

# Circa 1821:

Design and Material Culture  
in the Young Republic

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UNIVERSITY OF THE  
SCIENCES IN  
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Marvin Samson Center for  
the History of Pharmacy

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## Design and Material Culture in the Young Republic

The first half of the nineteenth century is a particularly remarkable time in the history of the United States. For much of that period, the nation was a loose association of scattered states bordered by a vast wilderness to the west and miles of ocean to its east. On the political front, America fought the English in the War of 1812—deemed our country’s “second war of independence”—only to be internally disovered by the Civil War, starting in 1861; in between there were a handful of smaller but highly consequential territorial wars, mostly in the southern and southwestern portions of the nation.

The Louisiana Purchase, in 1803, sparked interest in expansion to the west coast. A few weeks after the purchase, President Thomas Jefferson had Congress appropriate \$2500, “to send intelligent officers with ten or twelve men, to explore even to the Western ocean.” Jefferson selected Captain Meriwether Lewis to lead the expedition, which later was known as the Corps of Discovery. Lewis selected William Clark as his partner, and their entire party consisted of approximately forty men.

The Corp’s historic journey began in May 1804, and during the next 28 months, they traversed over 8,000 miles. Less than one year into the expedition, the team had already reported the discovery of 108 botanical and 68 mineral specimens and produced Clark’s map of the United

States. By expedition’s end in September 1806, they had recorded important information about the new territory and its Native American tribes, as well as the botany, geology, and wildlife in the region.

In painting, the early nineteenth century was the great period of recording America. A string of English artists traveled to the young republic to paint views of cities, harbors, or notable estates and scenic spots in the countryside; they became known as “view painters,” and their activity gave impetus to an ambitious publication



**Candlestick**  
sterling silver  
Boston, Bigelow, Kennard  
& Company, c. 1845–60



**Detail of platter with *View of the Dam and Waterworks at Fair Mount, Philadelphia***; earthenware; Staffordshire, c. 1825–30

produced in Philadelphia in 1820–21. *Picturesque Views of American Scenery* was the result of a collaboration between two English artists and two American publishers, which culminated in a series of twenty superb hand-colored aquatints. Numerous other portfolios were published around this time in response to the growing interest in recording America. Motivated by the related desire to document and study the nation's flora and fauna, French-born John James Audubon (1785–1851) had his drawings of birds engraved and published; the first volume of these landmarks in nineteenth-century natural history appeared in 1827.

The tremendous growth of the nation during the first half of the nineteenth century is reflected in the U.S. flag, which went through twelve design changes between 1795 and 1851, to accommodate the addition of eighteen states to the Union during that period. This growth prompted impressive transportation projects, most notably the Erie Canal. Completed in October 1825, the canal connected the Hudson River to Lake Erie, thus allowing New York to tap into the untold resources of the interior continent. New York became “the great commercial emporium of America,” and the success of the Erie Canal created a frenzy of canal building throughout the nation, which in turn spurred the growth of the steamboat industry. Meanwhile, land transportation was being revolutionized by the steam railroad to the extent that by the 1840s over nine thousand miles of track had been laid. This abundance of transportation routes allowed the nation to firmly bind its parts.

In the Monroe Doctrine of 1823, the United States had given notice to the European powers that the Western Hemisphere was no longer open to colonization. In spite of America's new political independence from Europe, its citizens continued to follow the fashions and designs that originated abroad. Far from being a remote outpost, the young republic had relatively quick access to new styles from London, Paris, and other European cities through imported goods, immigrant craftsmen who trained abroad, and design books and prints that were exported soon after their publication. By 1820, the table of any middle-class citizen could contain sugar from Cuba, fruits of the Mediterranean, pepper from Sumatra, coffee from Arabia, and tea from China.



Pharmacy jar inscribed  
*Beur: de Cacao*; porcelain;  
France, c. 1820–40

Early nineteenth-century artists and craftsmen in Europe and America had unprecedented access to the material culture of other times and places. Far-reaching archeological adventures, more extensive travel and trade about the globe, and the proliferation of printed reports and reproductions all provided a rich and novel vocabulary of design drawn from ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome, from the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the more recent European past. Artists used this wealth of fresh evidence with a freedom of expression that constituted a complex new language of styles—styles usually labeled as historical revivals but that tell us far more about the outlook of the nineteenth century than they do about any earlier times.

Wealthy Americans avidly participated in the tradition of the Grand Tour by embarking on extended tours of England and continental Europe; through these experiences and, more specifically, through the art and objects they acquired during their travels, they were able to

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# Checklist of the Exhibition

Objects listed according to medium; those preceded by an asterisk (\*) are temporary loans from institutions or from private collectors. The approximately thirty items exhibited with the Glentworth pharmacy are not itemized below.

