

**Nottingham
Contemporary**



**Pablo Bronstein and the
Treasures of Chatsworth**

**4 July – 20 September
Exhibition Notes**

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Pablo Bronstein and the Treasures of Chatsworth

4 July – 20 September 2015

As part of our contemporary interpretation of The Grand Tour, Pablo Bronstein was asked to create exhibitions at Nottingham Contemporary and Chatsworth.

Unusually for a leading contemporary artist, Pablo Bronstein explores historic architecture and the decorative arts. His highly detailed drawings, installations, public artworks and performances imbue the past with fiction. For his exhibition at Nottingham Contemporary he has chosen over 60 works of fine and decorative art from Chatsworth, their largest UK loan for 30 years. These are displayed with new work he has made for this exhibition.

The rich, often aristocratic Grand Tourists of the 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries were influenced, in particular, by their visits to the ancient sites of Greece and Rome, particularly in Italy. Influenced by the Baroque and Neo-Classical styles of the Continent, returning Grand Tourists reshaped English architecture. They also added to the private art collections that can still be seen in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire today.

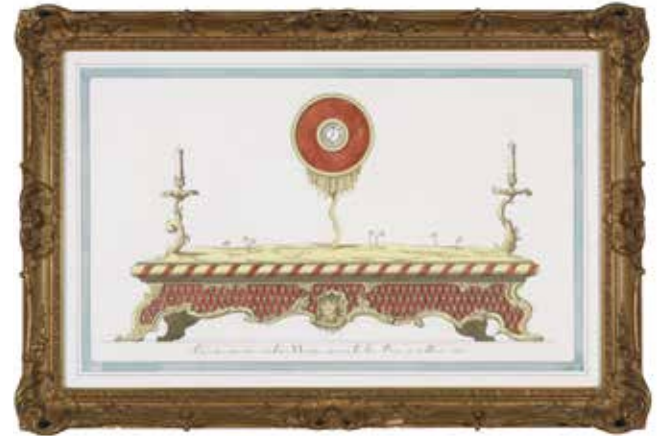
Designed by William Talman, Chatsworth is considered the first private house of the English Baroque – a period in which Bronstein has a particular interest.



© Chatsworth

Bronstein's drawings and work in other media has a strong narrative sense, even when they are without human figures. Buildings and furniture become protagonists in ambivalent social dramas that foreground architecture's continuing role in conveying status, wealth and power. By laying bare the Baroque's unapologetic architecture of power he reveals the more discreet power play that lies behind the grand buildings of our own era. For Bronstein, architecture and design is as much about staging the values of its owners, as it is about meeting practical needs. He is interested in how we physically interact with these environments, and how buildings dramatise a worldview.

Similarly he explores why decorative objects were created and what they reveal about prevailing political, economic and social values. By displaying some of the treasures of Chatsworth in a contemporary art gallery he encourages us to question why they were made, as well as enjoying their sheer visual exuberance. The idea of "good taste" may have changed, but the value and use of expensive objects is still determined by powerful elites, whether in an aristocratic country house or a luxurious minimalist house, he implies.



Pablo Bronstein, Design for a large clock in the Louis XV style, representing The Sun Rising over the Desert. 2012. Ash L'ange Collection. Courtesy Herald St. London



Foot Wearing a Sandal, Roman (Antique) Marble. BC 150 - BC 50.
© Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth.

Gallery 1

The large sequence of drawings by Pablo Bronstein that run around Gallery 1 is inspired by the Via Appia, the earliest and most strategically important road out of Rome, lined with churches, mausoleums, catacombs and mansions. After it fell into ruin the Via Appia attracted the attention of artists, including Michelangelo and Raphael who planned to restore it. It also featured in *vedute*, large scale realistic paintings, etchings or prints that captured some of the most famous scenes of the Grand Tour. They later incorporated fantasy architectural elements, most notably by Piranesi in the 18th century, whose views of real and recreated Roman ruins were a strong influence on the development of Neo-Classicism. Bronstein is alluding both to The Grand Tour and to the long history of *capriccio*, or architectural fantasy, in this major new work commissioned for this exhibition - his largest drawing to date. He imagines a period around 600AD, during the last gasps of the Roman Empire. The fragments of marble in this gallery include the left foot of a huge statue of a goddess, believed to be 11 metres high when still whole. The foot has corns visible on its fourth and fifth toes. The 6th Duke of Devonshire acquired it in Italy, in 1839.

Gallery 1 also contains the coronation chairs of William IV and Queen Adelaide, which were actually hand-me-downs from George IV - William was keen to appear frugal in comparison with his notoriously extravagant predecessor. The 6th Duke of Devonshire, at that time Lord Chamberlain, claimed them after the coronation in 1831 as one of the rights of his office.



Coronation chair of Queen Adelaide. 1830
© Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth

Gallery 2

Gallery 2 offers a more intimate reflection on the Chatsworth collection, perhaps suggesting a fantasy Ducal apartment. It contains Franz Hals' Portrait of a Man (1622). With his warm, direct gaze, the sitter could be Isaac Abrahamsz Massa, a Russian trader who was Franz Hals' friend. The decoration of the late 17th century chest beneath it echoes the rich embroidery of his sleeves. His ruff is echoed by the lace cravat by Grinling Gibbons, whose carvings can be seen in St Paul's Cathedral, Windsor Castle and Hampton Court.



