Portrait of a Patron

ROUTLEDGE

*The Patronage and
Collecting of
James Brydges,
1st Duke of Chandos
(1674–1744)*

Susan Jenkins

PORTRAIT OF A PATRON

This book is dedicated to my mother, Bessie, an historian, who has always supported my projects and who has read every word more than once.

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The Patronage and Collecting of James Brydges,
1st Duke of Chandos (1674–1744)

SUSAN JENKINS

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1 Tomb monument to the 1st Duke of Chandos, c.1718, Grinling Gibbons (1648–1721). St Lawrence Whitchurch, Little Stanmore, Middlesex.

Chapter One

Introduction

With antient Worthies, Chandos, shalt thou Live
In Verse, if I a living Verse can give...¹

James Brydges, 1st Duke of Chandos (1674–1744) was forty-three years old in 1717, when he commissioned Grinling Gibbons (1648–1721) Master Sculptor and Carver in Wood to the Crown, to produce marble statues for his tomb monument.² At that moment his fortune seemed secure, his new palace, Cannons, was nearing completion and in 1719 he was rewarded for his loyalty to the new Hanoverian monarchy with a ducal coronet. Less than twenty years later, in 1736, when the full-length statues, carved in grey and white marble, were moved into their current position in the mausoleum at St Lawrence, Whitchurch in Stanmore, the Duke's financial position was precarious. After his death, eight years later, his house and collection were sold off to avoid bankruptcy.³ The tomb monument commissioned by the Duke as a memorial to himself and his family remains as one of the few objects associated with him to survive for posterity. Brydges' story is the tale of an individual's rise from the ranks of the lesser nobility to its highest levels. Through the patronage of Queen Anne and her Captain-General, John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough (1650–1722), he amassed such a large personal fortune that his contemporaries at one time believed him to be the richest man in England. He used his wealth to build and furnish his palatial country seat, Cannons, near Edgware and acquire a magnificent collection of paintings and manuscripts. The

1 L. Welsted: 'An Epistle to his Grace the Duke of Chandos' in *Epistles, Odes &c written on several subjects*, London, 1724, lines 79–80.

2 C. and M. Collins Baker: *The Life and Circumstances of James Brydges, First Duke of Chandos, Patron of the Liberal Arts*, Oxford, 1949, pp. 413–14.

3 The Duke of Chandos died on 9 August 1744. His heir, Henry, 2nd Duke of Chandos could not afford to keep up the estate of Cannons and a number of sales took place. In date order these were: 16 February 1747 'A Catalogue of the Late Dwelling-House and Land thereunto belonging ... In Cavendish-Square' (Shakespeare Birthplace Trust DR 671/93); 12 March 1747 'A Catalogue of the Large and Valuable Library...(British Library PR 2.A.39); 6 May 1747 'A Catalogue of the Genuine Collection of Pictures of His Grace James Duke of Chandos...' (British Library C.119.h.3 (24); 1 June 1747 'A Catalogue of all the Genuine Household Furniture &c of His Grace James Duke of Chandos, Deceas'd, At his late Seat call'd Cannons' (London Metropolitan Archives Acc 262/13) and 16 June 1747 'A Catalogue of all the Materials of the Dwelling-House, Out-Houses &c Of His Grace James Duke of Chandos, Deceas'd At his late Seat call'd Cannons' (Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, Paul Mellon Collection SC 125). For a general summary of these see P. Dickson and J. Beckett: 'The Finances of the Dukes of Chandos: Aristocratic Inheritance, Marriage and Debt in Eighteenth-Century England' in *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 64, Nos. 3 and 4, 2001, San Marino, pp. 309–55, Appendix C, pp. 354–5.

poet and critic Charles Gildon (1665–1724) described him as ‘England’s Apollo’ and proclaimed that:

The Arts in him have now a patron found,
To them his Bounty does diffuse around.⁴

