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ENLIGHTENED ECLECTICISM

*The Grand Design of the 1st Duke and
Duchess of Northumberland*

PAUL MELLON CENTRE FOR STUDIES IN BRITISH ART

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(facing page)

6 ♦ Allan Ramsay, *Lady Elizabeth Seymour, afterwards 2nd Countess and then 1st Duchess of Northumberland*, 1739, oil on canvas, 72.4 × 52.7 cm. Collection of the Duke of Northumberland, Alnwick Castle (DNC 03263).

(this page)

7 ♦ Jean-Baptiste Van Loo (attr.), *Lady Elizabeth Smithson, afterwards 2nd Countess and then 1st Duchess of Northumberland*, c.1740, oil on canvas, 62 × 50 cm. Collection of the Duke of Northumberland, Syon House (DNC 04623).

8 ♦ Jean-Étienne Liotard, *Lady Elizabeth Percy, 2nd Countess and afterwards 1st Duchess of Northumberland*, 1755–7, pastel on paper, 53 × 43 cm. Collection of the Duke of Northumberland, Syon House (DNC 4141).



Colnbrook, Buckinghamshire. They renamed it Percy Lodge, adding a hexagon, hermitage and bungalow in the Indian style. In London their houses were in Dover Street until 1721 and thereafter in Grosvenor Street. In these town and country residences Lady Elizabeth's family lived a life almost completely secluded from the tyrannical 'Proud Duke', the father of Lord Hertford, who could not tolerate his daughter-in-law Lady Hertford. As a result, they barely visited most of the great estates of the Percys.

Frances Seymour, Lady Hertford, was well known as a bluestocking with a deep interest in literature.¹⁹ She patronised writers such as William Shenstone and James Thomson, wrote poetry herself and maintained a faithful correspondence with other famous learned women of the age such as Lady Luxborough and the Countess of Pomfret.²⁰ Every summer she would invite poets to the country and especially to Alnwick, where a small part of the crumbling old castle had been made habitable by the 'Proud Duke' for his son.²¹ She also entertained poets at Percy Lodge – several poems based on the lodge survive – where she hosted a quasi-monastic community of polite readers and talkers famous for their taste and piety.²² Alongside her active private

cultural life, from 1723 to 1737 Lady Hertford held a prestigious role at court, as Lady of the Bedchamber to Caroline of Brandenburg-Ansbach, at that time Princess of Wales, and from 1727 Queen of England.

Her husband pursued throughout his life a similarly successful career both in politics and in the army. He was MP for Marlborough in 1705–8 and for Northumberland in 1708–22, on his father's interest, and Lord Lieutenant for Sussex from 1706. Serving as aide-de-camp to Marlborough at Malplaquet in 1709, he gradually climbed all the steps of the military career, being promoted to general in 1747. At the death of his mother in 1722 he was summoned to the House of Lords as Baron Percy and at the death of his father in 1748 he became the 7th Duke of Somerset. However, he died less than two years later in 1750 at Percy Lodge, followed four years later by his wife. Both were buried in the family vault in Westminster Abbey.

Lord Hertford's cultural interests clearly rested mainly on architecture, as was customary among educated gentlemen of the Georgian age. He refurbished his country house at Marlborough and, after the death of his father in 1748, started a complete renovation of Northumberland House. A clear indication of his active

involvement in architecture is the dedication to him of *The British Carpenter* by Francis Price (1735), one of the most widely read and reprinted handbooks of the period on the practical aspects of architecture.²³ Hertford was also an opera enthusiast, a passion he surely inherited from his father, who was a noted patron of music.²⁴ He owned a box at the opera and would often travel to London from Percy Lodge for the sole purpose of attending the latest productions and to pick up news – a passion shared by all his family. His most important public cultural role was as president of the recently re-established Society of Antiquaries, a position he maintained from 1724 to 1750. A hint of his antiquarian interests can be gained from his collection, which provided the basis for Lady Elizabeth's later grander activities. Many of his objects, such as cameos, intaglios and a 'lachrymatory', were listed by Lady Elizabeth as 'my fathers' in the *Musaeum Catalogue* of her own collection that she compiled several years later.²⁵ That he also collected prints, paintings, medals and books is suggested by several sources, such as his wife's correspondence and especially his will, where he specifically left all his 'books and medals' to his wife and, at her death, to his daughter Elizabeth.²⁶ Lady Hertford must have been a collector herself, as other objects are listed in her daughter's *Musaeum Catalogue* as coming from her. Indeed, her best friend was Henrietta Louisa Fermor, 2nd Countess of Pomfret, mentioned earlier, a pioneering lady with antiquarian taste, with whom she shared the appointment of Lady of the Bedchamber to Queen Caroline.²⁷ Their love for the Gothic, for monasticism and 'hermitages', together with a passion for collecting, all characteristics inherited by Lady Elizabeth, emerge from the voluminous correspondence between these two famous bluestockings.²⁸

This was the lively cultural environment in which Elizabeth was raised: on the one hand, the world of men of letters and independent women that surrounded her mother, and on the other, her father's world of architectural, musical and antiquarian concerns and collecting. She spent a great part of her childhood in the north or in Wiltshire as a young lady of one of the most important families in England. Nevertheless, she was not the heiress, her younger brother Lord Beauchamp being the male heir, and her entire fortune amounted to no more than £10,000 payable upon the death of her grandfather, the 'Proud Duke'.²⁹ Possibly for this reason she was already twenty-three years old when in 1739 she

received her first proposal, from Yorkshire baronet Sir Hugh Smithson, whom she had met at Swillington in Yorkshire. They were married on 18 July of the following year at Percy Lodge.³⁰

SIR HUGH SMITHSON

Sir Hugh (figs 9, 10 and 14) was baptised 10 December 1712 at Kirby Wiske, Northallerton, Yorkshire, close to Newby Wiske, the home of his mother, whose family had moved there from Northumberland.³¹ He was the only son of Langdale Smithson (b. c.1682) and Philadelphia Reveley (bap. 1688, d. 1764), the daughter of William Reveley. From his mother's side he was descended from the aristocratic Catholic families of the north and he was brought up as a Catholic, conforming only on becoming heir to his grandfather in 1733. His paternal side was much humbler: the Smithsons were of yeoman origins and had made their fortune as hab-



9 • George Knapton (attr.), *Sir Hugh Smithson, afterwards 2nd Earl and then 1st Duke of Northumberland*, c.1740, oil on canvas, 60 × 49 cm. Collection of the Duke of Northumberland, Syon House (DNC 04622).

(facing page)

10 • Thomas Gainsborough, *Hugh, 1st Duke of Northumberland*, c.1770, oil on canvas, 74.9 × 62.2 cm. Collection of the Duke of Northumberland, Alnwick Castle (DNC 03524).





