

British &
Irish
Furniture
Makers
Online



The
FURNITURE
HISTORY
SOCIETY

DIGITAL RESEARCH PROGRAMME 2024

This programme is supported by the generous donation of the Iris Foundation.

Applications are invited from MA students at the University of Leeds, the University of York, the University of Buckingham, the Bard Graduate Center and Winterthur to engage in exciting digital research projects involving the collections and furnishings of three prestigious historic British houses: Castle Howard, Raby Castle and Holkham Hall. **The deadline for the submission of applications for this project is Friday 15th March 2024.** These projects will be conducted online.

Timing

This is a short research project of about three weeks to be carried out in late May and June 2024 (there is some flexibility as to the precise timing but only with the agreement of the relevant curator). Each project will be conducted online and will include both research and the creation of a public-facing digital product. Whilst the bulk of the work should be carried out within this time, there is some flexibility to work over the summer to refine the product. Precise timings should be agreed with the project curator and the BIFMO project manager. The online output created will need to be ready for the partnering institution to review by **Friday 20th September 2024.** This will allow time for the product to be tried and tested ahead of a research conference to be held later in the year where the students will have the opportunity to present their research to members of the Furniture History Society, curators and academics.

This project is suitable for MA students in the areas of art history, cultural history, material culture studies, and museum studies. Students who have an interest in digital technologies and historic British furniture and interiors are particularly encouraged to apply. Organised under the outreach programme of the Furniture History Society's database, British and Irish Furniture Makers Online (BIFMO), applications are invited from individual students to work with another student selected from one of the other participating universities or colleges. Successful applicants will be selected and allocated a working partner by the Digital Project Selection Committee. The aim is to bring together students with different skill sets, who are prepared to both share and learn from each other. Working virtually, students from the UK and from the US will be paired according to their project selection and skills.

Once the students have been selected and paired-up they will be introduced (virtually) to the curator of the collection to which they have been assigned. It is the curator who will provide access to online resources, both archival and published, which will form the focus of their research and set out their operational guidelines. In addition, a relevant specialist from within the FHS will also be available to support the project. The students will be expected to work collaboratively to create a blog or similar visual representation of the project that would be suitable to place on the collection's website. While the students will be encouraged to be creative with their project, they also need to be realistic in terms of the timescale and must ensure they aim to provide the collection with a usable product by the deadline. Finally, the participating students will have the opportunity to present their research at an academic conference later in the year.

The Application Process

To apply, you should complete the attached form and return it to the BIFMO administrator at bifmo@furniturehistorysociety.org by **Friday 15th March 2024**. We ask that you choose more than one project (up to three) and that you show your selection in order of preference. This will maximise your chances of participating in this project as there are only six places available overall. Pairs of students will be assigned by the selection committee. Each pair will consist of one US and one UK student. It is *not* required that students already have knowledge of digital programmes, such as WordPress (or other similar digital tools used to build websites), but we would be particularly interested in students who wish to develop those skills. Similarly, experience working on primary source material would also be valuable. We anticipate that these exciting projects will enable each student to obtain the following experience:

- To work collaboratively and to share knowledge and ideas.
- To develop research skills.
- To develop digital and media skills.
- To develop skills for public engagement to share their research.
- To gain a more in-depth knowledge of a particular historical period and learn to transmit that knowledge to a wider audience.
- To create an online blog.
- To present an oral paper on the project to an academic audience.

Finance

The FHS will award £450 to each successful applicant on completion of their project. BIFMO is prepared to consider applications for reimbursement of additional costs incurred, such as travel, purchasing of digital packages or other essential tools to carry out the project. These payments are discretionary and subject to approval in advance of incurring the cost. Applications for expenses should be sent to the BIFMO Project Manager at bifmoprojectmanager@furniturehistorysociety.org.

The Research Projects

Three research projects have been devised by curators and archivists of major houses in Britain. They engage with the history of furniture and interiors in the context of design, trade, manufacture and craft networks. Each one focuses on archival and published material from the house or collection. Students will be encouraged to explore the topic from a variety of perspectives and to develop their findings into a digital project of their own making, thus allowing students to consider different ways to engage with audiences.

