

Boulle

Date	Friday 31 January 2025
Times	10.00-17.30 GMT, followed by a drinks reception until 19.00
Location	At the museum (Theatre) and online (Zoom)



Chest of drawers, attributed to André-Charles Boulle, about 1710 (detail)

Event Description

Our free display, *Keeping Time: Clocks by Boulle*, showcases five exceptional timepieces made by one of history's greatest cabinetmakers, André-Charles Boulle (1642-1732).

Delve into the world of baroque France and learn more about Boulle's furniture with leading specialists. You'll explore the evolution of Boulle's iconic designs, his materials and techniques and his enduring legacy.

We are grateful to Christopher and Sophie North for their generous support of the Boulle Study Day.

Programme

- 10.00–10.30 Refreshments
- 10.30–10.35 Director's welcome (Xavier Bray)
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Boulle: The Designer

- 10.35–10.45 Introduction (Alexander Collins)
- 10.45–11.05 ***The Evolution of Boulle's Furniture***
Mathieu Deldicque
Today, Boulle would be described as a designer. He may not have invented modern furniture, like the desk or chest of drawers, but he undeniably popularised such models and gave them the appearance we recognise through the centuries. By reflecting on the landmark Boulle exhibition at Chantilly, Mathieu will reveal that, beyond Boulle's remarkable use of materials, it was the forms and specialisation that characterise his furniture that changed the course of design history.
- 11.05–11.25 ***Boulle as Artist and Collector***
Peter Fuhring
Boulle stands out among his contemporaries not only for his exceptional craftsmanship but for designing the models for his furniture and bronzes. Boulle's engravings of a series of these models helped to attract clients far outside his workshop, while his exceptional creativity is documented by a series of drawings attributed to him. Boulle's interest in historic design was embodied by the collection of drawings and prints he assembled, which undoubtedly inspired his own work. In this talk, Peter will explore Boulle's role as an artist and designer.
- 11.25–11.45 ***Boulle and the Grand Dauphin***
Lionel Arsac
Son of Louis XIV and Marie-Thérèse, the Grand Dauphin was one of Boulle's most prestigious clients and undoubtedly his most passionate. For this demanding patron with an almost unlimited budget, the cabinetmaker created two superb pedestals for the presentation of fire dogs by Alessandro Algardi, two large bronzes representing Jupiter and Juno that are today among the masterpieces of the Wallace Collection. Lionel will delve into the Grand Dauphin's patronage of Boulle.
- 11.45–12.05 ***Boulle and the Ménagerie***
Yves Carlier
Since the publication of Th. H. Lunsingh Scheurleer's seminal research in 1985, we have a much greater understanding of the furniture Boulle supplied to Louis XIV's Ménagerie at Versailles in 1701. Since then, further research has been published on the subject. Yves will reconsider this material and shed new light on several key pieces of furniture.
- 12.05–12.20 Q&A
- 12.20–13.50 Lunch (not provided)
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Boulle: The Cabinetmaker

- 13.50-13.55 Introduction (Alexander Collins)
- 13.55-14.15 ***Boulle's Marquetry in Wood***
Marc-André Paulin
Although the furniture attributed to Boulle is best known for its brass and brown turtleshell compositions, closer analysis also reveals a rich polychromy through the use of coloured woods and various pigments in marquetry. Using a number of case studies, Marc-André will further investigate this. (The talk will be given in French with English translation).
- 14.15-14.35 ***Conserving Boulle and 'Boulle' Furniture at the Wallace Collection***
Jürgen Huber
The Wallace Collection contains an extraordinary group of furniture by Boulle and in the Boulle style. Jürgen will examine how this furniture has been cared for throughout its history, while also evaluate traditional treatment methods alongside innovative approaches. Moreover, he will think about the effects that both private and public display have had on these artworks through time.
- 14.35-14.55 ***Boulle-style Marquetry beyond France***
Ulli Freyer
Furniture with turtleshell and metal inlays was produced in various cities across Europe. The largest production of such furniture took place in Paris by the likes of Boulle. Johann Daniel Sommer was a cabinetmaker who created marquetry of unique quality far from European art centres in the second half of the 17th century, in southern Germany. Ulli will take a closer look at Sommer's extraordinary marquetry furniture.
- 14.55-15.15 ***Boulle in the Digital Age***
Philippe Dechenaux
The materials and techniques Boulle used to make his mesmerising furniture have long fascinated us. In recent years, pioneering digital technology developed by Philippe has made it possible to gain a greater understanding of his craft, as well as that of other 18th-century cabinetmakers. This talk will reveal Philippe's methodology for digitally reconstructing a Boulle desk as part of Chantilly's recent exhibition on the cabinetmaker, and the discoveries made along the way.
- 15.15-15.30 Q&A
- 15.30-15.45 Break
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Boullé: The Legacy

- 15.45–15.50 Introduction (Alexander Collins)
- 15.50–16.10 ***The Enduring Appeal of Boullé in 18th-Century Paris***
William Iselin
Primarily using pieces from the Wallace Collection's extensive holdings of Boullé, this talk will examine how cabinetmakers and *marchand-merciers* (or luxury goods dealers) like Julliot re-imagined Boullé furniture to meet current tastes. William will focus on technical differences evident in gilt bronzes, marquetry and construction between pieces from Boullé's workshop and these later works.
- 16.10–16.30 ***George IV and the Fashion for Boullé***
Rufus Bird
Boullé furniture was widely collected by the British in the years following the Revolution in France and one of the foremost collectors of Boullé was George, Prince of Wales, later George IV. Rufus will trace George's acquisitions of French furniture by and attributed to Boullé and will consider some of his fellow collectors and their approach to collecting Boullé in the years 1800–30.
- 16.30–16.50 ***Boullé and the 4th Marquess of Hertford***
Alexander Collins
Hertford was one of the greatest collectors of the 19th century, assembling an extraordinary array of masterpieces, many of which form the foundation of the Wallace Collection. With a great passion for 18th-century French decorative arts and strong connoisseurial instincts, he sought out some of the finest pieces of Boullé furniture in the world. Alexander will reflect on Hertford's taste for the work of this remarkable artist.
- 16.50–17.10 ***The Rothschilds' Taste for Boullé***
Mia Jackson
The 'goût Rothschild' famously combines the decorative arts of 18th-century France with English portraits and Renaissance works of art, but what role did the furniture of Boullé play in these opulent interiors? Mia will explore objects in Rothschild collections in England, but also venture to France and beyond.
- 17.10–17.25 Q&A
- 17.25–17.30 Director's closing remarks (Xavier Bray)
- 17.30–19.00 Reception and private view
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Contributors

