Some English Architectural and Decorative Drawings in the Museum’s Collection

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“Future ages will ever be engaged to remember the Right Honourable the Earl of Burlington, the Honourable Lord Herbert and Sir Andrew Fountaine as the principal Practicioners and Preservers of it [architecture] in so critical a juncture.” So wrote Robert Morris, the self-assumed defender and theorist of the Palladians, eulogizing in his Essay in Defence of Ancient Architecture the three leading spirits of English Palladianism, when the architecture of Andrea Palladio and Inigo Jones was being held up as examplars for emulation. Of the three, Lord Herbert, or, as he is better known, Henry Herbert, ninth Earl of Pembroke, is the most puzzling figure. Despite his obvious importance as a patron and amateur architect, little is known about his responsibility for the many major Palladian buildings with which he was concerned. As historians have ignored the unusually diversified English drawings in the Museum’s collections, it is all the more welcome to find here the only known example (Figure 1) of a design that can credibly be attributed to Lord Pembroke. The part played by Pembroke in actual architectural designs is not always clear. He employed as his draughtsman Roger Morris, a relation of Robert and a considerable architect in his own right. The hand of this design, for the Water House designed about 1730 by Pembroke for Lord Orford in the park at Houghton in Norfolk, is, however, certainly not that of Roger. The inscription is by Horace Walpole, for the drawing comes from the manuscript and grangerized copy of his Aedes Walpolianae, a catalogue and description of the pictures at Houghton.

If this Pembroke design belongs to the 1730s, then it is contemporary with the delightfully ele-


3 (opposite, below). Design for a section of a room, about 1750, by Thomas Lightoler. Pen, wash, and yellow water color. 10 3/4 x 14 1/2 inches. The Elisha Whittelsey Fund, 61.537.4
gant views of the gardens at Stowe made by the
topographical painter Jacques Rigaud. Stowe,
described by Christopher Hussey as the “shrine
of English Whiggery,” had been laid out by the
landscape gardener Charles Bridgeman when Sir
John Vanbrugh, the architect and dramatist,
was rebuilding the house there. Its temples were
a symbolic reflection of Whig liberal principles,
particularly those of their owner, the politician
and soldier Viscount Cobham. Rigaud’s views
were produced for Sara Bridgeman, who pub-
lished them in 1739 soon after her husband died.
The volume was not only an epitaph to her hus-
band but also a plea for bills to be paid. One of

4. Design for a wall mirror, 1760s, by Sir William
Chambers. Pen and wash. 19 1/4 x 14 5/16 inches. Dick
Fund, 34.78.2 (36)

5. Design for a chimney piece, incorporating a portrait
of George III, 1760s, by Sir William Chambers
(1726-1796). Pencil and gray wash. 9 x 5 inches.
The Elisha Whittelsey Fund, 54.648.2

the views (Figure 2) shows Vanbrugh’s Rotun-
da surveying the broad expanse known as the
Queen’s Theatre and the Long Water, remind-
ing us of Pope’s lines, “Lo! Cobham comes, and
floats them with a lake.” The figure in the gout
chair may be one of the many visitors to Stowe—
even in 1739 a “work to wonder at,” as Pope de-
clared in his epistle “Of the Use of Riches.”

Rigaud’s drawings represent a moment when
architecture in England was still Palladian. For
interiors, the rules were perhaps more national,
more relaxed: that is, decoration inclined to be
more traditional English than imported Italian.
Palladianism was a style of architecture dissemi-
nated by the greatest of all publishing booms, that of the English eighteenth century pattern book. Yet beyond the often dictatorial influence of patrons such as Lord Burlington, the tightly knit pattern of decorative style was slowly disintegrating, until by mid-century a characteristic English rococo predominated. No drawing better illustrates this than the Museum’s section of a room attributed to Thomas Lightoler (Figure 3), a carver and architect who, with Robert Morris and William Halfpenny, published a similar room in *The Modern Builder’s Assistant* (1742). Encrusted on a pattern-book frame is an enchanting evocation, intended for plasterwork or relief carving, of a whole wide range of eclectic motifs.

