2019

Robert Adam's Revolution In Architecture

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Robert Adam's Revolution In Architecture

Abstract
ABSTRACT

ROBERT ADAM'S REVOLUTION IN ARCHITECTURE

Robert Adam (1728-92) was a revolutionary artist and, unusually, he possessed the insight and bravado to self-identify as one publicly. In the first fascicle of his three-volume Works in Architecture of Robert and James Adam (published in installments between 1773 and 1822), he proclaimed that he had started a “revolution” in the art of architecture. Adam’s “revolution” was expansive: it comprised the introduction of avant-garde, light, and elegant architectural decoration; mastery in the design of picturesque and scenographic interiors; and a revision of Renaissance traditions, including the relegation of architectural orders, the rejection of most Palladian forms, and the embrace of the concept of taste as a foundation of architecture. In his own time, he became the second architect in European history (after Andrea Palladio 1508-80) to be associated with an eponymous style — today known as the “Adam Style,” and, in the eighteenth-century, the “Adamitic mode.” Adam further distinguished himself as one of the first professional architects in modern Britain, within an era that had only recently adopted widespread use of the term “architect.” To elevate his professional status, he freshly and sharply differentiated between the architect and builder, and undertook considerable self-promotional efforts. With his two pioneering publications (Ruins of the Palace of the Emperor Diocletian at Spalatro in Dalmatia of 1764 and his Works), he established himself as an erudite, scientific antiquarian and as a connoisseur of buildings. Moreover, the architect-cum-marketer deftly and innovatively composed his books to address a modern, critical, reading public (especially the emergent architectural connoisseur) and made robust arguments for the leading roles of domestic architecture and architectural decoration in shaping British identity. Drawing on a wide-range of sources, this project argues for a more comprehensive vision of the nature of Adam’s revolution and new consideration of his significance as an architect, writer, and public figure. It also builds on scholarship that seeks to contextualize Adam as a product of the Enlightenment, the Romantic era, and a rapidly-changing, modern Britain.

Degree Type
Dissertation

Degree Name
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

Graduate Group
History of Art

First Advisor
David B. Brownlee

Keywords
Adam, Britain, Eighteenth-Century, Picturesque, Revolution, Scenographic

This dissertation is available at ScholarlyCommons: https://repository.upenn.edu/edissertations/3339
Subject Categories
History of Art, Architecture, and Archaeology

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ROBERT ADAM’S REVOLUTION IN ARCHITECTURE

Miranda Hausberg

A DISSERTATION

in

History of Art

Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania

in

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

2019

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André Dombrowski, Associate Professor of History of Art
For my mother, my husband,
and my adorable children,
Gus and Martin
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Foremost, I extend deep gratitude to my advisor and mentor, Professor David Brownlee. Professor Brownlee has fundamentally shaped my identity as a scholar and as a student of art, and has inspired me to improve each day. I have had the great pleasure and privilege to learn from his command of modern European architecture and intellectual history, from his gifts for effortlessly pinpointing salient points and crafting sharp-witted and sparkling historical narratives, and from conversations, particularly during the dissertation phase, in which he broadened my ambition and imagination, compassionately and wisely advised me, and focused me on the task at hand. I am humbled and honored to be his student.

I also offer tremendous thanks to Professor Michael Leja, Professor André Dombrowski, and Professor Conor Lucey. I feel unduly spoiled that they are my readers. More significantly, each has deeply enriched my intellectual life. My admiration and respect for these scholars is matched only by my desire to be more like them. Professor Lucey’s expertise in eighteenth-century architecture in Ireland and Britain is a constant source of inspiration, as are the masterful teaching and scholarship of Professor Leja and Professor Dombrowski. I must also note that Professor Leja’s book, *Looking Askance*, inspired me to become an academic both because of its fascinating content and the sheer power, beauty, and clarity of the expository writing.

Thanks are also due to Professor Michael Cole, Professor Dalibor Vesely, and Professor David Leatherbarrow. Particularly during my coursework at Penn, each of these scholars greatly helped me to become a stronger writer and thinker and played large roles in teaching me the craft of art history. I have fond memories of listening to their
lectures and having conversations with them about a remarkably wide-range of topics. Working with Professor Cole on a Master’s thesis was a turning point in my academic career and gave me the confidence to develop topics that are both meaningful to me and contribute to the field. I will never forget the laughter of Professor Vesely at the moment he learned (after a twenty-minute impromptu discourse, delivered in a kind effort to guide me in a paper topic) that I had not wanted to write about “Zeus,” but rather “zoos.”

Professor Leatherbarrow’s artful synthesis of architectural history, form, and theory in his lecture courses, his insatiable intellectual curiosity, and his extensive reading and knowledge of the field motivated me and shaped many of my intellectual activities and goals during my early years at Penn.

While writing this thesis, I was fortunate to have participated in a Georgian Group conference in London on the Adam brothers in September 2015, organized by Dr. Geoffrey Tyack and Dr. Colin Thom. It was my delight to speak on Robert Adam’s scenographic interiors in a session that was chaired by Jeremy Musson and also featured papers by Conor Lucey and Richard Ireland on Robert’s decorative work. I am thankful for the encouragement of the conference members, especially Colin Thom, Alistair Rowan, and Jeremy Musson, in pursuing my work on Adam.

I must also thank the institutions, librarians, and administrators, who have helped me to complete this project. Darlene Jackson, the administrative and graduate student coordinator in the Department of Art History at Penn, in particular, has provided immediate and strong support in all of the various needs that have arisen during my time as a student, and particularly during the last stages of the dissertation. I would also like to extend special thanks to the librarians at Fisher Fine Arts and Ven Pelt Libraries at the
University of Pennsylvania, and at the Library of the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art in London. The generous financial assistance from the University of Pennsylvania, the Paul Mellon and Kress Foundations was indispensable to completing the degree and I also extend to them my deepest thanks.

The support of my family and friends has allowed me to complete this thesis despite events that slowed me during its creation. My husband and especially my mother provided me with unconditional love and encouragement and for that I am eternally grateful. I must also thank Professor Brownlee and the art history department at Penn for their unfailing support and patience while I weathered health issues that waylaid me, initially for months and then years, and a change in the topic of the thesis. At various moments while writing the dissertation, I greatly enjoyed the warm company and encouragement of friends, including Olivia Oldridge, Carolyn Brunelle, Monika Bhagat-Kennedy, John Hagood, Emily Gerstell, and Andrea Kauffman-Berry. My in-laws, Margaret and Mark Hausberg, have also been a tremendous source of joy and support. The childcare provided by Deborah Rowe and Megan Hawtree gave me the time and support needed to complete this project, knowing that my children were in excellent hands. Thank you all.

Finally, profound thanks are also owed to my undergraduate advisor and mentor, Professor Eugene J. Johnson. Professor Johnson unknowingly converted me to an art historian during his first lecture of Art History 101, which I heard as a freshman at Williams College. He began the lecture with a comparison of a version of the Romanian Modernist sculptor Constantin Brâncuși’s “The Kiss” (1913) and the Italian Neoclassical sculptor Antonio Canova’s “Cupid and Psyche” (1787) — one comparison among many
others that I would never forget. Professor Johnson’s lectures instilled in me a kind of joy I did not know was possible and that I continued to experience in subsequent art history courses at Williams, especially those of Professor Michael Lewis and Professor Zirka Filipczak, and beyond. Thank you, E. J., for making the world seem infinitely beautiful, and for being a constant source of strength, inspiration, and support.
ABSTRACT

ROBERT ADAM’S REVOLUTION IN ARCHITECTURE

Miranda Hausberg
David Brownlee

Robert Adam (1728-92) was a revolutionary artist and, unusually, he possessed the insight and bravado to self-identify as one publicly. In the first fascicle of his three-volume *Works in Architecture of Robert and James Adam* (published in installments between 1773 and 1822), he proclaimed that he had started a “revolution” in the art of architecture. Adam’s “revolution” was expansive: it comprised the introduction of avant-garde, light, and elegant architectural decoration; mastery in the design of picturesque and scenographic interiors; and a revision of Renaissance traditions, including the relegation of architectural orders, the rejection of most Palladian forms, and the embrace of the concept of taste as a foundation of architecture. In his own time, he became the second architect in European history (after Andrea Palladio 1508-80) to be associated with an eponymous style —today known as the “Adam Style,” and, in the eighteenth-century, the “Adamitic mode.” Adam further distinguished himself as one of the first professional architects in modern Britain, within an era that had only recently adopted widespread use of the term “architect.” To elevate his professional status, he freshly and sharply differentiated between the architect and builder, and undertook considerable self-promotional efforts. With his two pioneering publications (*Ruins of the Palace of the Emperor Diocletian at Spalatro in Dalmatia* of 1764 and his *Works*), he established himself as an erudite, scientific antiquarian and as a connoisseur of buildings. Moreover, the architect-cum-marketer deftly and innovatively composed his books to address a
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1. Introduction: Adam the Revolutionary

_We need men who can dream of things that never were._ ~John Keats (1795-1821)

The Scope of Adam’s “Revolution”

Robert Adam (1728-92, Figure 1.1) was an architect in an age of tremendous cultural, economic, and political change, and he was a revolutionary who claimed that distinction directly. In his _Works of Architecture of Robert and James Adam_ (London, 1773, ff.), published jointly with his business partner and brother James Adam (1732-94, Figure 1.2), he proudly proclaimed:

> In the works which we have had the honour to execute, we have not only been met with the approbation of our employers, but even with the imitation of other artists, to such a degree, as in some measure to have brought about, in this country, a kind of revolution in the whole system of this useful and elegant art.¹

In the preface of the first fascicle of the _Works_ (July 1773), Adam explained his revolution, which was complex and large, in a few abbreviated terms, casting it solely in terms of architectural design and interior design. It comprised, he wrote, “a remarkable improvement in the form, convenience, arrangement, and relief of apartments; a greater movement and variety in the outside composition, and in the decoration of the inside, an almost total change.”² He then enumerated, specifically and vividly, the innovative forms he had introduced to the modern interior:

¹ Robert Adam and James Adam, _Works in Architecture of Robert & James Adam_, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1773), (Introduction by Henry Hope Reed. New York: Dover Publications, 1980), “Preface,” 1. The five fascicles of the first volume of the _Works_ were published on the following dates: No. 1 in July 1773; No. 2 in May 1774; No. 3 in April 1775; No. 4 in September 1776; and No. 5 in June 1778; volume II was published in 1779; and volume III was posthumously published by Robert’s brother William in 1822. While his brother James was Robert Adam’s partner and made significant contributions to the work of the architectural partnership, it has become customary to credit Robert with responsibility for the design and oversight of most of their projects.

The massive entablature, the ponderous compartment ceiling, the tabernacle frame, almost
the only species of ornament formerly known, in this country, are now universally
exploded, and in their place, we have adopted a beautiful variety of light mouldings,
gracefully formed, delicately enriched and arranged with propriety and skill. We have
introduced a great diversity of ceilings, freezes [sic], and decorated pilasters, and have
added grace and beauty to the whole, by a mixture of grotesque stucco, and painted
ornaments, together with the flowing rainçéau with its fanciful figures and winding
foliage.

In the footnotes, Adam provided a glossary to define key terms, including “movement,”
“the massive entablature,” “compartment ceiling,” “tabernacle frame,” “grotesque,” and
“rainçéau.” In these definitions, he succinctly chronicled the transition in Britain from the
dominance of the Palladian style, with its heavy architectural and decorative forms, to his
own style, distinguished by its lightness and delicacy.

Famously, Adam proclaimed further revolutionary feats. In the preface to the
second fascicle of the first volume (May 1774), he provided a synopsis of his distinctive
handling of the architectural orders, transformed by the psychology of perception. In the
preface to the first fascicle of the second volume (1779), he boasted of his introduction of
an “Etruscan style,” seen in the townhouse on Grosvenor Square that Adam designed for
the Earl of Derby in the mid-1770s:

…persons of taste will, no doubt, observe that a mode of decoration has been here
attempted, which differs from anything hitherto practiced in Europe…the style of the
ornament, and the colouring of the Countess of Derby’s dressing-room, are both evidently
imitated from the vases and urns of the Etruscans…we have not been able to discover,
either in our researches into antiquity, or in the works of modern artists, any idea of
applying this taste to the decoration of apartments.3

His Etruscan-style rooms also graced the interiors of Home House (1775), Harewood
House (1777), Apsley House (1778) and Cumberland House (1780).

Adam’s artistic achievements were codified in the mid-1770s when his visual
idiom was given a name: the “Adamitic Mode.” This style, which became known as the
“Adam Style” in the nineteenth century, was widely imitated throughout Europe and

3 Ibid., 13.
America until well into the nineteenth century. And although it was new and conspicuous during the two decades that followed its emergence in the early 1760s, during the final decades of the eighteenth century and the next few centuries, it became ubiquitous to the point of near invisibility — a fate similarly suffered by other classical modes of architecture, especially Neo-Palladianism, which, throughout the modern period, evolved into a national style of British architecture.

Although the central thrust and best known aspects of his revolution concerned the invention of new visual paradigms in architectural and decorative forms, the full scope and significance of Adam’s artistic “revolution” is almost too expansive to circumscribe. His contribution transcended the creation of new architectural styles to include the introduction of wholly new artistic practices, values, principles, and methods of execution. These compelling cognitive structures powerfully and immediately transformed the design of contemporary architecture and the theoretical basis of design in Britain.

Adam contributed, for example, to the late eighteenth-century British discourse about the foundations of architecture. In this pursuit, he asserted that, in their designs, architects must rely principally on “correct” taste and the work of a wide range of past masters, rather than on an idea of natural, Platonic harmony, governed by numerical relationships, and a narrow understanding of Roman architecture. His tendencies are best described as those of a Romantic-Classicist, rather than a Neo-Classicist, because they were driven by empiricism and rationalism, equally, and a distinctly British antipathy toward the codification of rules in architectural design. His romantic tendencies also
generated a willfulness to unseat both the idea of order in architectural theory and the use of architectural orders in architectural design.

Although ancient architecture remained the primary authority for design, Adam, like other modern architects, was no longer satisfied with the model of Vitruvian treatise and the Renaissance revival of antiquity. He found architectural theory of previous centuries overly constricting: the unremitting recapitulation of the proportional systems of the classical orders was tedious, and adherence solely to Roman architectural forms was narrow-minded. Adam and his contemporaries believed they could not only revive ancient architecture better, but also create a new architecture that could rival and surpass ancient achievements — a feat that had been achieved by very few architects of the modern era. Sometimes considered one of the founders of the so-called “eclectic” school of architecture, Adam developed his own, distinct modern idioms and standards for building, relying principally on contemporary ideas about taste and rules, and the artful use and alteration of historical forms.

He was also a leader in the eighteenth-century movement to establish the centrality of domestic architecture and interior design in the practice of architecture. Adam’s crowning achievements in design were the development and mastery of picturesque and scenographic interiors and the radicalization of the practice of exterior design by exporting picturesque ideals and motifs from his interiors. In the design of interiors, exteriors, and decorative programs, he broadened the expressive capacity of buildings with new systems of representation and new modes of seeing and spectatorship, allowing his understanding of the nature and limits of human perception to become the principal guide in architectural design. Adam significantly helped to shape non-academic,
visual and empirical conceptions, which rose to prominence alongside persistent academic ideals. He was also among the earliest architects to embrace the late eighteenth-century project to define architecture as more than an exercise in academic composition.

Examination of all of these achievements together affords significant larger insights into the impact of Adam’s revolution on the history of architecture. One of Adam’s greatest contributions to architectural practice was deracination of the Albertian conception of architecture as a collection of structural and decorative architectural elements or parts and their assembly to form an ideal whole. Adam’s modern idea of “parts” widened from individual forms, like pilasters, door frames, and corbels, to include everything that inhabits a room — including the human visitor and the room’s decorative furnishings — and the sculptural form of the room itself, especially its floor plan and the contours of its walls. He also defined the “whole” more expansively to comprise not only the compositional parts of interior walls and exterior façades, but also three-dimensional, decorated interior spaces, the surrounding landscape, and the experiences of spectators and inhabitants. Architecture, for Adam, encompassed the physical, emotional and perceptual experiences of habitation: especially the movement through rooms and series of rooms, and the feeling and the anticipation of being inside rooms that “spoke.” His work made a clear break with Renaissance architectural tradition and marked the beginning of the modern era in Britain.

The Significance and Meaning of the Term “Revolution” in Adam’s Works

Although its use in the Works is the sole instance in which Adam used the term “revolution” to describe his work and cultural impact, its deployment was potent because
he used it to describe a body of work (rather than a single work, or small group of works) and a style. The architect-cum-writer also empowered this term by couching it within phrases (see quote above, p. 1) that implied Adam’s role as a detached, but not impartial, critic, and as an observer who was reacting to a set of circumstances, rather than as an entrepreneur who was crafting a self-image. In his claim, Adam astutely omitted any trace of artistic intention, which he undoubtedly hoped would pave the way for acceptance of the idea of himself as a revolutionary person. Adam also imbedded the term within a narrative that painted him as an innovator, who created work that, to his delight, initiated a revolution in artistic style and inspired a spate of followers, from whom he demanded to be distinguished as the revolutionary originator. Regardless of the effectiveness of these rhetorical strategies, they stand out for their sophistication within a market that increasingly published books showcasing works by individual artists.

Adam’s selection of “revolution” was a deliberate act to set apart his work from that of his talented competitors, and was part of the larger project to create the first architectural book in of the modern era that was tailored specifically for the acquisition of new clients in a commercial society. At the time of the publication of the first fascicle of the *Works*, in July 1773, Adam faced the rivalry of several new stars in the neo-classical firmament: Charles Cameron, whose *Baths of the Romans Explained* (1772) promised a brilliant future for its author; James Gandon (1743-1823), whose town hall at Nottingham had featured prominently in the second volume of his continuation of *Vitruvius Britannicus* (1771); and James Wyatt’s (1746-1813) Oxford Street Pantheon (1769-72)

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was receiving sensational reviews.\(^5\) Williams Chambers, of course, was also a principal challenger; as early as 1755, Adam had described him as a “mortal Check” to his plans for future success in England.\(^6\)

Use of the term in the preface of an architectural book, or any book on art, was unprecedented and highly conspicuous, even within the long tradition of overblown rhetoric of book marketing in Western Europe. Use of the word “revolution” had been reserved exclusively for the discussion of radical social and political change, and did not become prevalent until after the outbreaks of the American and French Revolutions. The English writer Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* of 1792, for example, called for “a revolution in female manners” insisting that women should be educated in the same ways and with the same goals as men, and that women were as capable as men of thinking rationally and of acting virtuously.\(^7\) It was not until the nineteenth century, however, that it became common to import this term to other fields, and that its rhetorical power was diluted. Analysis of contemporary use of the term “revolution” confirms that it was not only a crucial marker of a precarious moment in the Adam brothers’ career (following the demise of the mammoth speculative building project, the Adelphi), but also an indicator of their business acumen and ability to project their firms’ image through branding. The eye-catching term resonated with the deep and acute changes occurring throughout architecture, language, and other aspects of culture underway in late eighteenth-century Britain.

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\(^5\) Harris, *British Architectural Books and Writers*, 119.

\(^6\) Robert Adam written from Naples on 18 April 1755 to Jamie back in Edinburgh; NRS, GD18/4770.

\(^7\) Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* Vol. 1, 2\(^{nd}\) ed. (London: J. Johnson, 1792), 92.
The language of marketing employed by the authors of earlier eighteenth century British books of designs was of a very different, milder nature. The arguments made by previous writers were invariably grounded in a commitment to the true style of ancient architecture, rather than the presentation of something that broke with this tradition. James Gibbs, for example, in his *Book on Architecture* of 1728, offered a temperate statement of self-promotion, representative of pattern books written throughout the eighteenth century: “I have taken the utmost care that these Designs should be done in the best Taste I could form upon the instructions of the greatest Masters in Italy, as well as my own Observations upon the antient Buildings there, during many Years application to these Studies.” By mid-century, the language of marketing had begun to evolve, but remained measured. Abraham Swan, for example, in his book *The British Architect* of 1758 wrote: “And I might venture to say, there is no Book yet extent which contains the Rules and Examples of Drawing and Working in so large a Variety, and at the Time in so plain and concise a Manner, as this single Volume.”

The act of calling his work revolutionary was distinctly modern and it implied a creative energy that exceeded the “novel” and circumvented the troubled impossibility of the “original.” Adam clearly believed such words, which were common in this period in the description of art, were inadequate to express the true force, spirit, and significance of his architectural contributions. Contemporary definitions of these alternative terms for invention contextualize their rhetorical significance and pinpoint the full power of “revolution” in Adam’s text.

“Novelty” was written about extensively in this period, particularly by aestheticians and philosophers, as the emotional pleasure it induced was believed to be

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essential to the creation of great art. Novelty was associated primarily with things that were encountered for the first time, and thus, it could refer to phenomena that existed previously, but which had not previously become part of one’s experience. The Irish statesman and philosopher Edmund Burke (1729-97) explained the charm of novelty and its abundant occurrence in youth: “We see children perpetually running from place to place, to hunt out something new: they catch with great eagerness…whatever comes before them; their attention is engaged by everything, because everything has in that stage of life…novelty to recommend it.”

The eighteenth-century English philosopher Joseph Addison further theorized that the “novel,” along with the beautiful, produced calmer passions, which refreshed and soothed the imagination, respectively. A new phenomenon for Addison was a sort of tonic for the world-weary. “It gratifies,” he wrote, “the curiosity” and “elicits agreeable surprise, lifting the imagination from its stupor and relieving it from what familiarity has rendered obvious and unremarkable.” In novelty, Addison believed, we find at every moment a new scene that relieves the monotony of the fixed and unchanging, and even transforms those things to which we might be initially averse: “[novelty] bestows charms on a Monster, and makes even the imperfections in Nature please us.”

Addison’s contemporary, Scottish philosopher Alexander Gerard similarly reflected that novelty produced pleasure because the mind attained a “lively and elevated temper” when it overcame some “moderate difficulty” and “if its efforts prove successful, consciousness of success inspires new joy.” Thus the delight one took in the study and investigation of things previously unseen, such as a new landscape painting, or a drawing

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room, derived from the effort required to move beyond past experience. On some occasions, however, the feeling was simply the result of a mind at a “loss how to employ itself,” becoming occupied and finding pleasure in relief from boredom; this kind of pleasure was increased when it involved relief from the “uneasiness” brought on by unvarying study, business, or recreation, and even more so when the relief was unexpected and supplemented by surprise.\(^\text{12}\) In an age in which only the privileged few were able to embark on extensive travel to see the architecture of the modern and ancient worlds, even despite the increasing publication of architectural designs, modern and ancient, it was not difficult to present the viewer with novelty.

Adam used the term “novelty” within the \textit{Works} in a manner that would have been familiar to a late eighteenth-century audience. It appeared in the opening of sentence of the second paragraph of the first preface — the same paragraph that closed with Adam’s claim to have enacted a “revolution.” He announced the “novelty and variety” of his designs before explaining more precisely that they were not conceived with the “aid” of others and that their novelty and variety were secondary to their revolutionary character. Adam’s pairing of “novelty” with “variety” was common in literature of the period: a discursive convention used to describe good and judicious works.\(^\text{13}\)

“Originality,” came into common use in the last third of the eighteenth century. Its meaning expanded from referring only to the beginning, source, or origin, to denoting the authentic and singular.\(^\text{14}\) In this sense, it came to refer to something new to the world,

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\(^\text{13}\) Novelty was also regarded with suspicion, sometimes considered the motivation of commercial interest at the expense of art. This view is advanced, for example, in the satirical postscript to the preface of \textit{The architectural remembrancer} (1751). I would like to thank Professor Lucey for bringing this to my attention.
and in contrast to “novelty,” its meaning was not dependent on an individual’s experience. Yet, as English poet Edward Young (1683-1765) wrote in 1759, “…an Original may be said to be of a vegetable order…it rises spontaneously from the vital root of genius; it grows, it is not made.”\(^{15}\) This was a metaphorical extension of the older sense of the term: an “original” takes material only from itself. In the eighteenth century, to call a work of art original was a form of praise and implied that the quality of a work was not dependent upon comparison with others, but constituted an independent standard.\(^{16}\)

Contemporary writers were left aghast and dismayed by claims to originality, and they heaped derision on the claimants. In his plea for literary originality, for example, Goethe remarked that little comes from our entirely native feelings but stupidity and awkwardness.\(^{17}\) “The mental disease of the present generation,” Samuel Johnson opined, “is impatience of study, contempt of the greatest masters of ancient wisdom, and a disposition to rely wholly upon unassisted genius and natural sagacity.”\(^{18}\) And Royal Academy president and painter Sir Joshua Reynolds chimed that “the greatest natural genius cannot subsist on its own stock.”\(^{19}\) The complete original, he continued, “will soon be reduced from mere barrenness, to the poorest of all imitations; he will be obliged to imitate himself.”\(^{20}\)

Just as “novelty” and “variety” were often paired, “originality” and “invention” were often coupled together. Generally, it was thought in this period that one’s internal

\(^{15}\) Edward Young, *Conjectures on Original Composition* (London, 1759), 12.
\(^{16}\) Williams, *Keywords*, 230-1.
\(^{17}\) Cited in Bate, *Classic to Romantic*, 72.
\(^{20}\) Reynolds, *Discourses*, 99 (Discourse VI, s. 205-6).
sense should be checked or assisted by the work of the great masters, who had been admired uninterruptedly for centuries. Desire and need for intercourse with great predecessors were considered sure signs of superior ability. Originality and invention, then, were thought to reside primarily in the architect’s abilities to compose by adapting rules drawn from universal principles to specific situations, and to manipulate and rearrange pre-existing forms in new compositions. Originality was essentially the product of the process of judicious invention, and invention seems to amount to a stockpile of ideas that the architect had built-up over periods of intense thought and observation. As Adam wrote at the end of the first preface of the first number of the first volume (1773):

> We hope it will be thought no more than justice to ourselves, thus to ascertain the originality of our designs, and enable the world to discover, where they have been imitated with judgment, and where they are been servility copied or misapplied. ------ An artist who feels in himself an inability of presenting to the public any thing [sic] from his own store of invention, has no title to be offended if an author is solicitous to vindicate himself to posterity from any imputation of plagiarism.

In this sense, originality and invention in architecture were considered to be in no danger of exhaustion.

In the last quarter of the eighteenth century, it became popular to entitle pattern books “Original Designs in Architecture.” The works of British architects William Thomas (d. 1800; London, 1783) and James Lewis (1750-1820; London, 1780) are two examples of this trend. Both of those design books present variations on the Palladian idiom, and the hallmarks of their “original” work were simple, austere planar façades with few windows and restrained use of ornament. Often their designs appeared incomplete and naïve, like an assemblage of parts left over at a building site, or as a simple exercise in the recombination of architectural elements. This kind of originality

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was far different than that to which Adam referred because it suppressed individuality in favor of universal principles.

