Panel - Apollo and the Nine Muses

Object: Panel
Place of origin: England (probably, made)
Date: ca. 1580 (made)
Artist/Maker: Unknown
Materials and Techniques: Carved, painted and gilt oak
Museum number: A.12-1924
Gallery location: British Galleries, Room 57, case WE

Public access description

Object Type The subject, Apollo and the Nine Muses, represents the Arts in general. It would have been thought suitable for an important chamber of a grand house. Panels such as these served as overmantels and, together with the chimney-piece, were the most prominent part of the room. Time Apollo and the Nine Muses was a popular theme in European art from the 1530s onwards. This carving is characteristic of English work of the 1580s and similar to the alabaster overmantel of Apollo in the Nine Muses in the library of Hardwick Hall, Derbyshire. The rocky landscape and ruins in the background are similar to prints based on engravings such as Hieronymus Cock's Praecipua aliquot romanae Antiquitatibus ruinarum monumenta ('Some outstanding monuments of Ancient Roman ruins'). Cock's work was published in Antwerp, Flanders (now Belgium), in 1551 and soon became widely available in England. Subjects Depicted Music played an important part of life in the grand house. Musicians were often of the payroll of the owner and they provided music for banquets, dances and chapel services. Proficiency on the lute or spinet was considered the mark of a lady or gentleman. Here, Apollo plays the lyre while the nine muses play the following instruments (from left to right): lyre, recorder, viola da braccio, viola da mano, hurdy-gurdy, lute, triangle and oboe (added later, as oboes were not invented until 1650). Place The panel formed part of the Temple of the Muses at the Grange, Hockliffe, Bedfordshire. It is said to have come from the Manor House, Toddington, Bedfordshire, which was built in the 1570s and demolished in 1745.

Descriptive line
Apollo and the Nine Muses

Physical description
Panel carved in high relief, depicting Apollo seated with his lyre, surrounded by the Nine Muses playing on musical instruments (viol, gittern, triangle, lyre-guitar, flageolet (2), theorbo and hurdy-gurdy); in the background is Pegasus flying and a ruined townscape; painted chiefly in blue, green, red with gilded scrolls on the garments. In a deep frame with gadrooning and corner leaf ornaments, with inner slip frame on three sides.

Dimensions
Height: 121.28 cm, Width: 178.18 cm

Museum number
A.12-1924

Object history note
Said to have come from the Manor House, Toddington, Bedfordshire.

Anthony Wells-Cole (1997, see References) suggests that Adrian Gaunt, a joiner who worked at Longleat from 1563 to the late 1570s could have been the author of this panel, as well as the Chatsworth Apollo overmantel in alabaster.

URL
http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O77786/apollo-and-the-nine-muses-panel-unknown/