Brydges was an important figure in the social and cultural world of the early eighteenth century. As an architectural patron, he employed leading architects such as William Talman (1650–1719), James Gibbs (1682–1754), John James (c.1672–1746), Sir John Vanbrugh (1664–1726) and John Wood the Elder (1704–54). As a patron of art, he commissioned work from the great painters of the day: Sir Godfrey Kneller (c.1646–1723), Michael Dahl (c.1659–1733), Antonio Bellucci (1654–1726) and Sir James Thornhill (c.1675–1734). His interest in music and literature led him to patronise George Frederick Handel (1685–1759), who lived at Cannons from 1717 to 1719, where he composed the ‘Chandos Anthems’ and the poet John Gay (1685–1732). In 1720, Gay wrote a poetic tribute which identified Chandos as one of the most important patrons of the period. In his *Poems on Several Occasions*, the poet linked Chandos with Richard Boyle, 3d Earl of Burlington (1694–1753), who was the most celebrated architectural innovator of the age, and praised them both as ‘enlightened patrons ... and patriotic heroes... striving to domesticate a taste for Continental art’.⁵

Censure will blame, her breath was ever spent
To blast the laurels of the Eminent.
While Burlington’s proportion’d columns rise,
Does he not stand the gaze of envious eyes?
Doors, windows are condemn’d by passing fools
Who know not that they damn Palladio’s rules.
If Chandois with a lib’ral hand bestow
Censure imputes it all to pomp and show:
When if the motive right were understood,
His daily pleasure is in doing good.⁶

Gay’s tribute indicates that whilst Chandos was recognised as an important patron of the arts, he was criticised for his patronage and his motivation was mistrusted. The great Augustan poet Alexander Pope (1688–1744) attacked him in his poem *Of Taste* (first published in 1731). The poem describes the tasteless country residence of an aristocrat called Timon, whom contemporaries identified as the Duke of Chandos. The literary giant Samuel Johnson (1709–84) lent weight to this interpretation, commenting that Timon: ‘was universally supposed and by the Earl of Burlington, to whom the poem is addressed, was privately said, to mean the Duke of Chandos, a man perhaps

4 C. Gildon: *Cannons: or, the Vision. A poem address’d to the right honourable James Earl of Caernarvon*, London, 1717, line 989.

5 D. Nokes: *John Gay. A Profession of Friendship*, Oxford, 1995, p. 300.

6 Quoted in D. Nokes op. cit. note 5, pp. 300–301. J. Gay: *Poems on Several Occasions: Mr Pope’s welcome from Greece, Epistle IV To the Right Honourable Paul Methuen Esq*, published June 1720, lines 65–74.

too much delighted with pomp and show'.⁷ More recent criticisms of the Duke's taste have dismissed it as 'uninformed and unsure' and vilified his house as an example of outdated Baroque architecture, which misappropriated features of the new Palladian style.⁸ Chandos has been accused of having 'a very distinct trace of vulgarity' and of showing no 'real appreciation of artistic problems'.⁹

The fact that the Duke's house and collection did not survive his death in 1744, makes it more difficult to evaluate his importance as a patron. His heir, Henry, 2nd Duke of Chandos (1708–71) was forced to auction every fixture and fitting in the house to pay off the family's debts.¹⁰ The dearth of surviving artefacts has resulted in a misunderstanding of Chandos's role as an enlightened and active patron and collector. This study seeks to reappraise the Duke's patronage and his cultural importance.

This is not the first time that a writer has chosen to champion the Duke of Chandos's cause.¹¹ In 1949, he was the subject of a comprehensive and sympathetic biography written by Charles Collins Baker, former Surveyor of the King's Pictures and his wife, Muriel.¹² Using the large archive of the Duke's correspondence in the Huntington Library, San Marino, California, they addressed his role as a patron of the liberal arts and provided a wealth of biographical detail relating to him and his family. The couple offered an extensive account of the building of Cannons, concluding that the house was simply one of the many new Palladian buildings under construction during the first half of the eighteenth century. They did not seek to present a rounded portrait of the Duke in the context of other collectors of the age. It is hoped that this book will fill that gap and, with the benefit of new material published in the last twenty-five years, situate Chandos within the cultural context of early eighteenth-century attitudes towards the arts.¹³

7 Dr. S. Johnson: *The Lives of the most eminent English Poets*, Vol. III, London, 1794, pp. 152–3.

8 K. Downes: *English Baroque Architecture*, London, 1966, p. 88.

9 F. Watson: 'English Villas and Venetian Decorators', p. 171 in *RIBA Journal*, LXI, March 1954, London, pp. 171–7. R. Wittkower review of the biography of C. and M. Collins Baker op. cit. note 2 in *Review of English Studies*, Vol. II, No. 6, April 1951, p. 185.