**Adam’s Revolution and the Nature of Change in Art**

In using “revolution” Adam imported fledgling social and political model of historical change, which was unstable and heavily debated in the second half of the eighteenth century, into architectural discourse. In this, he introduced an entirely new framework for the study of architecture and other arts that allowed artists to regard artworks as products of both gradual, or evolutionary, and sudden, or revolutionary, changes, and to consider the possibility that historical change could be accelerated and altered, willfully and deliberately, by an individual through the creation of designs that spoke to the present and future as much as, or more than the past.

The modern sense of “revolution” found formulation within the earliest books of modern history, particularly those in mid-eighteenth-century France and England. Voltaire is often considered the first modern historian, exemplifying this new discipline in his *Age of Louis XIV* (1751) and *Essay on the General History of Manners* (1754). Unlike previous writing on history, Voltaire and other mid-eighteenth-century writers, including Edmund Burke, tended to treat change, rather than permanence, as the primary characteristic of nature and human existence. Change occurred in all aspects human civilizations, these writers posited, either gradually, in an evolutionary process, or abruptly, in sharp “revolutionary” breaks with previous states or conditions. While evolutionary change was a largely unconscious process, abrupt change was the direct result of human agency and will. The shape of human existence was imagined by
eighteenth-century intellectuals as a fundamentally evolutionary progression, disrupted by moments of revolution that reoriented society toward new directions.

Central to the formulation of these new ideas were the terms “evolution” and “revolution,” both of which acquired new meanings in the late-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries — meanings semantically opposed to their previous definitions. In this time, “evolution,” came to denote the changes in the inherited characteristics of biological populations over successive generations and derived from the word *evolutio*, which meant the unrolling of a scroll in order to read it. That original definition carried religious implications, referring to a record of time that had been fully known to the Divine Creator from the beginning and was characterized by a continuity rather than change.

In the seventeenth-century the meaning of the ancient word revolution similarly incurred a radical reversal. Originally, a “revolution” was a mathematical or astronomical term that denoted rotation around an axis, and hence it was typically used figuratively to refer to any cycle, such as biological or historical cycles of growth, maturity, and decay, or the circular movement of celestial bodies. The idea that historical time was cyclical, destined to reenact the same cycles *ad infinitum*, was challenged in the eighteenth century. During Adam’s era, “revolution” came to refer to the sudden upheavals, particularly of political order, that ended one cycle and marked the beginning of another, which did not necessarily mirror the previous cycle. From the time of the

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22 Williams, *Keywords*, 120-123; and Peter Collins, *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture*, 31-2.
23 Ibid.
24 See Williams, *Keywords*, 270-4 and Reinhart Koselleck, “Historical Criteria of the Modern Concept of Revolution” in *Futures Past*, 43-57.
English Civil War (1642-1651), and certainly by the time of the Glorious Revolution of 1688, the word “revolution” had begun to mean a radical political change.

Adam’s use of the word “revolution,” then, summoned associations with the most effective and powerful means of cultural advancement. This was especially true because in eighteenth-century culture, the new ideas of “revolution” and “evolution” were closely allied with the continuously evolving ideas of “improvement” and “progress,” respectively. While “improvement,” a powerful engine that drove all cultural currents of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was invested with a strong sense of active, willful change, “progress” remained more closely related to larger forces, which evolved more slowly.

The characterization of Adam’s work as having made a break with the work of past architects, however, was in sharp contrast to the manner in which he described his contributions to architecture in the footnotes. There, he explained that his work participated in the centuries-long project to revive ancient architecture — a movement begun by Italian Renaissance and British Neo-Palladian architects. Thus, Adam perceived, paradoxically, that this revolutionary shift in British architectural taste was both a radical break with tradition and a refinement and improvement of earlier classical styles. He understood his work to have strong roots in Palladianism, including the work of Lord Burlington (1694-1753), William Kent (1685-1748), James Paine (1717-89), and Robert Taylor (1714-88). And while he credited Kent with the introduction of grotesque painting in interiors, he found even greater inspiration in the work of James Stuart (1713-88), who’s “Painted Room” at Spencer House in London (c.1759) was the most conspicuous precursor of Adam’s style. In his Works, Adam further recognized

Stuart for having “contributed greatly towards introducing the true style of antique decoration.”

Ultimately and innovatively, Adam’s discussion framed his work as part of an evolution of architectural forms and implied that the language of classical forms was a shared, increasingly refined language that derived from the collective experiences of people living in Western Europe. He and other British neoclassical architects largely believed that the importation of Italian Renaissance forms in the sixteenth century in the work of Inigo Jones (e.g. the Banqueting Hall and the Queen’s House), and the importation of classical theory in Henry Wotton’s Elements of Architecture (1624), had been natural stages in the evolution of Britain’s own architectural history, which was now brought into alignment with the true and universal style of the classical tradition. This expansive and enlightened point of view stood in stark contrast to the predominant public perception in England that Britain was violating her national heritage through importation of foreign traditions and idioms.

Although Adam does not reconcile or explain this inconsistency, it is conceivable that Adam had, actually, inchoately described his work as an embodiment of two different kinds of revolution. A recasting of evolution as a form of revolution was certainly “in the air” and would find articulation in writing of Edmund Burke. In his Reflections on the Revolution in France of 1790, Burke analyzed the language of the English Revolution of 1688 from the French Revolution of 1789, which were being confounded by certain political parties in England. He suggested that the principles behind each were fundamentally different, writing that the English Revolution was “natural” and that it embodied the natural rhythms of British history, as opposed to the

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26 Ibid., 1, n. 3.
unnatural revolution in France, which sought to sever the present from the past. Burke asserted further that the fundamental principles that drove revolutionary action in England in 1688 were the same as those within British governing doctrines, beginning with the Magna Carta (1215) and including the Declaration of Rights (1689), which led to the Bill of Rights (1689). Burke deemed all of these documents as organic expressions of the British “constitution” — meaning, the accumulated body of knowledge and traditional social, political, economic, and ideological structures that allow a culture to function and to evolve.  

(There is, of course, no British constitution in the sense of the written Constitution of the United States; it was not until the end of the eighteenth century that “constitution” came to refer to a paper document that imposed order through the delineation of a governing system.) Burke argued further that in writing a paper constitution, which did not reflect a French reality and had no connection with French history or experience, the French had “destroyed all of the balances and counterposes…which furnish sure correctives to any violent spirit which may prevail in any of the orders.” He further remarked, that “these balances existed in their oldest constitution, and in the constitution of this country, and in the constitutions of all the countries in Europe.”

In his complex and apparently dualistic claim to revolution, Adam’s text powerfully demonstrated eighteenth-century Britons’ acute awareness of the power of language to shape the perception of reality, to construct and to deconstruct our world, and, therefore, to create history. It also displayed the architect’s adroit, romantic

28 Edmund Burke, “Substance of the Speech of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke, in the Debate on the Army Estimates, in the House of Commons, on Tuesday, the 9th Day of February, 1790, Comprehending a Discussion of the Present Situation of Affairs in France” (London, 1790), 18.
sensitivity to cultural changes and his ability to exploit them for personal gain. Like many contemporary writers, especially Edmund Burke, Adam, too, realized that the most powerful “reality” is often not what happened, but what is written and remembered. And Adam, more than any other architect of his era, exploited this historical and psychological phenomenon.

**Adam’s “Revolutionary” Reputation**

In his bold claim of revolution, Adam also established the standard against which he would be measured in his own time and for centuries to come. Due to his substantial self-promotional efforts, consideration of Adam as a revolutionary architect, and the use of the term “revolution” to describe the force, breadth, and significance of his work, immediately became commonplace. His claim, however, provoked raised eyebrows from contemporaries. “Was there ever such a brace of self-puffing Scotch coxcombs?” exclaimed the English poet, scholar, and chaplain, Reverend William Mason (1724-1797). 29 The younger English architects William Porden (1755-1822) and Robert Smirke (1780-1867) likewise jeered that “no writer ever there was so arrogant as the Adams.”30 A pundit writing for the *Monthly Review* astutely observed that the Adams had made a misstep in heaping such uninhibited praise upon themselves, as it deterred others from bestowing on the talented brothers the critical praise they deserved; their claim of making a revolution, he wrote, “may, perhaps, be thought rather too assuming … [and] … is

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taking in a lofty style indeed! And we are the more sorry for it, as the ingenious authors have left us so much the less to say in their praise."\textsuperscript{31}

Disgust for Adam’s self-presentation as a revolutionary was expressed also by the period luminaries Samuel Johnson (1709-84) and Horace Walpole (1717-97) and prominent architects James Wyatt and Sir William Chambers (1723-96). Chambers’s adverse reaction survives in a letter:

Messieurs Adam have lately published a book of their ornaments, with a preface, rather presumptuous...in which they boast of having first brought about the true Style of Decoration into England and that all the architects of the present day are only servile copiers of their excellence. I do not agree with them in the first of these positions, and can produce many proofs against the last...\textsuperscript{32}

Although it is to be expected that Chambers, Adam’s rival, would be unsympathetic and negative, his remarks were rather humdrum and restrained in comparison with the pervasive and ferocious public disapproval.

Remarkably, however, and despite initial disapproval of Adam’s bravado, use of the word “revolution” to characterize the architect’s life and work was sustained as a historical artifact in nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholarship. A notable early nineteenth-century acknowledgement of Adam as a revolutionary figure came from Sir John Soane (1753-1837), in one of the lectures in architecture that he delivered in 1812 to the students at the Royal Academy: “To Mr. Adam’s taste in the ornament of his buildings...we stand indebted, inasmuch as manufacturers of every kind felt...the electric power of his revolution in art.”\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{31} Monthly Review, XLIX (Dec. 1773), 452. Also cited in Harris, British Architectural Books and Writers, 86.

\textsuperscript{32} Chambers’s letter to Lord Grantham; reprinted in Lees-Milne, Age of Adam, 149.

\textsuperscript{33} From Sir John Soane’s eleventh Royal Academy lecture (1812); cited in John Soane and Arthur T. Bolton, Lectures on Architecture: As Delivered to the Students of the Royal Academy from 1809 to 1836 in Two Courses of Six Lectures Each (London: Sir John Soane's Museum, 1929), 288. Here, Bolton also discussed the origin of the young John Soane’s admiration of Adam’s work.
The late nineteenth century witnessed the nadir of Adam’s posthumous reputation and an occasional abandonment of his portrayal as a revolutionary. Royal Academician, architect, and garden designer Sir Reginald Blomfield (1856-1942) was Adam’s most colorful and derisive critic in that period. Writing in 1897, he pointedly categorized Adam’s work as unoriginal, derivative, devoid of “the energy of intelligence…feminine in quality and steeped in affectation.”³⁴ Adam’s art, he pronounced, was essentially a contemptible development, “evidence of the slow decay [that overtook] the once magnificent school of English architecture.”³⁵ In a lecture delivered in 1976, architectural historian Sir John Summerson (1904-92) insightfully commented upon Blomfield’s purblind perspective on the work of Adam and his contemporaries: “[Blomfield] enjoyed everything about classical architecture except its classicism…while it was a noble thing to use the classical language it was ignoble and un-English to pay a very strict attention to the grammar.”³⁶

The early twentieth scholarship on Adam might productively be seen as a swift and strong reaction against Blomfield’s rancorous portrait of one of Britain’s most prolific and emulated artists. The value and impact of Adam’s work was first recognized fully in the early twentieth century with the publication in 1904 of the first monograph on the Scottish architect, by Percy Fitzgerald. In the preface the author pronounced: “For many years now have I been striving to secure recognition for that gifted architect and

artist, Robert Adam.” Throughout the twentieth century a wholly positive assessment of Adam’s work and the use of “revolutionary” as characteristic of his contributions gained widespread acceptance. This development acted not only to validate a self-assessment that eighteenth- and nineteenth-century critics had deemed false and overly-aggrandizing, but also duly acknowledged Adam’s singular impact and pivotal role in the history of Western architecture.

The work of the art historian Arthur Bolton (1864-1945), who was also active in the early twentieth century, launched a more effective and sustained campaign to rehabilitate Adam’s reputation through delivery of a series of three lectures presented at the Royal Academy of Arts in 1920 and published in the Academy’s Journal in the same year. In these lectures, Bolton wholly dismissed nineteenth-century descriptions of Adam’s designs as eclectic and effete machinations of a decorator disastrously and triflingly obsessed with ornament, to cast him freshly as an innovative and transformative artist. Adam was “no mere ornamentist,” Bolton professed, and he praised the architect as being responsible for singlehandedly ushering in a new, modern era in British architecture, which would culminate in the mature work of John Soane.

Bolton looked carefully into the nature of architectural changes that Adam had sought to beget. He located the “root” of Adam’s “revolution” in the idea that “the domestic architecture of the Greeks and Romans was entirely distinct from that of their

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Bolton lucidly explained that the central significance of this proposition was that it questioned the validity of the Renaissance system of the orders, which had governed the practice of architecture since the early sixteenth century. He, however, showed no interest in relating Adam’s work to eighteenth-century aesthetic theory, a nexus that reveals some of the most revolutionary aspects of Adam’s innovations.

Following Bolton’s trio of essays, the idea of Adam as a revolutionary artist gained momentum in the work of Summerson. In *Georgian London* (1946), he vividly and conspicuously framed and, in fact, doused his reader with references to Adam as a revolutionary architect, responsible in large part for anointing the second half of the eighteenth century as a golden age in British architecture. In a relatively brief section devoted to Adam and Chambers, Summerson used the term “revolution” liberally, and wrote that “Adam initiated what was at once recognized as a revolution in taste and in the whole approach to domestic design,” and that “he revolutionized the use of ornament and the revolution was felt not only throughout the building trade, but in furniture, and even in textiles and pottery.” He then remarked that “building tradesmen went mad over the Adam ‘revolution’ and brought it to every little street and every shop-front of later Georgian London.” Moreover, Summerson incorporated into his argument the English architect and carpenter William Pain’s (c.1730 – c.1790) reference to the inspired Scot in his popular *Practical Builder* (1774); here, Pain remarked upon the “very great Revolution” that was enlivening the “ornamental department” of architecture and
illustrated his argument with Adamitic designs.\textsuperscript{44} Finally, Summerson related that Adam’s innovations were neither instantaneously nor universally adopted, stating that “it took a few years for the Adam revolution to take effect”\textsuperscript{45} and that “the Adam revolution was not approved by everybody,” including Chambers.\textsuperscript{46}

The Viennese historian Emil Kaufmann (1891-1953) offered the sole authoritative dissent to the parade of Adam-panegyrics in the twentieth century. In his posthumously published \textit{Architecture of the Age of Reason} (1955), he described the progressive architect as “merely a decadent heir, than an innovator, let alone a revolutionary.”\textsuperscript{47} Kaufmann rejected outright one of the architect’s chief revolutionary claims, describing Adam’s work as a collection of forms devoid of movement: “all the features in his works look frozen.”\textsuperscript{48} He underscored this denigrating claim, writing further that Adam’s designs exemplified the “Frozen Baroque” style.\textsuperscript{49} No doubt Kaufmann’s critiques were grounded in his training in French academic classicism; Adam’s work, like the man himself, stood outside the academy, and much of the richness and meaning in his work falls away if examined within the strict framework of Continental academic neoclassical tenets, rather than within the flexible tradition of British empiricism.

Scholarship produced in the final third of the twentieth century and the early twenty-first century unilaterally accepted Adam’s status as a “revolutionary” figure. This period also witnessed a study stream of significant publications (including two separate two-volume catalogs of Adam’s architectural work) and a series of museum exhibitions

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 135.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 136.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.
on his architectural designs and his publication, the *Ruins of the Palace of the Emperor Diocletian at Spalatro in Dalmatia* (London, 1764).\textsuperscript{50} Writing on Adam in this period has increasingly aligned his designs with the picturesque and has begun to contextualize his work within eighteenth-century aesthetic theory.\textsuperscript{51}

**A Revolutionary in Other Fields**

Part of Adam’s historical significance also lies in his role as an agent of dramatic change in occupations that sustained and were closely related to the field of architecture. His involvement in this kaleidoscopic array of activities includes some of the most compelling and important examples of late eighteenth-century British architectural practice, as he was among the very few professionals who were capable of providing a comprehensive array of services to clients as a surveyor, builder, decorator, and art dealer. Like his father and brothers, Adam also remained an avid manufacturer and investor in branches of building trades throughout his long career, and, with famous and tragic lack of success, tried his hand at speculative building.

Additionally, his efforts in self-promotion were peerless and exhaustive, attracting the attention of writers even in his own time. In the early stages of his practice, Adam notably garnered prestige and strengthened the health and scope of his financial prospects as a collector, connoisseur, and antiquarian. Adam, in fact, became a lodestar in self-aggrandizement, branding, and modern marketing strategies, as one of the first writers to

\textsuperscript{50} Catalogs of Adam’s complete works are found in Arthur Bolton’s two-volume *Architecture of Robert & James Adam (1758-1794)* (London: Country Life, 1922) and David King’s *Complete Works of Robert and James Adam* (Oxford: Architectural Press, 2001).

address through both word and image the emergent “new” public, and to author a publication specifically for a new kind of public actor, the architectural connoisseur.

Examination of his working practices both sharpens the picture of the intellectual and cultural conditions that gave rise to an architect such as Adam, and provides a window into the peculiar and inimitable professional character that he self-consciously sculpted and willed into existence. The multitudinous achievements of this accomplished professional set high benchmarks for his competitors. The only other eighteenth-century architects who might share Adam’s status as a *uomo universale* were his contemporaries Robert Mylne (1733-1811) and Chambers.

His activity in occupations outside architecture has been previously recognized. An obituary in the *Gentleman’s Magazine* was among the earliest sources to acknowledge Adam’s impressive contributions to other fields, noting that “his talents extended beyond the line of his own profession.” It would take nearly two centuries, however, for scholars to begin to isolate and explore the nature and significance of Adam’s “extra-curricular” feats. Eileen Harris, A. A. Tait, and Iain Gordon Brown, for example, have called for greater appreciation of his innovative furniture designs, picturesque landscape drawings and paintings, and authorship of two important books, the *Ruins* and the *Works*. Alistair Rowan has shed light on the precise nature of the

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business activities and abilities not only of Robert, but also his father and brothers. Adam’s work as an art dealer has been more closely examined in a recent essay by Jonathan Yarker.

A Fresh Look at Adam’s Revolution

This dissertation joins late-twentieth- and twenty-first-century scholarship in the project to articulate more fully the nature and historical relevance of Adam’s many revolutionary contributions, and to provide a compelling portrait of the historical contexts that produced and supported such an avant-garde figure. It mirrors earlier studies on Adam in its use of the term “revolution” both as a discursive framing device and point of departure for consideration of an architect whose work signaled the dawn of the modern era in British architecture. Building on the work of Eileen Harris and A. A. Tait, this thesis also marshals Adam’s insights on his own working methods and practices, which are scattered throughout his correspondence, and the prefaces of Ruins and the Works, to argue for consideration of his writing as a vital source for the appreciation and deeper understanding of his built works, and the formation of Adam’s professional identity.

Closer examination of Adam’s revolution also contributes to the recent project of considering eighteenth-century architecture independently of nineteenth- and twentieth-


Sir John Clerk of Penicuik’s discovery around 1950 of letters that Adam wrote (about once per week) while on the Continent from 1754-1757 greatly expanded our knowledge of Adam. They are housed at H. M. Register House in Edinburgh.
century historiography. Much of this scholarship has been a quest to mine the eighteenth-century for the roots of modernism, and it became a commonplace to identify eighteenth-century classicism, pluralism, and eclecticism with a lack of invention and any kind of creative energy. Allegedly dizzied, disoriented and stifled by the introduction of relativism, eighteenth-century architects were frequently characterized as producing haphazard, ill-conceived designs, which drew randomly from a variety of forms from foreign countries and from various historical periods, rather than from indigenous storehouses of British inspiration. This perception still strongly colors understanding of Georgian building in general and Adam’s work in particular, and it is among the misconstruals that the following discussions seek to adjust.57

Third, this project also contributes to the field as part of the movement to consider monographic studies as rewarding sources for unprecedented insights and knowledge, rather than as homogenous and elementary studies, useful principally as foundational texts for more advanced work.58 It is dedicated to articulating in new ways Adam’s significance as an architect and writer on architecture, and more broadly as a cultural figure, and draws on biographical aspects of Adam’s life and those around him, formal analysis, and methods of social and cultural history to portray him as an artist who epitomized his epoch in his own development and achievements, and who lived a life that

57 The first scholar to reframe the eighteenth century as a zenith, rather than nadir of English design was Albert Richardson. Richardson taught at the Bartlett School and produced a series of books from the 1900s to the 1940s examining the native tradition in Britain, beginning with *Monumental Classical Architecture in Great Britain and Ireland during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (1914). Richardson’s contemporary, Steen Eiler Rasmussen, also produced some of the first work to concentrate on the eighteenth century as a crucial moment in the development of a distinctive English urban form and a high point in the British architectural tradition. Yet it was not until the work of their student John Summerson that the ideas of Richardson and Rasmussen would reach full development and the narrative of British architecture would be re-written.

was in itself a work of art. This dissertation also weakens the tendency in our discipline to regard the genre of monographs as synonymous with chronological reconstructions of an artist’s life, in which the works of the artist are treated as chapters in a life story, by avoiding this format all together.

In considering Robert Adam apart from his art work, exploring also his importance as a writer, thinker, businessman, and as a leader in the project to professionalize architecture, this project assumes that full understanding of Adam’s work can only be achieved through concomitant study of his life and culture. This assumption is, in turn, based on the beliefs that Adam’s work was a direct result of his deep and constant engagement with the greatest minds of the Enlightenment in Britain, and that monographs function most productively when the study the artist’s cultural and sociohistorical conditions are deeply considered. A valid concern that arises for art historical scholarship in this model, including my dissertation, however, is that the sections that deal with a cultural significance often do not illuminate the central subject matter of art history – visual form.

Finally, this dissertation takes steps to dismantle some of the troubling and controversial tropes that have been advanced in the majority of monographic studies in art history. These are three: first, the celebration of the individuality and the “genius,” of the self-made and self-reliant, maverick male artist, who has risen above the limitations of his contemporaries to achieve singular greatness; second, the tendency to consider this purported “genius” as a symbol of the best of human nature and achievement, and even as the paradigmatic case of what it means to be a human being and to achieve selfhood, or the state of having an individual identity, itself; and, third, the pervasive idea that an
artist’s significance depends on his or her innovation in a particular media. My project erodes some of their infrastructures through deliberate framing of the conception of “genius” as a social construct intended to protect and fortify male hegemony (rather than as a rare, divinely-endowed personality trait), and in its examination of a broader set of questions regarding the emergence of notions of artistic identity in the modern period, including professionalization, publication, and the artist’s new reliance on literature, especially philosophy, in the composition of theory and conceptualization of form. Furthermore, this dissertation places equal stress on Adam’s significance as a revolutionary innovator and as a figure who typified his era — he certainly was a logical, although extraordinary, product of the circumstances and conditions around him. My analysis also casts him as an artist valued not only for innovation, but also for the cultivation and meticulous and long-term development of a single visual idiom, the Adam Style, which eventually became a conventional and a traditional mode of expression.
2. Adam the Professional Architect

Robert Adam (1728-92) lived in an era that witnessed the emergence of the professional architect, and he made significant contributions to elevate the practice of architecture and to emancipate it from other closely-related occupations. His innovations and skill in conceptualizing designs and producing elegant architectural renderings were exceptional, and were galvanized by his strong ambition and abundant family resources. Adam’s belief that the central task of an architect was designing, and his precocious insistence on the separation of the occupations of architect and builder both significantly contributed to the professionalization of architecture in Britain and the advent of widespread public recognition of architects as elite members of society with specialized training and skills. Adam’s unusually comprehensive education and his affiliation with a variety of elite professional institutions further distinguished him from his peers and provided models for his predecessors. Moreover, his complex and diverse interactions with patrons provide crucial insight into the environment and challenges that professional British eighteenth-century architects faced while working within the constricting and precarious patronage system.

Designer, Draftsman, and “Contriver of Everything”

Designer and Draftsman

Robert Adam’s life story intermingles with the creation of many of the most significant architectural monuments of the second half of the eighteenth century in Britain, and the design and construction of architecture surrounded him from his first
breath to his last. In the year of his birth, his father, the Scottish architect and builder William Adam (1689-1748, Figure 2.1), was preoccupied with supervision of the construction of great Georgian Scottish mansions of his design – Hopetoun House (1721-48) and Arniston House (1726-30) – both of which Robert and his brothers would complete after their father’s death.\(^{59}\) In the year before Robert was born, William witnessed completion of the construction of Mavisbank House (1723-27), the first Palladian villa in Scotland, which he had also designed.\(^{60}\) At the time of his death, Robert was supervising eight public works and twenty-five private buildings, including the construction of major architectural commissions in England and Scotland: speculative houses on Portland Place (1773-94) and Fitzroy Square (1790-94) in London; and Charlotte Square (1791-94) in Edinburgh, where he was also overseeing the Register House (1774-92) and the new buildings (1785-93) for the University of Edinburgh.\(^{61}\)

Throughout his long career, in both England and Scotland, Adam had his hand in the design of at least twenty public buildings, five churches, eighteen London houses, fifty-three country houses, twelve castles, six mausoleums, seven bridges, and an array of various structures for country estates, including entrance screens, tea houses, garden follies, stables, conservatories, and fishing lodges.\(^{62}\) His commissions were chiefly for remodel projects, but he did design a few buildings in their entirety, including the Adelphi (1768-74, Figure 2.2), the University of Edinburgh (1789 ff.), and the Register

\(^{59}\) Hopetoun House was completed between 1750 and 1757; Arniston House was completed between 1754 and 1758.

\(^{60}\) William was trained by his father, John Adam, a stone mason, and then Sir William Bruce, the architect who introduced the Renaissance style to Scotland and is best known for his work on the Palace of Holyrood House. For more on William Adam see John Gifford, *William Adam, 1689-1748: a Life and Times of Scotland's Universal Architect* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1989).


\(^{62}\) For a list of his complete works, see King, *Complete Works of Robert and James Adam*. 
House. Although he is most often celebrated for his elegant reinterpretation of classicism, Adam’s less-known and less-studied late designs for castles in Scotland and his sketches of Gothic fantasies, which he produced throughout his life, demonstrate versatility and skill in other styles.

Of all his designs, Adam’s houses, especially country houses, provide most insights into his artistic character. Like many architects, Adam relied on certain design strategies and developed preferences in the composition of nearly all his country house plans. Four of these strategies stand out among the rest. First, he had a tendency to design from the inside-out, giving primary attention to the visitor’s experience of interior spaces. This required him to make adjustments, sometimes highly conspicuous ones, to exterior façades in order to accommodate his internal agenda; John Fleming has noted that sometimes “to marry an elevation to a plan he resorted to devices which would have appalled a Palladian.”

