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Thomas Brooks, *Chair*
Edward Lycett, *Ewer*

Dominic Carter: Decorative objects have their own stories to tell about the tastes and fantasies of the people who bought them and the craftsmen who made them.

The chair and the pitcher, or ewer, displayed here were both made in Brooklyn for wealthy clients. We know from the bill of sale that the chair was purchased from furniture maker Thomas Brooks by Judge Nathaniel Holmes Clement for his brownstone in nearby Park Slope. It's in the Renaissance Revival style then in vogue.

Barry Harwood: No one from the Renaissance would recognize this as a Renaissance chair. But some of the details—the turnings on the leg, the elaborate crest decoration—are in fact inspired by decoration from the Renaissance period.

Dominic Carter: Barry Harwood is a curator for decorative arts here at the Brooklyn Museum. Like everyone else, he has his personal likes and dislikes. Take the pitcher, for instance, just to the right of the chair:

Barry Harwood: This is the sort of object that I myself covet. And the decoration is particularly splendid. For modern tastes, people might think it's a bit over the top, with all of the various colored golds, the bright colors and the very dense decoration, but in the nineteenth century, they had an absolute horror of empty space.

Dominic Carter: A ewer is an ancient Islamic form, a pitcher for pouring water or oil. The decoration here is Japanese-inspired. This eclectic mixing of form and style is typical of late nineteenth-century decorative objects.

Barry Harwood: This was greatly appreciated—that the same object could have various influences on it. It showed sophistication.