

THOMAS HOPE: REGENCY DESIGNER

JULY 17 – NOVEMBER 16, 2008

The Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the
Decorative Arts, Design, and Culture

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From July 17 to November 16, The Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design, and Culture is presenting *Thomas Hope: Regency Designer*. This exhibition opens at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London on March 21; it is the second in a series of exhibitions organized by the Bard Graduate Center to be shown at the V&A.

Designer, patron, collector, and author, Thomas Hope (1769–1831) is a major figure in the history of British design. His style, derived from strictly observed classical antiquity and contemporary Parisian fashion, was instrumental in shaping and defining what became known as the Regency style — a mode of design and decoration that continues to be influential. Despite the key role he played in the fields of interior decoration, design, and decorative arts, however, Hope's significance has been largely overlooked. This exhibition examines his incomparable contribution and the remarkable works of art that were created under his patronage. It also further extends the Bard Graduate Center's international reputation for organizing exhibitions on under-recognized aspects of British design culture and history.

Thomas Hope brings together a curatorial team of leading experts in British architecture, decorative arts, and design. David Watkin, Reader in the History of Architecture at the University of Cambridge, England, has published extensively on the history of 18th- and 19th-century architecture. Philip Hewat-Jaboor, an art consultant and expert on Thomas Hope, was also a co-curator of *William Beckford, 1760–1844: An Eye for the Magnificent*, which opened at the Bard Graduate Center in 2001. Also curating is Daniella Ben-Arie, an independent scholar and researcher.



The exhibition conveys how Hope fostered the Regency, a fascinating amalgam of decorative details, ornament, and influences from antiquity and British and Continental European art, architecture, and design. The approximately 140 loaned items on view reveal the outstanding scope and complexity of Hope's contribution to the Regency. They include furniture inspired by models from antiquity, designed by Hope, as well as antique and neoclassical sculpture (by Thorvaldsen and Canova, among others, as well as several Roman-Egyptian sculptures); a group of classical vases from the Sir William Hamilton collection; fascinating silver and other metalwork; and the exquisite portrait by Sir William Beechey, *Thomas Hope*, now in the National Portrait Gallery, London. All are shown against the brilliantly rich backgrounds used by Hope in his own home, Duchess Street, London. The exceptional loans come from: the Benaki Museum, Athens; British Museum; Huntington Library Art Collections and Botanical Gardens; The Metropolitan Museum of Art; National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi; National Portrait Gallery, London; Victoria and Albert Museum; and Thorvaldsens Museum, Copenhagen; among others.

BACKGROUND

Thomas Hope, of Scottish descent, was born in Amsterdam to one of the wealthiest banking families in Europe. At the age of 18 he embarked on an extensive Grand Tour throughout Europe, Asia, and Africa that lasted nearly ten years. Along the way he made careful studies of architecture and sculpture and assembled a remarkable art collection. He moved to London in 1794, fleeing Amsterdam ahead of the French revolutionary forces.



Hope installed his collection in the extraordinary interior of his Duchess Street house, originally designed by Robert Adam but extensively remodeled and extended by Hope in his own idiosyncratic way. Hope, like his contemporary Sir John Soane, opened his house to the public. Hope's aim was to improve British design and craftsmanship, and his ideas were widely disseminated with the publication in 1807 of his *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration*, which contained line drawings of Duchess Street's interiors and furnishings. Like William Beckford, Hope designed his own furniture and works of art to demonstrate what he considered to be a new and purer design form. In contrast to Beckford, Hope was concerned that his designs reach and influence as wide an audience as possible. Similar to Beckford, Hope published a novel that was successful at the time, *Anastasius, or Memoirs of a Modern Greek* (1819).