Franz Hals, Portrait of a man. 1622.
© Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth



Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528), The Crucifixion (date unknown)
© Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth

This gallery also contains Old Master drawings chosen from Chatsworth, a historic family collection unrivalled in Europe. Those shown here include a Rembrandt drawing of the actor Willem Ruyters, dressed as a bishop for his part in a famous tragedy first performed in 1638. There is also a drawing by Inigo Jones, architect of the Queen's House, Greenwich, the first Neo-Classical building in England. Jones was also the designer of court masques, elaborate entertainments that involved fanciful costumes and mechanical scenery. Inigo's drawing shows scenery for a masque danced by Queen Henrietta Maria and fourteen of her ladies in 1638. The 3rd Earl of Devonshire took part as a Sentinel of the City of Sleep. Also shown in this gallery are an extremely rare etching of the crucifixion by Durer and a significant example of the work of Salvator Rosa, an unorthodox Baroque painter, poet and printmaker.

The chairs allude to one of the most significant partnerships in architecture, that of William Kent and Richard Boyle, the 3rd Earl of Burlington, whose daughter Charlotte, the heiress to his lands in Ireland, Yorkshire and London brought new estates to the family when she married the 4th Duke of Devonshire. Kent and the Earl of Burlington were inspired by the Italian architect Palladio and collaborated on many highly influential Neo-Classical projects. Burlington's patronage secured Kent architectural commissions that included the Treasury and the Horse Guards buildings in Whitehall, as well as the celebrated landscape gardens of

Stowe, while Burlington's projects included Burlington House, now home to the Royal Academy of the Arts. Kent was also a celebrated furniture designer – these chairs were made for the family's London home.

The elaborate sundial was made in 1710 for the 2nd Duke. Two lenses are aligned on the sun, focusing its rays. This allows the precise time to be read on hour and minute dials - perhaps an allusion to a history of collecting at Chatsworth that spans 400 years.



R. Glynne, Universal Equinoctial Dial. C. 18th century.
© Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth



Sir Godfrey Kneller, Portrait of William Cavendish, First Duke of Devonshire, c.1680
© Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth

Gallery 3

The power ratio of our relationship to architecture is perhaps reversed by the realisations of Chatsworth on the walls of this gallery. What is apparently monumental and immovable becomes malleable, infinitely manoeuvrable and free-floating. Chatsworth's famous facades become penetrable and the internal mechanics of its architecture is revealed in a more democratic digital age.

The central grouping of furniture recalls the casual interaction of an upmarket hotel lounge, or an airport waiting area, rather than evoking the formal, considered social interaction of the period and class for which it was constructed. The sumptuously decorated chest is by André-Charles Boulle, furniture maker to Louis XIV, France's flamboyant Sun King, a designer whose extraordinary effects in marquetry blended tortoiseshell, bronze, pewter and ebony.

The portrait of the 1st Duke of Devonshire, who recreated Chatsworth in the Baroque style, is by the studio of Godfrey Kneller.



Chatsworth, 2015.
Pablo Bronstein with the assistance of Skyla Bridges

Gallery 4

The Neo-Classical temple in Gallery 4 contains some of Chatsworth's large collection of silverware. The mirrored interior infinitely reflects these ostentatious signifiers of rank, taste and wealth. The silver soup tureens are some of the largest pieces made by Paul Storr, the most famous Regency silversmith. The silver candelabra, made in 1827 by Robert Garrard, were possibly taken to the Duke of Devonshire's residence in Russia for official entertaining during the coronation of Nicholas I, where the magnificence of the Duke's plate was noted.

The vitrine in the window contains Delft earthenware flower pyramids, designed to display exotic flowers. These were briefly fashionable between 1688 and 1710 when loyal aristocratic families followed the lead set by Queen Mary in commissioning them from her home country of Holland. They were the Europeanised equivalents of highly fashionable decorative objects made in blue and white Chinese porcelain.

Pablo Bronstein and *The Treasures of Chatsworth* continues at Chatsworth with a survey of Bronstein's drawings in the New Gallery, together with a new drawing created for the Old Masters Drawing Cabinet.



Adriaen Kocks (d.1701) Delft flower pyramids, date unknown
© Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth

For a video of Pablo Bronstein talking about the Treasures of Chatsworth see our Reception area, or visit www.thegrandtour.uk.com

Pablo Bronstein, born in Argentina in 1977, lives in London and Deal, Kent. He has had solo exhibitions at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2009, Kunsthal Charlottenborg, Copenhagen, 2011, ICA, London, 2011, Centre d'Art Contemporain, Geneva, 2013, REDCAT, Los Angeles, 2014, and The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 2015. His Beach Hut in the Style of Nicholas Hawksmoor was commissioned for last year's Folkestone Triennial. Bronstein has recently designed the cover of Transport For London's Underground map.

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The exhibition at Nottingham Contemporary is supported by

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The Grand Tour



Pablo Bronstein, Drapes in the William Kent Style, 2010. Collection Alastair Cookson, London. Courtesy Herald St. London

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Back image: Pablo Bronstein at Chatsworth 2015.
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