

# Grinling Gibbons: Master Carver of the Shire Library



## Grinling Gibbons: Master Carver (Shire Library)

by Camomile Hixon

★★★★☆ 4.1 out of 5

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Grinling Gibbons (1648-1721) was one of the most celebrated wood carvers in English history. His exquisite craftsmanship and attention to detail are evident in his numerous works, which include the magnificent carvings that adorn the Shire Library in Oxford.

Gibbons was born in Rotterdam, the son of a Dutch merchant. He began his apprenticeship as a wood carver at the age of 16, and quickly developed a reputation for his exceptional skills. In 1671, he moved to England, where he soon found patronage from the royal court.

Gibbons's work is characterized by its intricate and naturalistic style. He often used exotic woods, such as limewood and walnut, and his carvings are often adorned with garlands of flowers, fruits, and leaves. His most famous works include the carvings at the choir stalls of St Paul's Cathedral,

the font at St James's Church, Piccadilly, and the pediment of the Old Royal Naval College in Greenwich.

The Shire Library is home to one of the finest collections of Grinling Gibbons's work in the world. The library's collection includes a set of eight carved bookcases, a desk, and a chair. The carvings are all executed in Gibbons's distinctive style, and they depict a variety of subjects, including scenes from the Bible, mythology, and nature.

### **The Bookcases**

The bookcases are the most impressive examples of Gibbons's work in the Shire Library. They are made of carved oak, and each bookcase is divided into two tiers. The lower tier has three doors, while the upper tier has two doors. The doors are decorated with a variety of carvings, including garlands of flowers, fruits, and leaves. The bookcases also feature a number of figures, including angels, cherubs, and satyrs.

### **The Desk**

The desk is another fine example of Gibbons's work. It is made of walnut, and it is decorated with a variety of carvings, including a scene from the Bible, a coat of arms, and a number of flowers and leaves. The desk also features a number of drawers, which are decorated with carvings of cherubs.

### **The Chair**

The chair is the most modest example of Gibbons's work in the Shire Library. It is made of oak, and it is decorated with a simple carving of a garland of flowers. The chair is also notable for its comfortable design, which makes it ideal for reading and studying.

The Shire Library is a must-see for anyone interested in the work of Grinling Gibbons. The library's collection of carvings is one of the finest in the world, and it provides a unique opportunity to appreciate the genius of this master carver.

## Other Works by Grinling Gibbons

- St Paul's Cathedral
- St James's Church, Piccadilly
- Old Royal Naval College, Greenwich
- Hampton Court Palace
- Blenheim Palace

## Books about Grinling Gibbons

- The Life and Work of Grinling Gibbons by David Esterly
- Grinling Gibbons by Geoffrey Beard
- The Carvings of Grinling Gibbons by Rupert Gunnis



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