Second, Adam relished the creation of “surprises” for inhabitants, principally through making subtle variations in the perceived depth and flatness of architectural spaces, and through the incorporation of unexpected openings between rooms. Third, he preferred to treat rooms and even transitional spaces, such as hallways and stairways, as architectural forms with their own aesthetic value, regardless of applied, cosmetic decoration. This resulted in the stringing together of many different kinds of plan shapes to create room circuits — especially ovals, octagons, circles, and squares, and the incorporation of wall niches, curved hallways and door frames, and columnar screens. Adam’s consistent use of circular rooms in his designs was unusual and

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63 John Fleming has noted that “at Cumbernauld, for instance, windows which are round-headed outside have to be square-headed within; at the Drum of the great Venetian window, which is the centre-piece of the entrance front, lights an insignificant parlous and not, as might be expected, the grand salone; while at Duff House all attempt at orderly fenestration is abandoned on the flanks” (John Fleming, Adam Robert Adam and His Circle: In Edinburgh & Rome (London: J. Murray, 1962), 72-3).
noteworthy; while the circle was considered by most eighteenth-century architects to be the strongest, and most beautiful and “capacious” shape, it was also thought to be the most expensive and the worst for the distribution of light.64 Fourth, many of Adam’s interiors suffer from awkward formal moments in corners, such as colliding, partially-truncated door and window frames — what Alistair Rowan calls “Adam’s architecture of collision.”65

A handful of other design attributes are commonly associated with Adam’s work. He was well-known for his meticulously-composed ceiling designs, which were typically the first drawing that he made, and dictated the layout and decoration of the remainder of a room; he also often insisted upon low ceilings, as compared to Palladian proportional ideals. In accordance with the Palladian tradition, Adam preferred to isolate kitchens (sources of loud and sudden sounds, strong odors, and heat) from the principal interior room circuits. Aside from the arrangement of architectural forms, among Adam’s most popular and celebrated achievements were the decorative and ornamental aspects of his interior designs, and his use of vibrant hues.66 His exceptional ability to create a unified decorative program for a suite of rooms, while maintaining variety, resonated strongly

64 In his fourth Royal Academy lecture, for example, Professor of Architecture Thomas Sandby related: “The advantages of an entire circle are great; it is the most capacious of all the figures, the strongest and most beautiful. But the disadvantages are also many: it is the most expensive; the worst of all figures for the distribution of light, & in dividing it internally, much space will be lost in the curvature of spandrels” (SaT 1/1, Lecture 4, ff. 30-1).

65 Professor Alistair Rowan in conversation with the author at Chandos House in London, September 2015. Professor Conor Lucey has remarked in conversation with the author that these “collisions” were “perhaps also a consequence of building by proxy (from London) without direct supervision,” and that they should be considered as a common problem that plagued eighteenth-century building practices — and deeply annoyed architects, including William Chambers, who remarked in his correspondence that such collisions were a result of the incompetence of builders.

with the coincident late-eighteenth-century development of the four-movement symphony, exemplified in the work of Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-91).\textsuperscript{67}

Adam consistently felt uncomfortable using pattern books and adapting the designs of others, although he often did so out of necessity. He preferred instead to search their work for ideas to inspire his own design inventions. Adam’s time in Italy from 1754-57 was a watershed in the development of this ambition to invent. In a letter from Rome to his sister Peggy (Margaret) on 5 March 1755, he wrote, “I hope to be able to invent great things if I should never be able to execute one — that’s my ambition.”\textsuperscript{68}

Adam explained further on 4 July 1755 that his creative energies were stirred most by the work of the great Italian print-maker Giovanni Battista Piranesi, rhapsodizing that his “amazing and ingenious fancies…are the greatest fund for inspiring and instilling invention in any lover of architecture that can be imagined.”\textsuperscript{69} After returning from the Continent in January of 1758, Adam nearly completely abandoned the consultation of pattern books and any ambition to create them, allowing his own taste to govern.

Adam’s design work was communicated through drawings, and his methods of making them were attuned to the requirements of doing business and making art in the second half of the eighteenth century. Like many well-known architects, Adam sometimes arranged for clients to purchase only a building design, providing drawings that would be handed over to a local architect or builder to oversee construction. In these cases, it was common for significant modifications to be made to the design, especially with respect to decorative details, the execution of which was often too expensive for the

\textsuperscript{67} I would like to thank Professor E. J. Johnson for this rich and clever insight.
\textsuperscript{68} Cited in Fleming, \textit{Adam Robert Adam}, 144.
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., 167.
client or beyond the capabilities of local tradesmen. By the final stages of his career, Adam had developed fixed rates for the production of drawings alone: “if a house was not to cost five hundred Pound he charged twenty Pound for the Plan,” wrote one of his sisters, “if it came above a thousand [sic] then he charged one percent.” Adam also charged clients for additional drawings, and alterations to drawings that were required during the planning or construction phases of building.

Adam was admired equally for his work as a designer and draftsman, and much of his success in the creation of drawings and prints is attributable to the talent and efficiency of his many clerks. By 1767, the Adam Office in London employed at least fourteen clerks under the direction of a chief draftsman, Robert Morison. Adam instructed them to “become equal to [their] Neighbors;” this meant that they should develop a consistent, collective style – the Adam Style – rather than individual ones. At least two of his draftsman, the Italian decorative artists Antonio Zucchi (1726-95) and Giuseppe Manocchi (1731-82), would not only produce designs in the Adam Style, but they would also develop it.

As a draughtsman, Adam made at least four notable innovations. First, he played a leading role in the development of the developed surface drawing, the most important and peculiar architectural drawing type of the eighteenth century.

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72 Ibid.
73 Ibid. Tait speculated that James brought back both of these artists when he returned from Italy in 1763.
74 The “developed surface” drawing was also known as the “laid-out interior.” See Robin Evans, “The Developed Surface: An Enquiry into the Brief Life of an Eighteenth-Century Drawing Technique,” Translations from Drawing to Building and Other Essays (London, Architectural Association, 1997), 208.
showing elevation drawings of the ceiling and walls folded-out on a single sheet. (Figure 2.3) Adam used this format frequently for presentation drawings for clients and working drawings for his decorating teams.

Second, more than any other British architect of the eighteenth-century, Adam advanced the dramatic development and increased production of architectural drawings of interiors and decorative objects. This output derives in large part to his environment: for the first time in history, in the eighteenth century a significant amount of any British architect’s work was focused on the design and decoration of interiors. 75

Third, Adam participated in the period’s innovative peopling of architectural drawings. Showing spaces populated with imagined visitors exercised the architect’s capacity to imagine the use and social significance of architectural space. Finally, he expanded the use of color in architectural representation, an eye-catching trend that appealed strongly to clients and served higher cultural purposes. In the preface to the first fascicle of the first volume of the Works (1773), in fact, Adam explained precisely the usefulness of adding color to his designs:

We have thought it proper to colour with the tints, used in the execution, a few copies of each number, not only that posterity might be enabled to judge with more accuracy concerning the taste of the present age, and that foreign connoisseurs might have it in their power to indulge their curiosity with respect to our national style of ornament; but that the public in general might have an opportunity of cultivating the beautiful art of decoration, hitherto so little understood in most of the countries of Europe. 76

75 This development was paralleled in France. See Meredith Martin, “The Ascendency of the Interior in 18thc French Architectural Theory” in Architectural Space in Eighteenth-Century Europe: Constructing Identities and Interiors, Denise Amy Baxter & Meredith Martin (eds.) (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 18-23.
The watercolor pigments on his drawings, however, differed from those that adorned his interiors, which were typically richer in that context because they were suspended in oil.77

Adam’s work on paper is astonishing both for its quality and quantity. He worked unstintingly to produce not only informative and accurate drawings, but also beautiful objects that could be evaluated and admired in their own right. He remained intensely aware that architectural commissions could be won by making attractive drawings with seductive pictorial and picturesque effects, regardless of (and sometimes in spite of) the quality of the design. While in Rome, Robert communicated with his brother James his belief that “a design in itself neither immensely ingenious nor surprising may appear excessively so” through the elegant rendering of articulating ornaments, bas-reliefs, and statues.78

Many of Adam’s works on paper survive.79 Nearly nine-thousand drawings by Robert and the other members of his family are held in the Sir John Soane Museum, shrewdly purchased by Soane in 1833 for £200.80 The museum preserves drawings and sketches for many of Robert’s built architectural monuments, decorative work and furnishings, and unrealized monuments and architectural fantasies. Following the demise of the speculative Adelphi project in 1772, and until the end of his life in 1792, Adam,

77 I would like to thank Professor Lucey for reminding me of this.
78 Cited in Fleming, Robert Adam, 162.
who in the early years of his life had aspired to be a painter, found a vital emotional
outlet and an enjoyable pastime in the production of romantic landscape paintings in ink-
wash and watercolor (Figure 2.4). Many of these paintings are known: some thirty
watercolors of thatched cottages survive at Blair Adam, several more are in the Soane
Museum (Adam drawings, Vol. II, ff. 141-49), and there are at least three in the National
Gallery of Scotland (D.444, D 445, & D447).\(^{81}\)

While the enormity of Adam’s talent and the fecundity of his creative prowess are
undeniable, he was not unique in making a prodigious number of drawings. Every artist
and architect produced more drawings in the eighteenth century than in any previous era.
In part, this productivity was made possible by dramatic increases and refinements in
paper production.\(^{82}\) In this the two most important developments were the introduction of
the rag-engine or Hollander, invented by Dutch paper makers sometime before 1670,
which replaced primitive stamping mills in processing fiber, and the introduction of the
first smooth and unlined, “wove” paper in 1757. With these advances came the ability to
manufacture new, oversized sheets of paper, which naturally enough stimulated the
creation of large drawings of buildings.

The nature and extent of Adam’s creativity and productivity astonished those
around him. For this exuberant artist, to live was to make things. Saturated with nervous
and boundless creative energy, he nearly never stopped drawing. In the late 1770s,
Adam’s brother-in-law the Scottish printmaker and writer John Clerk of Eldin (1728-

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1812) remarked that Robert “never for a moment could be idle.” Robert could draw with unusual rapidity, a complement of his agile and fertile mind. His brother, James, a highly skilled architectural draughtsman himself, mused, “I believe he can draw plans faster that I can draw cornishes.” Throughout his career, Adam’s drawings consistently demonstrated his strong interests in chiaroscuro effects and his mastery of architectural decoration and ornament. He was less interested in creating perspectival and geometric renderings.

The all-consuming romance, passion, and fertility, that characterize Adam’s artistic life left little energy and time for the cultivation of personal relationships. He appears to have conserved his emotional and physical energy almost exclusively for his work, as no lasting romantic relationships or children are known. Adam openly declared to family and friends that passion for work prevented him from falling in love. His letters attest to a few passing attachments before he left for his Grand Tour, and in Rome, a young English woman, Diana Molyneux seemingly mesmerized him. But of her, Robert wrote, “If my heart were not as hard as iron I would undoubtedly be head over ears and desperation in love. But, thank God, my plans and elevations and Baths and virtu have a surprising effect to keep down that passion.”

Adam also increasingly shunned investment in strong family ties, despite artistic and business partnerships with his father and brothers. Even during the darkest hours

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84 Ibid., 61.
85 Of the four brothers, only John would marry (Jean Ramsay, in 1750).
88 Especially as a young man, Robert appears to have been very close with his family, especially his mother and sisters. In addition to his three brothers, he had six sisters: Janet (Jenny), Helen (Nelly, or Nell), Mary, Elizabeth (Betty, or Bess), Susannah, and Margaret (Peggy). (Three additional siblings died in infancy.)
for himself and his family in the mid-1770s and 1780s, he remained withdrawn, watching in silence while the Adam family businesses slid into financial ruin, and their familial relations dissolved. When his brother John sat face-to-face with Robert in the mid-1780s to consult with him about the devastating financial state of affairs of their family, he lamented that “Robert never opened his mouth.”

“Contriver of Everything”

In Adam’s era, as in the Renaissance, it was usual for an architect to work on varied projects — an impossibly wide spectrum of activity when seen from today’s perspective. While on the Grand Tour, he yearned to earn the commission for re-planning the city of Lisbon, which had been nearly completely destroyed in 1755 by an earthquake and subsequent tsunami and fires. Later, Adam aimed to make a name for himself as a measurer of ancient buildings and to publish a revised version of Antoine Desgodetz’s *Les Edifices antiques de Rome dessinés et mesurés très exactement* (Paris, 1682).

Toward the end of his tour, he mentioned a plan to produce a “very tolerable work” of

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Early in his tour, when in Florence, he assured his family in Edinburgh that they were always in his thoughts; he wrote to his sister “Bess”: “You will be apt to imagine these towns where I am traversing about have made me forget my good sober Edinburgh habitation. Far from it. I, in the midst of these harpies of strangers here, trace you all from top to bottom and consider all your faces, your persons, your dresses that you wear, the rooms you are in, your manner of life and in short I often look out to the deer park, survey its winding paths and stretch my eyes to the wonted sick-bed of old Crummy, reduced by Jack’s too feeling heart to that lamentable situation. I pursue you to your pantry. I think it is quite cured of damps. I assist you in sending some bottles from stinking catacombs and stepping into the kitchen by and by, lick a little good preserves and other curious workmanship of your invention.” He also wrote that he would, in imagination, step down to John’s drawing office and “divert myself with his gifts,” and after supper he was accompany Jamie to their study and having killed a few spiders go to bed. “May the Lord bless and take care of you all particularly, though he should not be so anxiously concerned about the rest of the world, is the sincere with of, my dear Bess, your R.A.” (Cited in Fleming, *Robert Adam*, 142).


designs of Greek architecture that would “rival Stuart and Revett’s.” Despite these sweeping, wide-eyed, dreams and his immense talent, Adam’s career would instead be marked by other glorious achievements in the remodeling and creation of single buildings, interior design, and the creation of books that illustrated a single Roman palace and his own innovative designs.

The extraordinary range of Adam’s creative output included designs for furniture and decorative objects, as well as architecture. Detailed drawings survive for garden follies, tombs, carpets, chimneypieces, fireboards, fireplace fenders and grates, stoves and stove-grate escutcheons, staircases, balustrades, ceilings, built-in bookcases, brackets, tripods, mirrors, tables, clocks, door knockers, lamps, organ casings, trophies, door handles, plates, chandeliers, candelabras, curtain cornices (or pelmets), window shutters, commodes, mirrors, girandoles, seat furniture, beds, pedestals, keyhole covers, inkwells, silverware and glassware. Adam’s designs also include a silver-gilt racing cup (1764) for the Scottish merchant Thomas Dundas (1708-86); a harpsichord and square piano (both 1774) for Catherine II (Catherine the Great), empress of Russia (r. 1762-96); a sphinx-footed sedan chair topped with a gold crown (1771) for Queen Charlotte (1744-1818, the wife of George III); a sundial stand (1765-67) for the estate at Croome Court; and a work bag for a patron’s wife.93

Adam’s greatest rival, Chambers, assembled a nearly equally varied portfolio of commissions. Two of his more diverting works were a gilded coronation stage coach (the Gold Stage Coach) for George III, and the “archisculptural” Dunmore Pineapple at

92 The mention of intending to write a book of Greek designs is cited in Yarwood, Robert Adam and Scotland, 80.
93 See King, Complete Works of Robert and James Adam, 29 & 376; and Roderick Graham, Arbiter of Elegance: A Biography of Robert Adam (Edinburgh: Birlinn, Ltd., 2009), xii.
Falkirk in Scotland (1761), one of the most bizarre monuments of the eighteenth century. Chambers also contributed designs for Christopher Pinchbeck’s architectonic astronomical clock (1768), and designed dozens of decorative objects in silver and ormolu for the royal family.  

A particularly interesting case study of variety in eighteenth-century architectural output from a single designer is found in the work of Adam’s friend and mentor, the architect and Professor of Architecture at the Royal Academy (1768-98), Thomas Sandby (1721-98). He built very little in his architectural career compared to Adam and Chambers, yet his work was strikingly varied. Sandby would design private houses near Windsor, including St. Leonard’s Hill for the duchess of Gloucester and Holly Grove (now Forest Lodge) for Colonel Deacon; an extension of Great Lodge at Windsor Great Park; Norbury Park in Mickleham, Surrey (1774) for William Lock; the Freemasons’ Hall (1775-6); an architectural framework in Saint George's Chapel for Benjamin West's altarpiece (1782); bleach works (1785) at Lleweni in the Vale of Clwyd, near Denbigh for Thomas Fitzmaurice; a stone bridge (1792-7, failed in 1799) over the Thames at Staines; dams at Virginia Water; and he may have been involved in house-building in London.  

In the 1780s, Sandby designed a three-story gothic tower for Mr. Temple Simon Luttrell, near the coastal village Calshot, in Hampshire; this stuccoed yellow-brick folly, known as “Luttrell’s Tower,” has a six-story circular stair turret and an extensive cellar with a tunnel that leads to the beach below. However, even measured against the

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varied commissions undertaken by Chambers, Sandby, and other eighteenth-century architects, Adam’s spectrum of design was wider than his contemporaries. He was among the first architects to be considered an “all-over” designer, a distinction that prefigured nineteenth-century developments.

The multi-media design work of Adam and his contemporaries was based on the Italian Renaissance conception of *disegno*. This powerful idea, which found reception throughout Europe beginning in the sixteenth century, encapsulated the belief that the artistic process is founded on constant, universal principals, applicable to the design of any form. Among others, this notion allowed architecture to be considered an art, rather than a science, and it emancipated the architect from the stricture that he designs only buildings — the composition of which was inherently more constrained and limited than artistic work in other media.

A compellingly period source that testifies to contemporary perceptions of the architect’s far-flung imaginative reach and output is Samuel Johnson’s *Dictionary*. While the first two definitions for “architect” are prosaic (“professor of the art of architecture,” and “contriver of a building; a builder”) the final two open a window on the architect’s multiple identities: “the contriver or former of any compound body” and “the contriver of anything.”

Emphasis on the architect’s cognitive, rather than mechanical abilities is implied by the verb “contrive,” a synonym of “invent” and “imagine,” which denote mental rather than physical production. Of all eighteenth-century architects in Britain, Adam best matched the definition of “contriver of anything.”

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96 Samuel Johnson, *A dictionary of the English language: in which the words are deduced from their originals, and illustrated in their different significations by examples from the best writers. ... By Samuel Johnson, LL.D. In two volumes. ... Volume 1. The second edition. London, 1755-56 & the eighth edition; corrected and revised. London, 1799. The definition remained constant in later editions of Johnson’s dictionary at least until the end of the 18th century.
While Johnson’s third and fourth definitions echoed the Renaissance conception of the architect as a nearly supernatural inventor, they also suggested an analogy between the architect-contriver and the Divine Creator, which was also common in Renaissance culture. A work by English naturalist John Ray (1627-1705) was the source for the third definition, which is taken from his three-volume work on natural theology, published in the 1690s, the most well-known volume being *Wisdom of God Manifested in the Works of the Creation* (1691). While “architect” took on biblical connotations throughout the early modern world, as it had during the Middle Ages, Joseph Rykwert has pointed out that it is not a biblical term, although it does appear frequently in Neo-Platonic texts, masonic literature, Spanish Jesuits texts, and in the ancient work on architecture by Vitruvius.97

These expansive, metaphoric definitions of “architect” find reinforcement in the definition of the term “Architectonick,” offered in the *Builder’s Dictionary* (1734): “that which builds a Thing up regularly, according to the Nature and Intentions of it.” Notes that follow the definition explained the natural analogy in more explicit terms, postulating that “the Term is usually apply’d to that plastic Power, Spirit, or whatever else it be, which hatches the Ova of Females into living Creatures, which is called the Architectonick Spirit; yet it is also apply’d to the chief Overseer of buildings, or an Architect.” Johnson’s *Dictionary* offered a similar, succinct definition of the “Architectonic”: “that which has the power or skill of an architect; that which can build or form anything.” Robert Adam was an architect in that sense of the word.

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Adam’s Professionalism, Education, & Institutional Affiliations

The Professional Architect in Eighteenth-Century Britain

In 1778 Adam wrote to his English client Charles Townley, “It is of little consequence to us what the practice is, among professional builders. We are not builders by profession, but Architects and Surveyors, & live by those Branches.”98 These words were penned in response to a letter from Townley in which he refused to pay Adam for sketches for a sky-lit sculpture gallery.99 It seems that Townley had argued that builders usually made no charge for making such designs, and Adam was swift in asserting that architects were different.100 Adam’s proud identification of himself as a professional architect was about a century ahead of its time, and his pointed response is one of the most revealing pieces of evidence in the reconstruction of his occupational identity. It is also one of several eighteenth-century legal disputes (records of which survive in court documents and letters) that provide useful information for understanding the status and struggle of the first generation of modern architects in Britain.101

Adam’s deft, progressive response efficiently communicated several significant points. First, he made clear that he is an architect, and that the professions of architect, builder, and surveyor are distinct. Second, Adam underscored the difference between

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100 For a brief discussion of this dispute see Viccy Coltman, Classical Sculpture and the Culture of Collecting In Britain Since 1760 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 204. The sketches are in the John Soane Museum, 27, 65, and 66. They are discussed by in Guilding’s “Robert Adam and Charles Townley,” 27-32.
builder and architect with respect to responsibilities and working practices. And third, while memorializing his own status as a professional, he equally identified the occupations of builder and surveyor as professions, rather than mere trades. Adam thus established himself as an important figure in the development of the modern architect’s identity as a professional, with duties and expectations distinct from those of other occupations related to the design and construction of buildings.

**Distinct Professions: Architect, Builder and Surveyor**

While Adam distinguished among architect, surveyors, and builders, they had overlapping skill sets, which allowed them to move nearly seamlessly among their closely-related occupations. Each typically had experience in the production and revision of building designs, the supervision of construction, mensuration, and estimation. While training in an architect’s office was desirable for a prospective architect, it was by no means essential. The author of a career guide published in London in 1747 reported that his informants “scarce know of any [architects] in England who have had an education regularly designed for the Profession. Bricklayers, Carpenters, etc. all [become] Architects; especially in and about London, where there go but few Rules to the building of a City-House.” More so in the eighteenth century than in the nineteenth, any ambitious craftsman who took the trouble to learn the orders found an avenue to the profession of architecture open to him.

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The transition from builder to architect was easily made, then, when there was no
great diversity of styles to learn, when pattern books were generally available, and when
building practices were standardized. An advertisement from a newspaper of 1753
demonstrated the ease of occupation-change: “Mr. (Robert) Brettingham is leaving off his
business of Mason, he intends to act in the character of an Architect, in drawing plans and
elevations, giving estimates, or putting our work, or measuring up any sort of building,
for any Gentleman in the Country.”\(^{103}\) Masons and carpenters in particular were well
prepared to retool themselves as architects because they were required to have skills in
architectural draughtsmanship and, indeed, in order to become full members of their
guilds or corporations, they had to pass a test to demonstrate this skill.\(^{104}\) However,
although skilled in building and architectural design and supervision, masons and
carpenters were not equipped to respond to rapid changes in taste.

It was also common for the same individual to provide clients with multiple
services. Adam’s contemporary, the Scottish architect Robert Mylne, for example, was
hired to be the surveyor, architect, and engineer of Blackfriar’s Bridge (1760-9),
according to a report of 22 January 1771.\(^{105}\) However, despite these overlaps, the focus of
an eighteenth-century architect’s work was relatively narrow: the preparation of designs
and estimates, and the supervision and coordination of subordinate trades.

Contemporary definitions of “architect” reiterated that artistic judgment and skill
in design were the defining characteristics of the architect. The *Builder’s Dictionary*
(1734) defined “Architect” as a “Master Workman…who designs the Model or draws the


plot, plan, or draught of the whole fabric; whose business it is to consider the whole manner and method of the building; and also to compute the charge and expense.” The London career guide of 1747 related that an “Architect is the Person who draws the design and plan of a palace, or other edifice…he describes, in profile, the whole building in all its proportional dimension…an architect…ought to be of no other employ; but must be a judge of work, and how it is executed to his design.”

As mentioned above, Johnson’s Dictionary defined an architect firstly as “a professor of the art of architecture.” The significance of this definition is two-fold: first, it provided evidence that architecture was considered an art, rather than a trade; and second, it explained that the architect was understood first to be an expert in an art form, rather than in one of the mechanical aspects of building. The term “professor” in this context does not to refer to a teacher or academic, but to one who professes to be an expert in some art or science – a “professional” – and is distinguished from an amateur. Johnson’s Dictionary defined “professor” as “one who publically practices or teaches an art.” The practice of using “professor” as a title prefixed to a name seems to have begun in 1706, but it was not explicitly and exclusively associated with academic posts until the nineteenth century.

The word “architect” appears to have been first used in Britain in the late sixteenth century, when it had strong associations with royalty and classicism. The Masters of Works and the Master Masons who were responsible for the design and construction of royal buildings, for example, were commonly called architects; they controlled expenditure and the employment of craftsmen and laborers, and supervised on-

site building activity, respectively. John Summerson has noted that “architect” was in use by the sixteenth century in Britain, albeit sparingly, and meant a craftsmen who was able to design and execute classical decorations; among the first craftsmen of classical forms in Britain included a group of Italian artists, who Henry VIII had hired to decorate royal estates. In the seventeenth century, “architect” additionally began to be associated with those who designed classical or Renaissance-style buildings; Inigo Jones (1573-1652) has thus often been deemed the first architect in Britain.

The literary use of the word architect in Britain traces its lineage back to the Renaissance texts that were inspired by the works of Vitruvius, and in this sturdy tradition “architect” is associated primarily with the theoretical work of design and the creation of drawings. One of the earliest British uses of the term is found in the work of the writer and diplomat Sir Henry Wotton (1586-1639). Conceived in response to his encounter with Renaissance culture, his Elements of Architecture (1624) asserted that the architect’s “glory doth more consist in the designment and Idea of the whole Work…to make the Form, which is the nobler part (as it were) triumph over the matter.”

In the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries “architect” was used variously in Britain to refer to a person who was responsible for the partial or full execution of a building’s design or construction, or one who patronized a building, inspired an architectural design, studied the theory of architecture, wrote about architecture, designed architectural ornament, or measured a building site. However, in the eighteenth century, it was uncommon for someone involved in any aspect of constructing a building to refer to himself as an architect or to be called one by others. It was more common to use the term

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“builder” or “surveyor” as an occupational title, and this was in part because the word architect was relatively new to Britain and was more prevalent in books, rather than in speech. This makes Adam’s resolute demand to be recognized an architect all the more notable.

The Separation of Architect and Builder

As Adam recognized, establishing a clear distinction between “architect” and “builder” remained the central task in defining the essential character and professional territory of the modern architect. This was a complex and mired project because many eighteenth-century architects were also builders, and even those who were primarily architects often acted as building contractors. In the eighteenth century it was also common for a local builder or another architect to revise an architect’s plan before construction commenced. Before Inigo Jones and Christopher Wren (1632-1723) most architectural designing in Britain had been carried on by builders.