10 Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, Paul Mellon Collection, SC 125: 'A Catalogue of all the Materials of the Dwelling-House, Out-Houses &c of His Grace James Duke of Chandos decess'd at his late Seat call'd Cannons, near Edgware...Which will be sold by Auction by Mr Cock, on 'Tuesday the 16th of June 1747', p. 6 no. 50: 'in the Marble Parlour next the Marble Hall about 650 feet of black and white marble paveing at 9d per foot'.

11 Biographies include J. Robinson: *The Princely Chandos. A Memoir of James Brydges*, London, 1893 and J. Johnson: *Princely Chandos, James Brydges, 1674–1744*, Gloucester, 1984.

12 C. and M. Collins Baker op. cit. note 2. See also S. Bennett: 'Charles Henry Collins Baker (1880–1959): Biographical and Bibliographical Note' in *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 64, Nos. 3 and 4, 2001, San Marino, pp. 501–5.

13 These include: P. Ayres: *Classical Culture and the Idea of Rome in Eighteenth-Century England*, Cambridge, 1997; A. Bermingham and J. Brewer: *The Consumption of Culture 1600–1800, Image, Object, Text*, New York and London, 1995; J. Lees-Milne: *Earls of Creation. Five Great Patrons of Eighteenth-Century Art*, London, 1962; J. Lubbock: *The Tyranny of Taste. The Politics of Architecture and Design in Britain, 1550–1960*, New Haven and London, 1995; W. Muensterberger: *Collecting. An Unruly Passion*, Princeton, 1994; I. Pears: *The Discovery of Painting. The Growth of Interest in the Arts in England, 1680–1768*, New Haven, 1988.

The Duke of Chandos was one of the greatest patrons of the first half of the eighteenth century and his patronage should be examined in relation to recent developments in art historical thought and literature. As a particular type of eighteenth-century collector – an aristocrat who created, rather than inherited the fortune with which he built up his outstanding collection of art and books – studies of the Duke investigate many of the recent areas of research that have occupied art historians and other scholars.

Among the issues that have dominated the social and cultural context of eighteenth century studies over the last twenty-five years is a complex debate about conspicuous consumption, and an associated analysis of luxury, taste, connoisseurship and ‘politeness’. The question of conspicuous consumption was first explored in the work of social and economic historians McKendrick, Brewer and Plumb (1982), who argued that an unprecedented demand for luxury items in the first half of the eighteenth century, paved the way for the Industrial Revolution at the end of the century, leading to the birth of our modern, consumerist society.¹⁴ Successive historians have examined the impact of conspicuous consumption (or ‘luxury’) on society and revealed contemporary concerns about its corrupting effect on taste, that were satirised in popular prints of the day. The argument between Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury (1671–1713) and Bernard Mandeville (1670–1733) author of *The Fable of the Bees, or Private Vices, Publick Benefits* (1714), indicated how threatening ‘luxury’ was considered to be.¹⁵ Shaftesbury opposed the immorality of Mandeville’s argument that the unbridled pursuit of personal pleasure was in the public interest because it would contribute to a thriving economy. As a philosopher, he encouraged the wealthy to fulfil their national duty by developing a ‘national’ school of native artists and architects, arguing that the models for ‘right taste’ should be drawn from the classical, Roman past.

Shaftesbury’s writings contributed to a growing art literature on connoisseurship, in which Jonathan Richardson senior (1667–1745) played an important part as both theorist and practitioner of art.¹⁶ New ideas about good taste began to circulate in a society in which contemporaries were concerned with the ‘correct way’ to spend money. The gentlemanly pursuit of scholarship became associated with ‘connoisseurship’, and with the belief that there was such a thing as a ‘right taste’.¹⁷ Recent art historical research has shown the importance of this period for the development of connoisseurship and collecting, a period in which the Duke of Chandos played a conspicuous role on a number of levels. Shaftesbury and Richardson were his contemporaries and friends

14 N. McKendrick, J. Brewer and J. Plumb: *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialisation of Eighteenth-Century England*, London, 1982.

15 J. Lubbock op. cit. note 13, p. xiii; J. Sekora: *Luxury: the Concept in Western Thought, Eden to Smollett*, London and Baltimore, 1977 and C. Berry: *The Idea of Luxury. A Conceptual and Historical Investigation*, Cambridge, 1994. For the influential role of Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3d Earl of Shaftesbury in this debate, see P. Ayres: *Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3d Earl of Shaftesbury: Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, 2 vols., Oxford, 1999.

