Plate LXXX of William Ince and John Mayhew’s Universal System of Household Furniture, published in parts between 1759 and 1763, displays the design for these mirrors, materially altered in the execution.

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ties, and gave it a substance which has descended intact to the present day.

The crests of the mirrors show the widest divergence from the design: the carvers substituted an oriental conceit of mannikins and pagodas with flame finials for an arrangement of loops and tassels that would have had to be carried out in wire and composition. The branches twining up the sides have been pruned and tidily espaliered, and the flower-shaped candleholders have been eliminated from the frames as executed. The perched squirrels are carvers' innovations, as are the shelves above them, which originally must have held Chinese porcelains. The oriental motive appears again on the lower sides, where the pillars rising from rockeries resemble the pagoda supports. The magnificent rococo C-scrolls and sprays follow the design closely. Deep and vigorous carving has given a more than apparent solidity to the structure.

The mirror glass was made in sections, some of the joints of which are hidden by scrolls and decorative bridges. The cost of the glass was disproportionately heavy in relation to the cost of the frames and accounted for a half to five sixths of the total expenditure on the mirrors. Before the introduction of the casting process into England in 1773 glass had to be blown into cylinders, which were then opened to form a sheet. The back of the panel was then silvered with a mixture of mercury and tin. Undoubtedly some of the panels in the Museum's mirrors are replacements or have been resilvered.

The gilding of the mirror frames, which also must have been in part renewed, is of the kind known as water-gilding and was applied on gesso. Gesso, which in Italian means chalk or gypsum, designates the base, laid on in several coats and moistened, to which the gilding was to adhere. Thin gold leaf was applied to the prepared ground and then burnished with a polished stone or an animal's tooth to bring up the parts where a high finish was desired. The gleam of their gold saved three famous Chippendale mirrors at Crichel, Dorset. The rescue of these mirrors was reported as follows to H. Avray Tipping by one of the owners of Crichel in the 1920's: "Lady Alington tells me that in the days when such things were not valued they barely escaped destruction. They had been removed into some loft by the father of the first Lord Alington, and forgotten there with much else that was held to be rubbish, and of which a clearance was determined later on. And so, towards the close of the last century, Lord Alinge-
ton, watching an estate cart removing lumber, saw that it included elaborate though very dusty giltwork. He stopped the cart to see what it was, and, finding it to be Chippendale mirrors, came to the conclusion, although he by no means posed as one of the virtuosi, that they were worth preserving."

The Museum’s mirrors, or pier glasses, were made for the space between the piers of a window wall. Possibly a pair of console tables, related to them in ornament, stood below, and perhaps Chinese figures appeared again in the room, on a painted wallpaper, a tapestry, or in porcelain. In the middle years of the eighteenth century the polite Englishman seemed engaged in a game of spot the Chinese, in which the repertory of Chinese devices, fèng-huang birds, dragons, lion-dogs, philosophers and faquirs, mandarins under parasols, or ladies in palanquins might start forth at him from the walls of his own house. The orientalized figures in these folies de chinoiserie sometimes stood in imagined Eastern landscapes, engaged in oriental pastimes. Or they mixed in baffling combination with more familiar creatures, squirrels, milkmaids, foxes and hounds, cows and windmills superimposed upon a rococo setting. Such phantasmagoria of the alien and the familiar and some plainly oriental conceits appear in the designs of William and John Halfpenny for garden architecture of 1750-1753, in Darly and Edwards’ New Book of Chinese Designs, published in 1754, and in some of the plates for the first edition of Chippendale’s Director of the same year. These were a few early designs illustrating the ways of casting the grounds of a country house or the walls or furniture of a room into an Anglo-Chinese mode. As an observer of 1753 reported: “According to the prevailing
whim, everything is Chinese. . . . Chairs, tables, chimney-pieces, frames for looking-glasses, and even our most vulgar utensils are all reduced to this new-fangled standard; and without doors so universally has it spread, that every gate to a cow-yard is in T's and Z's, and every hovel for the cows has bells hanging at the corners."