38 • Stanwick Hall, the Saloon, photograph c.1920. Collection of the Duke of Northumberland, Alnwick Castle (DNC 31496/1).

fixed paintings were in tune with the rest of the decoration. Although it seems that Sir Hugh originally commissioned his protégé Giles Hussey for these,²⁴ they were clearly executed by a different hand, depicting 'seven pastoral subjects fixed in ornamental frames' after Watteau,²⁵ some of them visible in the two surviving photographs (figs 38 and 39). The rococo plasterwork possibly extended to the Great Staircase (marked 'B' in the plan, fig. 30), described in 1745 by Lady Oxford as 'fitted up with paintings, stucco and gilding in a very pretty taste'.²⁶

The author of the elaborate plasterworks, Pietro Lafranchini (or Franchini or Francini), was a member of one of the many families of plasterers from Ticino who had moved to Britain and Ireland during the first half of the century. He later worked several times in association with Garrett in the north of England, in places such as Wallington Hall, Callaly Castle and Fenham Hall in Northumberland, Hilton Castle in County Durham,²⁷ and in London at 19 St James's Square for

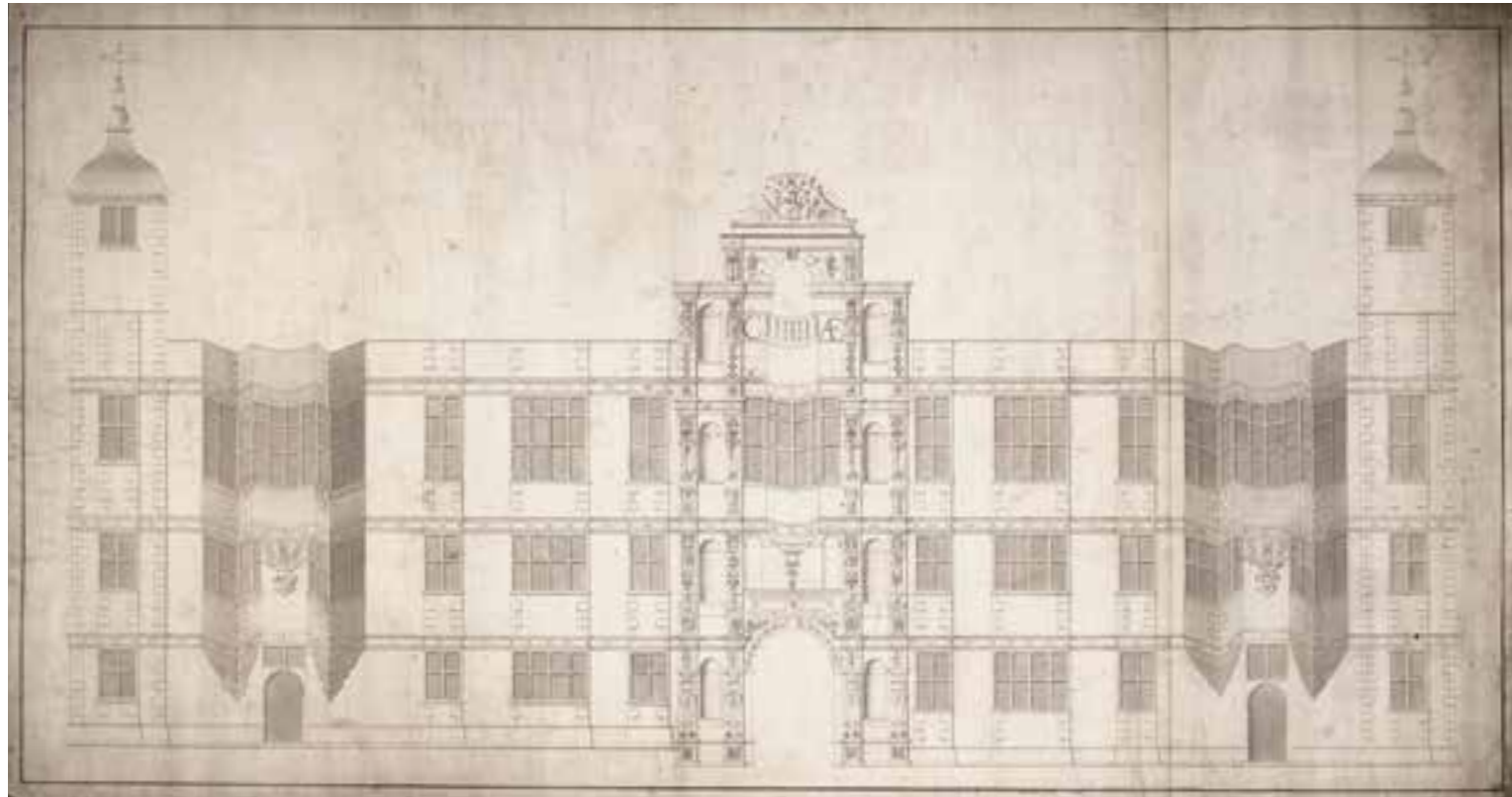
the Duke of Cleveland as well as, indeed, at Northumberland House.²⁸ It is very likely that the long-lasting partnership between Garrett and Lafranchini started at Stanwick, with the former providing the new fashionable designs to be executed *in situ* by the latter: in 1743 Sir Hugh commented positively on the 'stucco and the ornaments' at Hilton Castle, executed by 'the person I brought from London who did my work at Stanwick', incidentally revealing his role in summoning the Swiss plasterer to the north, and hence contributing crucially to the spread of rococo decoration in the north-east of England.²⁹ Sir Hugh's pioneering taste for rococo interior decoration at this date seems to confirm his familiarity with the circle of Frederick, Prince of Wales – the great Francophile and champion of the rococo in the 1730s and 1740s – within whose entourage Sir Hugh, as discussed, figured.³⁰

Very little information survives for the remaining rooms. John Harris has shown how, after the demolition, some of Stanwick interiors were sold in the 1920s

(facing page)

39 • Stanwick Hall, the Saloon, photograph c.1920. Collection of the Duke of Northumberland, Alnwick Castle (DNC 31496/2).





(facing page)
 58 • Elevational drawing of the Strand front (north) of Northumberland House, London (pre-1749). Collection of the Duke of Northumberland, Alnwick Castle (Sy: B/XV/2/a).

59 • Daniel Garrett and J. June, 'The front of Northumberland House next the Strand', 1752, engraving, 53.5 × 76.9 cm. Collection of the Duke of Northumberland, Alnwick Castle (Sy: B/XV/2/C/1).

(this page)
 60 • The front of Northumberland House in c.1870–74. Historic England Archives, Swindon.



was perfectly in line with the couple's overall strategy of self-celebration and display of the ancient lineage and origins of the Percys – expressed particularly in the exterior public facades. As the preservation and recreation of Jacobean motifs on the exterior of private stately homes was completely unknown in London at that time, Northumberland House represents an early case of 'Jacobean revival' among its contemporary Palladian counterparts.⁴⁹

Significantly, the style used for the interiors and other parts of the house was radically different from the public front on the Strand. The four sides of the court were 'new faced with Portland stone, and finished in the Roman style of architecture', as reported by the Dodsleys,⁵⁰ that is, redecorated in the orthodox Palladian language of Garrett, as can be inferred from some pictures taken before the demolition of the house (figs 61 and 62).⁵¹ The garden front was left with its original regular, quite dull, 'classical' facade devised by Edward Carter a century earlier (fig. 63).⁵² Garrett must also have been in charge of the construction of the two long wings in the garden, the east one accommodating service quarters (see fig 56).⁵³

Garrett was certainly also responsible for the refurbishment of the house interiors. Other names in the accounts associated with architects in this early phase include 'Mr Leadbetter' and 'Henry Keen' or 'Mr Keene'.⁵⁴ The former was Stiff Leadbetter, a competent and prolific builder-turned-architect who worked later

at Syon House in the 1760s.⁵⁵ His involvement at Northumberland House, however, must have been second to that of Garrett. Leadbetter's architectural practice was still young in 1750, even if he was Surveyor General of St Paul's Cathedral in succession to Henry Flitcroft in 1756. Henry Keene was a pioneer of the Gothic Revival who in 1750 held the position of Surveyor to the Dean and Chapter of Westminster Abbey.⁵⁶ Keene's bills for this period have been associated by other scholars with works at Alnwick Castle, however his presence at Northumberland House in the 1750s is much more probable.⁵⁷ His involvement at the house can be confirmed by the recurring presence in the accounts of the sculptor and statuary mason Benjamin Carter, the carver Thomas Dryhurst, the plasterer Thomas Hefford, the mason John Devall and the plumber William Chapman, who were later associated with Keene.⁵⁸ More so than Leadbetter, Keene was just starting his career as a private architect in 1750, so that his role, too, must have been limited to that of the general supervision and execution of Garrett's designs. Garrett's direction of the interior refurbishment is further testified by the presence in the accounts of the plasterer Lafranchini, who was paid the vast amount of £980 between 1750 and 1754, and who worked several times with Garrett in the north of England.⁵⁹ As we have seen, their collaboration had included the refurbishment of Stanwick Hall ten years earlier under Sir Hugh's supervision, and clearly the aim was to revive the established association here.



