



# THE TASTEMAKERS

British Dealers and  
the Anglo-Gallic Interior,  
1785–1865

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Fig. 1.2. *High Cliffe*. From Rev. F. O. Morris, ed., *A Series of Picturesque Views of Seats of the Noblemen and Gentlemen of Great Britain and Ireland. With Descriptive and Historical Letterpress*, 5 vols. (London: W. Mackenzie, 1880), 5: n.p.



Fig. 1.3. Drawing room, Highcliffe Castle, Dorset, ca. 1942.

at Cassiobury Park, owned by the 5th Earl of Essex, depicted by William Henry Hunt in 1823, also has a dominant color scheme, extensive gilding, and furnishings formally arranged around the walls (see plate 5). However, many of the art objects in this room, including the bouille cabinets and Sèvres porcelain, date from the ancien régime. The decorative scheme combines carved wood, which recalled the Elizabethan style, with a fashionable sky-painted ceiling, baroque-style chairs, and English furniture in a stylistic mélange typical of Regency interiors.

Concurrent with the *Empire* style, the rupture of revolution with its despoliation of churches and monuments presented “a terrifying and urgent challenge” for the French antiquary.<sup>65</sup> Essays in the Gothic style such as the *Musée des Monumens Français*, a collection of French statuary and architectural fragments assembled by Alexandre Lenoir (1761–1839) at the convent of the Petits-Augustins in Paris from 1795 until 1816, differed from Strawberry Hill and Fonthill. A museum, not a domestic interior, this had a didactic, public rationale: to save objects from destruction and preserve French heritage.<sup>66</sup> It proved seminal to the study of medieval art, influencing, among others, Alexandre du Sommerard (1779–1842), whose collection of medieval and Renaissance artifacts was established first at the rue de Menars and from 1832 in the Hôtel de Cluny, a late-Gothic townhouse.<sup>67</sup>

After the fall of Napoleon, the most striking feature of the Restoration monarchies (1815–30) of Louis XVIII (1755–1824) and Charles X (1757–1836) in art history terms was their iconographic use of Henri IV, the first Bourbon king, across the decorative arts.<sup>68</sup> For Louis XVIII—who was striving to affirm Bourbon legitimacy, restore faith in the Catholic Church, and appease warring factions of Bonapartists, Ultra-Royalists, and Liberals—Henri IV represented both the continuity of monarchy and concord, as the king who had pacified France after civil war.<sup>69</sup> Similarly, from the 1820s the novels of Walter Scott took France by storm as his vivid tales of a romantic past and national heritage entranced a nation in search of itself. *Ivanhoe* (1820) evoked the Anglo-Norman past; *Quentin Durward* (1823) was set in the time of Louis XI. Moreover, it has been argued that Jean-Baptiste Defauconpret (1767–1843), Scott’s translator, adapted the books to appeal to a legitimist Catholic, post-Napoleonic readership.<sup>70</sup> Scott’s influence informed fine art, the novels of Hugo and Honoré de Balzac (1799–1850), and the Gothic *style troubadour*, another endorsement of Church and monarchy.<sup>71</sup>

The search for a national style in France underpinned this revivalism. Paris expositions highlighted the Gothic in 1827, the neo-Renaissance in 1834, the Louis XIV, bouille revival in 1839, and the Louis XV style in 1844.<sup>72</sup> As Stéphane Flachat asked in 1834, “Where are the styles, where are the schools, where are the masters? Are we here in the Greek, or the Roman, or the Gothic? Are we recapitulating the style of the Renaissance, or of Louis XIV, or of Louis XV, or of the Empire? Have we a style of our own?”<sup>73</sup> The French did not revisit their eighteenth-century past until the 1820s. High prices were achieved for ancien régime art at the Craufurd sale in 1820 and that of the financier J.-J.-Pierre Augustin Lapeyrière (1779–1831) in 1825.<sup>74</sup> Visiting Paris in 1831, Lionel de Rothschild noted that “old inlaid Furniture . . . made