In the early 1760's, when the Museum's mirrors were made and Ince and Mayhew's *Universal System* and Thomas Johnson's *One Hundred and Fifty New Designs* were published, this game was beginning to wear thin. The rococo, with its Chinese and Gothic diversions, was receding as favor turned again to formal order, to a balance and restraint that had been missing from English houses for twenty years.

The craftsmen in Ince and Mayhew's shop also worked in this formal idiom, though not much of their output has been traced. In 1768 Lady Shelburne bought two unidentified glass "cases" or cabinets for Lansdowne House from "Mayhew and Inch," as she recorded in her diary. The company continued in operation until 1810, and in 1802 Dr. Johnson's Hester Lynch Thrale, who had so disconcertingly become Mrs. Piozzi, received furniture from Ince and Mayhew for her Welsh cottage, Brynbella.

Whatever the merit of these cabinetmakers, their reputation has fallen into insignificance beside the much magnified name of Chippendale. Thomas Chippendale seems to have conducted his business affairs with the bravura of a concert bandmaster. The names of his instrumentalists are not known. The assistants, apprentices, cabinetmakers, carvers, gilders, metalworkers, and upholsterers in his shop in St. Martin's Lane are anonymous. Research has discovered that two gifted designers, Matthias Lock and H. Copland, drew designs for Chippendale, some of which he signed "Chippendale inv[eni]t et del[ineavi]t" and had engraved for the first edition of the *Director* in 1754. An inflated claim to the authorship of the designs occurs, moreover, in the preface to the *Director*: "For I frankly confess that, in executing many of the drawings, my pencil has but faintly copied out those images that my fancy suggested." Probably Chippendale engaged a hack to write the diverting rhetoric of this preface, which appeared over his own name and concluded with the sentence: "And I am confident I can convince all Noblemen, Gentlemen, or others, who will honour me with their commands, that every design in the book can be improved, both as to beauty and enrichment, in the execution of it, by Their Most Obedient Servant, Thomas Chippendale."

The solid lines and the lacunae of the commercial-managerial character have become more familiar with the advance of the consumers' age in which we live. To the obvious sales manager's qualities of puffing and promoting the firm Chippendale added the equally great capacity of an entrepreneur who hired diverse talents and skills. He was absorbed in the first place by the business of running a firm that made furniture, and his artistic dispositions were compounded with an aptitude for publicity, contracts, and receipts.
ABOVE: Commode from St. Giles's, the country seat of the Earls of Shaftesbury. This piece was probably made in Chippendale's workshop. Morris Loeb Gift Fund, 1955. BELOW: Commode at Nostell Priory, perhaps by the same designer; it is listed in Chippendale's accounts. Drawing
Thus his name was well known to his contemporaries, and his reputation has persisted for two centuries, but he himself contributed little individually to the canon of eighteenth-century art.

The standards of Chippendale’s workshop did not suffer, although he was not the designer and maker of the furniture. The workmen he employed and the artists who provided them with designs are responsible for extraordinary cabinet-work. Some of the finest examples of furniture of this firm date from the post-

Director period. Such are the remarkable desk and sideboard with urns and pedestals at Harewood House, Yorkshire, made for Edwin Lascelles after designs by Robert Adam. Nostell Priory, near Harewood, contains furniture made by Chippendale’s firm, authenticated by his bills. Among this furniture is a marquetry commode the bill for which is dated December 22, 1770: “To a large antique commode, very curiously inlaid with various fine woods, with folding doors and drawers within, and very rich chas’d brass ornaments complete . . . £40.” Despite strong French influence, the construction and decoration of this beautiful piece of furniture show a clearly English character. The word commode, which applied to a chest of drawers in France, had sometimes an adjectival sense in English, indicating a serpentine or shaped line in the construction of a piece of furniture. Plates in the Director that show serpentine- and bombé-fronted wardrobes and chests are captioned “Commode Cloths Press” and “Commode Tables,” while straight-fronted examples are labeled “Cloaths Press” and “Chest of Drawers.” The French commode of this period usually held two drawers, and was profusely ornamented with gilt-bronze. The English commode or “Commode Table” was often equipped with doors concealing drawers, and was sparingly trimmed with gilt-bronze. English commodes of the finest workmanship stood in state apartments and reception rooms, where their function was chiefly ornamental.

