

Furniture at Spencer House

The V&A has an important group of 18th-century furniture on loan to London's Spencer House. Spencer House, overlooking The Green Park, was built for the 1st Earl Spencer, from 1756-66. Two architects worked on the scheme: the Palladian architect John Vardy designed external elevations and the ground floor rooms before James 'Athenian' Stuart took the job over in 1758 and completed the house.



Spencer House, The West Facade. © Spencer House Limited. Photograph by Mark Fiennes.

James Stuart replaced Vardy soon after returning from a tour of Greece and Italy. At Spencer House he put his new Neoclassical style into practice, creating one of the earliest interiors in the new 'pure' Greek taste. Architectural joinery, chimney-pieces, furniture, mirrors and frames were all designed by Stuart in a fully-integrated scheme.

Furniture designed by both Vardy and Stuart, for their respective interiors, is on loan to Spencer House from the V&A. A pier table designed by Vardy for The Dining Room was acquired by the Museum in 1974 (W.7-1974). The table and its pair (on loan from Temple Newsam, Leeds) are now back in their original positions, at opposite ends of the room.



Console table, John Vardy for Spencer House, 1750-60. Museum no. W.7-1974, © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

One of the richest rooms in Stuart's scheme was the Painted Room, in which ancient Roman 'grotesque' decoration was combined with Greek architectural motifs. An impressive group of chairs and settees designed for the room by Stuart (W.1-10-1977) can now be seen again in its original setting.



Settee, James Stuart for Spencer House, 1759. Museum no. W.3-1977, © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

More information about Spencer House can be found online:

<http://www.spencerhouse.co.uk/>