Adam’s conception of the profession of architect derived from his exposure to Renaissance culture, which had begun in the fifteenth-century and spread to the rest of Europe in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. Under this influence, the task of the architect, unlike the builder, was increasingly equated with design as an intellectual process, which valued invention and judgment more than the practical skills of construction.

Commonly cited evidence that the terms “architect” and “builder” were synonymous in the eighteenth-century is found in Johnson’s Dictionary. As mentioned above, his second definition of architect was “a contriver of a building; a builder.” It is
significant to note in this context, however, that the first definition was “professor of art of architecture” and that a contriver of a building is synonymous with inventor, or designer of a building. Rather than provide evidence that the term “architect” was tantamount to “builder,” Johnson’s entry reminds us that, since the Renaissance, the literary use of the term architect, while embracing both theoretical and practical knowledge, had emphasized the architect’s intellectual activity and his ability to invent.

Because architecture was perceived to be the highest form of mathematical science, during the Renaissance the belief emerged that the ideal architect should be trained in the liberal arts, rather than in the building trade.109 The architect was set apart from the tradesman and the masons by academic instruction and specialized training that nurtured a theoretical, rather than an empirical approach to design. Practically, training in design (disegno) meant drawing from life or the plaster casts of ancient monuments, mastering the science of perspective, and memorizing the forms, proportions and measurements of the classical orders, as codified in Renaissance treatises. Unlike the medieval “architect,” who was a master mason or carpenter, the modern architect’s principle task was creating highly finished working drawings, which were subsequently distributed to the executant builder, who oversaw construction. This Renaissance conception of the architect, like the coeval conception of the artist, was directly linked to the idea of individual genius.

It must be noted that the distinction between architect and builder – the central displacement that led to the formation of the modern architect – had rare precedents in

medieval building practices. Medieval masons and carpenters occasionally composed designs to be erected by others. It was most common, however, for design and construction to be closely connected. Medieval buildings were typically erected part-by-part (rather than designed as a coherent whole from the outset and built all at once) and they were conceived and built a group of people, comprising masters of different specialties, who came together and worked as a team.

The old tradition of collective design survived and evolved in Britain within the Office of Works in the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries. It was customary within that office for a group of staff members to devise plans and to suggest and supervise the execution of alterations required during the course of construction. Although a position known as “Deviser of Buildings” existed within the Office in previous centuries, it appears that appointees to this post only functioned as consultants in the design and construction of certain types of structures, perhaps fortifications.

What emerged in Adam’s era, for the first time in Britain, was the model of an architect-artist as a sole designer of buildings. This modern architect was also often but not necessarily involved in building his design, but all activities related to construction could be delegated. The defining characteristic of the architect, then, was his skill as a designer. The separation of designer and builder placed new emphasis on the architect’s artistic insight, but knowledge of construction was also important insofar as it informed the design. The quality of designs also hinged on the architect’s competence in the mensuration and valuation of land and materials, and estimating costs. The career guide

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110 Colvin, “Beginnings of the Architectural Profession in Scotland.”
112 Information on the nature of this office and those who held it is scanty. See Kaye, Development of the Architectural Profession in Britain, 35; and Summerson, Architecture in Britain, 1530–1830 (Harmondsworth, 1953; New Haven, 1993, 9th ed.), 11 & 135, n. 6.
published in London in 1747 reported that a successful architect “must know the secrets of the Bricklayer, Stonemason, Carpenter, Joiner, Carver, and all other Branches employed in building and finishing a house…”113 It is quite clear, in the case of Adam, that in design work he was as prescriptive about the materials and methods of construction, as he was about visual effects. He was at a great advantage in this respect, having had direct experience in his youth with the realities of the building trade and the structural and aesthetic attributes of building materials as an employee at his father’s firm, William Adam and Company, from 1746-54. By the end of the eighteenth century and beginning of the nineteenth century, the roles of architect and builder were demonstrably distinct. Soane made the point expressly in one of his letters:

The business of the architect is to make the designs and estimates, to direct the works, and to measure and value the different parts, he is the intermediary agent between the employer, whose honour and interests he is to study, and the mechanic, whose rights he is to defined. His situation implies great trust; he is responsible for the mistakes, negligencies [sic], and ignorancies [sic] of those he employs, and above all, he is to take care that the workmen’s bills do not exceed his own estimate. If these are the duties of an architect, with what propriety can his situation and that of the builder or contractor be united?114

**Surveyors**

Although the work of surveyors and architects overlapped, their professions were becoming increasingly distinct in Adam’s era. While the architect was chiefly concerned with designs, drawings, and estimates, the surveyor was consumed with wholly practical tasks, including the supervision of construction, measurement, valuation, and bookkeeping. The *Builder’s Dictionary* (1734) offered a contemporary definition of the

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occupation, describing “the surveyor, or superintendent of an edifice” as one who undertakes and manages all matters related to the building’s construction “prudently and advisedly, with the utmost caution that all matters may be ordered and disposed (in all circumstances) so as to answer the owner’s design, and be consentaneous to reason.”

Surveyors were also hired to care for existing buildings, manage maintenance, oversee the construction of additions, and guide restoration and conservation projects.

The *Universal Director*, published in London in 1763, cited surveying as a distinct profession and listed ten individuals practicing in the city.\textsuperscript{115} Surveyorships were an important source of long-term, stable income for architects in eighteenth century Britain, with many posts offered within the Office of Works. All of the lucrative sinecures and positions for architects within government offices required the expertise of a surveyor as well as a designer.

Adam was exceptional in his persistent separation of the work of surveyors and architects. The interchange of the titles architect and surveyor occurred often because it was standard practice for the designer of the building also to take on the role of surveyor, and because surveyors often engaged with design work as a practical necessity on site when modifications of an original design were inevitably made. Johnson’s *Dictionary*, in fact, made “surveyor” synonymous with “architect,” and the *Builder’s Dictionary* (1734) noted that the title “architect” was also used for “the surveyor, or superintendent of an edifice.” The professions were so closely allied that the anonymous author of an *Essay on \textsuperscript{115} Nenadic, “Architect-Builders in London and Edinburgh,” 602.
the Qualifications and Dutys of an Architect (1773) ventured that any distinction between an architect and surveyor was merely one of competence.116

Making a sharp distinction between them, however, became increasingly important for the settlement of fees, writing contracts and, eventually, liability. In Robert Mylne’s contract for Blackfriar’s Bridge, for example, duties for his roles as architect and surveyor were stated independently. As a “surveyor” his responsibilities were to:

- superintend the building of the …Bridge;…prepare and settle the Contracts of the various Artificers and others; attend and expediate the Progress of Works, and to see that the same were performed according to the Contract; measure the same when done; examine and comptroll the several Bills for Labour and Materials.117

By contrast, Mylne’s role as architect, as specified in the same contract, comprised the creation of plans and working drawings, and estimating costs of labor and materials.

As Adam gained experience, he learned the importance of explaining to clients the services he provided as a surveyor, rather than as an architect. This elucidation was crucial to the architect-client relationship because laymen often did not perceive any difference in roles between an architect and surveyor, and because it was typical for clients to take advantage of the architect’s knowledge of surveying without offering additional compensation. Adam explained this in a letter to his friend and the brother of a client, John Home (1722-1808):

> When I am employed to make designs only I am paid for my plan and have done with the business, such as was the case when your Brother received his Plans and paid me the 21£. But the case was totally changed when he desired other alterations on the Plan and calculating of timbers and …I had examined his quarry rock and at his desire I looked out for a quarrier and recommended one. In short I was proceeding in every step as a surveyor to his Building and I never doubted that we all understood it so.118

118 Paterson-Anderson Correspondence, 31 April 1791. Cited in Sanderson, Robert Adam and Scotland, 84.
The most significant task of a surveyor was to estimate the cost of building, essentially acting as an auditor of the architect’s original estimates. The cost of building in the eighteenth century was calculated by measuring the quantities of material, rather than measuring the hours or days of labor, or by flat rates. In London, people engaged in building often hired a surveyor at their own expense to estimate the cost of building, rather than taking the word of the master mason or carpenter on-site. In Edinburgh, architects and clients relied on sworn measurers, city-appointed wrights or masons, who acted as impartial measurers of building work and who were remunerated at fixed rate by the city.

Acting in the role in what we would today call a quantity surveyor, eighteenth-century surveyors advised clients on the selection of materials and contractors, negotiated prices of materials and labor fees, prepared and settled contracts between the client and the various trades employed to construct the building, and paid contractors; when executing these particular tasks, they were more commonly called measurers, rather than surveyors. Surveyors also examined bills for labor and material, acted as the project comptroller, and oversaw record keeping. The mensural work of the surveyor included demarcation of “building lines” (the places where walls would run), measuring extant buildings and large tracts of land, and locating buildings within a plot of land, especially in relation to property lines.

In addition to the legal, accounting, and measuring work, surveyors superintended construction and inspected all completed work. In this role, they were entrusted with ensuring the quality of workmanship and materials, and the faithful execution of the

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120 Ibid.
121 Ibid.
architect’s designs. A surveyor also supervised the alterations to original designs that arose during building, consulted with the building foreman about strategies for expediting work on site and maintaining safety standards, and performed regular inspections of all work and materials.

*Rise of Professions*

In 1743, Robert’s father, William Adam, clearly expressed the professional self-image of the eighteenth-century architect. While on the stand, testifying during a trial in which he was a defendant against his client Lord Braco over a billing dispute, William appealed to his public, pleading that as an architect he wished “to be considered as a Person of a liberal Profession . . . and to be treated not like a Tradesman who was to give in a Bill, but like a Lawyer…or a Physician…who get their Fees or Honoraries without presenting an accompt, or giving a Receipt.”122 In this he was alluding to the practice of professionals who typically received payment for services in the form of an “honorary” or “gratuity,” given as a mark of respect and in acknowledgment of professional services rendered.

A “professional” in eighteenth-century Britain was someone who possessed expertise in a particular, specialized subject or skill that set him apart from amateurs. It was also someone who publicly declared his occupation and earned a living as an autonomous practitioner. The term “profession,” like the term “architect,” was imported during the sixteenth century as a component of Renaissance culture, and it connoted the empowerment of the individual and the emergence of the mercantile economy and early

122 *Petition for William Lord Braco against Mr. William Adams Architect*, 5.
forms of capitalism.123 “Profession,” a truncation of the phrase “liberal profession,” was not merely a synonym for vocation or employment, although it was also used with that meaning.124

The idea of “profession,” even in its early eighteenth-century usage, implied specialized training, the ability to earn a living from one’s occupation, membership in dedicated clubs or associations, and expectations of ethical conduct and personal liability. The last was a complicated matter, and, for architects, it took decades to establish codes of conduct, enact laws that governed the professional’s behavior in society, and set up protocols for licensing and liability.125 While the professional status of architects was much discussed in the eighteenth century, the formal recognition of the profession in Britain is generally recognized to begin to 1834, the year of the foundation of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA). The RIBA was the first institution in Britain that had the capacity and the specific mission to instruct students of architecture, to promote and support the development of young architects, and to devise and enforce policies and regulations. The foundation of the Institute of the Architects of Scotland quickly followed in 1840.

Because this infrastructure for the profession of architecture did not yet exist, Robert Adam, his father William, and other eighteenth-century architects, had difficulty receiving recognition as professionals. The biggest deficiencies were the absence of a

124 Johnson’s *Dictionary*, 1755-6 (second edition). The definition remained constant in later editions of Johnson’s dictionary at least until the end of the 18th century.
125 In the nineteenth century, professions became institutionalized and were based on firm criteria. Since the nineteenth century professionals have been considered intellectuals with specialized, theoretical training, who abide by an ethical code of conduct and are affiliated with associations. Associations not only regulate financial dealings, to ensure fair pricing and to protect the customer from fraud, but also provide guarantees of a professional’s competence and integrity within a fair-market economy. Professions are also generally regarded to have arisen for the survival and betterment of society as a whole, rather than for that of mere individuals, and professionals are expected to act in the best interest of their client.
systematic and rigorous educational system, professional institutions, and conventions that governed the architects’ fees. During Adam’s life, all of these areas received attention and some movement toward professionalization was made.

Like their early modern-predecessors, the majority of eighteenth-century architects received no formal training at all. Fewer than half were apprenticed in an architect’s office. Most stepped into the profession from the position of clerk-of-works, mason, or carpenter, while others approached it from painting or sculpture. This arbitrary and random training continued in the early nineteenth century. Speaking to the Architectural Society in 1838, John Blyth (1806-78) expressed a very common opinion when he complained that architects were trained in a “rambling and discouraging way…partly in an office, partly in the [Royal] Academy, partly in the British Museum, and partly in some society or institute.”

The most common preparatory route followed by those who designed and constructed buildings in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was through membership or apprenticeship in an artist’s or craftsman’s guild or lodge. By the mid-eighteenth century, architects were finding training through pupilage in architects’ offices. Architects who followed these practical routes toward the profession often received little theoretical or historical education, but they learned on-site how to design and construct buildings.

Apprenticeships provided the opportunity for the most serious and intense instruction throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but the quality varied greatly. Despite this, the apprentice system suffered no lack of participation.

Apprenticeship records in the Public Record Office offer a glimpse into its operations,

showing that apprentices paid premiums of between £10 and £210, and most signed a seven-year contract. They often worked long hours and were supposed to learn the principles of surveying, measuring, costing, and superintendence, as well as techniques of draughtsmanship.

Problems with the apprenticeship system as an educational institution were rife. Not only did the quality of instruction vary, highly dependent on a master’s temperament, availability, interest, and skills, but also apprentices often learned only to mimic their masters’ style, rather than develop their own. Worse, concentration was often on the wrong skills, such as insignificant aspects of office work, or elementary drawing, rather than architectural design.

The establishment of fees and rates for architectural services was another aspect of professionalization. Although no standards for fees were in place in eighteenth-century Britain, it became common practice for an architect to charge his client five percent of the total cost of building. Sometimes he had to bargain over this rate, and sometimes he simply relied on the generosity of a satisfied client. When five percent was demanded and accepted, it was sometimes broken down into one percent for design and four percent for supervision. Some architects charged two-and-a-half percent or three percent for working drawings and specifications, and five percent for drawings, specifications and supervision. All architects expected to be reimbursed for their travelling expenses.

127 Ibid., 64.
129 See John Paterson’s statement of his charges (1796) in Scottish Record Office (SRO), GD 24/1/624, and William Stark’s letter (1811) to Sir Walter Scott in National Library of Scotland, MS 3880, fol. 166. These figures are also recounted in Colvin, “Beginnings of the Architectural Profession in Scotland,” 176.
130 See James Playfair’s statement of his charges (1785 and 1790) in SRO, GD 151/11/32, William Burn’s (1827) in SRO, GD 250/41/3, and W. H. Playfair’s (1842) in his Letter-Book No. 7 (229-30) in the Edinburgh University Library. These figures are also recounted in Colvin, “Beginnings of the Architectural Profession in Scotland,” 176.
For the better part of the eighteenth century, only three occupations could claim status indisputably as professions, the so-called “learned professions” of divinity, law, and medicine. Each had medieval origins and effective associations were founded for law and medicine in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (the first Inns of Court were founded in the fourteenth century and the Royal College of Physicians was founded in 1518). In the second half of the eighteenth century it became increasingly common to refer to all middle and upper class occupations as professions and to turn to the established professions of law, medicine, and ministry for guidance in their definition and governance.

The impetus for occupational specialization and the proliferation of professions in the eighteenth-century, including the professionalization of architecture, were in part responses to economic forces. Most pressingly, in the midst of rapid population growth and an expanding economy, the need arose to ensure an adequate supply of compensation for specialist work and to protect clients and employees from fraud.131

A previously unexamined stimulus for the splintering of vocations is significant and large scale reform in Britain’s education system, which underwent radical and widespread changes in Adam’s lifetime. While England boasted two ancient universities (Oxford, where teaching began as early as 1096, and Cambridge, founded in 1209), Ireland had one (Dublin, founded in 1592), and Scotland, home of the Adam family, harbored four: Aberdeen (founded in 1495), St. Andrews (founded in 1413), Glasgow (founded in 1451), and Edinburgh (founded in 1582). All were changed by the reform movement.

In addition to the formation of new disciplines, such as history, medicine, English, philosophy, and mathematics, the mid-century saw the restructuring of classical education at all major British centers of learning. Within the newly reformed education system the classics were no longer read as works of literature that taught one how to express oneself, but as sources of information, either on practical subjects like farming (Hesiod, Virgil), warfare (Caesar, Livy, Frontinus, Aelian), mathematics (Euclid), architecture (Vitruvius), education (Plutarch), or on matters of moral or political behavior (Horace). Ancient authors were to be supplemented with modern authors, but classical texts remained at the core of academic life and the lessons enshrined in them were still considered the most important to mankind. The study of Latin and other ancient languages was increasingly characterized as a pedantic leisure pursuit. Amidst the eighteenth-century’s growing interests in practicality, more and more people complained that those with the most power to enact change were spending too much time on Latin and not enough time on modern, practical subjects that might equip them to improve society.

Despite this growing clamor and change, the idea that the study of Latin and Greek were the habits of the highest, most refined and most civilized members of society remained. Similarly, the association of these languages with traditional values and the prevailing world order also never abated. Although the impulse toward practicality

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persisted, the reality was that very little practical knowledge could be extracted from ancient works of literature, even if they were approached in the spirit of the new age.

**Updating Vitruvius: Chambers’s “Requisites” for the Modern Architect**

From the early sixteenth to late eighteenth centuries the first chapter of Vitruvius’s *De Architectura*, entitled “The Education of the Architect,” was the sole explication of an architect’s ideal training and his essential skills, duties, and qualifications. Those who aspired to become architects knew it well and measured their preparation against it. While in Rome, the angst-ridden, energetic Adam, for example, deliberated, “The truth is, I am a very promising young man but there is much to be done and much to be studied to complete the prerequisites of Vitruvius.”

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An eighteenth-century update of Vitruvius’s ancient primer finally appeared in 1791 in the third edition of Chamber’s *Treatise on the Decorative Part of Civil Architecture*. For this version of his widely-read book, Chambers composed an introduction to accompany a new dedication, now to the King, and a substantially revised and expanded preface. The introduction was the most significant addition to the third edition and was “designed to point out, and briefly explain, the requisite qualifications and duty of an architect.”

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In his opening remarks, Chambers paraphrased what he considered the most useful of Vitruvius’s directives, before offering his own updated version of the chapter.

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134 Cited in Fleming, *Robert Adam*, 211.
“Vitruvius required,” he wrote, “that the architect should have both ingenuity and application, observing, that wit without labour, or labour without wit, never arrived at perfection.” Chambers reiterated Vitruvius’s demanding mandate that an architect “be a writer and draughtsman, understand geometry, optics, and arithmetic; be a good historian and philosopher, well skilled in music, and not ignorant in either physic [sic], law, or astrology.” Finally, Chambers added that “the same author farther [sic] requires that he should be possessed of a great and enterprising mind; be equitable, trusty, and totally free from avarice…ever disinterested, he should be less solicitous of acquiring riches, than honour, and fame, by his profession.”

Three lessons from the ancient writer, Chambers revealed, are of crucial importance to the modern architect. First, Chambers promoted the now sanctified Vitruvian idea that architecture requires both theoretical and practical expertise. Second, he underscored Vitruvius’s contention, in contrast to the work of Pythius, “another ancient writer,” that an architect’s judgment governs all of his activities and allows him to “direct” others with “precision” and “to examine, judge, and value, their performance with masterly accuracy.” To be a sound judge, rather than an expert in all arts connected to his profession, contended Vitruvius, is “the most that should be insisted upon” and, Chambers definitively added, is “all that most men can acquire.” Third, Chambers reminded his reader that an architect, according to Vitruvius, is inherently a master, and that until the student of this art has acquired all requisites, he should not assume the title.

Following these prefatory remarks, Chambers offered six and a half pages of his own recommendations, in which he laid out requirements that he had “adapted” from the opening chapter of Vitruvius to meet “the wants, customs, and modes of life of our
contemporaries, as well as to the duties and avocations of a modern architect.”¹³⁶ Each of Chambers modern “requisites” reflected the deep changes in eighteenth-century culture and the new profession “architect.” Among the most significant include physical and psychological fitness, sharpness of bodily senses, morality, scientific precision in making estimates, accounting skills, training in disegno, sound knowledge of architectural history, and mastery of “opticks,” or the art of perspective. Facility with this “science,” detailed Chambers, allows the architect to render perspectival drawings, which “give his employers a more perfect idea of his intentions than could be collected from geometrical drawings.” An understanding of “opticks” also improves the architect’s knowledge of the distribution of light, in order to “produce particular striking effects,” and enables him to dispose mirrors “to create deceptions; multiply objects; and raise ideas of far greater, than the real magnitude, or extent, of that which is exhibited to view.”¹³⁷ Chambers also cited knowledge of social customs, in Britain and on the Continent, and penmanship, as skills crucial to the architect’s economic success and social advancement within eighteenth-century Europe’s ceremonial, traveling, epistolary culture. Interestingly, Chambers then made clear that the art of gardening should remain under the purview of the architect and should not become a separate profession; he lamented that in England unlike in “Italy, France, and other countries of the European continent” gardening has fallen into “very improper” hands.

Another compelling insight Chambers offered in his introduction concerns one of the most important ideas that Vitruvius imparts: the necessary balance of practical and theoretical knowledge. Chambers wrote that the architect’s knowledge of both fields is

¹³⁶ Chambers, Treatise (third ed., 1791), 8.
¹³⁷ Ibid., 11.
vital, lest one be merely a draftsman, or a tradesman. Chambers illustrated this with an account of a “celebrated Italian artist,” who “styl[ed] himself an architect” (undoubtedly the printmaker Piranesi) based on his ability to create “usually great” paper architectural compositions that possess “taste and luxuriance of fancy.” Chambers argued that although this artist’s imagination and skill as a printmaker are peerless, because he knows “little of construction or calculation, yet less of the contrivance of habitable structure, or the modes of carrying real works into execution,” he cannot be considered an architect. Next, Chambers bemoaned the tendency of “mechanics,” or tradesmen, to “arrogate the title of architect.” He derided architectural designs made by mechanics as “discordant,” carelessly assembled pastiches, “collected without judgment from different stores,” which lack “determined style, marked character, or forcible effect…[and] novelty,” and seldom have “grandeur or beauty to recommend them.”

Three more of Chambers “requisites” deserve extended consideration. Brief examination of their broader contexts and meanings provides valuable insights into the eighteenth-century architectural culture in which Adam lived and worked. These include the idea of genius, language abilities, and travel.

**Genius**

In the late-eighteenth century the idea of “genius” was a key concept and coercive, invented identity for artists and architects to define and safeguard. For leading architects such as Adam and Chambers, who regarded themselves and were regarded by others as geniuses, these were especially exigent tasks. In his *Works*, Adam aggressively
asserted that “architects destitute of genius” are “incapable of venturing into the great line of their art.”

Although the notion of artistic genius had played a central role in art theory since the Renaissance, anxiety arose in the late eighteenth-century that the concept was now misunderstood and misused. The rise of so-called “pseudo-geniuses,” made possible by the rapid and widespread publication of detailed information about architecture and the other arts, and the existence of a growing, consumer market, now made it difficult for the general public to distinguish elevated from commonplace thinking. This undermining of the concept of genius threatened the stability of society. The idea of genius, strongly associated with notions of individualism and liberty, was further tarnished by the tendency to confuse it with ambition.

Royal Academicians, particularly vulnerable to the loss of cultural authority, responded to the devaluation of hegemonic social construct “genius,” which was nearly exclusively applied to male artists, by seeking to reinforce the original, Renaissance notion of the concept: an exceedingly rare, innate, and allegedly quasi-divine quality that cannot be acquired. The British painter and first President of the Royal Academy, Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-92) expounded, “Could we teach taste or genius…they would no longer be taste and genius.” Chambers, also an academician and founder of the Royal Academy, described the necessity of genius of a very particular, “complex sort” for architects, writing that the architect must command “many sorts of knowledge, very opposite in their natures,” balancing the “powers of the imagination” with the

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139 Reynolds, *Discourses on Art*, 44 (Discourse, III, s. 87-9).
investigation of “mathematical truths,” and the “noblest and most elevated conceptions” with “the meanest and minutest enquires.”

A second motivation for reminding the public of the powerful idea of genius was that it generated an interest in the arts and elevated the social status of the artist. Architects often strategically deployed the idea of genius against imitative and unoriginal architecture — the feared torrent of inferior buildings designed by inferior men, whose flashy work was indistinguishable to the large, diverse, unschooled public from work of true merit. The most talented male artists and architects in the late eighteenth-century feared that construct “genius” would thus be degraded and replaced by the spectacle of individual celebrity, and, consequently, strip them of authority, economic opportunities, and a degree of control over public opinion.

**Language**

Language study was more necessary for architects in the eighteenth-century than at any other time in history due to dramatic increases in travel and expansions in the production and circulation of printed material, and social and trade networks. The cultivation of foreign language skills, the creation of a larger, richer, and more precise English language, and the clarification and expansion of terms for increasingly specialized and sophisticated occupations, were essential to communicating modern ideas and fulfilling the eighteenth-century ideal of progress. In this ever more interconnected and literate modern world, language abilities were central aspects of people’s personal

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140 Chambers, *Treatise* (third edition, 1791), 71. Professor Lucey has rightly pointed out that Chambers’ understanding of the building site, and his demand for the benevolent management of building operatives, was often criticized. See Brian Hanson, *Architects and the ‘Building World’ from Chambers to Ruskin: Constructing Authority* (Cambridge, 2011).
and professional identities, and provided new personal and economic opportunities, and a means to gain greater insight into human nature. For Adam and other architects, competency in native and foreign languages was an essential tool for attaining mastery of the international idioms of the classical and gothic.

Chambers admonished the aspiring architect that to enable “travel with advantage” and “understand the many, and almost only valuable books treating of his profession,” proficiency in French and Italian were essential. Adam experienced the difficulties and limitations attendant on poor language skills while traveling and reading as student of architecture while on Grand Tour. He worked tirelessly and frantically to develop speaking and reading abilities in both and achieved a particularly sound working knowledge of French. French was particularly crucial for Adam and his professional contemporaries, as the growth of French military and cultural power caused the gradual displacement of Latin by French as the new universal language of Europe.