Reason and critical judgment contend that Chippendale’s firm worked on the furnishings of several country houses where his bills and ac-
counts are missing. No documentary evidence has confirmed the connection of T. Chippendale and Co. with St. Giles's, Dorset, country seat of the Earls of Shaftesbury. The Countess of Shaftesbury was a subscriber to the first edition of the Director, and St. Giles's House contains superb carved and gilded furniture of the Director period. This conjunction of facts has been interpreted to give Chippendale's firm credit for some of the fine decoration in the principal rooms of this house. The commode recently acquired by the Museum came from St. Giles's and dates from the post-Director period, about 1771-1773. Like the commode at Nostell it betrays French influence, although the triple vertical division of the front and the use of straight lines associates it more closely with the Louis XVI than with the rococo style. The sprays of roses and jonquils on the center panel resemble the garlands on the Nostell commode, and the marquetry vases upon fluted columns hung with swags recapitulate other motives. The designs for these two commodes, which were probably by the same hand, have not been identified, and the designer remains unknown.

The principal woods used in the marquetry panels of the Museum's newly acquired commode are satinwood, partridgewood, tulipwood, harewood, and thuya. The two term figures holding swags of husks on the central panel are of carved and etched ivory. The top is veneered with plain satinwood banded with partridgewood. These rare woods have been cut out, in some cases stained and etched, and applied with great mastery and care. The door panels open upon banks of drawers with fronts veneered in finely figured, fresh-appearing mahogany and harewood, fitted interiors that are themselves masterpieces of cabinetwork. The provenance and quality of this commode make it the most important English piece of the early seventeenth-seventies to be acquired by the Museum.

The gilt-brass hardware is well designed, though not as finely finished as French furniture mounts. Because the two flanking doors were hinged on the sides of the commode, the mounts sheathing the shaped corner stiles were interrupted at the knee and above the foot. This characteristic English device of breaking the corner mounts, allowing the doors to swing open, demanded close integration of the work of cabinetmaker and metal-caster. As in France, it was a metalworking practice to use the forms and molds for furniture mounts several times. A lacquer commode at Polesden Lacey, Surrey, has similar ormolu, perhaps cast from the same molds.

The commode from St. Giles's was included in the furniture and effects which the fourth Earl of Shaftesbury supplied for rooms that were new in the 1750's. The present form of the house, much of the furniture, and the grounds express the taste of the fourth earl, who otherwise left little mark on his times. The Shaftesbury family, however, contributed remarkable men to three centuries of English public life.

The first stone of St. Giles's was laid in 1650 by Anthony Ashley Cooper, created first Earl of Shaftesbury by Charles II. The first earl displayed such inconstancy in politics that the his-
torian Macaulay wrote of him as one "in whom the immorality which was epidemic among the politicians of that age appeared in its most malignant type." At the time of the Cabal of Charles II's ministers, of which he was a member, "he had already served and betrayed a succession of governments. But he had timed his treacheries so well that through all revolutions his fortunes had constantly been rising." Writers of his own day, including the poet Dryden, clouted the first earl for his turbulent life, but he earned the name of "the Statesman Earl" by founding the Whig, or parliamentary, party, which changed its name in the nineteenth century to Liberal. He was afterwards imprisoned for a year in the Tower of London, fled England in disguise, and died in Amsterdam.

The philosopher John Locke liked and admired the first earl, and acted as tutor to his son and grandson. Grounded in philosophy, the grandson, who succeeded as third earl, withdrew from politics and gave himself over to the writing of treatises which were collected and published in 1711 under the title of the *Characteristics*. In his philosophy the third earl held that the supreme excellence was a harmony of the senses and the mind, and that enormous benefit would result to mankind from this harmony. His thought was expressed in periods of such high seriousness that the poet Gray was moved to accuse him of "writing with the coronet on his head." In spite of this encumbrance, the third earl was no apologist for aristocratic prerogative. His philosophy was made to serve the Whig ministry: the rational optimism and deism of the *Characteristics* became a dialectical basis for advances in constitutional government, ministerial responsibility, the limiting of royal power, and the extension of parliamentary procedure.

