



*A Classical
Reception*



The English Salon 1700 - 1830

The salon, or as it would have been almost until this century, the saloon, was always a space in the grander of homes where guests, friends and family were received, welcomed and entertained. In their exhibition this year W.R. HARVEY & CO. will follow on the success of their previous displays by showing the evolution of the salon over a period of 130 years. Encompassing the reigns of 6 monarchs they will show, in four period settings, how this particular room changed with the different styles and public opinions.



Were one to examine the changes that took place between the end of William IIIrd's reign and the commencement of William IV's, one would see the dramatic contrasts of life and the style of life that goes with a nation emerging from a state of near illiteracy to a people who had become highly literate and were precursing the Industrial Revolution. During this period there was little that remained unchanged. Successively at war and yet towards the

end of this period involved in a massive expansion of its empire, Britain absorbed influences from around the world into its infrastructure to produce a multitude of different decorative idioms.

The function of the salon or saloon was adapted in tandem with tastes and attitudes. This was perfectly natural and reflected dramatic increases of wealth and the incredible expenditure of recently amassed fortunes on building vast mansions with

ever grander rooms devoted to the outdoing of ones neighbours. The numbers of magnates and politicians who nearly bankrupted themselves in the struggle to build an ever greater "pile" in the 18th. and 19th. centuries is only equalled by those who indebted themselves by overindulging the whim to entertain.

The four settings which Harvey's have chosen mirror, in the first place, the early 18th. century at

about the time of George IIrd's accession with the rich lustre of the Dutch influenced walnut furniture of that period within the relatively modest interiors that were then prevalent. Contrast this to the mid 1700s with the ascendancy of Palladianism and the designs of Ince and Mayhew, Chippendale and Daryl in the Rococo manner which was to be succeeded by the neo-classical as shown in the 3rd. room.

This now takes on an elegance and lightness shown so effectively in the work of Hepplewhite, Shearer and Sheraton. The architecture of Robert Adam, who was one of the first interior designers in the modern idiom to co-ordinate everything within a room, had a major impact during this last quarter of the 18th. century. One can also perceive women taking a much greater interest in the decorative arts and contents of the home.

The French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars that ushered out the 18th. and opened the doors to the 19th. century brought with them further great changes in style and taste. The flamboyance of the Regency Period shown in the final room is very



much a product of those stormy times. One has only to glance around the Royal Pavilion at Brighton to see the multitude of different influences which were current. The work of Thomas Hope, George Smith and George Bullock gained swift popularity with a public eager to adopt the latest fashions.

Within this framework of 130 years of diverse styles, what was the function of the Salon? The modern manner of "meeting and greeting" one's guests quite aptly expresses the initial purpose of this great room. A grand reception room where the furnishings were virtually on public view would therefore have required the finest furniture to hold its place. One would have displayed the very best here in the most fashionable of settings to show one's peers how affluent and au fait one was.





Thus the Salon was a special place within the home, one of entertainment, celebration and conversation, of gaming and politicking, of display and reception. Harvey's are sure they have captured all these different aspects in their exhibition which opens to the public on May 29th. and runs until June 29th.

Photographed at Forty Hall, Enfield with the kind cooperation of the London Borough of Enfield

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"A Classical Reception:

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