83 • Chimney-piece from the Glass Drawing Room at Northumberland House, c.1775. Collection of the Duke of Northumberland, Syon House (DNC 50740).

84 • Henry James Richter after Giovanni Battista Cipriani, *Venus* (Plate 1), 1787, stipple engraving, 29.3 × 18 cm. British Museum, London (1867,1214.171).

85 • Giovanni Battista Cipriani, *The Triumph of Venus and Love*, c.1775, pencil, pen and ink and wash, 22.8 × 26.6 cm. Private collection.

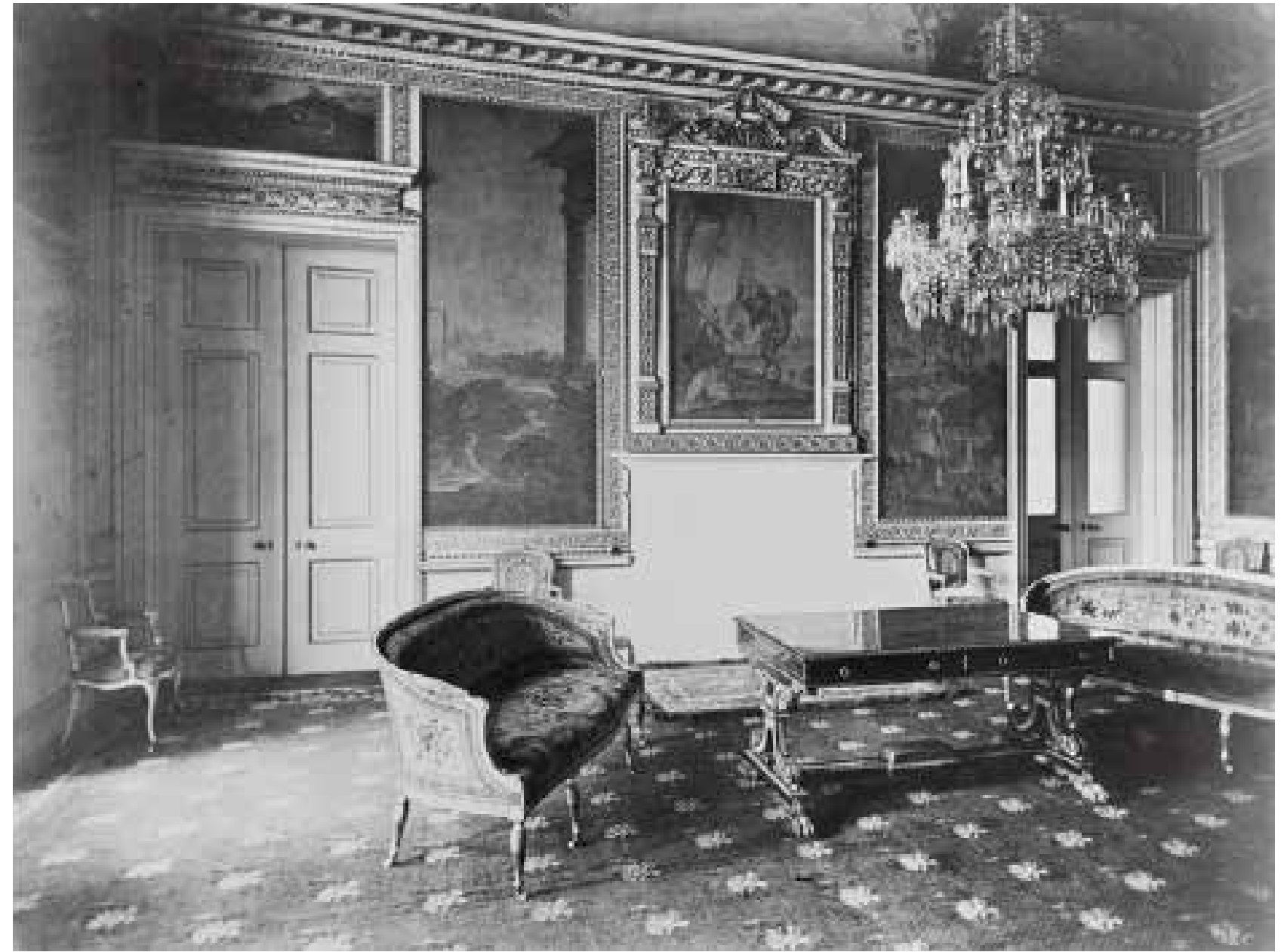
86 • Henry James Richter after Giovanni Battista Cipriani, *Venus* (Plate 2), 1787, stipple engraving, 29.6 × 22 cm. British Museum, London (1867,1214.172).



87 • The Tapestry Room, Northumberland House (with the chimney-piece already removed), photograph c.1874. Collection of the Duke of Northumberland, Alnwick Castle (DNC 31371).

(following pages)

88 • Paul Saunders after Francesco Zuccarelli, tapestry from the series of 'Scenes of Eastern Travel', 1758, wool and silk on woollen 3-ply warp, 550 × 300 cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London (T.173-1980).



the bride's father, the ceremony was eventually held in the Drawing Room at Syon in the intimate presence of the family, officiated by Dr Thomas Percy.¹⁴⁸

The Tapestry Room: Support of Local Manufacturers

A picture taken not long before the 1874 demolition offers a fairly detailed image of the following Tapestry Room's eighteenth-century appearance, as this room was almost untouched by Cundy's alterations of c.1819–24 (fig. 87).¹⁴⁹ Its renovation must have occurred in two stages, with the first involving the decoration of the vaulted ceiling, still partially visible in the photograph. The vault, simulating a leafy pergola with

lunettes, opening on to 'light summer clouds',¹⁵⁰ was almost certainly executed by Andien de Clermont, a French painter active in England between 1716 and 1756, famous for introducing *singerie* monkey paintings and whose other surviving rococo works match the style of the Tapestry Room ceiling. His name appears in the accounts in 1750, while two years later he produced a series of painted panels for Syon House in the *singerie* vein.¹⁵¹ In 1750 he was also paid for 'painting glass'. This likely corresponds with the 'Pier Glass w[i]th Painted Decorat[i]ons', mentioned in the 1786 inventory as being in the Tapestry Room¹⁵² but not visible in the photograph, which may be the one later adapted to the square cabinet attached to the Long Gallery at Syon.