58. Earl de Grey, "The Earl de Grey's Account of the Building of Wrest House," *Miscellanea* 59, ed. A. F. Cirket (1980): 65–87.
59. Cited in Westgarth, "Biographical Dictionary," 125.
60. Cox, *Complete Tradesman*, 99.
61. Cited in Westgarth, "Biographical Dictionary," 69.
62. 29 January 1819. Cited in William Beckford, *Life at Fonthill, 1807–1822: With Interludes in Paris and London from the Correspondence of William Beckford*, trans. and ed. Boyd Alexander (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1957), 276.
63. LMA: MS11936/434/779142-3, 17 August 1805; and LMA: MS11936/553/1224111, 18 May 1836.
64. LMA: MS11936/533/1130505, 11 November 1831. For Buxted, see ESRO: AMS 6018.
65. Geoffrey de Bellaigue, "Edward Holmes Baldock, Part I" *Connoisseur* 189 (1975): 1, 290.
66. Harry Dougall, "Guest Post: Alexander Barker and the South Kensington Museum," <https://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/network/guest-post-alexander-barker-and-the-south-kensington-museum>.
67. Martin Levy and Elaine Moss, "John Coleman Isaac, 'Importer of Curiosities': An Outline of His Life, and the 1846 Continental Diary," *Journal of the History of Collections* 14, no. 1 (2002): 104.
68. TNA: PROB 11/1676/265, 21 October 1823.
69. Boyd Hilton, *A Mad, Bad & Dangerous People? England 1783–1846* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 135.
70. Martin Daunton, "London and the World," in *London—World City 1800–1840*, ed. Celina Fox (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 26.
71. Boyd Hilton, *Corn, Cash, Commerce: The Economic Policies of the Tory Governments 1815–1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).
72. Matthew Parker, *The Sugar Barons: Family, Corruption, Empire and War* (London: Windmill, 2012), 351–57. Slavery itself was not abolished in the British Empire until 1833.
73. Blessington, *Idler in France*, 2:59.
74. Watson, *Literature and Material Culture*, 175.
75. "dressed in rags and stinking of Jewry." Honoré de Balzac, *Le Cousin Pons* (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1873), 140. Several Parisian dealers have been suggested as Balzac's model for Magus, including Charles Mannheim. See, for example, Westgarth, "Antique and Curiosity Dealer," 1:225n7.
76. Cited in Cohen, *Household Gods*, 149.
77. 30 June 1814. Cited in Beckford, *Life at Fonthill*, 151–52. On ethnicity and the dealer, see Westgarth, "Antique and Curiosity Dealer," 1:216–17.
78. Julian Hoppit, *Risk and Failure in English Business 1700–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).
79. George Elwick, *The Bankrupt Directory*. . . (London: Simpkin, Marshall, 1843).
80. Hilton, *Mad, Bad & Dangerous*, 156.
81. TNA B 4/46: Docket book 1834–37.
82. BCP: Furniture Bundle 698.
83. TNA: PROB 11/1976/188, 13 March 1843.
84. 19 January 1836. Cited in Sebag-Montefiore and Armstrong-Totten, *Dynasty of Dealers*, 195.
85. TNA: B 3/4073.
86. TNA: B 3/2011.
87. HL: MS 139 AJ53/1-103/3, 16 March 1831.

## Chapter 4

# “The New Race of Connoisseurs”

Selling art entails creating perceptions of value in the marketplace. One of the dealer's greatest if intangible assets was his understanding of objects. It informed what he bought, how he sold it, and what he made. In the preface to his *Handbook of Pottery and Porcelain* (1850), Joseph Marryat claimed that when he began collecting in the early nineteenth century, “knowledge of the different kinds of Pottery and Porcelain appeared limited to the dealers.” This was correct. Dealers understood the objects they traded in, their knowledge gained through manufacturing and retail experience, trade networks, and buying trips. By 1865, though, this primacy of knowledge, shared with auctioneers, architects, and makers, was challenged by new publications like Marryat's and by a burgeoning museum and exhibition culture. Both of these disseminated information about the decorative arts to a wider audience, thus creating an increasingly well-informed clientele.

Before the museum, the shop and auction room had acted as a locus for learning, endorsed by advice on interior decoration in popular publications and pattern books. The Great Exhibition of 1851 and those that followed highlighted the dealer's multifaceted achievement as retailer, producer, and tastemaker, enlarging his sphere of activity from the private and commercial to the public and educative. However, the critical analysis of the decorative arts that accompanied these exhibitions demonstrated a significant advance in art historical knowledge, just as it reflected a growing resistance in some quarters to the ubiquitous, French-inspired aesthetic. To retain their customers, later nineteenth-century dealers would have to adapt how they exploited the British preference for French taste.