Project 1: Castle Howard

Early 18th century Chairs at Castle Howard



Castle Howard was built for Charles Howard, 3rd Earl of Carlisle, in the first decades of the 18th century. While much is known about the design and creation of the house, relatively little survives in the collection or archive relating to its original furnishing. There are, however, two similar (but not identical) groups of seat furniture which are thought to date from this early period of display. Historically attributed to James Moore, and with giltwood frames and crimson velvet upholstery, these distinctive pieces of furniture would have been stand-out items within any interior. A significant programme of restoration of these chairs is due to begin in 2024. The purpose of this project with BIFMO-FHS is to pull together a body of research which explores the context of these chairs, from

stylistic design to use and display up to the present day, with the aim that this will contribute to the future interpretation and celebration of these important pieces of furniture.

IMAGE: Chair attributed to James Moore © Castle Howard

Project 2: Raby Castle

Raby Castle and Cleveland House

The Vane family have owned Raby Castle for nearly 400 years. During that time, they have also owned several other dwellings, including Battle Abbey, Newton House, and various London residences. One such example is Cleveland House, historically positioned at No. 19 St. James's Square, London. This house was used during the heyday of the Vane family, when they were Earls of Darlington and later Dukes of Cleveland. The title was passed down through marriage from the original iteration of the Dukes of Cleveland via Barbara Villiers and King Charles II. Whilst the original Cleveland House was



demolished at the turn of the 20th century, we still have inventories, a floor plan and even some furniture brought to Raby Castle which gives us an indication of how Cleveland House would have looked during the 1800s. This project invites students to conduct research into the house and its contents to better help us understand the previously unexplored location. Using archives, furniture found on our CMS and first and second-hand accounts, the aim is for the students to develop a picture of the layout and some of the interiors of the London house. A blog or interactive output, using the floor plan and any existing furniture, would provide a helpful final overview of the research conducted.

IMAGE: Cleveland House, St. James's Square. Re-drawn from A. I. Dasent's *History*

Project 3: Holkham Hall

Tracing the furniture and goods that were transferred from Thanet House to Holkham Hall and its prominence within the collection.

Thanet House on Great Russell Street was the London house of Thomas Coke, 1st Earl of Leicester, and his wife Lady Margaret Tufton. After a year-long refurbishment by architect James Gibbs (c. 1719) it was filled with grand paintings, gilt-framed seating and extravagant textiles so that it could become their main residence prior to the building of Holkham Hall in rural Norfolk. Despite its significance, little is known about Thanet House in the eighteenth century as it was subsequently redeveloped and split into two houses and none of the interiors survive today. An inventory of the property was taken after the death of Thomas Coke in 1760, at which time, Lady Margaret oversaw the removal of its contents (paintings, library, statues, busts, goods, and furniture) to the nearly complete Holkham Hall. Using this record and subsequent inventories of Holkham together with various account books, students will aim to trace where these items, originally designed for a fashionable London house, were inserted into Holkham Hall and how their significance has changed over time. For example, the Cornucopia Suite was designed by William Kent and believed to have been made for Lady Margaret's dressing room at Thanet House, can now be found in the North State Sitting Room. The students will be invited to consider the following questions: how do these pieces sit in the rooms at Holkham? Is there any significance behind their new locations? How do their various locations around the house reflect the different uses of rooms, and the variety of tastes of subsequent generations? The aim of this project is to produce a map of Holkham showing the location of a selection of furniture pieces, as well as blog posts and textual interpretation exploring a selection of items and their changing location within the house. This project will run in May and June on specific dates agreed between the archivist and the students.



IMAGE: Andrea Casali (1705-1784), portrait of Thomas Coke, (1697-1759) 1st Earl of Leicester, Holkham Hall. Reproduced by permission of the Earl of Leicester and the Trustees of the Holkham Estate.

Applicant's name: _____ University/College: _____

Phone number: _____ Email address: _____

Course / Degree programme title: _____

Academic Supervisor name: _____ Email: _____

Have you previously used digital tools (e.g. *Sketchup*)? YES / NO (delete as appropriate)

If yes, please provide further details: _____

Have you had any previous experience working with an archive? YES / NO (delete as appropriate)

If yes, please provide further details: _____

Please list your project choices in order of preference by completing the table below:

	Project Number & Location	Add any additional relevant comments to support your application (eg. the reason for your choice; the reason for the order of preference; an association with a particular project). You may expand more fully on these points in the next section.
1st Choice		
2nd Choice		
3rd Choice		