But English had to be mastered as well. Chambers added that the architect must also attain “proficiency in the learned languages, and a thorough knowledge of his own.” The last, poignant prescription reflects the reality that Chambers and Adam lived during an era when English was not taught in schools. Doreen Yarwood has noted that “it was Robert’s generation who altered the reputation of Scottish people as

141 See Fleming, Robert Adam, 112, 122, 127, 128, 149, 162, 173, 220, & 246.
142 Chambers, Treatise (third edition, 1791), 9.
those who could not speak English well,” and that English “MPs” at Westminster laughed at their Scottish counterparts for poor speech and inability to be understood.\textsuperscript{144}

While mastery of Latin and Greek was a requirement in classical education, students were expected to teach themselves English outside of the classroom. The significant consequences of this situation were that in the eighteenth-century the English language lacked a common vocabulary, organized grammar, and accepted principles of style. Moreover, illiteracy and partial literacy were rampant: scarcely one in fifty who went through Eton or Westminster could speak or write English fluently.\textsuperscript{145} That the same is probably true of other schools is apparent in the great variety of spelling, punctuation, and use of words which continued well into the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{146} Many of the public schools in Britain, in fact, did not have proper English departments until the 1960s; in 1762, however, the first chair in English Literature anywhere in the world was founded at the University of Edinburgh.\textsuperscript{147} This addition was part of the mid-century reform movement in education that sought to shift attention to modern, practical needs.

In the eighteenth century, a hierarchy of languages emerged: classical Latin was at the top, followed by “correct” French, English, Spanish, and other Continental vernacular languages.\textsuperscript{148} In \textit{Some Thoughts Concerning Education} (1693), John Locke (1632-1704) observed that Latin “was absolutely necessary to a gentleman,” but was not for men of the laboring classes.\textsuperscript{149} With the proliferation of vernacular tongues in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, many of them corruptions of Latin, it was necessary

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\textsuperscript{144} Yarwood, \textit{Robert Adam}, 33.  
\textsuperscript{145} Ogilvie, \textit{English Public School}, 56.  
\textsuperscript{146} Gathorne-Hardy, \textit{Old School Tie}, 31.  
\textsuperscript{149} John Locke, \textit{Some Thoughts Concerning Education} (London, 1693), 164.  
\end{flushright}
to set standards to reestablish the linguistic unity of Europe. Latin became the language of public institutions — the Church, the universities, and the court —, centers of power where rulers and leaders spoke with one tongue.

In this era, different dialects of Welsh and Gaelic were the everyday medium of communication for up to half of the populations in Wales, Scotland, Ireland and many parts of northern and western England. Linguistic notions of center and periphery constantly shifted. Many British citizens displayed and promoted multiple linguistic identities, or loyalties, at once, simultaneously embracing their own dialect, regional dialects, and the pervading English language. Adam spoke in the Lowland Scots’ dialect and wrote in Southern English with occasional Scottish words. Scotsmen began to speak Southern English or “Anglice” beginning in 1761, after Thomas Sheridan, an Irishman, gave a series of lectures in Edinburgh on English speech.

In addition to foreign and regional languages, in his *Treatise*, Chambers listed knowledge of the “technical language” of architecture among the architect’s requisite skills. This technical vocabulary expanded more in the eighteenth-century than at any other time in history and it overwhelmed aspiring architects and their masters. At this time, there was also increasing urgency to democratize language — to speak to audiences in a language that could be easily understood and was not laden with technical and foreign terms. A new urgency also arose to define clearly and precisely technical and foreign terms that could not be dismissed or replaced with more familiar words. In architecture, many essential terms had been imported from Italian and French and badly

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needed clarification. Authors in architecture and other disciplines sought to make their writings as comprehensible as possible to the anonymous, expanding literate population, and modern concepts of authorship developed.

The most significant architectural publications that sought to clarify terminology were the *Builder’s Dictionary* (published in two volumes in London in 1734) and Isaac Ware’s (1704-66) *A Complete Body of Architecture*, issued in parts in the years 1756-57 (second edition, 1767; reissued in 1768). The lengthy title of the dictionary is in of itself evidence of the care given to precision and comprehensiveness in their clarifying task:

The Builder’s Dictionary: or, Gentleman and Architect’s Companion. Explaining not only the TERMS of ART in all the several PARTS of ARCHITECTURE, but also containing the THEORY and PRACTICE of the various BRANCHES thereof, requisite to be known by MASONs, CARPENTERS, JOINERS, BRICKLAYERS, PLAISTERERS, PAINTERS, GLAZIERS, SMITHS, TURNERS, CARVERS, STATUARIES, PLUMBERS, &c. Also Necessary Problems in ARITHMETIC, GEOMETRY, MECHANICS, PERSPECTIVE, HYDRAULICS, and other MATHEMATICAL SCIENCES. Together with the Quantities, Proportions, and Prices of all Kinds of MATERIALS used in BUILDING; with DIRECTIONS for Chusing, Preparing, and Using them: The several Proportions of the FIVE ORDERS of ARCHITECTURE and all their Members, according to VITRUVIUS, PALLADIO, SCAMOZZI, VIGNOLA, M. LE CLERC, &c. With RULES for the Valuation of HOUSES, and the EXPENCE calculated of Erecting any FABRICK, Great or Small. The Whole Illustrated with more than Two Hundred FIGURES, many of them curiously Engraven on COPPER-PLATES: Bring a Work of great Use, not only to ARTIFICERS, but likewise to GENTLEMEN, and others, concerned in BUILDING, &c. Faithfully Digested from the most Approved Writers on these Subjects.

Nicholas Hawksmoor (1661-1736), John James (1673-1746), and James Gibbs (1682-1754) endorsed the *Dictionary*, agreeing to allow their names to appear under the following statement, dated January 11, 1734, on the flyleaf: “We have perused these Two Volumes of the *Builder’s Dictionary*, and do think they contain a great deal of useful Knowledge in the Building Business.”

The *Dictionary*’s target audience, as stated in the preface, was those “who study the Mechanical Part of Building.” This innovative book explained further that “the elements of the art will be fully explained, and in so regular a Method, too that it can
hardly be in the Power of a Novice to mistake.” The Dictionary stored all of the modern architect’s knowledge in alphabetical order and, “regularly digested,” it acted as a quick reference book, or “Remembrancer” for critics, artists, and those educated in the fine arts — generally aristocratic land-owners.\textsuperscript{153} The French artist Sébastien Leclerc I’s (1637–1714) Treatise in Architecture (Paris, 1714) was the Dictionary’s model, a work which had been translated into English by the writer and encyclopedist Ephraim Chambers (1680-1740) as a Treatise of Architecture with Remarks and Observations in the year of its original publication in French. It is also clear, however, that the works of Vitruvius, Leon Battista Alberti (1404-72), Sebastiano Serlio (1475-1554), and Philibert de l’Orme (1514-70) (Le premier tome de l’Architecture, 1567) were heavily consulted. Appearing in a number of editions, the Builder’s Dictionary served until the mid-eighteenth century as the only systematic and encyclopedic introduction to architectural decoration that was available in English.

The great worth of the Builder’s Dictionary, however, lay in its character as a repository of both theoretical and practical knowledge, including lengthy explanations of individual architectural elements, geometrical and arithmetical principals, building types, equipment and materials, construction techniques, and larger abstract ideas, which contextualized terms, such as “architect,” “architecture,” “modern,” and “style.” This was an era when these old words were newly defined, and it was also the epoch when the idea of artistic and historic “style” emerged, and various styles were given names such as classical, gothic, rococo, baroque, and renaissance; these terms, however, were not commonly used in Britain until the mid-nineteenth century and are not found in the dictionary. Crucially, all of the entries provided simplified, accessible definitions and

\textsuperscript{153} Builder's Dictionary, or, Gentleman and Architect's Companion (London, 1734), preface.
instructions. In entries for materials and artistic techniques, for example, “anamorphosis” and “perspective” the Dictionary provided step-by-step instructions on their use and application.

Ware’s Complete Body of Architecture was more expansive than the Builder’s Dictionary and it was organized in ten books in the manner of traditional architectural treatises, modeled on Vitruvius’s De Architectura, or Decem Libri. In this seven-hundred page work, Ware discussed building materials, architectural situation, the proper use of the orders, building construction, proportion, internal and external decoration, and mensuration. He devoted a chapter to each topic and wrote additional chapters on the construction and decoration of doors and windows, chimney pieces, bridges, and elevations.

In the preface to a Complete Body of Architecture, Ware was explicit about his intent to produce an accessible, intelligible, and practical book of architecture. A primary tool for advancing toward this goal was the use of clear terminology and language. On the first page of the preface, Ware promised his reader that the authors “shall be careful to use no words that are not perfectly understood, without first rendering them plain and familiar.” Furthermore, he offered an extensive glossary of terms, not at the end of the book, but at the very beginning, as an introductory symphony of architectural explication and clarification. Finally, he also assured the reader that if his words still did not possess satisfactory clarity, he “shall accompany our account of it with a figure, accurately engraved, which will render the expression clear and striking the eye, will never be forgotten.”

154 Isaac Ware, Complete Body of Architecture. Adorned with Plans and Elevations, From Original Designs. By Isaac Ware, Esq. of His Majesty's Board of Works. In Which Are Interspersed Some Designs of Inigo Jones, Never Before Published (London: T. Osborne and J. Shipton, 1756-7), preface.
In assembling this book, Ware believed that he had emulated Palladio, who’s *Quattro Libri* was written not in classical Latin, but in the vernacular, in an effort to make the work accessible and clear. Palladio noted in his preface: “And in all these books I shall avoid the superfluity of word, and simply give those directions that seem to me most necessary, and shall make use of those terms which at this time are most commonly used among artificers.” Palladio’s precision, clarity, brevity and accessibility guided the *Libri*, and it established the organization and tone of many subsequent books in Britain. As the most widely-circulating architectural book in Britain (especially Book 1), the impact of Palladio’s work cannot be overstated. Ware, who had published the second English translation of Palladio’s *Libri* in 1738, was thoroughly familiar with its lucid style. His work superseded the first English edition, published by Giacomo Leoni in 1715, which had been criticized, particularly by Richard Boyle, third Earl of Burlington, as inaccurate: neither plates, nor text not faithful to Palladio’s original. Ware, a follower of Burlington, completed this task with extraordinary accuracy.

An examination of the changes in language and the growth of architectural terminology in Adam’s era help to explain one of the most conspicuous aspects of his publications: the footnotes to the introduction to the plates on Syon House in the *Works* (the most famous and most cited preface of all three volumes). Here, as mentioned earlier, Adam included a glossary of six architectural terms: movement, massive entablature, compartment ceiling, tabernacle frame, grotesque, and rainçseau. In addition

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155 Andrea Palladio, *Quattro Libri* (Venice, 1570).
to providing an essential explanation of his theoretical views, these conspicuous footnotes also revealed Adam’s pressing interests in the origin, usage, and meaning of the technical words. At the end of these footnotes, Adam explained the motivation for their inclusion:

“We hope this minute explanation of these terms will be excused. It is intended to supply in some measure a general deficiency which we have found upon this subject in all the encyclopedias and technical dictionaries.” Lengthy footnotes in architectural publications were relatively rare modern architectural publications, but find precedent in Claude Perrault’s widely-circulated edition of Vitruvius’s *De Architectura* (1673) and Stuart and Revett’s *Antiquities of Athens* (1762), both of which Adam had read and admired. Even more unusual than the length of the footnotes are their format (an abbreviated technical dictionary) and their discursive rather than descriptive content.

None of Adam’s terms can be found in Ware’s glossary or in the *Builder’s Dictionary*, save for “grotesque,” which appears solely in the *Builder’s Dictionary*. Adam’s definition of grotesque, however, is far more specific, informative, and accurate. In fact, it appears that he is among the earliest, if not the very first writer, to identify correctly the origin of the word grotesque; this term derived from the Italian word for caves or *grotte*, and refers to a kind of interior decoration, discovered by modern Italians in their archeological excavations (most notably Raphael in his excavations of the Domus Aurea in 1505), which adorned above-ground, free-standing ancient buildings, long buried and now functioning as caves. Adam expounded:

*By grotesque is meant that beautiful light stile [sic] of ornament used by the ancient Romans, in the decoration of their palaces, baths and villas. It is also to be seen in some of their amphitheatres, temples and tombs; the greatest part of which being vaulted and covered with ruins, have been dug up and cleared by the modern Italians, who for these reasons, give them the name of grotte, which is perhaps a corruption of the Latin *Criptae*, a word borrowed from the Greeks, as the Romans did most of their terms in*
architecture; and hence the modern word *grotesque*, and the English word *grotto*, signifying a cave.\(^\text{158}\)

In this passage Adam not only explained the origin and historical significance of grotesque decoration, but also argued that the technical terms of his profession derive mainly from ancient Greek. After providing the above explanation of the term, Adam became the first British writer to assert the merits of grotesque decoration, in direct refutation of the admonitions of Vitruvius, who found such fanciful ornamentation illogical and indecorous.\(^\text{159}\)

Adam was also the first architectural writer to distinguish between the commonly interchanged, but distinct decorative terms “grotesque,” “arabesque,” and “rainçneau,” which were all recent additions to the English language. Of the three, “grotesque” and “arabesque” were substituted for each other most often, and Adam was quick to remark that this tendency was a mistake:

> The French, who till of late never adopted the ornaments of the ancients, and jealous as all mankind are of the reputation of their national taste, have branded these ornaments with the vague and fantastical appellation of *arabesque*, a stile which, thought entirely distinct from the *grotesque*, has, notwithstanding, been most absurdly and universally confounded with it by the ignorant.\(^\text{160}\)

Here, Adam missed an edifying opportunity in his language-clarifying mission to provide a precise definition for “arabesque,” which is a kind of decoration with origins in Arabic or Moorish architecture, and is typically composed of highly-intricate, interlaced vines and other flora. Adam then immediately provided an explanation of “rainçneau,” decoration he also used frequently in interiors:

> …apparently derived from *rain*, an old French word, signifying the branch of a tree. – This French term is also used by the artists of this country, to express the winding and twisting of the stalk or stem of the acanthus plant; which flowering round in many graceful turnings, spreads its foliage with great beauty and variety, and is often


\(^{159}\) Vitruvius, *Decem Libri*, 7.5.3-5.

intermixed, with human figures, animals and birds, imaginary or real; also with flowers
and fruits.

In expanding the English language for architecture while also thoroughly and
clearly explaining of some of the most widely used but heretofore undefined architectural
terms of his era, Adam displayed panache, as well as expertise. However, his importation
of vocabulary was controversial among lexicographers, led by Samuel Johnson, who
decried the frequent borrowing of foreign words. As he wrote in his Dictionary: “We
have long preserved our constitution; let us make some struggles for our language.”
Johnson was particularly concerned about the importation of French words, and the moral
nationalism of his tone was appropriate for a country moving towards full-scale war with
France. He continued: “The words which our authors have introduced by their knowledge
of foreign languages, or ignorance of their own, by vanity or wantonness, by compliance
with fashion or lust of innovation, I have registered as they occurred, though commonly
only to censure them, and warn others against the folly of naturalizing useless foreigners
to the injury of the natives.”

With the proliferation of books and the standardization of language also came an
emergent concept of a public language. The frequent public usage of concepts, figurative
imagery, words, and phrases recorded and circulated in books stabilized meaning, and
created a bigger and more complex shared frame of reality. Adam participated directly in
the great public project to forge a common language, at a time when the meaning of
words was in flux and each significant publication played a crucial role in constructing
and strengthening linguistic, and hence, cultural identity.

161 Johnson, Dictionary (1755), preface.
Travel

Increased travel in the eighteenth century shaped European artistic culture more dramatically and deeply than any other phenomenon. Chambers, himself well-traveled, summed up the significance of travel for the modern architect in a lengthy, dense entry in the new introduction to the third edition of his *Treatise*. In his discussion, Chambers, who was born and raised in Sweden (although he was the son of a Scottish merchant), who had traveled to China three times as an employee of the Swedish East India Company (between 1740 and 1749), who had studied in Paris under Jacques-François Blondel (1705-74) at the École des Arts (1749-50), and who had lived five years in Rome (1750-55), emphasized that traveling helped the architect to produce original designs by activating his imagination, and by sharply honing his reasoning faculties and ability to discern truths:

It seems almost superfluous to observe, that an architect cannot aspire to superiority in his possession, without having travelled; for it must be obvious, that an art founded upon reasoning and much observation, is not to be learnt without it; books cannot avail; descriptions, even drawings or prints are but weak substitutes of realities: an artist who constantly inhabits the same place, converses with the same people, and has the same objects always obtruding on his view; must necessarily have confined notions; few ideas, and many prejudices. Travelling rouses the imagination; the sight of great, new, or uncommon objects, elevated the mind to sublime conception; enriches the fancy with numerous ideas; sets the reasoning faculties in motion: he who has beheld with attentive consideration, the venerable remains of ancient magnificence; or studiously examined the splendor of modern times, in the productions of the sublime Bonarotti [sic], Bramante, Vignola, Palladio, Raphael, Polidore, Peruzzi, Sansovino, San Michaeli, Amanato, Bernini, Pietro da Cortonna, and many other original matters; whose works are the ornament and pride of the European continent; must have acquired notions, far more extensive, and superior to him, whose information has been gleaned, from the copiers, or feeble imitators, of these great men; and their stupendous works: he must be in composition more animated, varied and luxuriant; in design, more leaned, correct, and graceful: ever governed by a taste formed at the fountain’s head, upon the purest models; and impressed with the effect of those great objects, which some time or other in life, have been the admiration of most who either claim distinction, or aspire to elegance; he must always labour with greater certainty of success.

By travelling, a thorough knowledge of different countries, their language and manners, are alone to be attained in perfection: and by conversing with men of different nations, we learn their opinions; hear their reasons in support of them; and are naturally led to reason in our turn: to set aside our national prejudices, reject our ill-founded maxims, and allow for granted, that only which is clearly proved; or is founded on reason, long experience, and careful observation.
Thus habituated to consider with the rigour of critical accuracy, we learn to see objects in their true light; without attention, either to casual approbation or dislike: to distinguish truth through the veil of obscurity, and detect pretence however speciously sustained. Travelling to an artist, is as the university to a man of letters, the last stage of a regular education; which opens the mind to a more liberal and extensive train of thinking, diffuses an air of importance over the whole man, and stamps value upon his opinions: it affords him opportunities of forming connections with the great, the learned, or the rich; and the friendships he makes while abroad, are frequently the first causes of his reputation, and success at home.162

As he made clear, part of Chambers’ motivation for dedicating a large portion of his introduction to the importance of travel was to communicate the profound impact of travel on intellectual culture as a whole, in Britain and throughout the world.

Adam also wrote of the significance of travel for the modern architect. In the preface to the Ruins of the Palace of the Emperor Diocletian at Spalatro in Dalmatia (London, 1764) he expressed anxiety over the rapid loss of ancient buildings and the necessity for architects to view them first hand:

There is not any misfortune which an Architect is more apt to regret than the destruction of these buildings, nor could any thing [sic] more sensibly gratify his curiosity [sic], or improve his taste, than to have the opportunity of viewing the private edifices of the Ancients, and of collecting, from his own observation, such ideas concerning the disposition, the form, the ornaments, and uses of the several apartments, as no description can supply.163

Extensive travel was a new phenomenon in Adam and Chambers’ era, and its impact on European culture was only beginning to be reckoned with. The British of the mid-late seventeenth century had not traveled much beyond France, Germany and the Low Countries.164 A particularly adventurous merchant might have an interest in Spanish America or the East Indies, but the general public was not informed or interested in these distant places. By the third quarter of the eighteenth century, however, British merchants

163 Robert Adam, Ruins of the Palace of Emperor Diocletian at Spalatro (Cannitello [Reggio Calabria]: Biblioteca del Cenide, 2001; first published London, 1764), 2.
were profoundly involved in east and west trading, which inspired increased travel in both directions.\textsuperscript{165} India had already become the goal of the upper middle classes: it offered employment and enrichment and became a focus of popular imagination.\textsuperscript{166} Educated people no longer confined their vision to Europe but took an intelligent interest in doing things throughout the world. As their outlook enlarged, British tastes expanded.

Travel was also an essential component to the self-presentation constructed by the elites of the later eighteenth century, and it comprised such practices as collecting artifacts, the new genre of travel writing, and the custom of having one’s portrait painted abroad.\textsuperscript{167} Both peaceful tourism and imperial expansion were important in defining the large world in which those with the money and background could participate. For the British travel writer or tourist, the imperialistic agenda was especially important, and their activities constituted a subtle form of colonization, as foreign nations were reduced to stereotypes and vehicles for strengthening British identity.\textsuperscript{168}

Architects such as Adam and Chambers certainly traveled with an imperialist agenda, eager to admire and to exploit cultural heritages for the commercial and artistic


advantage of Britain. Architects counted among vast numbers of travelers from England, Germany, France, Scandinavia, Eastern Europe and Russia, who poured into a handful of major Italian centers beginning in the mid-to-late eighteenth-century with the aim of cultural and personal gain. They would shape not only their own lives through travel, but also the identity of Italy by imposing their own cultural values on local practices and the constructing fictions about Italian society.

For the eighteenth-century architect, the most significant travel was a Grand Tour, an essentially British tradition.\textsuperscript{169} The end of the War of Spanish Succession in 1713 was the watershed moment, after which aristocratic and scholarly interest in the Grand Tour was rekindled. This new interest gave wealthy dilettantes and students of art direct contact with classical monuments and opportunities to purchase ancient artifacts for display and sale in Britain. Although itineraries varied, typical routes took the traveler through France and Italy, with extended stays in Paris and Rome.

Adam’s Grand Tour, taken between October of 1754 and January of 1758, was the single most important event in his education, providing him with the confidence, connections, and skills to establish himself as one of the most significant architects of his generation.\textsuperscript{170} In Italy, Adam received career-shaping advice from artists and patrons that emboldened him to establish a practice in London, rather than return to the family firm in Edinburgh. During his time in Rome, Adam also met and learned from the Belgian architect Laurent-Benôit Dewez (1731-1812), the Italian painter Agostino Brunias (1730-
96), and the Venetian printmaker Giovanni Battista Piranesi, with whom Adam would collaborate for most of his career, as he invented, expanded, and executed his signature style. Adam’s chief objective during his time abroad was the maturation of his artistic abilities and sensibilities. As he explained to his brother James in his first year in Rome: “[In Rome] I hope to have my ideas greatly enlarged and my taste formed on the solid foundation of genuine antiquity. I already feel a passion for sculpture and painting which I was before ignorant of… my conceptions of architecture will become much more noble than I could have attained had I remained in Britain.”  

This experience provided Adam and other architects of his era, with life-changing travel to architectural monuments, contacts with other ambitious British and Continental architects, and connections to the networks of art dealers, draughtsmen, antiquarians, patrons, craftsmen, and academicians on whom Adam would later rely to expand the activities of his architectural firm.

Most travelers did not undertake the Grand Tour merely because it was believed that an artist could only learn about the fine arts in Italy. There was also considerable social and professional pressure to undertake the journey in order to earn credibility and respect from patrons and colleagues. As Johnson remarked, “A man who has not been to Italy, is always conscious of an inferiority, from his not having seen what it is expected a man should see. The grand object of travelling is to see the shores of the Mediterranean.” Adam certainly did see what he was expected to see on his tour, which took him through France and much of Italy, despite not having time to visit Calabria, Sicily, or Greece. He also took time for cultural adventures, such as going to the theater, dinner parties, and seasonal festivities, motivated by his eagerness to connect

171 Graham, Arbiter of Elegance, 75.
with interesting people. Adam also stole indulgent moments for playful activities. Upon arriving in Florence on 30 January 1755, for example, he partook of the carnival celebrations before beginning to look and sketch: “What way do you think I spent these three mornings? I wager you won’t guess. Says one, seeing the Venus of Medici, seeing the antique statues and glorious pictures? No! Why, in short, skating on the ice.”\textsuperscript{174} It is amusing to imagine Adam tottering on skates on the frozen Arno river to the “no small amusement of the bystanders who have uttered more Gesu Marias and other marks of astonishment than can be expressed.”\textsuperscript{175}

Near the end of his tour, Adam grew anxious to see as much as possible because he knew that he would likely never travel outside Britain after this trip. He especially hoped to see Athens, Sparta, Egypt, and the Holy Land, but time and money would not permit those visits. On October 23, 1757, he wrote to his sister Nell (Helen), “…perhaps the time may come when I have 5 or 6 Thousands a Year that I may spend a Year or Two for the Good of the Publick and advancement of our Art.”\textsuperscript{176} If he could not travel himself, Robert hoped his brothers could, and that between them, they could maximize the potential to create innovative designs with motifs previously unknown in Britain. Following his tour, however, Adam never left Britain, and when he reached London in January of 1758, he promised his mother that he would not travel far again: “I ever am my Dearest Mothers British Boy and shall remain so.”\textsuperscript{177}

For British architects, the emphasis on the Grand Tour reflected a critical, seismic shift in perceptions about adequate training. While very few architects could afford to

\textsuperscript{174} Cited in Fleming, \textit{Robert Adam}, 133.
\textsuperscript{175} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{176} Cited in Yarwood, 78.
\textsuperscript{177} Cited in Yarwood, 88.
take such a tour, it came to be considered indispensable for the attainment of mastery in architectural design and was more enriching than book-learning. Although the training and practice of architects remained primarily book-based between 1500 and 1800, and although the circulation and publication of architectural treatises steadily increased through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (and exploded in the eighteenth), the belief that it was important for an architect to learn directly from buildings, rather than from books, also grew at a steady rate.\textsuperscript{178}

Architecturally inspired travel was not new. Beginning at least with Leon Battista Alberti (1404-72) and Donato Bramante (1444-1514), some architects had made a point of traveling to learn from the buildings themselves.\textsuperscript{179} Indeed, Adam and his contemporaries believed that Renaissance architects had a great advantage over all who succeeded them because the ancient buildings had been in better condition when they saw them. In a letter of 1756, Robert wrote to his brother James:

\begin{quote}
… in Palladio’s time [the baths of Diocletian and Carcalla] were much more intire so that I get great light from him; My other studies are the drawings of what good buildings are in Rome, either within or without, particularly those done from the Antients by Piero Ligorio, Algardi and Salvi.\textsuperscript{180}
\end{quote}

This is not to say that the in-person study of ancient monuments was ever easy or widespread, although in the eighteenth century it became a more common practice. Even leading Renaissance architects had to be persuaded to undertake the task. Palladio, for example, was moved to study directly ancient monuments directly only after being guided to do so by his humanist mentor, Alvise Cornaro (1484-1566). In his \textit{Trittato della vita sobria (Treatise on the Sober Life)}, published in 1548, Cornaro claimed that he had learned more “from the ancient buildings that from the book of the divine Vitruvius,”

\textsuperscript{180} Edinburgh, Register House, Clerk of Penicuik Papers, no. 4817, Robert Adam to James, Sept. 11, 1756.
and that while books and drawings of ancient architecture were useful in Palladio’s
development, they were no substitute for the buildings themselves.181 Indeed, Palladio
opens the first book of his Quattro Libri attesting to the great value of studying ancient
buildings first hand:

I set myself the task of investigating the remains of the ancient buildings that have
survived despite the ravages of time and the cruelty of the barbarians, and finding them
much worthier of study than I had first thought, I began to measure all their parts
minutely and with the greatest care…I repeatedly visited various parts of Italy and abroad
in order to understand that totality of buildings from their parts and commit them to
drawings.182

For the eighteenth-century architect, the study of ancient “buildings” largely comprised
the study of the fragments of large public structures. For such eighteenth-century
architects, one of the principal values of Renaissance buildings was that they had been
inspired by more-or-less intact ancient structures. The study of such Renaissance
buildings, modern architects believed, provided them with insights into the classical past,
enabling them to compose more accurate reconstructions of ancient architectural
monuments and to compose more successful classically-inspired designs. Eighteenth-
century architects also relied on the work of Renaissance architects to study buildings
that did not survive in their era. Adam wrote, for example, in the description for Plate XX
in Ruins (Figure 4.9), which illustrated a view of the peristylium of the Palace, that “Part
[the principal Front of Dioclesian’s [sic] Baths at Rome] of these Baths have been
destroyed since Palladio’s Time, [so] I am obliged to quote his Authority, instead of
appealing to the Original itself” (this “principal front,” Adam believed, looked “exactly
similar” to that of the peristylium of the Palace at Spilt).

