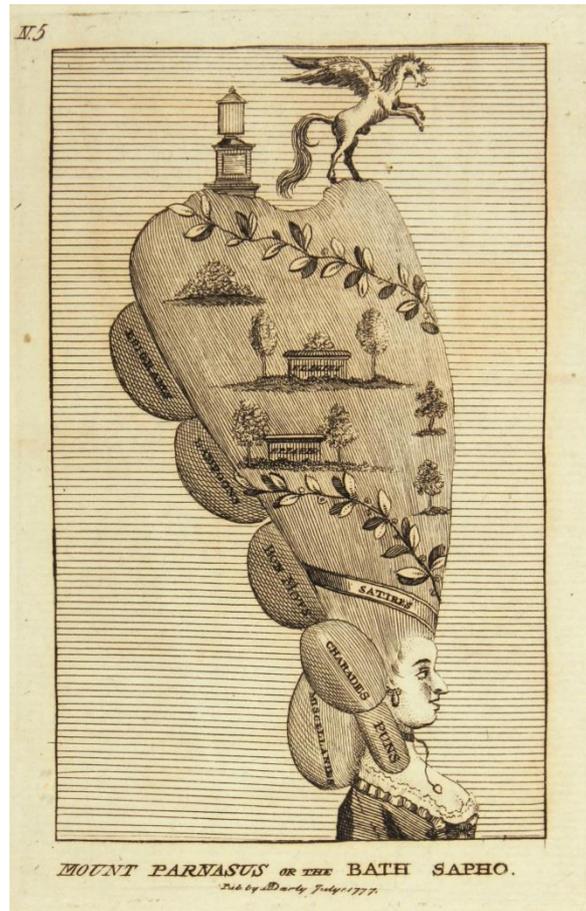


Matthew and Mary Darly



The Victoria Art Gallery collection of prints is extensive and includes some amusing, if sometimes particularly cruel, satires.

Matthew and his wife Mary Darly were amongst the foremost 18th century designers, print makers and publishers in London. Their shop window was much visited to see who now was being sent up. Indeed, so famous was the shop window that it was itself the subject of a print.

This print satirises, as Sappho, Lady Anna Millar who lived at Batheaston Villa. There she held salons to which members of society, with literary aspirations, were invited. Each wrote a poem and these were dropped into a vase and a committee decided on the best. The author was wreathed in Laurel. The vase was said to resemble a piece from Cicero's villa and was housed, some say, in a rotunda in the garden. The villa and possibly the rotunda survive but there is doubt about the whereabouts of the vase.

The Sappho reference is to Sappho (630-570 BC), as a poetess and not to her origin in Lesbos, nor makes any suggestion that Lady Millar had any interest in sapphism.

The print also satirises the fashion for ridiculously high wigs and hair ornaments. This one is adorned with laurels, or possibly Daphne leaves, from Mount Parnassus, with references to Elegies, epigrams, lampoons, epitaphs, bon mots, satires, charades, miscellanies and puns and is topped out with the vase and Pegasus, whose hoof prints generated springs of clear water and artistic inspiration.