16 See C. Gibson-Wood: ‘Jonathan Richardson and the Rationalisation of Connoisseurship’ in *Art History*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1984, Oxford, pp. 38–56 and C. Gibson-Wood: *Jonathan Richardson: Art Theorist of the English Enlightenment*, New Haven, 2000.

17 B. Cowan: ‘An Open Elite: The Peculiarities of Connoisseurship in Early Modern England’ in *Modern Intellectual History*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 2004, Cambridge, pp. 151–83.

and it is clear that he read their work, participated in debates and formed his collection accordingly. He was also a reluctant, but central figure in one of the century's most notorious and public debates concerning taste and conspicuous consumption. This debate saw him identified as the epitome of luxury, the extravagant and tasteless figure of Timon in Alexander Pope's poem *Of Taste* (1731). A study of the Duke of Chandos's collecting and patronage is therefore situated at the heart of contemporary concerns about the right way to spend money.

Developing in parallel with recent studies on connoisseurship, is research into the evolution of 'virtuoso' collecting. Scholars have combined this with an examination of early museum collections, and an understanding of the rising public interest in viewing works of art in the early eighteenth century, which encouraged the foundation of national museums and art institutions, including the British Museum (1753), the Society of Arts (1758) and the Royal Academy (1768).¹⁸ The transition of the seventeenth-century virtuoso man of science into the informed connoisseur that has been identified also touched on the philosophical divisions between the 'Ancient' and 'Modern' schools of thought, which debated the extent to which the teachings of the classical past should dominate scholarship.¹⁹ As a member of the Royal Society and son-in-law to the important naturalist Francis Willoughby (1635–72), the Duke of Chandos was closely involved in these philosophical debates and it is important to review his engagement with them in the light of new scholarship regarding virtuoso culture.

It is important to examine the Duke's position as a patron in the context of the collecting of the time and in relation to his contemporaries. Recent monographs on the collecting of Sir Robert Walpole (1676–1745); the patronage of Richard Boyle, 3rd Earl of Burlington and the connoisseurship of Horace Walpole (1717–97) shed light on the circles in which Chandos moved and the motivation behind the establishment of a great collection.²⁰ General studies into the evolution of collecting have also set out the broad social, cultural, political and economic context to the Duke's activities and evaluated the changes taking place in collecting in the period 1650–1750.²¹ Influential research published recently by Solkin (1993) and Hoock (2003) has also emphasised the importance of the period 1700–1750 in the rise of the art market, the development of

18 See B. Cowan op. cit. note 17 and O. Impey and A. MacGregor (eds): *The Origins of Museums. The Cabinet of Curiosities in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Europe*, Oxford, 1985.

19 For a discussion of this debate see J. Levine: *Dr. Woodward's Shield. History, Science and Satire in Augustan England*, Berkeley and London, 1977 and J. Levine: *Between the Ancients and the Moderns: Baroque Culture in Restoration England*, New Haven and London, 1991.

20 K. Pomian: *Collectors and Curiosities: Paris and Venice 1500–1800*, translated E. Wiles-Portier, Cambridge, 1990; M. Brownell: *The Prime Minister of Taste. A Portrait of Horace Walpole*, New Haven and London, 2001; L. Dukelskaya and A. Moore (eds): *A Capital Collection. Houghton Hall and the Hermitage*, New Haven and London, 2003; T. Barnard and J. Clark (eds): *Lord Burlington. Architecture, Art and Life*, London, 1995 and J. Harris: *The Palladian Revival, Lord Burlington, His Villa and Garden at Chiswick*, New Haven and London, 1994. Also C. Saumarez Smith: *The Building of Castle Howard*, London, 1990.