Royale' or by 'Princess Caroline' had been given to her by her mother; the latter still survives in the Northumberland collection.²⁶⁰ She also owned 'a book of single figures in watercolour by Ostade, 35 figures, bought at 5£ 5s 4d', which she must have purchased personally on her travels.²⁶¹ Another likely acquisition of hers was a collection of twenty-seven spectacular marine drawings by Willem van de Velde, father and son, which are perfectly in accordance with her taste and which have been recently sold by the family.²⁶²

The following short sub-category devoted to portraits lists some of the best pieces in her possession, some already discussed with respect to their display on the ground floor of the house. A large number of 'Holbein' pictures were displayed in her rooms – all studio, after, or school of – which she had probably inherited from her father.²⁶³ They constitute a first hint of her passion for British history that also characterises many other parts of the collection. The next three sub-categories in Volume I grouped together a similar class of objects: small-scale portraits in different media,

a typical product of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century craftsmanship, and eagerly commissioned and collected alongside painted portraits. The first sub-category, 'Works of Gosset', lists a series of wax portrait reliefs.²⁶⁴ Isaac Gosset was the descendant of a Huguenot family of carvers and wax-modellers who settled in England from Normandy in the first half of the eighteenth century. In the middle decades of the century he became the most famous and fashionable wax-modeller and wood-carver in London, highly sought after by noblemen and wealthy members of the professional classes.²⁶⁵ His original models cost 4 guineas and were used to create casts from which replicas were made and sold in oval frames for a guinea each. He produced mostly private portraits – which were kept by the sitters or swapped between allied families and friends – portraits of monarchs, of British worthies and also a famous series of *Twelve Roman Emperors*, all categories well represented in Lady Elizabeth's collection, which originally listed twenty-four items.²⁶⁶ Nine survive in their original oval frames at Alnwick Castle (fig. 108).²⁶⁷

106 ♦ Andrea Solario, *Salome with the Head of Saint John the Baptist*, c.1506, oil on canvas, 52.2 × 47 cm. Valsecchi Collection, Palazzo Butera, Palermo.

107 ♦ Mattia Preti, *A Soldier*, 1630s, oil on canvas, 128 × 95 cm. Museo Civico, Rende (Cosenza) (no. 12).



108 ♦ Isaac Gosset, wax portraits of English characters, among which the 1st Duke of Northumberland, George II, Princess Charlotte and Inigo Jones, 1760s, from 8.9 × 7 cm to 8.5 × 5.8 cm. Collection of the Duke of Northumberland, Alnwick Castle (DNC 07551).

109 ♦ Peter Lens, *Hugh, 1st Duke of Northumberland*, 1768, enamel, 3.2 × 4.6 cm. Collection of the Duke of Northumberland, Alnwick Castle (DNC 07530).



The next miscellaneous sub-category mostly lists watercolour and enamel miniature portraits, a class of objects ubiquitous in English aristocratic collections since the Elizabethan age.²⁶⁸ Included in the Percy miniatures were masterpieces by Nicholas Hilliard, Isaac Olivier and others, which Lady Elizabeth had probably inherited from her father. With her husband, she indulged in new commissions from artists such as Peter Lens and Jeremiah Meyer (fig. 109).²⁶⁹ These are preserved at Alnwick Castle and a detailed catalogue of them was published a century ago.²⁷⁰ Highlights listed in the *Musaeum Catalogue* and still in the collection include two portraits of the 1st Earl of Salisbury and of Queen Elizabeth I, by Nicholas Hilliard (1594, c.1595), a horseback portrait of the 1st Duke of Buckingham by Balthasar Gerbier (1618), and a copy by John Hoskins of Van Dyck's portrait of Charles I and Henrietta Maria, a miniature originally in the Royal Collection (1636) (fig.

precious and semi-precious stones, many large and in odd shapes but also set in rings that she inherited from her mother, some surviving at Alnwick (fig. 136).⁴⁰⁸ Others were gifts from her husband, or friends, such as a 'vast pear shap'd agathonyx' given to her by Queen Charlotte. The Queen also gave her a Dresden snuff box of amethystine quartz and gemstones, c.1762, which she must have treasured especially because of the precious material; it is still preserved in the collection.⁴⁰⁹ Lady Elizabeth also actively bought several lots, such as an 'Oriental agate on which is represented a tyger', from 'Maisonneuve'. Not surprisingly, she had a penchant for jewels in general. Accurate descriptions of some she had seen at parties or receptions dot the pages of her diaries, and a list of them divided by overall cost and owner survives among her papers.⁴¹⁰

The volume also lists a spectacular collection of marble specimens, mostly ancient Roman coloured marbles, surely sent to her from Rome, possibly in connection with the commission of coloured marbles for the decoration of Syon House.⁴¹¹ The collection, which comprises around 300 specimens, was recently found in a tin deed box at Syon and now resides at Alnwick. The marbles are cut in square tiles and arranged alpha-



betically, using a terminology, such as 'Africano', 'Alabaster a Pecorella', 'Lumachella' etc., that was in use among Roman stone-cutters of the time (fig. 137). A whole handwritten Italian catalogue of Roman marbles survives at Alnwick, probably sent along with the samples.⁴¹² Similar collections of marble specimens were widespread in Italy and would become prevalent in Britain only at the end of the century, and hence Lady Elizabeth's must be considered one of the earliest in the country.⁴¹³ Lady Elizabeth also possessed many specimens of 'marbles' from England, especially Derbyshire, which were used increasingly in interior decoration as substitutes for the more expensive Roman ones (she bought some personally in Derby), and some that she probably bought in France.⁴¹⁴ A third category included marbles from the margraviate of Baden-Durlach, commercialised in the 1760s by Johann Jacob Reinhard, lawyer, essayist and advisor to the young Margrave Karl Friedrich von Baden.⁴¹⁵ Lady Elizabeth had met the Margrave and the Margravine several times in Karlsruhe during her travels in the region in the 1770s and most probably purchased the marble set there.⁴¹⁶ Some scagliola tiles are also part of her collection.

She also possessed a small collection of 'petrifications' – petrified vegetable specimens – mostly given by friends, and fossils, such as a 'petrified Natalus', a growing passion among English collectors and naturalists whose efforts led to the modern science of palaeontology.⁴¹⁷ An extraordinarily large collection of specimens of woods arranged alphabetically are also listed in the same volume, possibly because they were cut in tiles resembling the marble specimens. They recently resurfaced together with the marble tiles and largely survive at Alnwick Castle (fig. 138). Many came from England and places Lady Elizabeth visited on her travels, mostly from Germany, but also from more exotic places such as Jamaica, the Barbados, Guadalupe and Bengal. Others were given to her by acquaintances such as 'Mr Carlisle' or 'Mr L' Anglois'.⁴¹⁸ The tiles are divided into groups of different sizes, depending on the provenance, and all are carefully labelled. Other similar collections had been assembled during Lady Elizabeth's lifetime, such as the 'wood cabinets' gathered by Dutch physician and naturalist Martinus Houttuyn in Amsterdam and by the Reverend Hazeu in Rotterdam, which she might have seen during her travels. These were published in 1773 in a beautifully illustrated multilingual publication meant for 'use and pleasure' of the 'Lovers of Natural History'

136 ♦ 'Sardonyx found in the Ruins of King Salomon's Temple at Jerusalem ...', c.1760. Collection of the Duke of Northumberland, Alnwick Castle.



137 ♦ A selection of Italian, German and English marble tiles and a scagliola tile from Lady Elizabeth's *Musaeum*, 1760s and 1770s. Collection of the Duke of Northumberland, Alnwick Castle.