By 1760 English architecture had divided itself into two predominating programs: that of the Roman school headed by Sir William Chambers, who was later to become the father figure presiding over the Palladian inheritance; and that of Robert Adam, the first of the modern interior decorators. The followers of Chambers believed in the fundamental rightness of what had been inherited from English architecture of the past, tempered with much French rococo and neoclassic detail. Adam’s popular uprising against traditional forms resulted in a new decorative style based, for the greater part, on genuinely antique sources.

Chambers’s designs in the Museum include a series for chimney pieces, one (Figure 5) designed for King George III and incorporating his portrait as a bas-relief in the overmantel. More important for the student of Chambers are the rare designs for mirrors (Figure 4)—sensible and simple in comparison with the fussy effect of many Adam pieces. Chambers was, as he admitted to Lord Melbourne, “a very pretty Connoisseur in furniture.” Perhaps of all the English albums in the Museum the laurel for sheer beauty must go to the manuscript and drawings for Chambers’s *Plans . . . and Views of the Gardens and Buildings at Kew* (1763), paid for by Chambers’s patroness at Kew, the Dowager Princess Augusta of Wales. The album is probably the one given

by Chambers to Lord Bute, in “gratitude for the many Great and Generous favors you have bestow’d upon me.” Bute was Chambers’s first patron and probably recommended him for the post of architectural tutor to the Prince of Wales, later George III. From then on Chambers never looked back, and was in royal favor until his death in 1796. Bute was certainly one of the originators of the important botanical garden at Kew, part of the over-all garden design of which Chambers had begun to execute in 1756. The views in this album are drawn by Thomas Sandby, Joshua Kirby, and William Marlow. The scene of the “Wilderness” at Kew (Figure 6) by the last-named evokes a wondrous glimpse of that Cathay set down by the river Thames. Part of the Moorish Alhambra can be seen, along with the Chinese Pagoda and the Turkish Mosque.

Chambers was always blessed with royal patronage. Not so the otherwise more successful Robert Adam, who had arrived back in England in 1758 from the Grand Tour, full of self-esteem and anxious to cut a figure in society. How he hated the royal favors bestowed on Chambers! A little later his brother James also took the Grand Tour and while in Rome, between 1760 and 1762, made a set of designs for new Houses
9. Design for the first drawing room ceiling at Culzean Castle, Ayrshire, after 1777, by Robert Adam. Pen and wash. 13 ⅜ x 17 ⅞ inches. Dick Fund, 34.78.2 (20)

10. Detail from antique Roman sculpture, 1776, by Thomas Hardwick (1752-1829). Pencil. 11 ¾ x 15 ¾ inches. Dick Fund, 34.78.2 (72)
of Parliament. For this project James invented a “British Order” with a “capital of my own Invention.” One of the drawings for this capital is possessed by the Museum (Figure 7); another is in the Avery Library of Columbia University. James was to display, however, none of his brother’s genius or ability in innovation and soon disappeared from the architectural scene behind the coattails of the greater Robert.

By 1762 the significant projects by Robert Adam at Osterley, Syon, and Kedleston were well under way. Except for one front at Kedleston, all were essentially interior projects, displaying various stages in the evolution of the Adam style.

The Museum also has a design by Robert for a ceiling at Culzean Castle in Ayrshire (Figure 9), drawn sometime after 1777. Its simple restrained style is in contrast to his more expensive ceilings for richer patrons—and may therefore be a product of the Adam “office,” a proto-modern establishment with a team of draughtsmen always busy at work. Many of these draughtsmen were recruited in Italy, among them Giuseppe Mannocchi, whose album of designs is dated between 1763 and 1765 in London. The grotesques in this album (Figure 11) show how indebted Adam was to his draughtsmen for a constant supply of figural and pattern motifs to be executed in plaster or paint.