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181 Andrea Palladio, Four Books on Architecture; translated and introduction by Robert Tavernor &
182 Ibid., 5.
The most common kind of examination of ancient buildings undertaken by eighteenth-century architects in Rome was the re-measuring of extant edifices rather than excavation, and very little of the excavation that did occur was concerned with buildings. British architects instead undertook treasure hunts for sculpture, which had the highest status among ancient treasures. Expert surveying of the kind undertaken in the Domus Aurea on the Esquiline Hill was quite rare. In fact, in the eighteenth century, British architects were not even allowed to erect scaffolding on ancient Roman buildings.

Training of the Architect at the Royal Academy

The greatest change in architectural training in Britain in the second half of the eighteenth century was the founding of the Royal Academy on December 10, 1768. That is a modest claim, however, because the new institution accomplished relatively little at first, providing only minimal, supplementary education, in the form of periodic lectures and instruction in non-architectural draftsmanship. It would take the span of the nineteenth century before architects would receive adequate training at the Academy.

Generations of architects and writers openly and heavily criticized the institution for its negligence, especially in the first half of the nineteenth century. English architect

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184 Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture 1500-1900 (Turnhout: Miller, 2016).
185 See Frank Salmon, “‘Storming the Campo Vaccino’: British Architects and the Antique Buildings of Rome after Waterloo” Architectural History 38, 149, p. 150.
186 The British Royal Academy of art has a late founding date when compared to European counterparts. Florence in 1563, Rome in 1593, Milan in 1620, and Paris in 1648, the British academy succeeds them all by at least a century, founded in 1768. The period 1500 to 1900 saw the flourishing and decline of this model.
James Elmes (1782-1862) called the Academy a “perverted institution.” His colleague George Godwin (1815-88) attacked it “inexcusable degree of inattention to architecture.” Another critic complained that at Somerset House architects were treated like “unhappy nobodies,” given “the worst and the darkest room,” limited use of the library, and “no models, no instruction.”

Prior to the eighteenth century, Britain had no school for drawing, painting, or architecture, and architects’ struggle for social recognition, adequate training, and an authoritative central institution, like that of other British artists, was long, checkered, and at times humiliating. The idea to found an academy of arts existed in England at least since the mid-seventeenth century. Some of the earliest advocates of such an institution were members of the Royal Society (founded 1660), a discussion group of intellectuals, scientists, and dilettantes supported by royal patronage (initially Charles II) who were dedicated to sustaining the scientific and philosophical doctrines of Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626). The Royal Society was like an academy, but with important differences, such as its lack of obligation to provide instruction, or regulate a particular profession. John Evelyn (1620-1706), one of England’s leading architects, town planners, and architectural writers, was one of the strongest advocates within the Royal Society for the foundation of an academy.

Inspired by the academies of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italy and the new French Royal Academy (1648) in Paris, which Evelyn had visited, he called for the

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radical restructuring of architectural training in England.\textsuperscript{191} His ideal form of architectural education was rooted in the Renaissance tradition of artist-architects, i.e. designers who were not narrowly specialized in the practice of architecture. This tradition was founded on the belief that any artist could design a building, since it was the conception of the work that mattered rather than the construction, and the custom of treating painting, sculpture, and architecture as three branches of the same art, namely design (disegno), which Vasari called “the father of our three arts.”

Directly encouraged by Evelyn’s activities in the Royal Society, in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries two artists’ organizations emerged. These were the Rose and Crown Club (active from 1704-45) and the Society of Virtuosi of Saint Luke (active from 1689-1743), which admitted as members the architects William Talman (1650-1719), James Gibbs (1682-1754), Christopher Wren (1632-1723), and William Kent (1685-1748). These clubs, however, proved ineffective in reaching the goals set by artists, largely because they offered no formal training, only informal meetings, often in taverns, which were useful only for the exchange of ideas and fostering social cohesion.

The beginning of more formal artistic training began early in the autumn of 1711, when the painter Godfrey Kneller (1646-1723) opened the first private academy of art in London. This would be the seed of the Royal Academy (founded in 1768) and the modern British system of making and exhibiting art. Like the future Royal Academy, Kneller’s school required its members to pay a subscription (one guinea), and it brought together a good-sized number of men, sixty upon the school’s foundation, of varying

\textsuperscript{191} The foundation of the French Royal Academy in 1648 was followed by the foundation of the \textit{Académie royale d'architecture} in 1671.
ages, social positions, professions, and nationalities. They first gathered on the Day of St. Luke, 18 October 1711, when they elected a governor and twelve directors. A ruinous mansion in Great Queen Street, occupied by several noblemen, provided the venue for this fledging school, and a large room on the ground floor served as a studio, in which they all drew from life. Working conditions at this stage were far from ideal, however. The studio was poorly ventilated, and the smell and fumes of the central oil lamp created a sickening atmosphere that caused at least one member to quit.\textsuperscript{192} Kneller’s proto-academy folded upon his death in 1723.

Between 1711 and 1768, at least three other academies opened in London. Upon leaving Kneller’s school, the painter Sir James Thornhill (1675-1734) opened one in his own house in Covent Garden in 1716. This soon closed, sadly, due to a lack of subscribers. In 1720, the alumni from Great Queen Street regrouped to found an academy in St. Martin’s Lane. The painter and architect William Kent was an early member, as was William Hogarth (1697-1764), whose papers contain some information about its activities.\textsuperscript{193} He reported that the school met in a “great room” that had before been used as a meeting house and that in order to attract students, the directors of the academy engaged female models to pose for the life class.\textsuperscript{194} Indeed, the opening of St Martin’s was announced in the papers in October 1722: “This week the Academy for the Improvement of Painters and Sculptors by drawing from the Naked, open’d in St. Martin's

\textsuperscript{192} This member was Peter Berchett, the French artist who painted the ceiling of the chapel at Trinity College, Oxford, and the staircase at Schomberg House, Pall Mall. See William Thomas Whitley, \textit{Artists and Their Friends in England: 1700-1799} (New York: B. Blom, 1968), 10.

\textsuperscript{193} Ibid., 17.

\textsuperscript{194} Ibid.
Lane and will continue during the winter as usual. N.B. The company have agreed not to draw on Mondays and Saturdays.”

The school at St Martin's Lane closed when the treasurer embezzled the subscriptions, upon which the landlord seized the furniture. Hogarth, an adamant supporter of the education of artists, came to the rescue and founded a second St. Martin's Lane Academy in the winter of 1735. At about the same time, another school for painting and drawing from life was opened at Salisbury Court. The Hellenist and architect James Stuart was a member, but the school was short-lived and eventually merged with Hogarth's.

In spite of the success of the St. Martin’s Lane Academy, the desire to establish an official government institution, like the French example, persisted. After a series of false starts (including the foundation of the short-lived Society of Artists of Great Britain), in the autumn of 1768, George III commissioned four artists – Williams Chambers, Benjamin West (1738-1820), George Michael Moser (1706-83), and Francis Cotes (1726-70) – to prepare a plan for a royal academy. The academy was inaugurated on 10 December.

From December 1768 to early 1771, the Royal Academy was confined to the modest premises of Dalton’s former print warehouse on the south side of Pall Mall, adjacent to Old Carlton House. In 1771, George III provided accommodations, which had been restored, for the Academy’s antique and life classes, a lecture hall, a library, and

195 Ibid., 18.
196 Hogarth wrote, “I lent to the Society the furniture that had belonged to Sir James Thornhill's Academy; and attributing the failure of the preceding Academies to the leading members having assumed a superiority which their fellow students could not brook, I proposed that every member should contribute an equal sum towards the support of the establishment and have an equal right to vote on every question relative to its affairs. By these regulations the Academy has now existed nearly thirty years, and is for every useful purpose equal to that in France or any other” (Whitley, *Artists and Their Friends in England*, 27).
offices in Old Somerset House in the Strand. The replacement of this former royal palace in 1781 with a grand new building designed by Chambers provided the Royal Academy with room for its school, library, collection of casts and the “Great Room” — a top-floor gallery, purpose-built for the display of works of art.

The need for a functional and effective academy was believed to be great. Above all, British artists and architects desired a means to establish their social level as on par with their clients, and, thereby, assure patronage. A second objective was to certify the intellectual and professional competence of its members, in the pursuit of which the Academy would operate like other learned institutions. In previous centuries, the Office of Works had acted as a kind of substitute academy, educating skilled master craftsmen in design innovations and decorative trends, which could be incorporated into work for private clients.

To some extent, the Royal Academy succeeded in boosting the social and professional status of its members. Royal patronage and the titles and honors the Academy had the power to bestow were publicly-acknowledged status symbols, which distinguished the professional (academic) artist from the amateur, guild-controlled artisan. The British painter James Northcote (1746-1831), admitted to the Royal Academy in 1787, regarded the rank of Royal Academician (R.A.) as “equal to a patent of nobility.”

The Royal Academy made other modest, but tangible, contributions to the welfare of the architectural profession. The appointment of the Professor of Architecture constituted a prominent employment opportunity. The library, although not widely

accessible, boasted a renowned collection of important books on architecture. And the new institution greatly helped a handful of promising architectural students by occasionally awarding gold medals and traveling scholarships.

Through its first century of existence, there were never more than half a dozen students of architecture at any one time. Despite the fact that an architect, Chambers, did more than any other individual to ensure the its foundation, and who held the most powerful position at the Academy (Treasurer) for over thirty years, the architect members of the Academy did not work to increase their numbers or expand their professional interests. At the outset, architects were vastly outnumbered by painters: of the thirty-six founding members, each nominated by the king, twenty-eight were painters, five were architects, and three were sculptors. Of the seventy-seven students admitted to the Academy schools in its first academic year (1769), only three were accepted in architecture, compared to thirty-five in painting, ten in sculpture and four in engraving (twenty-five were not specified). Between 1769 and 1820, the Academy schools admitted 1,184 male students, and the subjects studied by 1,034 (87%) of them is known: 51% registered in painting; 15% in architecture; 12% in engraving, and 8% in sculpture.

There is little evidence of attendance, but the surviving records indicate that students probably attended classes for four to six years, and a report at the turn of the century lists eighty active students, making the academy medium-to-large sized by

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198 According to the constitution, academicians had to be painters, sculptors, or architects and “men of fair moral characters, of high reputation in their several professions, at least twenty-five years of age, resident in Great Britain, and not members of any other London art society.” The average age of the founders hovered in the early forties and most were of middling income. Among the founders were many, but not all, of the leading British painters, sculptors, and architects (Holger Hoock, *King's Artists: the Royal Academy of Arts and the Politics of British Culture, 1760-1840* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), 30-1.

199 Hoock, *King's Artists*, 34.

200 Ibid., 53.
European standards. Students admitted after 1800 were allowed ten years of affiliation with the Royal Academy, whereas students admitted before 1800 could enjoy their status for life.\textsuperscript{201}

Royal Academy students received the most comprehensive theoretical and practical fine arts training in the British Isles. Its teaching doctrine was embodied in the lectures of the Academy’s President and Professor of Painting, Joshua Reynolds, which he delivered to students between 1769 and 1790, and which he published as a collection of discourses in 1778. His philosophy was consistent with Europe-wide, neoclassical academic theory, including the belief in the mimetic naturalism of artistic practice, the superiority of moralistic history painting in the hierarchy of genres, the precedence of design and drawings over coloring, and the pursuit of ideal beauty as an objective and universal visual language. Reynolds taught students to draw selectively and eclectically from Old Masters, just as the Professor of Architecture, Thomas Sandby, instructed students to learn selectively from the master architects of the Renaissance. Reynolds summed up the significance of the new Academy in his first discourse:

\begin{quote}
The principle advantage of an Academy is, that, besides furnishing able men to direct the Student, it will be a repository for the great examples of the Art. These are the materials on which Genius is to work, and without which the strongest intellect may be fruitlessly or deviously employed. By studying these authentic models, that idea of excellence which is the result of the accumulated experience of past ages, may be at once acquired; and the tardy and obstructed progress of our predecessors may teach us a shorter and easier way. The Student receives, at one glance, the principles which many Artists have spent their whole lives in ascertaining; and, satisfied with their effect, is spared the painful investigation by which they came to be known and fixed. How many men of great natural abilities have been lost to this nation, for want of these advantages! They never had an opportunity of seeing those masterly efforts of genius, which at once kindle the whole soul, and force it into sudden and irresistible approbation.\textsuperscript{202}
\end{quote}

In this passage, Reynolds poetically related a vision of an academy as a crucial agent in the institutionalization of the principle of cumulative progress in art and the establishment

\textsuperscript{201} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{202} Reynolds, \textit{Discourses on Art}, 15 (Discourse I, s. 46-60).
of genealogies of artists. In this model of cultural progress, the new Academy acts as a “repository” of the accumulated wisdom and intellectual and artistic production of mankind, akin to modern notions of the museum, which were being formulated at the same time. In many ways, Reynolds’ panegyric also echoes the ideals of another coeval invention, the modern encyclopedia, which sought to collect and rationally organize all the knowledge of mankind. Another parallel is found in, what had become by mid-century, the standard prefatory remarks of important architectural publications. Setting an example that Chambers would later adopt in his *Treatise on Civil Architecture*, Francois Blondel (1618-86), in the first volume of his *Cours d’Architecture* (Paris, 1675), for example, explained that the principle significance of his book was the careful collection and rational organization of all known significant architectural theory.

The Royal Academy offered a standard academic program in relation to other European academies. Unlike their continental counterparts, however, no tuition was charged. The academicians were proud of their commitment to provide considerable administrative and financial support for their students.

All students, regardless of their specific field, were required to complete the same core curriculum. Initially, students spent up to three years drawing from casts of classical and Renaissance sculptures in the “Antique School.” (This was instead of copying from drawings first, as was the practice in most continental academies.) Following this was up to three years of drawing from live models, instruction in anatomy, history, and perspective, and attendance at lectures on painting, architecture, and, by the 1810s, sculpture. Architects were not trained in architectural drawing, but did produce drawings that copied fragments of buildings, chiefly casts of ancient Roman monuments. In his
first lecture, Sandby pled for the acquisition of architectural models, which he perceived to be invaluable pedagogical tools:

It is much to be wished that for the future instruction and improvement of the students they could be assisted with models also... Models therefore should be procured whenever our finances will permit, of the most celebrated structures of antiquity, and premiums given to those who should best execute them.²⁰³

From the start, the Royal Academy organized competitions and offered Rome scholarships on the Parisian model. Gold medals for the best history painting, bas-relief, and architectural drawing were awarded annually from 1769, but reduced to biannually in 1772; annual competitions were held for silver medals.

The collections assembled by the Royal Academy were strongest in Old Master prints and drawings and casts of sculpture, and were comparatively weak in architectural drawings, fragments, and casts of fragments. A 1770 painting by Elias Martin (1739-1818), showing Royal Academicians drawing after casts of classical sculpture, in the Academy’s first residence in Pall Mall, gives us some idea of the daily life of the RA student (Figure 2.5). A group of eager Academicians cluster around plaster casts, drawing under the dim light of a single, overhead lamp. The plaster casts are identifiable. Moving from left to right, they are: Sansovino’s Bacchus; The Cannibal, a fragment of an ancient Roman statue that depicts a boy biting the calf of another boy; the Uffizi Mercury; the Callipygian Venus; and the Vatican group of Meleager with his dog. In Martin’s painting, the casts have been slightly distorted, chiefly through elongation; these changes were perhaps made to emphasize the smallness of the quarters. According to Academy regulations, the plaster casts were replaced each week with a fresh batch.²⁰⁴

²⁰³ Sandby, SaT/1/1, Lecture 1, ff. 44-5.
The core of the cast collection consisted of copies of classical and Renaissance statues and écorché figures inherited from the school of drawing in Saint Martin’s Lane. Although the precise number of casts held by the Royal Academy during its early years housed in Pall Mall and Old Somerset House is not known, we do know the precise nature of the Royal Academy’s cast collection at the time of its move into New Somerset House. This information survives thanks to a contemporary guide to the Academy written around 1781 by the then Secretary of Foreign Correspondence, Giuseppe Baretti; this source listed all of the casts according to their locations within the new three-story space. ²⁰⁵ Private donations and acquisitions rapidly augmented the Royal Academy’s collection, and, by 1810, it housed over two-hundred and fifty casts. The students’ education was further advanced by use of the Academy’s large library, open once a week. The book collection was vast and eclectic, representative of a range of diverse histories and theories of all the fine arts, especially painting and architecture.

It is worth noting that Martin’s painting shows an entirely male group of students, which reflects the nature of all professional organizations in eighteenth-century Britain. Although female students were not barred under the Royal Academy’s constitution, none was admitted before 1860. A Miss Patrickson, however, is said to have been allowed by Keeper, painter Henry Fuseli (1741-1825), to work in the Council Room, and during vacations, to draw from casts in the Antique School; and two women, the painters Mary Moser (1744-1819) and Angelica Kauffman (1741-1807), were among the founding members of the Royal Academy, although they did not actively participate in the Academy’s teaching or administration and were excluded from its life class, the defining

²⁰⁵ Giuseppe Baretti, A Guide through the Royal Academy by Joseph Baretti, Secretary for Foreign Correspondence to the Royal Academy, n.d. [c1781].
activity of artists.\textsuperscript{206} Cursory, if not insensitively crude, portraits of Mary Moser and Angelica Kauffmann appear in Johan Zoffany’s (1733-1810) group portrait of the Royal Academicians from 1772, hanging on the right-hand wall. (Figure 2.6)

\textit{Thomas Sandby’s Royal Academy Lectures on Architecture}

Brief examination of Sandby’s lectures provides insight into the shared theoretical language of British students and architects, and a clearer picture of academic training in Adam’s era. It also elucidates further the methods and practices that characterized professional architects in eighteenth-century Britain, and contextualizes more fully the intellectual contributions of Sandby, one of the most important British artists of the eighteenth century, to the development of the modern architect, and especially to Adam, whom he instructed in drawing and painting in Scotland in 1745-6 and with whom he would remain in contact throughout this career. Adam likely attended at least some of these lectures, as he and Sandby appear to have stayed in touch, and Adam lived in London during his tenure.

Thomas Sandby’s election in 1768 as Professor of Architecture at the Royal Academy obliged him to write six lectures and deliver them each year. His lectures did not address practical aspects of the profession of architecture, but instead presented a range of aesthetic and historical topics. Popular contemporary ideas of the sublime and the picturesque governed each lecture, as did the Enlightenment ideals of truth, logic, and reason, and the strong tradition of British empiricism.

\textsuperscript{206} See Hoock’s \textit{King’s Artists}, 53 & 32.
Instrument XIV of the foundation document required Sandby, as Professor of Architecture, to submit lectures before their delivery to the “Council” for approval.\(^{207}\) Chambers’ role as the reviewer of Sandby’s lectures is known both from a letter that Sandby wrote to Chambers in September of 1769 (to inform him that his first lecture was ready for review), and from Chambers’ own partial drafts of lectures, which he composed sometime around 1770 when Sandby’s ill health seemed likely to prevent him from fulfilling his teaching duty.\(^{208}\) As might be expected from his consultation with Chambers during authorship of the essays, Sandby’s lectures are consistent with the arguments and organization presented in Chambers’ *Treatise*. Large sections of the lectures, in fact, were borrowed from that work, as well as from the writings of other British writers, including the architect Robert Morris (1703-54), the philosophers Henry Home (Lord Kames) and Edmund Burke (1729-97), and the gardener Thomas Whately (1726-72).

Sandby delivered his lectures at the Academy between 1770 and 1796.\(^{209}\) They are not published, but two copies of the lectures are housed in the library of the Royal Institute of British Architects, and a third copy is preserved in the Soane Museum.\(^{210}\) The RIBA received its first copy of Sandby’s lectures in 1848 from the then secretary of the Royal Academy, the art historian John Britton (1771-1857). Britton’s prefatory epistle provides the sole evidence that this copy was written in Sandby’s own, graceful hand. Thomas Sandby’s son, William Sandby, copied this manuscript in 1849 into a quarto-sized volume, which is also held at the Royal Institute of British Architects.


\(^{210}\) Royal Institute of British Architects, SaT/1/1 & SaT/1/2; Sir John Soane Museum, MS AL 31B.
Museum’s copy of the Sandby lectures was made under the direction of Sir John Soane’s pupils, and is complemented by two volumes of miscellaneous architectural drawings made by Sandby.

Although bound within a single volume, Sandby evidently copied out the lectures at different dates. The title page of lecture six, for example, refers to “the present year” as 1794, while lecture four was written on pages watermarked 1796. From this variation in dating, one can deduce that Sandby copied his lectures over the span of two years, between 1794 and 1796. When Sandby fell ill late in 1796, he requested that his friend Edward Edwards, Professor of Perspective at the Royal Academy, deliver his lectures. After Sandby’s death in 1798, the architect and surveyor George Dance the Younger (1741-1825) took over his post and served as Professor of Architecture from 1798 to 1805. Controversially, Dance did not write or deliver lectures.

The Academy lectures were open to the public and aimed to attract attendees beyond the student body. Although the precise nature of the audiences of these lectures is unknown, there is some evidence that the lectures were well attended and that audience members often included Academicians’ friends and colleagues, journalists, connoisseurs, collectors, other intellectuals, and cultural professionals.\textsuperscript{211} Certainly there is agreement that Sandby's lectures were “well received and influential [and] assured his place at the centre of affairs in London in the 1770s.”\textsuperscript{212}

Between 1781 and 1798 Sandby delivered his lectures in a room on the third floor of Somerset House within the Royal Academy’s dedicated suite of rooms. Previous to 1781, before the Academy moved to Somerset House, the precise location of the lecture

\textsuperscript{211} Hoock, \textit{King’s Artists}, 57.
space is unknown. We have some idea of the staging and intimate atmosphere of the Royal Academy lectures from George Scharf the Elder’s (1788-1860) painting, *Presenting a Lecture on Sculpture at the Royal Academy of Arts, Somerset House* (1830, Figure 2.7), depicting Professor Richard Westmacott (1775-1856), surrounded by casts of sculptures, delivering his lecture to an impressively large crowd.

Like Westmacott, Sandby taught directly from works of art. For all of his lectures, Sandby depended heavily on his lecture drawings, which were his greatest contribution to Royal Academy teaching. In his first lecture, Sandby prepared his audience for his extensive use of visual material: “Theory…never instructs so fully as when accompanied by practice and example. I shall therefore in these lectures, endeavor to illustrate my observations by a variety of plans, elevations, and other drawings.”

The number and titles of each of Sandby’s many illustrations are known from his enumeration of them at the start of each lecture and total one-hundred and twenty-six. The drawings to which Sandby referred in the lectures, however, neither accompany the manuscript, nor are preserved in public or private collections, save for a few. We know, however, that Sandby’s lists relate only to the minimum number of drawings he prepared for each talk. For example, while he displayed over forty drawings of bridges for the sixth lecture, he listed only thirteen in the manuscript. It also appears that

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213 SaT/1/1, Lecture 1, ff. 43-4.
214 Three of Sandby’s drawings of the “Bridge of Magnificence” are held at the Drawings and Archives Collections at the RIBA (the drawings of the Bridge are dated to c1780 because they resemble Chambers’ Somerset House, the reconstruction of which began in 1776). Two, “29” and “30” of lecture six, were given to the Institute of Architects by Mr. Britton, and another, “27” from lecture 6, is in the Library of the Soane Museum. Sandby’s drawings are in different collections: the Soane Museum, Victoria & Albert Museum, British Museum, RIBA London, Bodleian Library in Oxford (Gough Collection), Vassar College in New York, and the Royal Collection at Windsor. His lecture drawings have not been identified.
Sandby composed most, but not all of the lecture drawings; some he borrowed from friends and students.

The content of Sandby’s first two lectures closely followed the opening chapters of the second edition of Chamber's *Treatise* (1768). The first lecture covered the origins and progress of architecture, and stated general guidelines for the study and practice of architecture, including knowledge of architecture’s “attendant sciences,” geometry, arithmetic, perspective, mechanics, hydraulics, and “the art of design.” The second offered a brief exposition of the architectural orders, of which Sandby identified six: three of Greek origin (Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian) and three of Roman (Tuscan, Composite, and Attic). In his discussion of the orders, Sandby, like Chambers, relied principally upon Fréart de Chambray’s *Parallèle de l’architecture et de la moderne* (1650). Throughout the first and second lectures, he encouraged his students to look both to nature and great works from the past for inspiration in the creation of their own designs, and to be guided by their own reason and imagination.

At the heart of the second lecture, we are given clear examples of how the professor used his large lecture drawings as didactic instruments. Here, Sandby compared drawings of architectural orders found in ancient ruins, including those from the Theater of Marcellus, the Baths of Diocletian, the Campo Vaccino, the Coliseum, the Pantheon, the Temple of Faustina, and the Arch of Titus, with those illustrated in the books of Vitruvius, Palladio, Vignola, and Scamozzi, and found in modern buildings. Initially, Sandby used drawings representing Doric entablatures from the Theater of Marcellus, the Baths of Diocletian, and Saint Mary’s Church at Albano (listed as numbers “five,” “six,” and “seven”), to demonstrate one of the central lessons of the ancients: “These three
different designs may tend to prove what hath already been observed, that the Ancients
produced great variety in their compositions and decorations, still preserving the
character of the Order." Later, Sandby directed his students to examine further the
ancient’s ability to preserve architectural character, now looking at differences between
the Doric and Ionic orders in ancient works:

Behold the Doric cornice in the Theater of Marcellus, where you will evidently perceive
how much larger it appears than that given to this Order by our great author Vitruvius, as
represented in the Profile below. The other is Drawing No 3 [drawing of an Ionic cornice
from the Theater of Marcellus]. In this Drawing you will also see the difference in the
Ionic Cornice, from the same Building, from that of Vitruvius. Profiles of each are now
before you, the uppermost from the same Theater and the other from the above
mentioned author. Notwithstanding the very apparent differences between them, these
cornices have stood the test of many ages. They are all drawn by the same scale that the
variation & difference in their proportions may be more readily discovered. There you
will find that the Ionic Cornice, in the Theater of Marcellus is nearly double the
dimensions, both in height and projection, to the one given by Vitruvius and the Doric
Cornice in the same building is likewise, both in height and projection above one half
more than he allows to the same Order; and yet the character of those Orders are
evidently preserved in each of the Designs.