## Ceramics

### 1. Pharmacy jar inscribed *Beur: de Cacao*

porcelain with polychrome decoration and gilding  
France, c. 1820–40

### 2. Plate with Carpenters' Hall

glazed earthenware with transfer design  
England, Stoke-on-Trent (Staffordshire), Wedgwood factory, 20th century, after an early 19th-century design

### \* 3. Molded jug

stoneware  
England, Hanley (Staffordshire), William Ridgway & Co., dated 1 October 1835

### \* 4. Covered sauce pot

ironstone  
England, Fenton (Staffordshire), Miles Mason & Sons factory, c. 1815–30

### \* 5. Platter with *View of the Dam and Waterworks at Fair Mount, Philadelphia*

earthenware  
England, Staffordshire, attributed to the Burslem pottery of Joseph Stubbs, c. 1825–30

### \* 6. Armorial plate

hard-paste porcelain with overglaze enamel and gilding  
China, Jingdezhen, c. 1800

### \* 7. Celadon plate

hard-paste porcelain with overglaze enamel and gilding  
China, c. 1825–50

### 8.–9. Two containers for opium or opium compound storage

porcelain; labeled *Sem. Papaver. alb.* and *Opium* probably France and United States, c. 1820–50

## Glass

### \* 10. Scent bottle

glass, polychrome decoration and gilding  
Bohemia (present-day Czech Republic), c. 1840–60

### \* 11.–12. Two “lacy” salt cellars

pressed glass  
United States, probably Sandwich, Massachusetts, Boston and Sandwich Glass Company, c. 1825–35



### \* 13. Cornucopia vase (shown above)

colored glass and metal on a marble base  
England, c. 1850

### 14.–15. Two containers for opium or opium compound storage

glass; labeled *TR. OPII CAMP.* and [*Persian*] *OPIUM*  
probably United States, c. 1820–50

## Wood and Furniture

### 16. Mortar

carved and painted wood  
probably United States, c. 1820–50



\* 17. *Armchair (shown above)*  
mahogany wood  
England or United States (perhaps Philadelphia), late Sheraton style, c. 1810–20

### 18. Counters and sign from the Glentworth Pharmacy

wood and metal  
Philadelphia, c. 1812

## Metalwork

### 19. Mortar and pestle

bronze, with relief decoration and inscribed  
*EMPEREUR NAPOLEON*  
probably Besançon or Paris, dated 1802

### \* 20. Epaulets of Robert Patterson

bullion (gold threading), brass, wool, and silk  
United States, c. 1830–50  
*Loaned by the Civil War and Underground Railroad Museum of Philadelphia*

### \* 21. Candlestick

sterling silver  
Boston, Bigelow, Kennard & Company,  
c. 1845–60

### \* 22. Oval dish with handles

silver-plated copper  
United States, International/Meriden Silver Company, c. 1900, after a form current  
c. 1790 to c. 1860.

### \* 23. Sauceboat

sterling silver  
probably United States, c. 1780–1810

## Textiles

### 24. Scenes with caged animals, architecture, and people

screen-printed cotton  
20th-century reproduction of a toile design  
of c. 1820–40

### 25. *The Bird-Catcher (L'Oiseleur)*

screen-printed cotton  
20th-century reproduction of a French  
toile design of 1811 by Jean-Baptiste Huet  
(with minor modifications)

## Portraiture

### 26. William R. Fisher (d. 1842)

*(shown below)*  
oil on canvas,  
artist unknown  
probably Philadelphia,  
19th century



**27. Benjamin Ellis, M.D. (1798–1831)**

oil on canvas, artist unknown  
probably Philadelphia, early 20th century

**28. Peter K. Lehman (b. 1787)**

oil on canvas, artist unknown  
probably Philadelphia, early 20th century

**29. Gerard Troost, M.D. (1776–1850)**

oil on canvas, artist unknown  
probably Philadelphia, early 20th century

**30. Henry Troth (1794–1842)**

pastel on board, artist unknown  
probably Philadelphia, early 20th century

*Prints*



\* 31.–35. Designs after the antique;  
plates V, VI, XI, XIV, and XXI from *Nuova  
raccolta rappresentante i costume religiosi,  
civili, e militari degli antichi Egiziani,  
Etruschi, Greci, e Romani; tratti dagli  
antichi monumenti, per uso de professori  
delle belle arti (plate XIV shown above)*

engravings by Domenico Pronti  
Rome, 1808

\* 36. *Battle Monument, Baltimore,*  
completed in 1825

engraving; designed by William Goodacre  
(New York); engraved by Archer & Boilly  
London, c. 1831

\* 37. *Imperatoria angustifolia*

copper engraving; from *Mémoires de  
l'Académie des sciences, littératures et beaux-arts  
de Turin*, Turin, 1803, vol. 7, pl. 3