Lionel Arzac has been Curator in Charge of Sculptures at the Château de Versailles since 2016. He was co-curator of the exhibition *Henri IV, un roi dans l'Histoire* (Château ducal de Cadillac, 2019) and curated the exhibition *Chefs-d'œuvre retrouvés* (Château de Versailles, 2022). Lionel is currently preparing two exhibitions: one devoted to Bernini's bust of Louis XIV (Château de Versailles, June 2025), the other to the Grand Dauphin, son of Louis XIV (Château de Versailles, October 2025).

Rufus Bird is an independent art advisor, consultant and curator. He was appointed by HM Queen Elizabeth II as Deputy Surveyor of the Queen's Works of Art in 2010, where he oversaw responsibility for about 500,000 works of decorative art across 15 royal residences, as well as taking responsibility and management for all conservation of decorative art objects in three workshops. In 2018, he was appointed Surveyor of the Queen's Works of Art, adding curatorial responsibility for the Crown Jewels.

Yves Carlier is Deputy Director of the Château de Versailles. He joined Versailles as curator in 2010, after serving as curator at the Château de Fontainebleau for almost 20 years. His work focuses on decorative arts and interior decoration in France from the 16th century to the mid-19th century. He has a special interest in 18th-century Parisian silver.

Alexander Collins is Curator of Decorative Arts at the Wallace Collection. Previously, he was Assistant Curator for *Portraits of Dogs: From Gainsborough to Hockney* and Leverhulme Fellow for the prestigious Riesener Project, in which he researched the furniture of Jean-Henri Riesener and contributed to the Project's monograph and digital resources. Alexander was also Decorative Arts Curatorial Intern at the Royal Collection.

Philippe Dechenaux is a cabinetmaker and marqueteur, specialising in furniture reconstruction. Following an apprenticeship in cabinetmaking and study at the École Boulle, he opened a workshop, where he designed and made bespoke furniture. In 2017, he founded uWood.org, the first free, interactive online 3D atlas of woodworking available, and in 2018 founded ExploVision, a company that digitally reconstructs historic furniture.

Mathieu Deldicque is the Chief Curator and current Director of the Musée Condé at the Château de Chantilly. Prior to this, he worked at the French Ministry of Culture from 2013 to 2015 as the heritage officer in charge of national châteaux museums. Since joining Chantilly in 2015, he has curated numerous exhibitions, including the first Boulle exhibition in France. He is an alumnus of the École nationale des chartes and the Institut national du patrimoine and holds a PhD in art history.

Ulli Freyer has been working in his own studio in Bern, Switzerland, for over 25 years. He specialises in the conservation of Boulle marquetry objects. He has carried out many studies and research into the use of different types of turtleshell on artworks in Europe.

Peter Fuhring specialises in the history of ornament and design, publishing widely on the subject. His dissertation on Juste-Aurèle Meissonnier was published as *Juste-Aurèle Meissonnier. Un Génie du Rococo, 1695-1760*. He has organised several exhibitions, including *Designing the Décor. French Drawings of the Eighteenth Century*, and was the first to hold the Ottema Kingma Chair for the History of the Decorative Arts at Radboud University. He worked for the Fondation Custodia, where he oversaw the project of Lugt's *Marques de collections de dessins & d'estampes*.

Jürgen Huber is Senior Furniture Conservator at the Wallace Collection, where he is responsible for preventive and interventive conservation of furniture. After completing an apprenticeship in cabinetmaking in 1987, he gained a 'Meister im Tischlerhandwerk' in 1992 and a postgraduate diploma in conservation studies in 1998. He has published and lectured extensively on heritage, as well as the environment and sustainability.

William Iselin is a London-based advisor and agent in the field of European furniture and works of art. He was one of the co-organisers of the recent exhibition on André-Charles Boulle held at the Château de Chantilly.

Mia Jackson has been Curator of Decorative Arts at Waddesdon Manor since 2017. Her doctoral thesis entitled 'André-Charles Boulle (1642-1732) and Paper: Prints and Drawings in the Workshop of an Ébéniste du Roi' was completed at QMUL in 2016. She has worked at the British Museum, the Wallace Collection and English Heritage. Her areas of expertise are 18th-century French decorative arts and the collections of the Rothschild Family.

Marc-André Paulin is a heritage furniture conservator. He is head of the furniture conservation workshop at the Centre de recherche et de restauration des musées de France (C2RMF). He is involved in the study and conservation of furniture attributed to André-Charles Boulle in the Musée du Louvre. He wrote his doctoral thesis in modern art history on the cabinetmaker and the work of Jean-Henri Riesener.

Joining Information and Format

Take part at the Museum: This event will take place in the Theatre, Lower Ground Floor at the museum.

Watch Online: This event will also be broadcast live from the museum on Zoom. All ticketholders will also receive a link to view a recording of the talk, which will be available for two weeks only.