### Arbiters of Taste:

**Early Auction Catalogs and Popular Literature** Auction catalogs, like the shop window, provided a key interface between buyer and seller. How auctioneers differentiated goods to obtain the best price in a crowded marketplace therefore reflects contemporary perceptions of value. Analysis of twenty-seven British catalogs, published between 1788 and 1820, shows that the early selling points for ancien régime art were its ornament and finish, the romantic associative story it conveyed, and the magnificence it conferred on the interior. This was intentional. As annotations in the Wallace Collection's archive of Phillips's sale catalogs show, although



Plate 2

**Thomas Shotton Boys (British, 1803–74).**  
*The Striped Drawing Room, Apsley House*, ca. 1852, watercolor on paper.  
Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Plate 3

**Joseph Nash (British, 1806–85).**  
*The Waterloo Gallery, Apsley House*, ca. 1852, watercolor on paper.  
Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Plate 48

Sèvres porcelain manufactory (French, 1756–present); Nicquet, painter (French, act. 1764–92); Jean-Jacques Pierre, *jeune*, painter (b. 1745/6, act. 1763–1800); and Henry-François Vincent, gilder (act. 1753–1806). Plates from a dessert service (*assiette à palmes*), ca. 1763 and 1786, soft-paste porcelain, painted and gilded, Diam.: 24.2 cm. Private collection.



Plate 49

Jean-Pierre Feuillet, retailer and china painter (French, 1777–1840). Pair of green-ground ice pails (back view), ca. 1814–25, hard-paste porcelain, polychrome enamels, [dimensions TK]. Ickworth House, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk.



Plate 50 (old 51)

Jane Paris (British, mid-nineteenth century). The drawing rooms at Wrotham Park, ca. 1840, watercolor on paper, [Dimensions TK?]. Wrotham Park, Barnet, Hertfordshire.

**Fig. 5.6.** Attributed to Messrs. Blake, *marqueteurs* (British, act. 1825–79). *Bureau plat* (marquetry detail) of François I after Titian, ca. 1841, tulipwood, marquetry woods, ivory, bone, pewter. Wrotham Park, Barnet, Hertfordshire.



**Fig. 5.7.** Gilles Edmé Petit (French, 1694–1760). *Portrait de François I<sup>er</sup> d'après le tableau du Titien, qui est dans le Cabinet du Roy*, 1729, engraving. Musée Condée, Chantilly, France.



(opposite, top left)

**Fig. 5.8.** Attributed to Messrs. Blake, *marqueteurs* (British, act. 1825–79). *Bureau plat* (marquetry detail) of *La belle ferronnière*, after Leonardo da Vinci, ca. 1841, tulipwood, marquetry woods, ivory, bone, pewter. Wrotham Park, Barnet, Hertfordshire.



(opposite, bottom left)

**Fig. 5.9.** Attributed to Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519). *Portrait de femme, dit La belle ferronnière*, ca. 1495–99, oil on canvas, 63 × 45 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris.



(opposite, top right)

**Fig. 5.10.** Attributed to Messrs. Blake, *marqueteurs* (British, act. 1825–79).

*Bureau plat* (marquetry detail) of Agnès Sorel, after stained-glass window at Château de Loches, ca. 1841, tulipwood, marquetry woods, ivory, bone, pewter. Wrotham Park, Barnet, Hertfordshire.

(opposite, bottom right)

**Fig. 5.11.** Emile Wattier (French, 1800–1868). *Agnès Sorel*, 1836, gray lead and pink pencil, black lead, wash and white highlights on paper, [dimensions TK]. [Location TK], Manufacture Nationale de Sèvres, Archives.

London continued to attract specialist foreign artisans. When the antiquary William Twopeny (1797–1873) described the making of the Alnwick table in 1865, he mentioned a “Mr. Vert.” Honorato Vert (b. 1809), listed as an “Artists Inlayer and marqueterie cutter” in the 1851 census, was Spanish and had arrived in Britain in 1838.<sup>87</sup> He lodged with Aubin Felix Riel, born in Paris in 1818, described as a “marqueterie and buhl cutter,” possibly another Blake employee.

The frieze drawers on Baldock’s desks repeat one of three designs of English cottage garden flowers.<sup>88</sup> The desktop borders typically incorporated flowers, emblems related to the arts, and, in the case of the second Wrotham desk, portrait roundels. The roundels, executed in marquetry woods, pewter, and bone and posi-

tioned at the corners of the desktop, depict two French kings, François I (1494–1547) and Charles VII (1403–61), and their reputed mistresses, *La belle ferronnière* and Agnès Sorel. The roundel of François I copies a portrait of 1539 by Titian (musée du Louvre) reproduced in numerous engravings like the one illustrated by Gilles Edmé Petit in 1729 (figs. 5.6, 5.7). *La belle ferronnière* was taken from a painting attributed to Leonardo da Vinci of an unknown woman, possibly Béatrice d’Este, the wife of Ludovico Sforza, or one of Sforza’s mistresses, Lucrezia Crivelli or Cecilia Galleriani (figs 5.8, 5.9).<sup>89</sup> The popularity of the Ferronnière story was evidenced across the decorative arts. In 1819 the dealer Edward Sharpus (d. 1834) supplied George IV with two Sèvres cups “with Portraits of Francis 1st & the fair Ferronnière” (see plates 34a,