**38. *Arcade, Philadelphia (Philadelphia  
Museum), c. 1827***

hand-colored engraving; designed by  
C. Burton; engraved and printed by  
Fenner Sears & Co.  
London, 1831

\* 39. *Tomb of Kosciuszko, built 1828*

steel-engraving; designed by W. H. Bartlett;  
published by George Virtue  
London, 1838

\* 40. *Capitol of Virginia, Richmond,*  
completed in 1792

engraving; designed by William Goodacre;  
engraved by John Wykeham Archer  
London, c. 1832

\* 41. *View of Tremont House, Boston,*  
built 1828–32

engraving; designed by J. Kidder;  
engraved by John Wykeham Archer  
London, c. 1832

\* 42. *Poor Richard Illustrated*

engraving; designed by Samuel A. Allen and  
Thomas R. Holland; engraved by O. Pelton  
Boston, 1859

\* 43. *Thomas de Quincey*

engraving; frontispiece from *Confessions of  
an English Opium-Eater*  
c. 1860

\* 44. *Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*

wood-engraving; designed by Winslow  
Homer; engraved by Pierce  
from *Ballou's Pictorial*, Boston, 25 December  
1858, p. 401 (title page)

\* 45. *Otsego Hall, Residence of J. Fenimore Cooper*

steel-engraving; designed by J. A. Hows;  
engraved by Robert Hinshelwood  
probably New York, c. 1840–50



\* 46.–49. *The Raving Maniac and the Driv'ing Fool; The Gin Palace; The Drunkard's Home; and The Upas Tree (shown above)*

etchings; designed by George Cruikshank  
London, 1842

*Books and Other Printed Material*

50.–51. Two lecture admission cards,  
College of Pharmacy  
Philadelphia, 1822 and 1823

\* 52. *Queen Mab*  
Percy Bysshe Shelley  
London, 1821

\* 53. *Queen Mab, a Philosophical Poem*  
Percy Bysshe Shelley  
New York, 1821

\* 54. *The Political Quixote; or, the Adventures of the Renowned Don Blackibo Dwarfino, and his Trusty 'Squire, Seditious; a Romance, in which are introduced many popular and celebrated political characters of the present day*  
George Buxton  
London, 1820

55. *Formulae for the Preparation of Eight Patent Medicines, Adopted by the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy*  
Philadelphia, 1824

*Printmaking Material*

56. Copper engraving plate,  
*Eupatorium Perfoliatum*  
designed by William P. C. Barton  
Philadelphia, 1832

57. Copper engraving plate mounted  
on wood block, College of Apothecaries  
Philadelphia, 1821

*Manuscripts*

58. Receipt for goods, C. Schrank  
New York, dated 1 July 1830

59. Receipt book,  
Philadelphia  
College of  
Pharmacy  
(detail shown  
at right)  
Philadelphia,  
1835-72



60. Recipe book of Robert Shoemaker  
Philadelphia, c. 1838

*Numismatics*

61. U.S. copper "large" cent  
designed by chief-engraver Robert Scot  
Philadelphia, 1835

find context and meaning for their lives by considering themselves heirs of the great Western traditions. A great sense of nationalism pervaded the country, and leaders in all fields looked to the classical past of Greece and Italy for forging the identity of their young democratic republic.

America's hunt for models of design and ornament in the first decades of the century witnessed several versions of the neoclassical style, often marked by regional differences. Much of the furniture of this period echoed two earlier English trade catalogues, George Hepplewhite's *The Cabinet-Maker and Upholsterer's Guide* (1788), and Thomas Sheraton's *The Cabinet-Maker and Upholsterer's Drawing-Book* (1791–94). These design books, each with nineteenth-century editions, were largely responsible for disseminating neoclassicism throughout Europe and, slightly later, throughout America. Starting around 1815, American neoclassical design began to be influenced by Empire styles derived from pattern books, such as Percier and Fontaine's *Recueil de décorations intérieures* (1801 and 1812), the first guide to Greek, Roman, and Egyptian designs based on archeological sources, and Thomas Hope's *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration* (1807). A more direct introduction of classical design came via French and English émigré artists working in America.

As many of the objects in the current exhibition attest, there was a constant exchange of ideas between artists designing in the fine arts (e.g., prints, painting, architecture) and those active in the applied arts (e.g., furniture, glass, metalwork, ceramics). Philadelphia is given special attention in the displays in part because it was the largest city, financial center, and major port in the country until around 1830, when that distinction passed to New York. But more importantly, for the period covered by the exhibition, Philadelphia was a city of firsts and of innovation and, in many respects, the vanguard of art, culture, politics, and education for the fledgling republic.

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**Front cover: Detail of platter with *View of the Dam and Waterworks at Fair Mount, Philadelphia*, earthenware; England, Staffordshire, attributed to the Burslem pottery of Joseph Stubbs, c. 1825–30**



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