138 ♦ A selection of wood specimen tiles from Lady Elizabeth's *Musaeum*, 1760s and 1770s. Collection of the Duke of Northumberland, Alnwick Castle.

and keepers of 'Cabinets of natural Curiosities'.⁴¹⁹ The woods were a reflection of Lady Elizabeth's interest in natural history and probably also a reflection of her husband's planting campaign in Northumberland and his import of exotic trees, but they also reflect her own interest in different species of trees, which she often listed in detail during her travels.⁴²⁰ They also clearly reveal an interest in the raw material of inlaid furniture, of which the couple owned many items, both inherited and commissioned, some of which survive at Syon and Alnwick today.⁴²¹

IX. Books

Finally, the ninth volume lists Lady Elizabeth's books.⁴²² The main strengths of her library were the genres of Literature, History, Theology and Natural History, all

of which were well diffused among eighteenth-century libraries.⁴²³ Other lists of 'books' appear in her papers, possibly *desiderata*.⁴²⁴ Classics in translation were particularly well represented, as well as French literature, history and memoirs, further proof of her Francophile taste.⁴²⁵ Her large section on 'Letters' and on 'History and Lives' included famous publications such as a monumental twenty-three-volume *Les Vies des Hommes Illustres de France*; various 'memoires', especially of women, such as that of Madame de Pompadour; and the letters of Madame de Maintenon, the Marquise de Sévigné and Jean-Louis Guez de Balzac. The many volumes in the genre reveal her taste for historical memoirs and correspondence, which she shared with other collectors and bibliophiles of the period, in particular with Horace Walpole. Other volumes were specifically related to the French monarchy, such as *Memoirs de la Cour France*,

4

Syon House

THE ROMAN SUBURBAN VILLA AND THE RECREATION OF THE CLASSICAL PAST

In the year 1762, the Duke of Northumberland came to the resolution of fitting up the apartments of Syon House, in a magnificent manner. He communicated his intentions to me, and having expressed his desire, that the whole might be executed intirely in the antique style, he was pleased, in terms very flattering, to signify his confidence in my abilities to follow out his idea. Upon this plan, the alterations and inside decoration of Syon House were begun, and as the idea was to me a favourite one, the subject great, the expence unlimited, and the Duke himself a person of extensive knowledge and correct taste in architecture, I endeavoured to render it a noble and elegant habitation, not unworthy of a proprietor, who possessed not only wealth to execute a great design, but skill to judge of its merit.

With these words Robert Adam began the description of his works at Syon House, significantly the first house to be presented to the reader and the most heavily represented in his celebrated *Works in Architecture*, published in London from 1773 onwards.¹ By this time Adam had been working for Sir Hugh for almost thirteen years and was still carrying out some important commissions for him elsewhere. Flattery undoubtedly

played a role in his choice of words yet, as this chapter demonstrates, Sir Hugh's skills and taste in architecture were indeed considerable. Adam's creative interior refurbishment of Syon House (which actually began two years before the date he gives above) was directed and influenced by him, and followed his detailed requirements step by step, transforming what was essentially a seventeenth-century building into a lavish classical villa at the forefront of a changing national taste.

Syon House occupies a highly significant position in the history of neo-classicism. As one of the very first creations of Robert Adam, and certainly as an interior where his language was expressed in the most monumental and uncompromising way, the suburban villa of the Percys is the perfect place to understand the essential characteristics of Adam's new 'antique style'. Syon's lavish interiors are a kaleidoscopic collection of references to the antique based on a threefold principle involving quotation of architectural, sculptural and decorative sources, used with a varied degree of coherence. The *modus operandi* established here by Adam and Sir Hugh, and the ensuing results, established a new fashion in architecture and interior decoration that constituted a radical departure from the late-Palladian language still in vogue in the 1750s. In the following decades this language crossed the Channel, to

143 • Syon House, Vestibule.







179 • John Cheere, plaster copy of *Ganymede* in the Medici collection, 1766. Collection of the Duke of Northumberland, Syon House (Vestibule) (DNC 11966/7).

180 • *Ganymede*, Roman, first century AD, marble, h. 141 cm. Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence (no. 128).

183 • John Cheere, plaster copy of 'Mr Breton' *Urania*, 1766. Collection of the Duke of Northumberland, Syon House (Vestibule) (DNC 11966/10).

184 • Matthew Brettingham the Younger, plaster copy of 'Mr Breton' *Urania*, c.1758, h. 145 cm. Holkham Hall, Norfolk.

185 • Joseph Wilton?, plaster copy of the *Celestial Venus*, 1766 (twentieth-century copy). Collection of the Duke of Northumberland, Syon House (Vestibule) (DNC 11966/8).

186 • Joseph Wilton?, plaster copy of *Bacchus*, 1766 (twentieth-century copy). Collection of the Duke of Northumberland, Syon House (Vestibule) (DNC 11966/9).

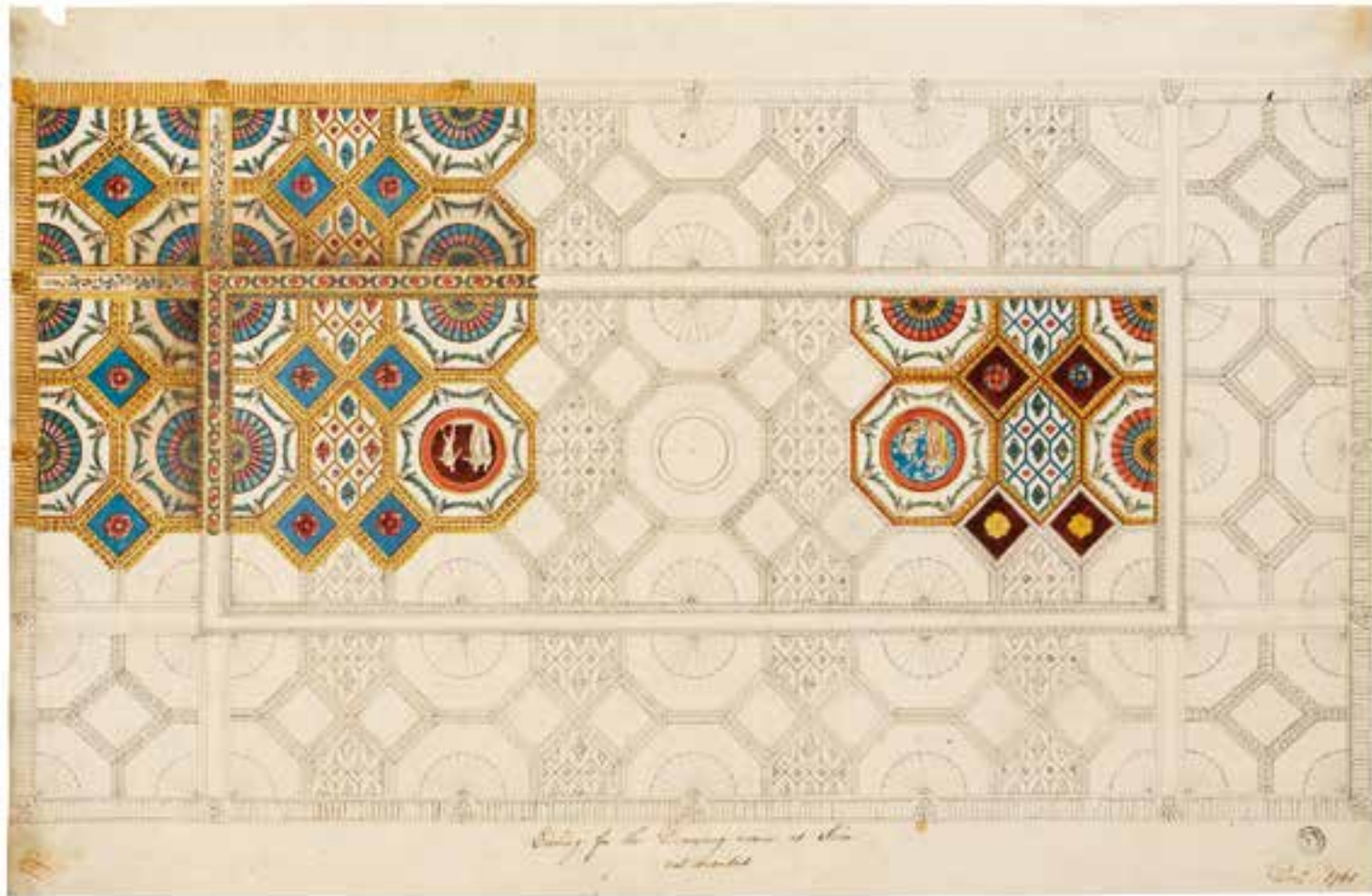
187 • *Young Satyr*, Graeco-Roman, second century AD, marble, h. 170 cm. Petworth House, West Sussex (NT 486312).