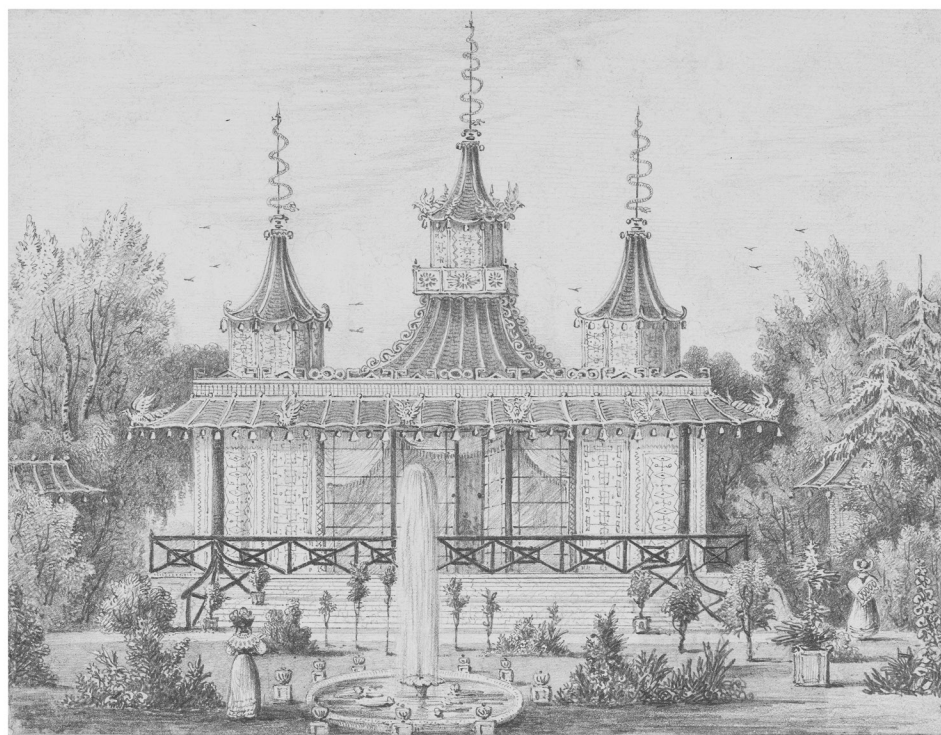


Fig. 6.6. William Alfred Delamotte (British, 1775–1863). Drawing of the Chinese Pavilion in Virginia Water, 1836, pencil on paper, 15 × 19.5 cm. The Royal Collection.

porcelain ones, a metal frieze was inserted between vase and cover, painted plaques replaced the original biscuit medallions surrounded by a new decorative wreath, and a different porcelain foot and stem and elaborate gilt-bronze stand were added. A note accompanying the bill emphasized its key selling points. The vase was soft-paste “old Sevres,” the “bleu de Roy” color was regal, and the plain medallions were now “exquisitely painted.” The overriding emphasis was on gold, with the phrase “richly” chased, gilt, or mounted repeated four times, while the stem was in “the finest mat gold.”<sup>55</sup>

Edward Holmes Baldock specialized in reconfiguring Sèvres. A series of metal mounts in the form of a two-legged, winged dragon are almost certainly attributable to him. Baldock’s mounts represented the fantasy element exemplified by Brighton Pavilion, completed in 1823. They were the antithesis of the neoclassical aesthetic promoted by Vulliamy’s and Decaix that had been suited to a country at war focused on military panoply. This more frivolous motif presaged an alternative style that was not specifically Chinese but, like much of Baldock’s furniture, based on the rococo. Dragon mounts were used to enhance oriental ceramics in eighteenth-century France. Examples occur in many collections, including that of Louis-Jean Gaignat (1697–1768).<sup>56</sup> Sold in 1769, Gaignat’s collection included lot 92, “Deux Vases d’ancienne porcelain-céladon, gauffrée, craquelé montés en buire avec

un dragon,” and lots 102 and 103, “Deux grands Vases de porcelain de la Chine & anses surmontés d’un dragon.”<sup>57</sup> The dragon, symbolizing the exotic East, enjoyed equal popularity in the nineteenth century. George IV used it in his Chinese Room at Carlton House and at Brighton, with its dragons tumbling down from the Banqueting Room chandelier, ornamenting the sideboards and the carpet and as gilt cornice decorations in the Music Room.<sup>58</sup> The Fishing Temple, created for George IV at Virginia Water by Jeffrey Wyattville and Frederick Crace (1779–1859), was described waspishly by Lady Holland in 1826 as “in the Chinese taste, full of gilt dragons for ornaments; rather too expensive, on dit, considering Windsor, Buckingham House, York House and the state of the country” (fig. 6.6).<sup>59</sup>