Although their difference is so amazingly great, they are not the only examples that might
be produced among the works of the ancients; for there are many others, where the same
latitude and scope for invention has been indulged with almost equal success.

From this short passage, we are able to surmise that Sandby’s drawings, which hung
collectively in the lecture hall through the span of his talk, were used comparatively and
as vivid exemplars of his written argument. We also learn that Sandby drew his
illustrations to the same scale, a tradition that Soane would later emulate in the many
drawings he composed for his twelve Royal Academy lectures as Professor of
Architecture (1806-37).

216 Sandby, SaT/1/1, Lecture 2, f. 17.
217 Sandby, SaT/1/1, Lecture 2, ff. 12-3.
218 Soane’s first course of six lectures were delivered in the years 1810, 1812, 1813, 1817, and 1819. Soane
extensively revised the first set of lectures in 1817 and again in 1818-19. He composed an entirely different
second course of six lectures in March 1815, and made minor revisions to them in 1817 and 1819-21. Both
courses of lectures were delivered for him by Henry Howard from 1832-1836 (Watkin published this
Crucially, it is also evident in this passage that Sandby not only related the critical principles and rules of architecture to his attentive audience, but also taught them how to learn from looking at art, rather than from merely reading books. Sandby was not coy in his conveyance of this goal. In the presentation of drawing one of the second lecture, which he entitled, “The Diminution of Columns,” he announced that “it is sometimes much better to speak to the Eye that to the Ear; the sight of a drawing will explain our meaning much better than the most labored description, we will therefore refer to a sketch made for that purpose that the foregoing remarks may be more clearly comprehended.”

Furthermore, when he presented the eleventh drawing of the second lecture, an “example of Ionia Order…taken from some ruins yet remaining in Ionia,” Sandby proclaimed:

> As the simplicity and at the same time, the elegance of this composition, may engage your attention, it will be needless to dwell on when instruction can be conveyed thro’ the eye to the mind, by example of this sort, the memory will retain much more than from any verbal description we can deliver here on this, the object under your present consideration.

Similarly, when Sandby introduced appropriate variation and proper ornament of exterior orders, he eschewed a lengthy verbal exposition and relied upon visual evidence to make his point. To this end, Sandby displayed four large drawings of different Corinthian entablatures from four different ancient monuments (drawings numbered fourteenth through seventeen in his lecture text: the Coliseum, the Pantheon, the Temple of Faustina, and Nero's Palace on Rome’s highest hill, the Quirinal), and professed:

> To point out the difference in these several compositions will at this time be unnecessary, as the Drawings alone, sufficiently show their variation from each other. It is in this order that Ornament has been introduced to a profusion: and here you easily discern the man of refined judgment and scientific knowledge from the more mechanical Architect. In one you see the repeated incisions on the small numbers, produce those confused shadows and unmeaning demi-tints which distract the light, destroy the effect, and mutilate those

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219 Sandby, SaT/1/1 Lecture 2, f. 6.
220 Ibid., 19-20.
very forms they were intended to adorn and whose native beauties needed no assistance from the hand of art. The man of real science enriches his architecture with that preciseness of judgment, and that subtlety of refinement, that the imperceptible transitions from simple to complex, from rich to plain surfaces, produce that repose to the Eye, which gives satisfaction to the Mind, & captivates us by a fascination of pleasing sensations. Hence arises that breadth of light and shade, the effect of grandeur and simplicity, which excited the Idea of magnificence in the mind of the Spectator. In a word - Ornament in external buildings require the most refined taste and the most solid judgment, to be introduced with that propriety which becomes the dignity of Architecture.  

In his third lecture, Sandby offered a survey of the history of architecture outside the classical tradition. He called these styles “those extraneous modes of building which have been adopted by other nations at different periods according as they were activated by necessity or caprice.” Sandby covered a range of architecture in the following order: “Saxon”; Gothic; the “Architecture of the Holy Land,” as exemplified in the Holy Sepulcher at Jerusalem; the architecture of “China, Persia, & several parts of the Kingdom of Indostan,” including Indian choultries, caravanserais, and the Temple Elephanta; Stonehenge; Gothic, again; “Mixed Gothic”; a style of architecture to which he gives no name, but is what we have come to call rococo; and, finally, Chinese pagodas. David Watkin has noted that Sandby’s second discussion of Gothic, which follows the account of Stonehenge, was taken directly from the work of the historian and antiquary, William Warburton (1698-1779), Bishop of Gloucester, who was, in turn, indebted to Jean Francois Félibien’s *Dissertation touchant l’architecture antique et l’architecture gothique* (1699). Sandby concluded this lecture by imploring students of architecture not to “go in search of new worlds before [having] conquered the old” and to follow the example of the “ancients,” by which he means the architects of the works produced in ancient Greece and Rome.

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221 Ibid., ff. 22-23.
222 Watkin, *Sir John Soane*, 47.
223 Sandby, SaT/1/1, Lecture 3, f. 49.
Sandby’s original contributions within his third lecture are found chiefly in his discussion of Indian architecture, which included the early rock temples at Elephanta (near Bombay) and Salsette Island, and the seventeenth-century royal palace at Madurai in the Indo-Islamic style. While Sandby created his own drawings to illustrate the Palace at Madurai, which he showed in two perspective views, his account of the Elephanta was illustrated with three drawings showing the temple in perspective, plan, and section that were supplied by his friend, Dr. James Lind.\(^{224}\) In this lecture, Sandby also showed the Rotunda over the Holy Sepulcher, the choir of the Temple of Solomon, a drawing of an “East Indian Choultry Rolled up,” a plan and elevation of Stonehenge, a plan of the choir of York Minster, the ceiling and a section of the King’s College Chapel at Cambridge, some examples of “mixed architecture of the 15\(^{th}\) and 16\(^{th}\) centuries,” and a Chinese pagoda.

In his fourth and longest lecture, Sandby expounded upon the design, structure, and decoration of the country house, or villa. Here, he advised students on the plans of country houses, the proper shapes, sequences, and proportions of rooms, the distribution of light and internal division of space, and the proportion and ornamentation of the elevation (including a separate section on the decoration of doors and windows). He also related precepts on the thickness of walls, the proper number and organization of windows, and the construction of the roof. The content of this lecture derives chiefly from Robert Morris’s *An Essay on Harmony. As it Relates Chiefly to Situation and Building* (1739) and John Gwynn’s *London and Westminster Improved...To which is Prefaced, a discourse on Publick Magnificence* (1766). Sandby’s striking, modern assertion that diversity within a landscape “produce[s] a continual moving picture” is

\(^{224}\) Watkin, *Sir John Soane*, 47.
taken from Isaac Ware’s section on landscape gardening in *Complete Body of Architecture* (1756-57).

Sandby’s fifth lecture comprised a lengthy discourse on beauty and is indebted to Edmund Burke’s second edition of his *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1759) and Henry Home’s *Elements of Criticism*. Near the end of the fifth lecture, he wrote a series of comparative studies of ancient and modern villas and displayed at least four new large drawings: a plan of a “Roman Villa compared with Holkham House,” a plan and elevation of Pliny’s Villa at Laurentinum, and a “Plan of a Grecian Villa.” David Watkin has noted that the drawings Sandby showed of Pliny’s Villa were those executed by a talented student of William Chambers, Edward Stevens, who had exhibited them at the Royal Academy in 1771. Each drawing is compared with the other, providing a clear parsing of the differences, in Sandby’s mind, between Greek and Roman villas, and between ancient villas and those of eighteenth-century Britain. Sandby ended his fifth lecture with a discussion of the decoration of rooms in ancient buildings. Here, he noted the lack of orders in the interiors of Pliny’s Villa and praised the decorative qualities of Pompeian mural decoration.

Sandby’s sixth and final lecture was a lengthy discussion of taste, symmetry, and magnificence in architecture. In his writing on taste and magnificence Sandby drew heavily from the works of Burke and Home that had also inspired most of the fifth lecture. In his expansive discussion of magnificence, which is truly a treatment of the sublime, Sandby also delved into discussion of emblematic ornament and the ideas of character and propriety, derived in part from Whatley’s *Observations on Modern Gardening* (1770). He then introduced a series of thirty-three drawings, “beginning with

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225 Ibid., 50.
the most simple, & proceeding up, through different degrees, to one of the most elegant & magnificent structures that has been erected in this country (Westminster Hall)” to demonstrate the principles of the theory he had set forth. Through these drawings, Sandby made clear how each building embodies various architectural values, whether that of propriety, elegance, symmetry, the subordination of parts, character, magnificence, convenience, expression, simplicity or grandeur.

In a final comparative exercise, Sandby demonstrated the “idea of false taste” by showing the drawings of ancient buildings (a temple, basilica, and forum), and contrasting them with modern ones (a church, exchange, and court of justice). Specifically, he contrasted the Temple of Jupiter Stator with St. Martin’s Church, the plan of an unnamed Roman basilica with the Royal Exchange, and the Roman Forum with the courts of justice in Westminster Hall. Sandby revealed through these comparisons why ancient building types may not simply be “converted” to modern counterparts.

Before concluding his final lecture with an artful summary of the progress of architecture in modern Britain, Sandby dedicated twenty pages to an original discussion of bridges. In this section, Sandby focused his analyses on the construction principles and visual properties of Roman, Chinese, modern British bridges. He was enchanted by accounts of Chinese bridges and provided a detailed account of the Flying Bridge of Nijmegen, taken from Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach’s *A Plan of Civil and Historical Architecture* (1721). In this work, Fischer provided a print of the bridge (book 3, plate 14) and reminded his reader that the bridge, which spanned 16,200 feet, was over three miles in length, citing that a “Martin Mart measured them very exactly.”

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226 Sandby, SaT/1/1, Lecture 6, f. 19.
The sixth lecture also included a discussion of an idealized Bridge of Magnificence over the Thames. (Figure 2.8) Old London Bridge had been the only river crossing for centuries, but the improvements to the city’s infrastructure being carried out during the mid-eighteenth century included a campaign of bridge-building: Westminster Bridge was built in 1738-49, London Bridge was improved in 1758-62, and Blackfriars Bridge was built in 1760-69. Sandby’s ideal bridge comprised nine arches supporting a colonnade and three classical pavilions, leading from Somerset House, under construction to the designs of Chambers from 1776, to the relatively underdeveloped south bank, and thus close to the site of the present Waterloo Bridge. In all, the sixth lecture was eventually illustrated by about forty drawings and watercolors of the bridge, some extending up to half the width of the lecture room. These drawings would become some of those for which Sandby became best known. He exhibited two of these drawings: A bridge of magnificence, design’d for the sixth lecture on architecture and a View from the entrance on the bridge at the Royal Academy in 1781.227

Sandby’s chief qualifications in his appointment as Royal Professor of Architecture stem nearly wholly from his skill as a draughtsman.228 He had almost no

227 Sandby’s authority on bridge building was perhaps undercut by three, very public engineering failures — two of which occurred while Sandby was Professor of Architecture. None of them, however, appeared to have resulted in professional set-backs or threatened his standing with his royal patrons. The first of these failures was that of his first dam project, built to create the Virginia Water Lake at Windsor Great Park. Sandby’s infirm dam, built of clay and sand, broke in a storm in 1768. The flood destroyed most of the building in the Great Park and earned him the nickname “Tommy Sandbank,” an event contemporaneous with his appointment as Professor of Architecture at the Royal Academy. Despite this failure, the King asked him to rebuild the dam. Sadly, however, the rebuilt dam at the Great Park proved equally infirm and gave way in a storm in 1782. Despite this second failure, Sandby kept his post and was made immediately responsible for the enlargement of the Lake and the building of a new cascade, a series of stone grottoes, and a great stone bridge for head of the Lake. In 1792, he was asked to build a stone bridge over the Thames at Staines (1792-97). Becoming Sandby’s third major engineering failure, this bridge collapsed in 1799 a year after his death.

228 Chambers might have initially been selected as the Professor of Architecture and then backed out for unknown reasons. Reynolds wrote to William Hamilton in Naples on 28 March 1768 that “…we have four professors Mr. Penny of Painting Mr. Chambers of Architecture Mr. Wale of Geometry and Perspective
training in architectural history or theory and very little experience as an architect by 1768, but he had already established himself as one of the fathers of British watercolor and as a master landscape draftsman.²²⁹ Throughout his career, Sandby remained first and foremost a painter, and he depended upon the marketing and sale of his paintings in order to support his family and promote his growing reputation.

Sandby’s lectures provide important evidence that Robert Adam was equally an innovator in his field and a logical product of the conditions of his era. They show foremost that Adam’s interests in philosophy (particularly the concepts set forth by Lord Kames), picturesque theory, empiricism, human perception, and an eclectic approach to design had all permeated and saturated architectural discourse by the middle of the second half of the eighteenth century. These essays also support the existence of shared antipathy and skepticism toward rules among British architects of this period — sentiments deeply felt by Adam throughout his working life. Finally, Sandby’s lectures also must have offered his audience powerful models for the use of images as didactic instruments and as sites for visual argumentation; these were specialized crafts that became commonplace for the first time in British history in the Georgian era, and were those which Adam exercised expertly in both of his publications, especially the *Works*.

*Adam’s Education*

Adam’s training as an architect was exceptional in its comprehensiveness. Rather than receiving an education from one principal source, as most architects did in his era,
he had the great advantage of learning from nearly every source available to an 
eighteenth-century student of architecture. Not only did Adam benefit from a liberal arts 
education, which included theoretical training in architecture, but he also gained practical 
experience as a builder and surveyor, working for his father’s business, William Adam 
and Company. As a Grand Tourist, Adam studied buildings first-hand and contracted 
masters in architectural drawing to engage him in intensive apprenticeships.

While Adam did not train in a French or Italian academy, his liberal, or humanist, 
education in Edinburgh and the academic culture of that city played a large role in the 
formation of his distinctive style. Adam’s father operated within an extensive circle of 
enlightened acquaintances, patrons, and close friends, which extended throughout 
Britain.\textsuperscript{230} One of the key figures in William Adam’s social network was his friend and 
patron, Sir John Clerk of Penicuik (1676-1755).\textsuperscript{231} Clerk was the intimate of nearly all the 
leading figures of arts and letters in his era, including Richard Boyle, Lord Burlington 
(1694-1753), Samuel Gale (1682-1754), and William Stukeley (1687-1785). Within the 
close-knit Clerk’s circle, William Adam participated in regular meetings of the Scottish 
intelligentsia, which John Fleming has described:

\begin{quote}
At home, whether in Edinburgh or at his country-house at Penicuik, [Clerk] gathered 
round himself a miniature \textit{Accademia dell’Arcadia} of which the poet Alan Ramsey, the 
antiquarian Alexander Gordon and the architect William Adam were the principal 
ornaments; and through them and his other protégés he exerted a wide influence on the 
development of Scottish art and letters. William Adam in particular, who became the 
architect-in-ordinary to this little society, owed much to the classical learning and taste of 
his patron.\textsuperscript{232}
\end{quote}

This active and intellectually robust community provided the young Adam with an 
example of the kind of academic culture that had flourished in Western Europe since the

\textsuperscript{230} Fleming, \textit{Robert Adam}, 15.  
\textsuperscript{231} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{232} Ibid.
Renaissance. In fact, as early as 1729, William Adam, Allan Ramsey and others had attempted to establish a “public academy” of arts in Edinburgh, in which instruction would be given to students of painting, sculpture and architecture. This, of course, paralleled developments in London. Energized by projects like this, at the time of Adam’s birth in 1728, Edinburgh was on the brink of becoming one of the most intellectually stimulating cities in Europe, and it had a strong education system on the verge of significant reform.

Adam’s formal education began at age six, when he entered the Edinburgh High School in Blackfriar’s Wynd, an institution which only taught Latin grammar and literature, and often entirely in the Latin tongue. This schooling was rigorous and students attended classes six days a week, Mondays through Saturdays, and were given almost no vacation. Those who matriculated from the High School were expected to possess only a sound knowledge of Latin grammar and literature, especially the works of Cicero. John Fleming has noted that in high school, Adam read Cordery’s *Colloquies* and Erasmus’s *Syntax*, then Cicero’s *Epistles*, Terence’s *Comedies* and Buchanan’s *Psalms*. In the final two years of high school, Adam carefully studied Virgil, Ovid, Caesar, Terence, and especially Cicero. In addition to their Latin studies, in their free time, students at the High School were expected to master written and spoken English.

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233 See the agreement printed in *Edinburgh Annual Register*, IX (1816), ccclxxiii (473).
238 Ibid.
239 Ibid.
Following ten years of high school, in 1743, at the age of fourteen or fifteen, Adam matriculated at the University of Edinburgh, then known as “Tounis College,” whose academic year ran from November to June. He arrived at a newly-reformed institution, having been transformed under the leadership of principal William Carstares. Previously, the College had trained clergy and lawyers to teach moral philosophy, divinity, law and jurisprudence. Under the old “regent system,” a student took all courses from a single professor, whom the student paid directly upon graduation. Carstares replaced these regents with professors in individual subjects and allowed students to take a wide range of courses from a variety of teachers. This was done in emulation of Dutch practices. (Carstares, like many of his contemporaries, had been educated in Leyden.) Exposure to specialized training, expert knowledge, new ideas, conflicting points of view, and a diverse array of rhetorical styles must have fostered particularly strong creative energies in the students and created a culture conducive to lively debate, critique, and independent thinking. These would become the crucial skills in Adam’s founding of his own architectural practice and the development of a new style.

Tounis College was an unusually cosmopolitan center of learning. Because all courses were taught in Latin and because of the school’s religious tolerance and a lack of strict rules of conduct (as were enforced at Edinburgh’s English counterparts, Oxford and Cambridge) the Scottish college attracted a diverse mixture of students from across Europe. As a result of this more casual atmosphere, ideas were exchanged more frequently and more freely among students and faculty.

Although we know that students at the College were required to take courses in Latin and Greek, including Greek logic, metaphysics, and natural philosophy (or physics

\[240 \text{ See Graham, } Arbiter of Elegance, 25-27.\]
in modern terms), the precise nature of Adam’s education at the College is unknown. Records do show, however, that a “Robert Adams,” a spelling Adam had used in previous years, matriculated in the class of George Stuart (c. 1715-93), Professor of Latin language and Roman antiquities. It is also known that Adam’s cousin, William Robertson (1721-93), and his close friend, the philosopher and historian David Hume (1711-76) attended the lectures of Professor Mackie (1688-1770) on European modern history. Mackie also lectured on all aspects of Roman culture, especially antiquities, and on the “history of the world” between the decline and fall of the Roman Empire and the Reformation.

Adam took a course on the new philosophy of mathematics with Colin MacLaurin (1698-1746), his favorite professor, who had been appointed on the recommendation of Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727). MacLaurin was a prodigy, having entered Glasgow University at age eleven, taking his M.A. at age fifteen, and having been appointed Professor of Mathematics at Aberdeen University at age nineteen. In 1725, at age twenty-seven he came to Edinburgh. There, he lectured on history, ancient Rome, natural philosophy, astronomy, and mathematics. Math was considered subversive in the eighteenth century, as it challenged the church’s precept that everything in the universe was created and controlled by an omnipotent creator. In enlightened Scotland, however, the discipline found sympathetic conditions, nourished by a mounting skepticism of religious authority and a prevalent belief in the ability of human reason to

241 Fleming, Robert Adam, 78.
242 Ibid.
improve all aspects of culture. Adam wrote that MacLaurin’s mathematics classes were so successful that in the “war of 1743 (presumably the Dettingen campaign), nine-tenths of the British army of engineers were Scottish officers.”

In his memoirs, Dr. Alexander Carlyle (1722-1805) also boasted of the strength of the teaching of mathematics and mensuration in Scottish schools and of the consequent success of Scotsmen in the Royal Engineers (and as head gardeners to the English nobility). Although Carlyle does not specifically mention architects, they, too, would have reaped similar benefits. Adam, however, famously had no interest or talent in mensuration and arithmetic.

Adam probably also attended the anatomy lectures of Professor Alexander Monro and the logic lectures of Professor John Stevenson, at which he would have heard excepts from Aristotle’s *Poetics*, Longinus’s *On the Sublime* and an abridgment of Locke’s *Essay*. His study of Aristotle and Longinus would have laid a solid foundation for principles of taste and art, while logic, anatomy, and mathematics ostensibly prepared him to absorb the principles of measurement and function, and for the practical work of an architect not only in design and surveying, but also in estimating costs and bookkeeping. Adam left the University in 1746 without taking a degree, to assist his father in his architectural practice.

In the years before he left for Italy, Adam worked in the family business on-site and in the drawing office, and engaged in part-time study through reading in his father’s exceptional library. His earliest known architectural sketches and designs date to the winter of 1749, when, at age twenty-one, when he accompanied his friend, the Scottish

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244 Cited in Yarwood, Robert Adam, 33-4.
playwright, minister, and future private secretary to Lord Bute, John Home, to London and then made an architectural tour of England during the late winter and spring of 1750. While on this trip, according to John Clerk of Eldin, Adam “first began to curb the exuberance of his fancy and polish his taste.”

Although he did begin to study seriously Palladian monuments, including Inigo Jones’ Wilton House (1660ff), his notebooks from that trip are largely filled with sketches of Gothic buildings and fantasies in the Decorated and Perpendicular styles, which were new to him.

Adam’s most significant training occurred while on tour. During the long trip from Edinburgh to Rome, he visited as many significant works of architecture as he could possibly squeeze into his itinerary. Adam arrived in Rome on 24 February 1755 and within three months he had settled into a daily routine of work; this is known from a letter dated 24 May 1755, in which he wrote, “The forenoon I devote to study and drawing; after dinner I ride out to see palaces and draw on the spot.”

Adam reported that, militantly, he was up and at work each morning at seven o’clock, seated at his drawing board in a “green silk short coat and waistcoat, with a pair of thin breeches and my stockings ungartered.”

The French painter Charles-Louis Clérisseau (1721-1820) taught him drawing, perspective, and watercolor, and he was tutored by the French painter Laurent Pecheux, who had developed an abridged version of his own training at the French Academy, beginning with study of Le Brun’s *Méthode pour apprendre à dessiner les passions*.

Clérisseau was one of Adam’s principal masters in Rome and would become one of the draftsmen, who spent five weeks with him in Spilt and created the picturesque

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249 Ibid., 161.
250 Ibid., 162.
plates for *Ruins*. Adam first met Clérisseau in Florence, when he wrote “I have also got acquainted with one Clérisseau who draws in Architecture delightfully in the free manner I wanted. I hope to reap some Instruction from him.” Clérisseau had studied architecture at the Académie Royale d’Architecture in Paris under Germain Boffrand and in 1746, after winning the Prix de Rome, moved to the Eternal City and studied under the painter and architect Giovanni Paolo Panini (1691-1765). When his scholarship ended in 1754, Clérisseau relocated to Florence, where he met Adam in 1755. Adam immediately recognized Clérisseau’s talent and valuable social connections (he was friends, for example, with Piranesi, Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-68), and Cardinal Alessandro Albani (1692-1779)), and agreed to pay for the Frenchman’s board and expenses, and to live with him in Rome. He wrote of his new teacher:

> [He has] the utmost knowledge of Architecture and Perspective and of Designing and Colouring that I ever saw, or had any Conception of. He rais’d my Ideas, he created emulation and fire in my Breast, I wish’d above all things to learn his manner and to have him with me at Rome, to study close with him and to purchase of his Works.

Clérisseau was a rigorous instructor, who imposed on Adam a course of study heavily grounded in drawing ancient sculpture. Until he had achieved a certain level of proficiency in this work, Clérisseau would not allow him to study architecture. Adam wrote to his sisters on June 18, “You’ll be surprised to think that my time is chiefly employed now in drawing and copying feet and hands and noses and legs…which I am convinced is…absolutely requisite…[and] without which an architect cannot ornament a building, draw a bas-relief or a statue…” He later confessed to James, however, that despite Clérisseau’s disapproval and direction to abstain from “inventing or composing either plans or elevations” during the early stages of instruction, he could not resist now

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252 Ibid., 59.
and then “scrawling a plan of a temple or a bit of a front.” Clérisseau’s concern was that until Robert had acquired a “greater fund” from which to invent, had “made more progress in seeing “filled [his head] with proper ornaments,” and was more able to draw “to purpose,” the young architect would be “inventing indifferently and drawing so-so [mediocre] ornaments” and would never “[get] into the taste of better ones.”253

Aside from the disciplined instruction from the Frenchmen Clérisseau and Pecheux, Adam benefitted deeply from spending time talking and drawing with his draftsmen Dewez and Brunias, and especially with the spontaneous Piranesi. Robert met Piranesi probably in June 1755, and their meeting was electric. Robert wrote immediately to his sisters following their initial encounter that Piranesi was “the most extraordinary fellow I ever saw” and that he was becoming “immensely intimate” with him.254 He additionally divulged that “upon seeing some of my sketches and drawings [Piranesi] was so highly delighted that he almost ran quite distracted and said I have more genius for the true noble architecture than any Englishman ever was in Italy.”255 Adam’s confidence now soared, and his drawings swiftly became more self-assured, clear, and intelligent.

