

## **Explore cabinetmaker Jean-Henri Riesener (1734-1806) with innovative digital tools**

**The Wallace Collection concludes a six-year study on 18<sup>th</sup>-century cabinetmaker Jean-Henri Riesener, publicising findings on a microsite and a unique online trail.**

Jean-Henri Riesener (1734–1806), the German cabinetmaker who emigrated to Paris in the mid-eighteenth century and became supplier of furniture to Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette and their court, has been the subject of an extensive research project undertaken by the Wallace Collection, Waddesdon Manor and the Royal Collection.

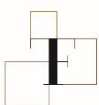
Over the past six years, the Project has investigated his career, craft and legacy, which has helped develop a greater understanding of his cabinetmaking materials and techniques, as well as his innovations in furniture design. Many of the Project's discoveries were incorporated into cutting-edge 3D furniture models, the first monograph on Riesener and a display at the Wallace Collection. This display focused on the furniture that Riesener made for Marie-Antoinette as well as his lasting influence on later cabinetmakers.

Although this display at the Wallace Collection has now drawn to a close, much of the Project's work, as well as the pieces of furniture themselves, can still be explored through a comprehensive [microsite](#) dedicated to Riesener, in addition to the book. The detailed technical examination of the materials, structure and condition of the objects that took place during the Project, along with scientific analysis, allowed accurate digital models to be created in SketchUp. These are hosted on Sketchfab for a fully interactive experience that allows users to gain an appreciation of the complexity of Riesener's work, and his virtuosity as a craftsman and designer. These models on the Microsite are enriched by isometric drawings, catalogue entries that examine the history of the furniture and the characteristics of their production, along with essays that explore Riesener's life, craft, patrons and collectors.

A [Riesener trail](#) has also been created on the Royal Collection's website. This draws together all the Riesener furniture from the three collections, along with their digital models, short catalogue entries and an interactive timeline of Riesener's life and key commissions, interspersed with events in French national history.

Many aspects of the Riesener Project were pioneering, from its focus on the materiality of Riesener's furniture to his workshop processes and the business of furniture-making. However, perhaps the Project's most ground-breaking achievement was sharing its research results with as wide an audience as possible, through multiple media, on an open-access online platform.

The Riesener microsite is supported by The Tavolozza Foundation.



## **NOTES FOR EDITORS**

### **Digital Tools**

Riesener Microsite: <https://www.wallacecollection.org/riesener/>

Riesener Trail: <https://www.rct.uk/collection/themes/Trails/jean-henri-riesener>

### **Publication**

*Jean-Henri Riesener: Cabinetmaker to Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette* is the first major monograph on Riesener which traces his life and career, bringing new insights into his business practice, his designs and construction techniques. Based on the extensive collections of Riesener furniture in the Wallace Collection, Waddesdon Manor and the Royal Collection, the authors examine the objects and their history, and highlight the changing tastes of the nineteenth-century collectors who acquired so many former French royal pieces. Edited by Helen Jacobsen, Rufus Bird, Mia Jackson. [Available to buy here.](#)

### **About Jean-Henri Riesener**

Jean-Henri Riesener (1734–1806) is one of the most celebrated French furniture makers of all time. A German immigrant who travelled to Paris to make his fortune, his fame is largely based on his role as official cabinetmaker to the king, Louis XVI, and the pieces he produced for the royal court. He was a particular favourite of Marie-Antoinette and made beautiful furniture for her private apartments that reflected her love of exquisitely detailed works of art and refined elegance.

### **About the Riesener Project**

The Wallace Collection is lucky to possess eleven pieces attributed to Riesener. Over the past six years the museum conducted a research project to learn more about the cabinetmaker and his workshop, and to cast light on the materials he used, the way in which his business operated and the evolution of his designs. The museum was joined in this project by Waddesdon Manor and the Royal Collection, who also own important collections of Riesener furniture. Together, the institutions studied the development of the fashion for Riesener furniture in Britain, which reached its peak in the last decades of the nineteenth century. The Project included employing cutting-edge technology, such as 3D modelling, to understand how these exceptional pieces of furniture were made and how they may have originally appeared.

### **About the Wallace Collection**

As one of Britain's preeminent cultural institutions, the Wallace Collection is home to one of the most significant ensembles of fine and decorative arts in the world. Highlights include oil paintings from the fourteenth to the late nineteenth centuries by artists such as Titian, Velazquez, Rubens and Van Dyck; princely arms and armour; and one of the finest collections of eighteenth-century French paintings and decorative arts. Visitors can also enjoy superb medieval and Renaissance objects, including Limoges enamel, maiolica, glass and bronzes. Displayed at Hertford House, former home to Sir Richard and Lady Wallace, this outstanding collection is displayed in a manner designed to evoke the lives and tastes of its founders, creating a special ambiance that remains an essential part of its charm.