181 • John Cheere, plaster copy of *Livia Augusta*, 1766. Collection of the Duke of Northumberland, Syon House (Vestibule) (DNC 11966/6).

182 • Paolo Alessandro Maffei and Domenico De Rossi, *Raccolta di statue antiche e moderne*, 1704, plate XCI: *Donna Augusta*. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (93-B5694).





To enhance the grandeur of the room, two very large pier-glasses in Adam's frames, displayed on the widow side, were imported from France and cost the enormous amount of £421 9s 8d.²⁸⁵ With these reflecting the pier-glass placed opposite above the chimney-piece, as well as the doors' and chimney's gilded ornamental details, the brightly coloured damask on the walls and the equally rich ceiling and carpet, this was indeed one of the most opulent rooms visible in England at that time, offering again a striking contrast to the previous sombre Dining Room.

Architecture and Ceiling Decoration

Following on from the Corinthian Dining Room, the Order chosen for the minor elements of the decoration is again Corinthian, such as in the capitals of the chimney, but Composite for the pilasters of the doors, prefiguring the full display of this final Order in the following

Gallery. The first element to be devised was once again the ceiling, of which three drawings dated 1761–2 survive (figs 218 and 219).²⁸⁶ After a more conservative solution was refused,²⁸⁷ Adam planned a fully classical coffered ceiling with roundels inside octagons, hexagons and squares (fig. 218). This clearly derives from similar ceilings devised by William Kent for the Saloon at Holkham Hall and the Saloon at 44 Berkeley Square, which in turn were inspired by Raphael's Villa Madama.²⁸⁸ The entire Drawing Room at Syon clearly refers to these models. What was realised was nevertheless a simpler scheme of contiguous octagons and small diamonds containing roundels (fig. 219), which possibly also refers to the plate in Desgodet's *Édifices antiques de Rome* already used by Adam for the coffering in the Hall.²⁸⁹ This was executed by Joseph Rose in the winter of 1763–4,²⁹⁰ who was paid the enormous sum of £550 (fig. 220).²⁹¹

The ceiling's decoration was decided by Sir Hugh himself, as is made clear in a surviving letter to Robert

218 • Adam office hand, 'Ceiling for the Drawing Room at Sion, not executed, Dec[embe]r 1761; pencil, pen and washes, 41.6 × 53.8 cm. Sir John Soane's Museum, London (Adam, XI, 19).

(facing page)

219 • Adam office hand, 'Ceiling of the Drawing Room at Syon, 1762; as executed, pencil, pen and washes, 36.8 × 45.5 cm. Sir John Soane's Museum, London (Adam, XI, 20).

220 • Detail of the Drawing Room ceiling. Syon House.

221 • *Le Antichità di Ercolano esposte*, 1757, vol. 1, p. 103, plate XIX. Heidelberg University Library (C 3594 Gross RES.1).



Adam of November 1763 that demonstrates how precise was his control over the execution of the works.²⁹² He chose the subjects to be painted in the roundels mainly from the first three volumes of the *Antichità di Ercolano esposte*, the recently published fashionable repertory of ancient paintings discovered at Herculaneum, of which he possessed a copy in the adjoining Gallery (fig. 221).²⁹³ He had 'two paintings one with a single the other with a double figures [sic] ... done as specimens' by an unnamed artist, based on the illustrations in the volumes.²⁹⁴ He then showed them to Giovanni Battista Cipriani, who later would also decorate the roundels in the hall, and who eventually painted them on paper for the high price of £284.²⁹⁵ They reproduce the prints in the *Antichità* in an ornamental way, nonetheless carefully placing grounded figures in the cove and floating ones in the actual ceiling, to evoke the idea of the sky (figs 216 and 220). By choosing the *Antichità*, the third volume of which had just been printed in 1762, Sir Hugh placed Syon decisively at the vanguard of national, if not international, taste. In fact, the pres-

