

= Zodiac settle =

The Zodiac settle is a piece of painted furniture designed by the English architect and designer William Burges and made between 1869 and 1871 . A wooden settle designed with Zodiac themes , it was made for Burges ' rooms at Buckingham Street , and later moved to the drawing room of The Tower House , the home that he designed for himself in Holland Park . Burges desired to fill his home with furniture " covered with paintings , both ornaments and subjects ; it not only did its duty as furniture , but spoke and told a story . " At one stage the poet John Betjeman gave the settle to the novelist Evelyn Waugh , and it is now in the collection of The Higgins Art Gallery & Museum in Bedford .

= = Design = =

The settle is a wooden bench with a canopy . It is painted and stenciled , with inlaid pieces of glass crystal and vellum . In 1865 , Burges wrote , " it is almost impossible for us to conceive the effect of a first @-@ class piece of medieval sacred furniture covered with burnished gilding engraved and punched into patterns enriched with paintings by an artist like Giotto , and glittering with mosaics of gilt and coloured glass . "

The only settle that Burges created , its form has been likened to a day bed of the Italian Renaissance . Burges scorned his typical French Gothic influences in his design for the settle , being influenced instead by English Gothic sources as well as the Italian Renaissance . It is decorated with a central painted panel , painted by Henry Stacy Marks . The panel features an enthroned sun , with the Zodiac signs dancing around it . The signs of Leo , Virgo , Cancer , Gemini , Taurus and Aries dance on the right , and Libra , Scorpio , Sagittarius , Capricorn , Aquarius and Pisces are dancing on the left . The planets of the solar system are depicted as musicians on one side of the settle , with Saint Cecilia and another female figure on the other side . It is inscribed in Latin " BURGES ARCHITECTUS ME FIERI FECIT ANNO SALUTIS MDCCCLXIX AUTEM ME DEPINCI FECIT APRILIS SALUTIS MDCCCLXX " (" Burges the Architect had me made in the year of salvation 1869 however he had me painted in April of the year of salvation 1870 ") .

The maker of the settle is unknown ; it is believed to be either Harland and Fisher , who had made earlier pieces of furniture for Burges , or John Walden , who made the guest bedroom furniture for the Tower House . The settle featured in photographs published in 1885 , taken in Buckingham Street by Burges 's brother @-@ in @-@ law , Richard Popplewell Pullan . The settle is shown with an embroidered panel and three seat cushions .

= = History = =

Designed by Burges for himself , the Zodiac settle was originally placed in his rooms at 15 Buckingham Street on the The Strand in London , and later moved to The Tower House in Holland Park around 1878 , when Burges first occupied the house . The Tower House was designed by Burges by himself . Burges continued to work on Tower House until his death in 1881 , and the Zodiac settle was placed opposite the drawing room windows in Tower House . The decoration of the drawing room remained unfinished upon Burges 's death . The Tower House was subsequently owned by Burges 's brother @-@ in @-@ law , Pullan , and then by Colonel T. H. Minshall in the 1920s . Minshall offered the Zodiac settle and other items from Tower House for sale in 1933 , but the settle remained unsold .

The Tower House was owned by Colonel E. R. B. Graham and his wife from 1933 . The English poet John Betjeman , a champion of the architecture of the Victorian Gothic Revival , later befriended the Grahams and Betjeman was given the remaining two @-@ year lease on the Tower House and some of the furniture upon Mrs Graham 's death in 1962 . Betjeman subsequently gave the Zodiac settle as well as the " Narcissus washstand " and the " Philosophy cabinet " from Tower House to his friend , the novelist Evelyn Waugh . It is believed Betjeman gave them to Waugh to appease his wife , Penelope , who did not share his appreciation of Gothic Revival painted furniture

. The " Philosophy cabinet " is now in the private collection of Andrew Lloyd Webber and the " Narcissus washstand " in the collection of The Higgins Art Gallery & Museum in Bedford . Waugh mentioned the settle in a letter to his daughter Maragret FitzHerbert in July 1965 . Waugh wrote that the settle was " looking very well between the windows of the morning @-@ room " . The settle descended through the Waugh family before being acquired by The Higgins Art Gallery & Museum in 2011 .

= = = 2011 acquisition = = =

A temporary export bar was placed on the settle by the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest (RCEWA) . The RCEWA is part of the Arts Council England and advise the Secretary of State for Culture , Media and Sport on matters concerning the exporting of objects of national interest . It was subsequently acquired by The Higgins Art Gallery & Museum in Bedford after a £ 480 @, @ 000 grant from the National Heritage Memorial Fund (NHMF) , £ 190 @, @ 000 from the Trustees of the Cecil Higgins Art Gallery and £ 180 @, @ 000 from the Art Fund .