In the nineteenth century the Shaftesbury line bore another prodigy, whose activities in behalf of the poor and deprived have claimed great honors and esteem for him. This was Anthony, seventh Earl of Shaftesbury, the humanitarian, born in 1801, and commemorated by London's Shaftesbury Avenue and by the statue of Eros in Piccadilly Circus. Although he never rejected the respectable patrician world to which he was born, Lord Ashley, as he was known until his succession to the title in 1851, broke through nineteenth-century conventional barriers and alarmed members of his class by pressing for much needed reforms in the social system. In 1833 he sponsored a law to eliminate the employment in factories of children under nine years of age, and to restrict the working time of persons under eighteen to ten hours a day, eight on Saturdays (see ill. p. 140). In 1842 he introduced a bill to prevent boys under thirteen and all women from working underground in coal mines. These measures were opposed and trimmed by the governing coalition of employers and landowners in Parliament, where feeling was strong against legislated benefits for the poor classes. Until his death in 1885, the seventh earl continued to move for bettering the lives of the uneducated London poor, the lunatics, slaves in foreign lands, chimney-sweeps, workers in clay pits, agricultural laborers, and others who engaged his sympathy. His acts cast a brilliant light over the many squalid abuses of these times.

The most versatile contributor to the portfolio of English formal designs of the 1770's and 1780's was Robert Adam. "The light and elegant ornaments, the varied compartments in the ceilings of Mr. Adam, imitated from Ancient Works
LEFT: Design for an urn and pedestal, from "The Works in Architecture of Robert and James Adam," 1774.
RIGHT: One of a pair of urns and pedestals shown, with the table on the opposite page, in the Lansdowne Room
Side table belonging with the two urns and detail of the decoration on the top. The table and urns, of mahogany and other woods, come from Hursley Park, Hampshire, and date from about 1780. Morris Loeb Gift Fund, 1955
in the Baths and Villas of the Romans,” were soon applied in designs for chairs, tables, carpets, and in every other species of furniture. To Mr. Adam’s taste in the ornament of his buildings and furniture we stand indebted, inasmuch as manufactures of every kind felt, as it were, the electric power of this revolution in Art.” Thus Sir John Soane, a gifted architect who followed Robert Adam, did justice to his predecessor’s remodeling of English interiors. “Mr. Adam’s taste” is manifest in the inlaid mahogany dining-room furniture from Hursley Park, Winchester, now exhibited in the Museum’s Lansdowne Room. A pair of urns and pedestals was part of late eighteenth-century dining-room sets, and stood against a wall, flanking a serving or side-board table. The metal liners of the urns held water for rinsing silver knives and spoons; the pedestals served as a repository for wine bottles and sometimes contained metal grilles over which plates could be warmed.

Robert Adam’s inner eye saw each house that he designed as a whole, served by exterior architecture, interior divisions, and the ornament of the rooms to the last perfect detail. He made designs for complete exterior and interior elevations, and detailed drawings of lighting apparatus, chimney pieces, clocks, curtains, doorknobs, lock plates, and other minutiae. Among the engraved plates for the Works in Architecture of Robert and James Adam, which appeared in parts between 1773 and 1779, is a design for the dining-room furniture formerly at Lord Mansfield’s villa, Kenwood. The pedestals in this design closely resemble those of the Museum’s dining-room set. The Kenwood furniture, no longer in the location for which it was intended, is of plain mahogany and painted wood, and lacks the marquetry enrichment which makes so fine an effect on the Museum’s furniture. The delineations in this marquetry, the honeysuckle frieze, the paterae, frets, and endive motive, are “light and elegant ornaments, imitated from Ancient Works in the Baths and Villas of the Romans” applied to furniture in symmetric, brilliantly original patterns. Though essentially created in the mind of Robert Adam, the Museum’s furniture cannot be assigned to a particular cabinetmaker or workshop. During the period of ascendance of the Adam style, many English furniture-makers worked in this style. Further discoveries, inventories, sales catalogues, or the bills and statements of the original owner, may provide a fuller description for this set of furniture.

Cartoon from the London “Examiner,” satirizing the contest for workingmen’s hours. The seventh Earl of Shaftesbury leads the figures on the left while Sir Robert Peel stands first among the opposing group.