[www.wallacecollection.org](http://www.wallacecollection.org)

Instagram: @wallacemuseum

Facebook: @wallacecollection

Twitter: @WallaceMuseum

YouTube: TheWallacecollection

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION AND INTERVIEWS**

For further press information for the Wallace Collection, please contact Lauren Turner or Billy Ward on [press@wallacecollection.org](mailto:press@wallacecollection.org) / 020 7563 9569 / 074 8331 0811

CHEST-OF-DRAWERS (F248)

**Date:** 1782  
**Maker:** Cabinetwork by Jean-Henri Riesener; mounts gilded by François Rémond; re-veneered (probably c. 1795-1815)  
**Materials:** Oak, mahogany, purplewood, ebony or ebonised wood, box, gilt bronze, brocatello marble  
**Measurements:** 88.5 x 136.3 x 60.2 cm

This chest-of-drawers bears witness to changing tastes and the events of the French Revolution. In the winter of 1780, Marie-Antoinette ordered major changes to her private apartments at the Château de Marly. This had been built in the seventeenth century by Louis XIV (1638-1715) as a retreat from the strict court etiquette that was in place at Versailles and although it was not used so much in the eighteenth century, it remained an escape for the royal family.



Chest-of-drawers (F248).



Detail of gilt-bronze frieze. Chest-of-drawers (F248).

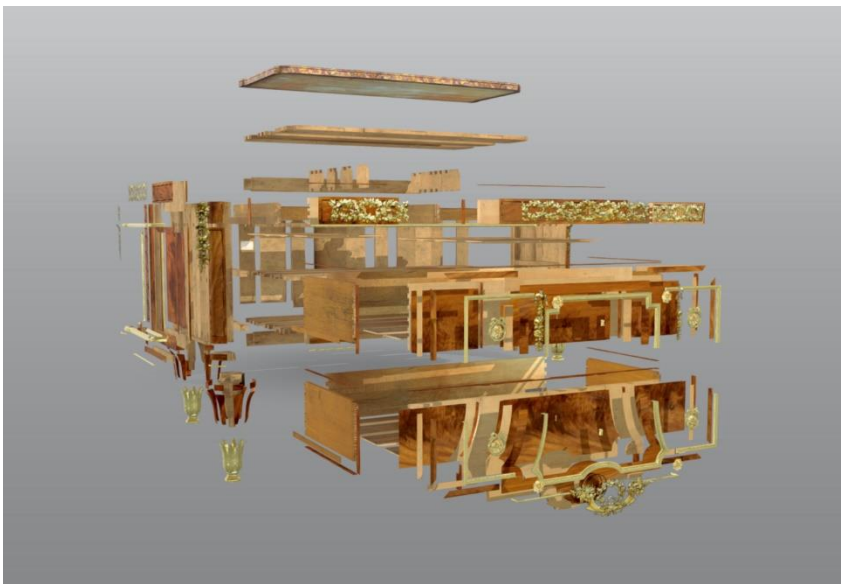
Marie-Antoinette's rooms had not been modernised for several decades and were still furnished as they had been laid out for Marie Leszczyńska, the previous queen of France. Marie-Antoinette ordered significant changes, including the remodelling of three mezzanine rooms and redecoration throughout. Riesener was commissioned to make the furniture.

The following spring these three new rooms were finished. Riesener delivered a marquetrie chest-of-drawers with a pastoral trophy (in the Musée du Louvre), a writing table (in the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum) and a chiffonnière (a different, smaller type of writing table, now in a private collection).

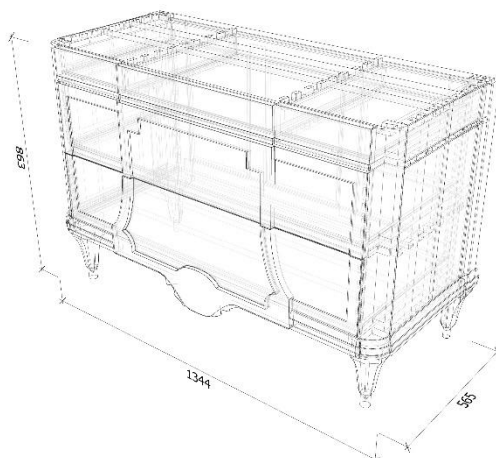
The chest-of-drawers was also decorated with the customary lozenge marquetrie and the new model of gilt-bronze frieze with the queen's initials in the centre that had decorated the previous chest-of-drawers Riesener had delivered for her at Versailles.

[Learn more about this chest-of-drawers here](#)

A page on the microsite exploring a chest-of-drawers at the Wallace Collection. © The Trustees of the Wallace Collection.



An interactive model of a chest-of-drawers at the Wallace Collection. © The Trustees of the Wallace Collection.



An isometric drawing of a chest-of-drawers at the Wallace Collection. © The Trustees of the Wallace Collection.