21 E. Chaney: *Studies in British Art 12. The Evolution of English Collecting: Receptions of Italian Art in the Tudor and Stuart Periods*, New Haven and London, 2003.

native English art and the growth of public art institutions.²² As Hooch has pointed out, this period of radical change led to the emergence of a flourishing art market and the establishment of taste and connoisseurship as important social attributes.²³ The Duke of Chandos was among the collectors who opened up his house and garden to avid country house visitors, thereby simultaneously fuelling interest in art amongst a wider public and enjoying public recognition for his taste.²⁴ Equally popular were visits to the country house treasures on display at Wanstead House and Blenheim.²⁵ Visits to private London collections owned by Dr Richard Mead (1673–1754) and the Royal Society were also popular and paved the way for the establishment of public museums in the second half of the eighteenth century.²⁶

One of the factors that contributed to a rise in the activity of collecting was the increasing availability of works of art. Significant research has taken place in recent years into the development of the European art market, which has led to a reassessment of the influence of economic factors, such as protectionist import restrictions, on its expansion. Scholars have identified a ‘massive boom’ in London art sales from the late 1680s to the 1690s with over four hundred auctions taking place in five years.²⁷ The London art market experienced a significant expansion during the fifty years after the Restoration, depending for its success on the increased interest in connoisseurship, the development of taste and the growth of foreign travel.²⁸ Chandos took advantage of the beneficial economic climate and the growth of sales at auction to become a significant purchaser of works of art, frequently buying pictures from sales in Holland.²⁹

A study of the Duke of Chandos’s patronage and collecting thus offers important insights into changing taste in the eighteenth century and reflects significant developments in cultural and social attitudes towards works of art and collecting. The fact that the Duke’s life spanned almost the whole of the first half of the century, enables us to review his involvement in the gradual development of trends such as the expansion of

22 D. Solkin: *Painting for Money. The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England*, New Haven and London, 1993 and I. Pears op. cit. note 13.

23 H. Hooch: *The King’s Artists. The Royal Academy of Arts and the Politics of British Culture 1760–1840*, Oxford, 2003.

24 P. Mandler: *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home*, New Haven and London, 1997 and P. Bourdieu: *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, translated R. Nice, Cambridge, Mass., 1984.

25 G. Waterfield: ‘Anticipating the Enlightenment: Museums and Galleries in Britain before the British Museum’, pp. 5–10 and I. Jenkins: ‘Dr Richard Mead (1673–1754) and his Circle’, pp. 127–35 in R. Anderson, M. Caygill, A. MacGregor and L. Syson: *Enlightening the British. Knowledge, Discovery and the Museum in the Eighteenth Century*, London, 2003.

26 O. Impey and A. MacGregor (eds) op. cit. note 18.

27 I. Pears op. cit. note 13, p. 212.

28 D. Ormrod: ‘Cultural Production and Import Substitution: The Fine and Decorative Arts in London 1660–1730’ in P. O’Brien, D. Keene, M. Hart, H. Van der Wee (eds): *Urban Achievement in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge, 2001, pp. 210–30 and B. Cowan: ‘Arenas of Connoisseurship: Auctioning Art in later Stuart England’ in M. North and D. Ormrod (eds): *Art Markets in Europe 1400–1800*, Aldershot, 1998, pp. 153–66.

29 D. Ormrod: ‘The Origins of the London Art Market, 1660–1730’, p. 178 in M. North and D. Ormrod (eds) op. cit. note 28.

the art market and the growing taste in England for the work of contemporary British artists.³⁰

Whilst this volume seeks to assess the achievements of the Duke as a collector within the context of his times and his broader significance in the field of eighteenth-century studies, it also presents a personal drama. Chandos's unique, but salutary tale offers a story of hubris to nemesis, enacted against the backdrop of the South Sea Bubble financial disaster. His fate cannot be allowed to obscure his significance, however, as one of the greatest patrons of the early eighteenth century. Despite the destruction of his buildings, the dispersal of his collections and the demise of his family and reputation, the Duke's silent monument in St Lawrence, Whitchurch challenges us to discover the nature of his legacy and the truth behind the generous assessment of his obituary:

And is he gone? The gentlest, noblest mind,
The lover and the love of human kind.
Chandos whose wealth by every virtue grac'd,
Showed how Heaven's bounty shines when justly placed.
So true a judge, a patron so direct,
A hand so generous, so true a heart.
All who could feel its warmth, his power confessed,
And all who felt it, own such greatness blessed.
Now let the Muse, who feels his absense most
Deplore his virtues or example lost.³¹

30 J. Brewer: *The Pleasures of the Imagination. English Culture in the Eighteenth Century*, London, 1997, pp. 202–5. See also J. Scott: *The Pleasures of Antiquity: British Collectors of Greece and Rome*, New Haven and London, 2003.

31 *The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle*, Vol. XIV, August 1744, London, p. 446.

2 *James Brydges, later 1st Duke of Chandos and his family, 1713, Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646–1723). (The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.)*