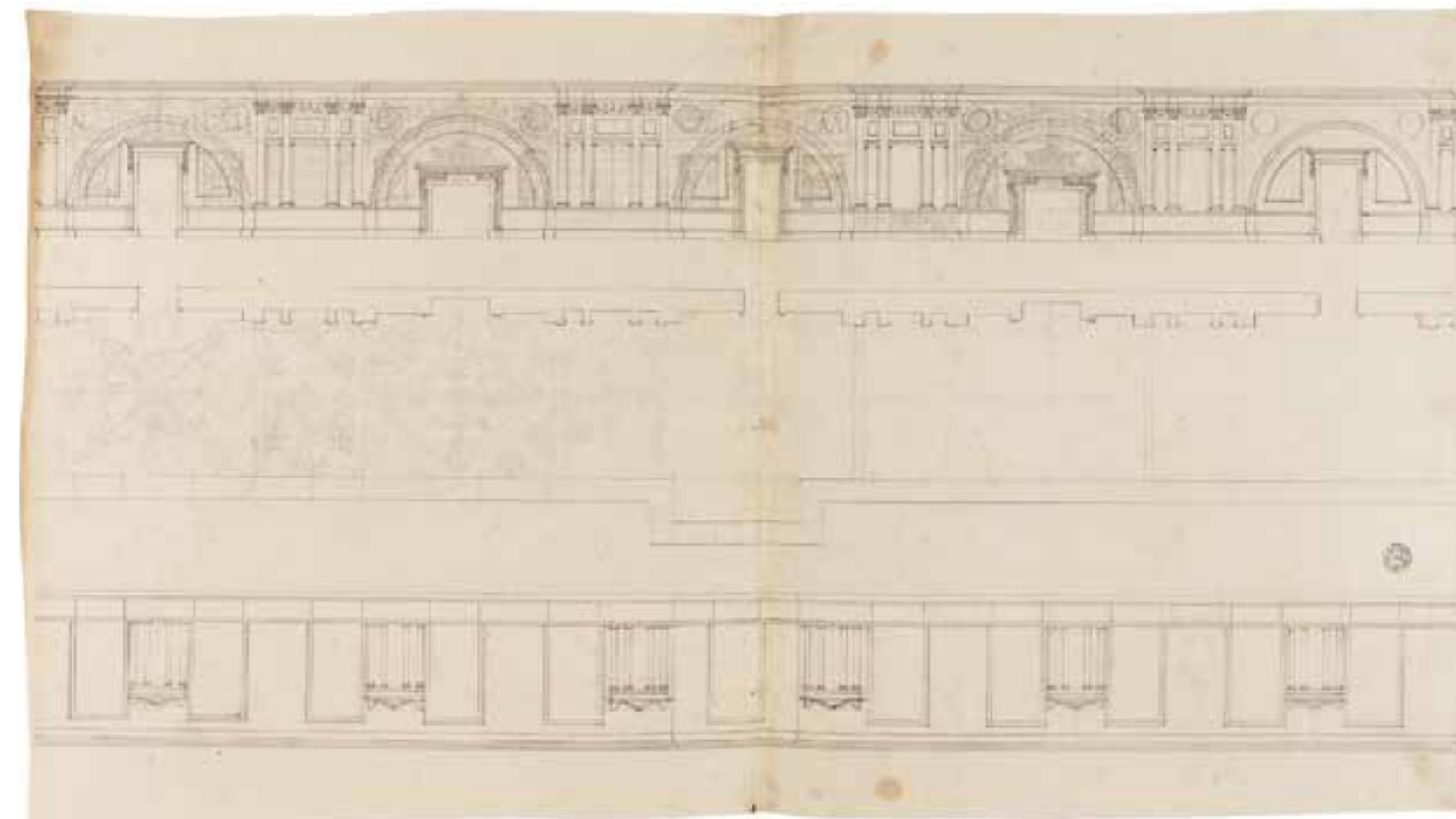




At the same time as he was creating his different designs for the ceiling, Adam must have started to experiment with different solutions for the long chimney-wall, as suggested by a large plan and elevation of the Gallery that shows the evolution of his ideas as they progressed from a more conservative scheme to what was eventually realised (fig. 225).

Initially he devised a scheme based on a repetition of Diocletian windows framing the doors, faced on the opposite wall by aedicules in the shape of Ionic temples placed between the windows. Following Walpole's sug-

gestion – which in any case built upon Adam's own previous attempt at Kedleston – he added in pencil elements derived from Roman *columbaria*: the niches, filled with urns or vases, the fluted sarcophagus in the dado, the rectangular or semi-circular paintings and the circular recesses set above the niches and the chimney-pieces (fig. 225). Eventually, Adam developed this scheme in an extremely large and unusually long finished design (fig. 226), which corresponds almost faithfully with what was executed and later reproduced in his *Works* (figs 227 and 228).³²⁴

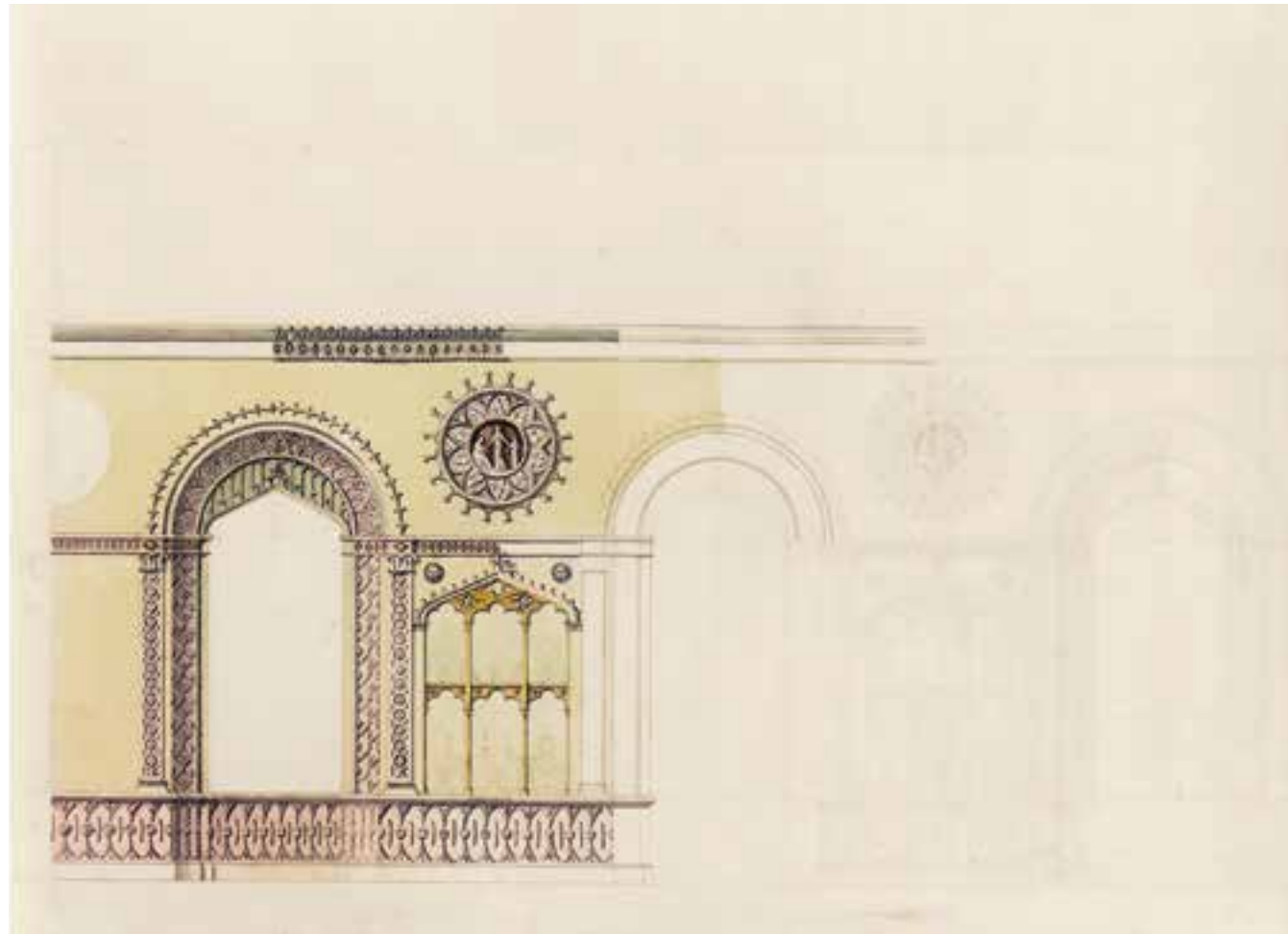


223 ♦ Syon House, the Gallery.

(facing page)