Chambers also employed draughtsmen, but his were regarded as pupils and potential architects as well. Under Chambers they received the finest architectural training then possible in England. One pupil was Thomas Hardwick, who traveled in Italy in 1776 and made a survey of antique Roman fragments. The Museum’s drawings by Hardwick (Figure 10) complement

11. Page from a sketchbook, 1765, by Giuseppe Mannocchi (about 1731-1782). Pen and wash. 29\(\frac{3}{4}\) x 5\(\frac{3}{4}\) inches. Dick Fund, 47.112

The Museum’s collections show that, despite the difference between his and Chambers’s viewpoints, even Robert was prepared to pay lip service to English Palladianism, that is, to traditional architecture. The volume of designs for Great Saxham in Suffolk, prepared in 1762 as a presentation copy to the owner, Hutchinson Mure, are based throughout on Palladian sources. Most notably, the elevation with the row of three “Palladian” windows (Figure 8) can be taken back to Lord Burlington’s villa at Chiswick, and
12. Design for a museum or repository, 1758, by Stephen Riou (died 1780). 5 ¼ x 9 ½ inches. Pen and wash. The Elisha Whittelsey Fund, 49.56.12

those in the Royal Institute of British Architects. Although Hardwick is here displayed as a copyist, who after he left Chambers's office practiced as a conservative architect of second-rate ability, his sketchbooks reveal him as sensitive to the Roman scene.

Another Roman soul was Stephen Riou, who seems to have been rather a gentleman amateur in architecture. In his book *The Grecian Orders of Architecture* (1768) he published some of his own designs. Related to these may be one (Figure 12) he drew in Rome a decade earlier. In presentation and style it is thoroughly Italian.

Among the most attractive aspects of the Museum's drawings are their range and diversity. They cover not only architecture but also allied fields such as monumental tomb sculpture. In this latter area England encouraged a great school of sculptors, among whom Joseph Wilton may rank with the best. He was a friend of Chambers and Joshua Reynolds, was appointed "Sculptor to his Majesty" in 1764, and was a founding member of the Royal Academy. His work has been described as "skilfully executed and coldly correct—sometimes graceful. His groups are crowded in their composition, yet not without grandeur of composition." A design that can be identified as his (Figure 14) was executed in 1783 at Wroxton in Oxfordshire, commemorating the three deceased wives of the first Earl of Guildford.

Perhaps one should end a survey of these English drawings with the most important single group. This is an album of designs for ceilings by James Wyatt. Wyatt's attitude toward architecture is summed up in a story he is said to have told George III: that when he returned from Italy in 1768 "there had been no regular architecture since Sir William Chambers ... he found the public taste corrupted by the Adams, and he was obliged to comply with it." Wyatt's interiors are more chaste, less "snippets of gingerbread" than Adam's. In contrast to Adam, Wyatt was essentially a country-house designer: Adam built few complete houses, whereas Wyatt built dozens. This album in the Museum is of great value to English architectural history because it reveals many hitherto unknown Wyatt houses, bringing the total number of his commissions far beyond even those of the versatile and busy Adam. They throw an interesting sidelight on the participation of Wyatt's brother Samuel, who can now be regarded as an architect of very considerable ability; in fact, the partnership can be compared with that of Robert and James Adam. This Wyatt album also discloses an unusually large Irish practice, including work at Farnham and Abbeyliex and responsibility for the beautiful interiors at Curraghmore (Figure 13), the seat of Lord Waterford.

Only now are architectural drawings receiving the attention they deserve. Despite the fact that English drawings are more numerous than any others, they have been the last among western European ones to obtain recognition. The Museum can congratulate itself on acquiring a representative survey of such high quality.

14. *Design for a tomb at Wroxton, Oxfordshire, 1783*, by Joseph Wilton (1722-1803). Pen and wash. 10 x 8\(\frac{3}{4}\) inches. The Elisha Whittelsey Fund, 49.56.51