Three celadon vases (one single and a pair mounted as ewers) with nineteenth-century dragon mounts attributable to Baldock were at Brighton by 1829 (fig. 6.7).<sup>60</sup> Gilt-metal dragon mounts recur as handles or stands on many items Baldock sold, including an adapted pair of Sèvres *pots à oille du Roi* of circa 1756–59, bought by the 5th Duke of Buccleuch in about 1830, and an inkstand made for George Byng



Fig. 6.7. Vase (Chinese), mark and reign Qianlong; mounts attributed to Edward Holmes Baldock (British, 1777–1845). Vase, 1736–95, porcelain with light celadon glaze painted in white slip, early nineteenth-century gilt-bronze mounts, 75 × 38.5 × 33.5 cm (whole object). The Royal Collection.



Fig. 6.8. Vases (Chinese); mounts, maker unknown, possibly French. Kangxi porcelain ewers, 1662–1722, mounted in gilt bronze with *c-couronne* mark (ca. 1745–49), celadon, gilt bronze, 57 × 33 cm. Private collection.

8. See Barbara Lasic, "A Display of Opulence: Alfred de Rothschild and the Visual Recording of Halton House," *Furniture History* 40 (2004): 138. As Lasic notes, the recording of collections was not new; see Lasic, "Display," 137.
9. Simon Swynfen-Jervis, "Charles Davis, the 15th Duke of Norfolk, and the Formation of the Collection of Furniture at Arundel Castle," *Furniture History* 41 (2005): 236.
10. Ferdinand Rothschild, "Bric-à-Brac: A Rothschild's Memoir of Collecting," in *Apollo* 166, no. 545 (2007): 55.
11. Heidi Egginton, "Popular Antique Collecting and the Second-Hand Trade in Britain, c. 1868–1939" (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 2016), 75.

## Appendix 1

# Selected Dealer Biographies

Full details of the sale catalogs are provided in appendix 2.

### Agnew's

Agnew's was founded in 1797 in Manchester by Victor Zanetti, who advertised his repository of art in 1817 as "Carvers and Gilders, Looking Glass and Picture-Frame manufacturers, Opticians, Ancient and Modern English and Foreign Printsellers, Publishers, and Dealers in Old Coins, Medals and all kinds of Curiosities . . . Ancient and Modern Paintings bought, Sold and Exchanged."<sup>1</sup>

Zanetti took Thomas Agnew into partnership in 1817. Agnew developed the print selling side of the business, turning the firm into an art dealership that specialized in contemporary English paintings and profited from wealthy industrialists, keen to invest in art. Agnew became the sole proprietor in 1835. In 1826 the firm moved from Market Street to Exchange Street, where it remained until 1932. In 1857–58, the official guide to Manchester noted that "the first manufactories, and the various ateliers, of the continent, of Sèvres, Paris, Berlin, Dresden, Vienna, Milan, are constantly searched by this enterprising firm for works of art."<sup>2</sup> In 1860 Agnew's opened in London at 5 Waterloo Place. A stock sale conducted by Christie's in Manchester and Liverpool in 1860 included "objects of art and vertu" as well as furniture, clocks, glass, marbles and bronzes, armor, engravings, and books. In 1875 Agnew's built a gallery at 39 (now 43) Old Bond Street.

### Baldock, Edward Holmes

Edward Holmes Baldock (1777–1845), m. Mary Goringe, was apprenticed as a carpenter to Richard Louch in 1792–93.<sup>3</sup> He was recorded as a buyer at a Christie's auction on 21 June 1805. A partnership with the china dealer Charles Hitchcock was dissolved in 1805.<sup>4</sup> Baldock was listed in trade directories from 1806 as a dealer in china and glass, trading from 7 Hanway Street. In 1808 he was also listed at 71 St. James's Street, but his main premises and workshops remained on Hanway Street (including at nos. 1, 2, and 3). In 1827 Baldock's billhead described his "Seve, Dresden, Oriental China and Antique Furniture Warehouse," adding "China, Cabinets,