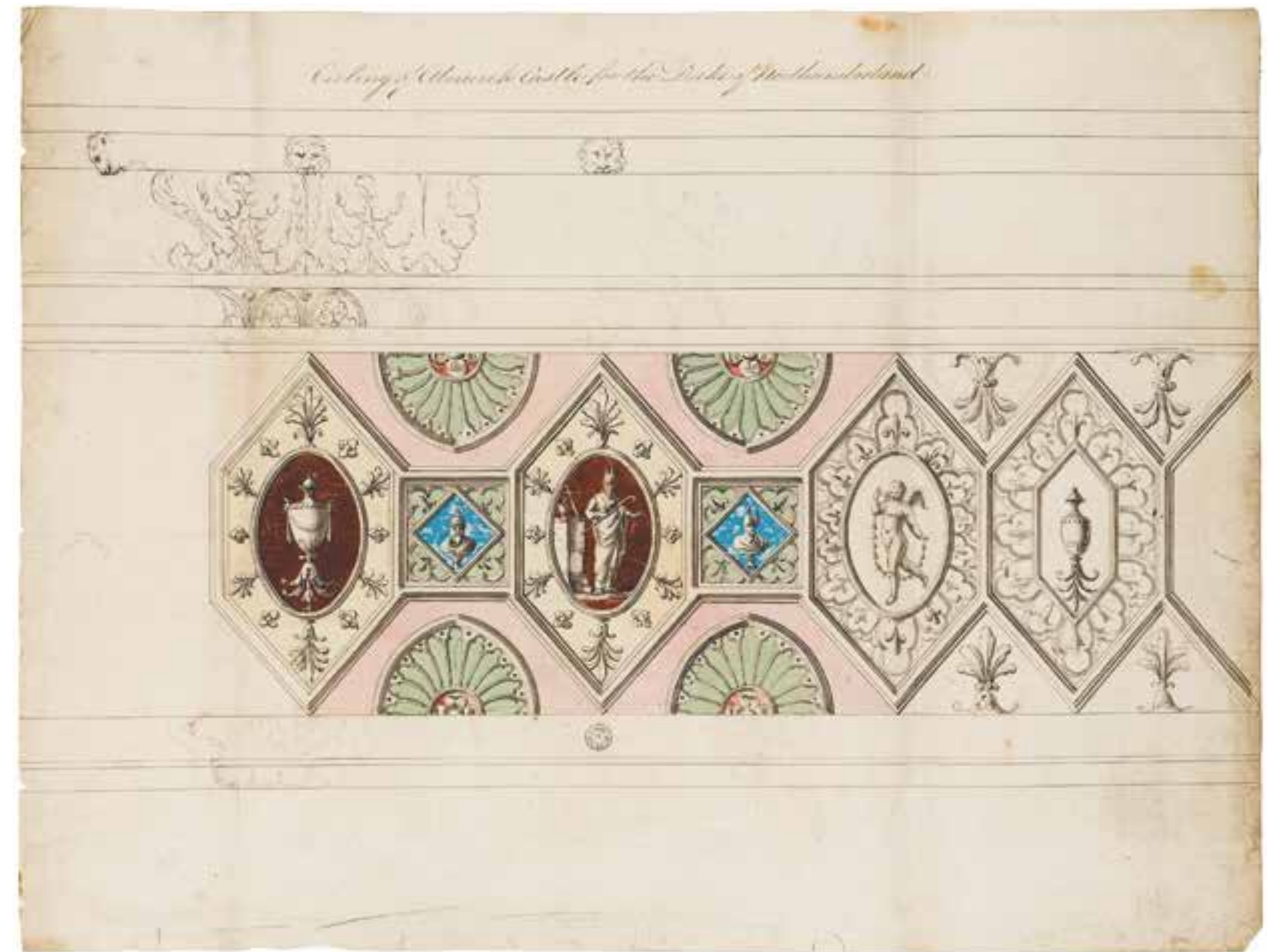
224 ♦ Adam office hand, 'Ceiling for the Gallery at Sion, August 1763', part as executed, pencil, pen and washes, 29.8 × 141.4 cm. Sir John Soane's Museum, London (Adam, XI, 23).

225 ♦ Robert Adam and an Adam office hand, plan and elevations of the Gallery at Syon House, unexecuted, c.1763, pencil and pen, 38.5 × 69.5 cm. Sir John Soane's Museum (London, Adam, I, 162).



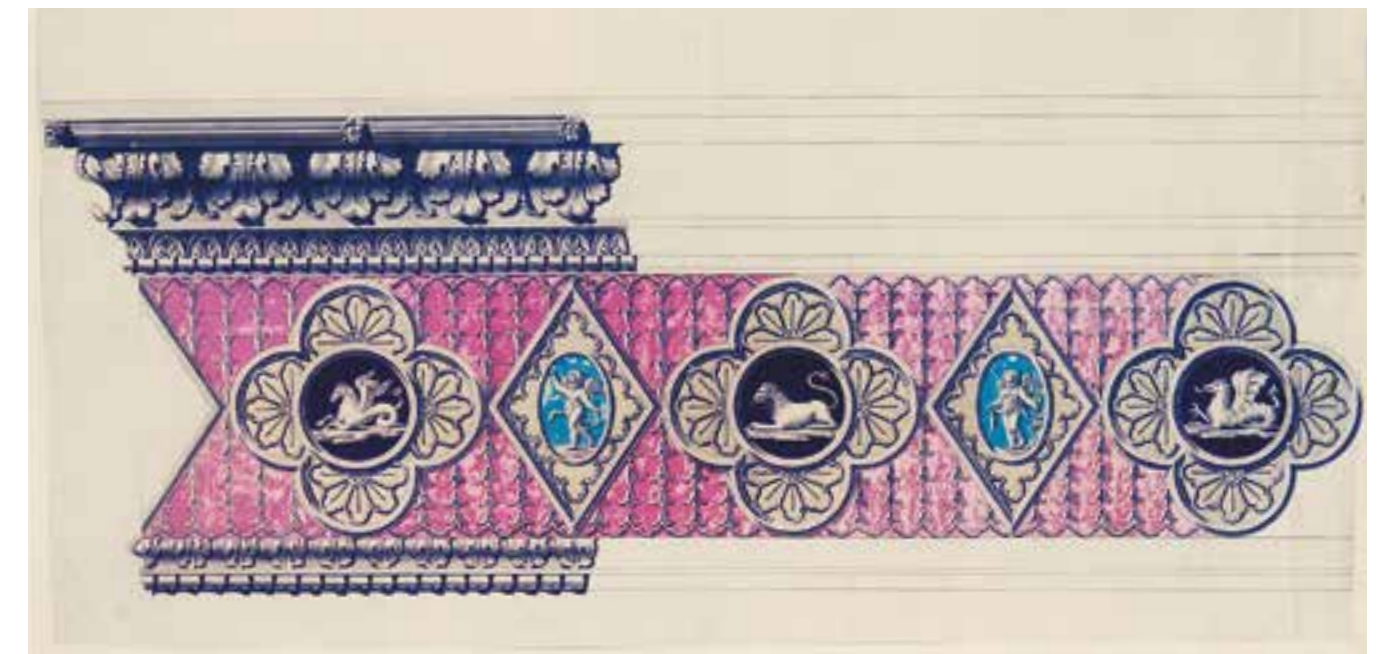
272 • Adam office hand, elevation design for the Banqueting Room at Alwick, c.1770, possibly as executed, pencil, pen and washes, 49 × 63 cm. Collection of the Duke of Northumberland, Alwick Castle (DNC 03411).

273 • Adam office hand, design for the ceiling of the Banqueting Room at Alwick, c.1770, possibly as executed, pencil, pen and washes, 68 × 63,6 cm. Collection of the Duke of Northumberland, Alwick Castle (DNC 03405).



274 • Adam office hand, 'Ceiling of Alwick castle for the Duke of Northumberland' (Banqueting Room), c.1770, possibly as executed, pencil, pen and washes, 49,7 × 65,3 cm. Sir John Soane's Museum, London (Adam, XXXIX, 13).

275 • Adam office hand, design for the frieze of the Banqueting Room, c.1770, possibly as executed, pencil, pen and washes, 50 × 94,5 cm. Collection of the Duke of Northumberland, Alwick Castle (DNC 03404).



271).¹⁸⁸ Like its equivalent at Syon, the overall aspect of the room must have overwhelmed the viewer with its contrast between the predominant red tone of the walls, carpet and French chairs, and the green and pink of the ceiling and matted chairs, the latter displaying on their backs the only concession to heraldry within the room.

The circular Banqueting Room above the Evidence Room in the Record's Tower (see fig. 251, no. 9) was restored by Adam during the same period (figs 272–5). This space also avoided heraldic references, and combined Gothic and classical details to an unprecedented colourful degree. Adam's wall elevation (fig. 272) – unfortunately Waddell's description is very superficial¹⁸⁹ – depicts rhombuses, elongated tablets, Tudor arches, etc., interspersed with pilasters covered with guilloche, and with medallions of classical scenes. In a further Adam wall elevation a Gothic stove appears with a classical base with rams' heads and sphinxes.¹⁹⁰ The same combination of contrasting details was repeated on the room's ceiling and frieze, as evidenced by a series of colourful Adam drawings, one dated January 1770 (figs 273–5).¹⁹¹ Two alternative designs for the frieze