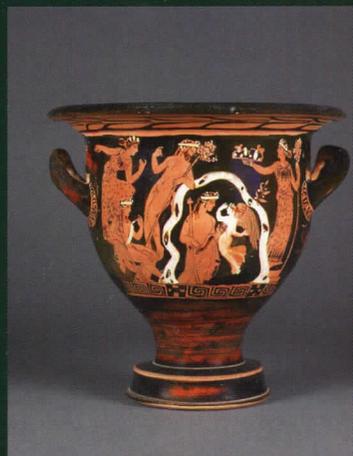
THE CATALOGUE

A catalogue, richly illustrated and published by the Bard Graduate Center and Yale University Press, accompanies the exhibition. The editors are David Watkin and Philip Hewat-Jaboor. The book contains previously unpublished material that reveals the multifaceted nature of Hope's influence on the British Regency in 15 scholarly essays, including "Thomas Hope and the Neoclassical Revolution" (Philip Mansel, independent scholar, London), "Thomas Hope's Furniture: 'A Delightful and Varied Significance of Shape and Embellishment'" (Frances Collard, Victoria & Albert Museum, London), "The Tragic Mask of *Anastasius/Selim: A New Introduction to Hope's Novel*" (Jerry Nolan, independent scholar, London), and "The Afterlife of Hope" (David Watkin and Frances Collard).



RELATED PROGRAMS

A series of lectures, panels, and other offerings will be presented in conjunction with *Thomas Hope: Regency Designer*. For further information, please call 212-501-3011 or e-mail programs@bgc.bard.edu.





COVER

Thomas Hope

Sir William Beechey (1753–1839)

English, 1798

Oil on canvas

National Portrait Gallery, London

INSIDE LEFT

Pharaoh

Roman, 1st century B.C.E.

Alabaster (*alabastro fiorito*)

Chen Art Gallery, Torrance, California

Photo: Copyright Christie's Images Ltd. 2004

INSIDE CENTER

Settee

After a design published by Thomas Hope

English, ca. 1802

Bronzed and gilded beech, with restoration, and bronze mounts

Trustees of the Faringdon Collection, Buscot Park, Oxfordshire

Photo: Bruce White

INSIDE RIGHT (TOP TO BOTTOM)

Candlesticks

After a design published by Thomas Hope

Probably made by Alexis Decaix (ca. 1753–1811)

English, ca. 1802

Patinated bronze, gilt bronze, marble

Private collection

Photo: Bruce White

Louisa Hope

Bertel Thorvaldsen (1770–1844)

Danish, 1817 – ca. 1823

Marble

Thorvaldsens Museum, Copenhagen

Photo: Pernille Klemp

Bell-crater: Dionysus Rising

Greek, early 4th century B.C.E.

Terra-cotta

Photo: Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum

INSIDE FLAP

Ulysses and Nausicaa

Louis Gauffier (1762–1801)

1798

Oil on canvas

Musées de Poitiers

Photo: Christian Vignaud

BACK COVER

Lion

Egyptian, Ptolemaic period (323–30 B.C.E.)

or 18th century

Basalt, Imperial Egyptian porphyry

National Museum of Ancient Art, Lisbon

Photo: Divisão de Documentação Fotográfica,

Instituto Português de Museus

EXHIBITION TOURS

Group tours of *Thomas Hope: Regency Designer* are conducted Tuesdays through Fridays between 11:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., and on Thursdays until 7:00 p.m. Reservations are required for all groups. For further information, please call the Bard Graduate Center Gallery at 212-501-3013 or TTY 212-501-3012, or e-mail gallery@bgc.bard.edu.

LOCATION

The Bard Graduate Center is located at 18 West 86th Street, between Central Park West and Columbus Avenue, in New York City. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Thursday from 11:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Admission is \$3 general, \$2 seniors and students (with valid ID), and free on Thursday evenings after 5:00 p.m. For further information about the Bard Graduate Center and upcoming exhibitions, please visit www.bgc.bard.edu.

SUPPORT

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UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS

DECEMBER 11, 2008 – MARCH 15, 2009

Twixt Art and Nature: English Embroidery 1575–1700

Selections from The Metropolitan Museum of Art

SPRING/SUMMER 2009

Knoll Textiles in Modern and Contemporary Furnishings and Interiors

BGC

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