Adam’s Training as a Painter and the Picturesque

A significant and broad aspect of Adam’s artistic training, which would heavily impact his architectural designs, was in painting. According to John Clerk of Eldin (1728-1812), Adam’s ambition during his university years had been to be a painter.256 Clerk remarked that Adam had “very sedulously occupied his leisure hours” at Tounis

253 Fleming, Robert Adam, 169.
254 Ibid., 165.
255 Ibid.
256 Ibid., 81.
College in landscape sketching.\textsuperscript{257} The only Adam drawings that survive from his days at the College, however, are a few pen-and-ink sketch copies of landscape engravings by the Old Masters, such as Salvator Rosa (1615–73).\textsuperscript{258}

Also influential were Thomas Sandby and his younger brother, the painter Paul Sandby (1731-1809). In addition to having briefly instructed Robert in drawing and painting when he was working as a draftsman in Scotland in 1745-6, Thomas also spoke with the gifted youth about painting in Windsor in mid-October of 1754. In Windsor, a city that Robert was passing through on his way to Dover at the start of his tour abroad, Thomas showed the future architect his recently completed landscape paintings of the Great Park and at Virginia Water.\textsuperscript{259}

Paul, who began his career as a map-maker and who became a master draftsman, print-maker, landscape painter, and Royal Academician, became especially close to the Adam family during his time in Scotland between 1745 and 1751. In 1745, Paul had been appointed draftsman to the military survey of the new road to Fort George, and of the northern and western parts of the Highlands, under the leadership of Colonel David Watson. In addition to encouraging William Adam in his enthusiasm for composing landscape scenes, it is very likely that Paul also instilled young Robert’s interest in painting. It is certain that Paul instructed Robert in painting, and may have also passed on the “hints” on mixing colors that Robert jotted in a notebook before a journey to Fort George.\textsuperscript{260}

\textsuperscript{257} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{258} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{259} Sanderson, \textit{Robert Adam and Scotland}, 32.
\textsuperscript{260} Ibid., 33.
Adam’s instruction in painting continued throughout his Grand Tour. When in Paris, he was introduced to “Mr. Collins,” painter to the King, whom he described as a “prodigious Connoisseur in painting,” and “M. Portail,” the King’s painter at Versailles.\textsuperscript{261} In Toulon at the end of December 1754, Adam met with the French painter Claude-Joseph Vernet (1714-89), who had been based in Rome for nineteen years and was a highly regarded exponent of Italian classical landscape painting. There, Adam and Vernet had “a long walk and much discussion of painting.”\textsuperscript{262} In Rome, in addition to training with Pècheux, Adam had a painting session or two in the studio of German painter Anton Raphael Mengs (1728-79), whom Adam called “Mr. Minx.”\textsuperscript{263} It is also possible that, through Pècheux, Adam met Italian neoclassical painter Pompeo Girolamo Batoni (1708-87), the Scottish portrait painter Allan Ramsay (1713-84), and the Scottish history painter Gavin Hamilton (1723-98).\textsuperscript{264} It was also clear from Adam’s letters that while in Rome he took lessons from an additional, unnamed teacher in landscape painting: “Before I leave Rome I shall draw landscape tolerably, having a good master for that branch too.”\textsuperscript{265}

Adam grew close with Laurent Pècheux and, while still in Rome, wrote to his brothers back in Edinburgh, who were planning their own Grand Tours, that when arrived in Rome they should invite the Pècheux family “to live with them.”\textsuperscript{266} He explained that although Pècheux “is a painter and not an architect” he was still the “cleverest fellow in Rome by many degrees and will be of much service.”\textsuperscript{267} Robert admonished, however,

\textsuperscript{261} Cited in Yarwood, \textit{Robert Adam}, 52.
\textsuperscript{262} Graham’s \textit{Arbiter of Elegance}, 63.
\textsuperscript{264} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{265} Ibid., 162.
\textsuperscript{266} Ibid., 191.
\textsuperscript{267} Ibid.
that “it cannot be expected that his instructions in architecture will be so perfect as one whose [sic] Soul, Body, and Guts are tinctured with it…”

Despite the enormous time and intellectual energy that Adam devoted to painting, however, the focus of his training in Rome was on draftsmanship, and his principal teachers remained Piranesi and Clérisseau. However, the relationship between painting and architecture was not dichotomous, because Adam lived in an age when painting and architecture were more intimately related than at any other time. This close interconnection was largely due to surging fascination with the “picturesque,” a theory that formed a bridge between the two arts. Certainly it was true that the principal training of the eighteenth-century architect was through drawing, painting, and studying representations of architecture in books. Moreover, many of architecture’s terms and formal concepts had been imported from painting, which had, in turn, derived them from rhetoric. Not only was the theory of painting a much broader and extensive subject than that of architecture, but it also provided a framework for the discussion of the nature and effects of objects, shapes, color, line, form, and composition, and many other topics central to architectural design.

The link between painting and architecture was epitomized in the work of William Kent (1685-1748), one of the leading architects in the first half of the century, who had trained solely as a history painter in Italy. Adam admired Kent’s work and perceived himself to be following in Kent’s footsteps, improving the architectural style he had introduced. Kent had begun executing decorative and ornamental painting in 1719, and by 1723-24 he was decorating houses, and he had become the designer of complete rooms by 1725. His painterly approach to architectural design and decoration

268 Ibid.
gave his work unusual freedom and boldness, and it considerably widened the range of his source material. Kent’s background in painting and his inexhaustible imagination enabled him to shift seamlessly between decorative styles and fantasies and establish innovative forms and decorative programs.

To approach architecture through painting was also common in late eighteenth-century Britain. This, of course, was due in part to the lack of professional organizations dedicated solely to architecture and the relative dearth of architectural literature in Britain prior to mid-century. However, this was also because two leading British theorists in architecture of the age, Sandby and Reynolds, were painters and often approached the study of architecture through painting themselves. Reflecting his own roots in painting, in the final words of his first lecture on architecture for the Royal Academy, Sandby encouraged his students to draw “in the manner of Landskip Painters” in order to learn how to produce effective compositions:

> To conclude, it is seriously recommended to the young students in Architecture…that they accustom themselves to draw after real Buildings without the use of Rules and Compasses, in the manner of the Landskip Painters. This will lead them to make nice observations on the natural effect of light and shade produced by the suns and the various teints and demi-teints occasioned by different colors, opposed to each other, and also make them masters of drawing from the productions of Nature that fall occasionally in their way. 269

Similarly, in his thirteenth discourse, Reynolds argued that John Vanbrugh (1664-1726) “composed like a Painter” and that this made him one of the greatest architects in British history. Reynolds also evaluated Vanbrugh’s architectural monuments in the language of painting, lauding the architect’s originality, and praising his masterful skill in composition, painterly grouping of masses, understanding of light and shadow, and careful consideration of the “back-ground” in his designs.

269 Sandby, SaT/1/1, Lecture 1, ff. 41-2.
The idea that an architect should compose in the manner of a landscape painter was also upheld by Adam in his famous discussion of architectural “movement,” in which he also mentioned the “picturesque”:

Movement is meant to express, the rise and fall, the advance and recess, with other diversity of form, in the different parts of a building, so as to add greatly to the picturesque of the composition. For the rising and the falling, advancing and receding, with the convexity and concavity and other forms of the great parts, have the same effect in architecture, that hill and dale, fore-ground and distance, swelling and sinking have in a landscape: that is, they serve to produce an agreeable and diversified contour, that groups and contrasts like a picture, and creates a variety of light and shade, which gives great spirit, beauty and effect to the composition.270

Like Sandby, Adam encouraged the architect to emulate the painter in using nature as a guide in striving to depict the ideal. In this method of design, architecture is conceived as an image that is seen in the distance and as a composition of “great parts” that mimic an ideal, presumably manmade, topography. The potential of a building as an image is activated through the viewer’s anticipation of other forms of sensory interaction and habitation.

Adam drew a second analogy between the composition of architecture and painting in a letter he wrote to James from Rome in 1755. He mused that he “consider[s] beginning [architectural] compositions just now [at the beginning of his study of draftsmanship with Clérisseau] as one would do a painter who had never learnt to draw hands, feet, or eyes and yet would attempt to draw the Laocoôn or to compose a history-painting.”271 James had previously asked Robert to send “a sketch or two to form some idea of a great design.” Robert further explained, “I have not as yet attempted designing anything in the way of composing in the Grand Style as I am applying to those things from which I shall be able to make such compositions viz. to figures, to ornaments and to

271 Cited in Fleming, Robert Adam, 162.
perspective. When I have studied them for some time I will put them in different forms so as to be simple and great.”

In his discussion of public buildings in the preface to the fourth fascicle of the first volume of the *Works* (September 1776), Adam conspicuously and gracefully argued that painting and architecture “may very justly be compared” in terms of compositional strategies. While Italian painters forged compositions comparable to architectural façades, he argued, Flemish painters composed in a manner appropriate for architectural interiors. Adam explained that “the most celebrated painters of the Italian school, trusting to the greatness of their compositions, to their large masses of light and shade, and to the splendor and éclat of their general effect, never entered with scrupulous minutes into all the detail of various parts.” This strategy was suitable for architectural exteriors. In Flemish painting, by contrast, Adam saw useful lessons for interior design:

> Whilst Flemish artist, sensible of the smallness of his field, endeavors to avail himself of every particular circumstance, by entering with precision into the consideration of the minute detail, by describing every part with utmost accuracy and correctness, and by heightening with force and brilliancy of colour every accessory that can give elegance and vivacity to his small, but exquisite and highly finished, performance.

Sir Uvedale Price (1747-1829), an English writer on the picturesque, perhaps expressed most explicitly the period belief in the value and significance of the study of painting for any kind of artist, but particularly architects. And he also placed this interest squarely within picturesque theory:

> The more I reflect on the whole of the subject, the more I am convinced, that the study of the principles of painting in the works of eminent painters, is the best method of acquiring an accurate and comprehensive taste and judgment, in all that regards the effects and combinations of visible objects: and thence I conclude, that unless we are guided by those enlarged principles…we may indeed have fine houses, highly polished grounds and gardens, and beautiful ornamental buildings, but we shall not have that general combination of form and effect, which is by far the most essential point; which

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272 Ibid.
makes amends for the want of particular beauties, but the absence of which no particular beauties can compensate.\textsuperscript{273}

The chief difference between Price and earlier architectural theorists was that he was concerned with the pictorial effect of objects on the eye, rather than with construction or the effect of architecture on emotions and thoughts. He wrote:

With respect to the particular subject of this Essay, although by the study of pictures a man will gain but little knowledge of architecture as a science, yet, by seeing the grandest and most beautiful specimens of that art happily grouped with each other and with the surrounding objects, and displayed in the most favorable points of view, he may certainly acquire a just idea of their forms and effects, and their connection with scenery.\textsuperscript{274}

\textit{Adam’s Institutional Affiliations}

Throughout his career, Adam found recognition from various elite institutions. These credentials – spectacular jewels encrusting the already glittering crown of a renowned architect – bolstered his status as a leading figure in architecture, empowered him to make revolutionary strides in his art, and helped him win clients and further institutional affiliations. As Adam lived and worked before the professionalization of institutions, his involvements with various establishments offers another useful index of his professional reputation, social standing, and goals.

While abroad, Adam aggressively pursued membership at the academies of Rome, Florence, and Bologna, believing these credentials to be essential for professional success in Britain:

I intend to be made professor of Architecture, Painting, and Sculpture in the Academy of Saint Luke in Rome. The Cerimony [sic] of which and getting out my Diploma will cost me 25 Guineas at least but is extremely honourable and showy in all Books or things you may Publish. I shall obtain this easily and Grandly as I will sollicite[sic] my good friend the Cardinal Albani to ask it in person. I hope also to be made member of the Academy of Florence in passing through the City which Sir Horace will push with pleasure. At bologna I shall be received fellow of the Institute of that City also coveted by great men.


\textsuperscript{274} Ibid., 368-9.
of the arts, and these three with what additional titles I may acquire in England will be very sufficient to show the person that has been honour’d with all of them was not altogether without merit in his profession.\textsuperscript{275}

He wrote to his mother on 14 May 1757 of his success: “All the virtuosi of Florence have been crowding to see me. And I am received member [of the Florentine Academy] and have got all my diplomas both of Rome, Florence and Bologna…everything I wished for has succeeded.”\textsuperscript{276}

Within a month of Adam’s arrival in England following his Grand Tour, he was elected fellow of the Royal Society of Arts (on 1 February 1758), an honor that indicated that, as a young man, he had already established an impressive reputation while abroad. In 1761, the highly selective Society of Antiquaries of London (founded 1707) elected him a fellow, and, twenty years later, in 1781, Adam would also accept fellowship in the newly established Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. These three societies were among the handful that welcomed architects as members. Others included the Society for the Improvement of Knowledge in the Arts and Sciences and the Royal Society of Edinburgh, to which Adam was elected a fellow in 1788. Although each was seriously conceived, and each succeeded in advancing the reputation of its members, none sustained meaningful discourse on architecture, or supported the professional ambitions of its architect members.

Aside from esteem, these societies offered fellows educational opportunities through lectures and discussions, and a means to establish their professional identities.

The significance for architects of these early clubs, societies, and academies was three-

\textsuperscript{275} Cited in Yarwood, \textit{Robert Adam}, 77.
\textsuperscript{276} Cited in Fleming, \textit{Robert Adam}, 232. Adam was elected accademico di merito of the Accademia di San Luca in Rome on May 8, 1757; Academico d’Onore of the Accademia Clementia in Bologna on April 14, 1757; and Professore Inglese et Architetto Regio of the Accademia del Disegno in Florence on 30 April 1757. Also see Frank Salmon, “British Architects and the Florentine Academy, 1752-1794,” Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz, 34. Bd., H. 1/2 (1990), 199-214.
fold. First, they provided important social opportunities for networking, reputation building, and establishing a larger public professional identity (Amy Milne-Smith has argued that they were also an important site for eighteenth-century masculine identity formation). Second, they were venues for the exhibition of work. Eighteenth-century artists’ societies that exhibited the work of architects include the Society of Virtuosi of St. Luke, the Society of Dilettanti, the Incorporated Society of Artists, and the Free Society of Artists. The Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce (subsequently the Royal Society of Arts, the building for which Robert Adam designed) offered small prizes for architectural designs. And third, these organizations supported the architect’s gradual and precarious emancipation from the personal patronage system, which had tended to discourage fraternization among architects. The development of these increasingly effective and well-populated associations was critical to the professionalization of architecture. Eventually, professional institutions would also ensure a certain degree of employment security through the establishment of registers of qualified persons, following the Architects Registration Act of 1938.

In November 1761, upon the recommendation of Adam’s patron and fellow Scot, Lord Bute, George III appointed the hugely popular young man “Architect of the King’s Works,” a position he shared with William Chambers until 1768, at a salary of £300 per year. This was the most prestigious post he held in his long career and had particular significance in the history of the professionalization of architecture in Britain. Although

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278 Kaye, Development of the Architectural Profession in Britain, 58.
279 Ibid., 19.
280 Cited in Yarwood, Robert Adam, 102.
the Office of Works had existed since 1378, it was not until Adam and Chambers’ appointments in 1761 that it became an office expressly dedicated to architecture, headed by named architects. The other principal officers of the Office of Works were the Surveyor or Surveyor-General, the Comptroller, the Master Mason and the Master Carpenter. Under these officers worked various administrators, artificers, and clerks. Although most salaries were modest, all architects of repute sought connection with the Office because of its proximity to the Crown, and its responsibility for supervising the design and construction of all royal buildings. However, the significance of the Office of Works extended beyond the buildings commissioned by the Crown to include the outside activities of its officers, whose services were available to all members of the Royal Court, and its role as the nation’s largest employer of architects, who were appointed to surveyorships and clerkships of royal buildings.281

It was significant for Scottish architects, like Adam, that the Act of Union in 1707 had eliminated the Scottish resident monarch and court, and with them the Scottish Offices of Works. Following the Union, Scottish architects were stripped of many posts to which they once aspired and were left without a governmental sponsor for their profession. These changes caused many to seek employment in England and slowed architectural “progress” in Scotland, especially Edinburgh.282

Adam’s tenure in the Office of Works ended in 1768, when he was elected a Member of Parliament for Kinross-shire. Deftly, Robert managed to pass his position to his brother James. By the late eighteenth-century, the reputation of officials at the Office

of Works had steadily declined, as appointments were increasingly made on a political basis, rather than on merit.

While it appears that Adam’s activity in the Office of Works occupied him to a considerable extent, the full details of his design work and other contributions, including whether he helped to train craftsmen and builders in the Office in the art of decoration or design, is unknown. Adam dedicated the fifth fascicle of the first volume of his *Works* (1778) to his royal commissions, which were relatively insignificant. They included a gateway for Carlton House, two designs for chimneys, and a sedan chair. The most important works Adam executed for these most prominent clients were the temporary illuminations designed for George III’s birthday celebrations at Buckingham House in June 1763 (Figures 2.9 & 2.10).

In the final years of his life, Adam was an original member (but not a founder) of the first British professional organization composed exclusively of architects, the Architects’ Club, from which the Royal Institute of British Architects would later emerge. Established in 1791, it was founded by James Wyatt, George Dance the Younger (1741-1825), Henry Holland (1745-1806), and Samuel Pepys Cockerell (1753-1827). It was essentially a dinner-club, which met the first Thursday of each month (at 5-8PM) at the Thatched House Tavern in St. James’s and membership was highly select.\(^{283}\) All members held distinction in architecture, and membership eligibility rested on previous membership to other elite bodies: one had to be a Royal Academician or an Associate Member of the Royal Academy, a gold medalist of the Royal Academy, or a member of the Academies of Rome, Parma, Florence, or Paris. Adam, the only prominent architect of his generation not elected to the Royal Academy, met the admissions requirements as a

\(^{283}\) Entrance fee was five guineas, and an annual subscription was the same amount.
member of the Academies of Rome and Florence. Other original members included William Chambers, Robert Mylne, Richard Jupp (1728-99), James Lewis (1750/1-1820), Richard Norris (?-1792), John Soane (1753-1837), John Yenn (n.d.), Thomas Hardwick (1752-1829), Robert Brettingham (1750-1820), and James Paine (1717-89).\footnote{284} Honorary memberships were awarded to four architects, whose primary residence was outside of the city of London: Thomas Sandby, Nicholas Revett (1721-1804), James Gandon, and John Carr (1723-1807).

According to an entry in John Soane’s notebook, the Architects’ Club undertook “to define the profession and qualifications of an architect.”\footnote{285} But it would not be until after Adam’s death in 1792 that they would begin to shape the profession through the work of specialized committees and the drafting of resolutions. Unlike the Royal Academy, the Architects’ Club did not seek to train or educate, but to establish and enforce professional protocols and policies, especially safety standards in building construction. Unfortunately, no record of their deliberation remains.

Finally, it is significant to note that Adam was surprised and offended not to have been elected to the Royal Academy. A trifling yet toothsome detail of Adam’s courtship of the Royal Academy is known: upon the foundation of the Academy, in an unsuccessful effort to gain membership, he had presented to Chambers a red leather and tooled gilt copy of his \textit{Ruins} for use at “so great and usefull [sic] an Institution.”\footnote{286} Although he had successfully used the gift of this magnificent work to unlock the doors of the Society of

\begin{footnotes}
\item[284] T. Mulvany, \textit{Life of James Gandon} (1846), 295-7.
\item[286] Cited in Iain Gordon Brown, \textit{Monumental Reputation}, 47; see also Yarwood, \textit{Robert Adam}, 113.
\end{footnotes}
Antiquaries in London, it was not enough to win him standing as a Royal Academician. Scholars have speculated that Adam was barred from admission by a spiteful Chambers, who was embittered by professional rivalry, yet no evidence exists to support this theory. Although during Adam’s era the Academy was little more than an informal gathering of intelligentsia, during the nineteenth century it grew into a formal institution that aspired to monopolize all state patronage, all state commissions, all training and hiring of artists, all awards, and the loyalty of all gifted artists.

Navigating the Patronage System

British eighteenth-century architects wholly depended for their livelihood on the patronage of the upper classes. Until the final third of the century, Britain lacked state-funded institutions for the education of artists and a monarch who prioritized artistic patronage, and political and religious turmoil hindered artistic and cultural development.287 These circumstances placed patronage, as Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713) stated in his Letter Concerning the Art, or Science of Design of 1712, directly in the hands of the aristocracy.288

The hunting and seduction of patrons consumed Adam for the span of his career. His correspondence is peppered with schemes for the courtship of patrons, and stories abound recounting his social struggles and analysis of his interactions with prospective benefactors. Robert and especially James socialized at a feverish pace while on their

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287 The longstanding view that George I was disinterested in patronage of the arts is challenged in Barbara Arciszewska, Classicism and Modernity: Architectural Thought in Eighteenth-century Britain (2010).
Grand Tours, and their efforts resulted in the development of a strong support network, which paid substantial dividends both during their years abroad and later.289

Adam understood well the precarious position held by the architect within the contemporary marketplace, in which he was often suddenly replaced, or his designs clandestinely or publicly altered on a patron’s whim. (Adam himself often displaced architects in the midst of current projects: at Croome Court, he replaced Lancelot “Capability” Brown (better known as a landscape gardener); at Harewood and Kedleston, he replaced John Carr and James Paine, respectively.) He also recognized the urgent need for an architect perpetually to prove his worth. Adam was determined to put himself in the best possible social position within this harsh and capricious matrix of modern consumerism. Johnson, in his Dictionary, offered insight into the period’s sentiments in his bland definition of a patron as “one who countenances, supports, or protects,” which ended with a cutting coda: “commonly a wretch who supports with insolence, and is paid in flattery.” 290

Adam noted in a letter from Rome that, above all else, self-presentation to prospective patrons (“strangers and of consequence people” as he called them) required “money and education.” 291 Adam’s family delivered the money, along with many other crucial resources, and he possessed the significant advantages, in a very competitive patronage market, of a refined understanding of current stylistic trends, and sufficient knowledge of the practical aspects of building. Aside from having these financial and educational resources, Adam’s navigation of the patronage system was also facilitated by

289 See especially Fleming, Robert Adam.
291 Fleming, Robert Adam, 211-2.
his identity as a Scotsman, as some of his most important early patrons, were Scots, motivated to support the growing, fragile Scottish community in England.

To launch a career, Adam, like many architects relied heavily on familial resources. The greatest virtues of his family-based support were its stability and independence from the volatile construction market. Adam had one of the most visibly advantageous positions with regard to family support in his generation of architects. His father had established a sound reputation as an architect and builder, and had advanced his family’s status through the acquisition of Blair Crambeth, a Kinross-shire estate consisting of 640 acres of uncultivated moorland, which William renamed Blair Adam (this land became the nucleus of the 3922-acre estate that Robert’s brother John owned by 1750). Robert inherited a modest estate from his father, Dowhill Castle, the former seat of the Earls of Crawford. Adam’s continental training owed something to his father’s efforts, as his tour was partly undertaken as the companion of a young nobleman, Charles Hope, who was the son of his father’s acquaintance, the Earl of Hopetoun. In his brothers, Robert also found not only a source of funds, but also business partnerships. His cousin, the eminent Scottish historian William Robertson (1721-92) played a hand in launching Robert’s career, as author of the introduction to Ruins (and, towards the end of Robert’s career, Robertson, the principal of the University of Edinburgh, helped Robert gain the commission for the University’s new buildings in the 1780s). Robert even enlisted his sisters in his effort to recruit clients; while in Rome, he suggested that they

292 See Yarwood, Robert Adam (21 40, & 43) for information on the Adam’s Scottish estate, including Dowhill Castle – this small structure had two circular turrets in a ruinous state and its site measured just over two-thousand square feet; the estimated value was not great.
293 See Fleming, Robert Adam, Chapter 4. Robert paid his own way, except most of the traveling costs; he had saved £5000 to spend while on tour.
cultivate wealthy friends as potential patrons and improve their polite credentials, to the benefit of the entire Adam family, by taking French classes.\(^{294}\)

Especially at the start, Adam relied greatly on family assistance to pursue his professional ambitions. He sought support especially from his eldest brother John, the heir to the bulk of their father’s estate. John provided Robert with most of the funds for his years in Italy and financial support in the early years of his London practice. His steadfast sibling also invested heavily in the Adelphi partnership.\(^{295}\)

Collectively, in the early stages of his career, Adam’s family provided him with an astonishing array of advantages, support, and resources, including reputation, ancestry, training, social connections, and financial support for travel and study on the Continent. Equipped with inherited financial resources and family support, Adam was able to focus at once on widening his social connections and finding teachers. It was in part a result of these new social and working relationships that Adam embraced new, modern architectural values, such as relativism and eclecticism, and absorbed the new principles of aesthetics that rapidly permeated intellectual life in Britain.

Adam’s unusually strong and varied educational background supplied him with the tools needed to compete against the professional architect’s greatest amateur rivals: the architect-builder and the gentleman architect. He appreciated that his professional survival predominantly hinged on his ability to market himself to patrons as a more competent designer than even a highly-skilled builder, whose design competency had grown considerably throughout the eighteenth century due to the proliferation of pattern


\(^{295}\) See Alistair Rowan, “After the Adelphi: Forgotten Years in the Adam Brothers’ Practice.”
books; in the second half of the eighteenth century, an average building craftsman possessed the ability to construct a complex building from even the crudest of sketches and plans. It is astonishing, in some ways, that architects survived in the early stages of their professional development in Britain, given that the following three conditions, all of which enticed prospective clients to hire builders, rather than architects, were well established by mid-century: first, it was commonly perceived that builders typically charged less for designs; second, designs made by builders were often for simpler, or were easier to simplify, and, therefore, less expensive and more-quickly realized monuments; and third, patrons found that working with a single person for both the design and build phases was more convenient than hiring an architect and builder separately.

In contrast to practical-minded builders, whose prominence as designers eventually receded under the rule of taste, the professional architect’s other leading competitor, the gentleman architect, while often well versed in leading stylistic trends, was often totally ignorant of the practical aspects of construction. Nearly without exception, these gentlemen “architects” were members of the nobility or gentry, who pursued architecture as a hobby, rather than as a profession, and erected buildings of their own design. This was nearly expected of male members of their class, and they often reasoned that if they had the ability to design a decent building, the hiring or consult of an architect were superfluous and fiscally irresponsible. Even untrained dilettantes often fancied that they were capable of this work, although, in the end, they often hired professional architects as “ghost” designers.296

Gentleman architects emerged as a result of humanist educations and close examination of Vitruvius’s *De Architectura*, and were often trained in mathematics, surveying, and drawing, along with other aspects of a liberal arts education. These aristocratic amateur architects augmented their study through the collection and study of architectural prints, drawings, and handbooks on classical architecture, and through travel, when they measured and sketched the architectural monuments of the Renaissance and ancient Rome. Many gentlemen architects also subscribed to illustrated folios of design.

Professional architects and gentlemen architects often partnered in the design of country houses, and while their relationship was ostensibly that of equals, the professionals brought two unique qualifications to the collaboration. First, they possessed knowledge of building materials and construction, while amateurs often disdained such “minute and mechanical detail[s]” of building. Beginning with Wotton, the British gentleman-architect had been expected to avoid “mechanical” taint. While some knowledge of architectural design was desirable, to have too much was (as Lord Chesterfield (1694-1773) admonished his son in 1749) “lowering.” Chesterfield suggested to his heir that he devote just “three or four days in learning the five Orders of Architecture, with their general proportions,” and to consult only Palladio’s book of architecture, “[skipping] over the lower mechanical parts of it, such as the materials, the cement, &c.”

Second, unlike the gentleman architect, the professional architect had time, liberty, and intense motivation to keep up with cutting-edge trends in taste, innovative practices, and new, highly-skilled craftsmen in the building trades.

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297 Lord Chesterfield, from a letter of August 7, 1749.
Robert Adam’s patronage had significant regional character. Together, the Adam clan and a rival family of architects, the Mylne’s (Robert Mylne, the most successful architect in his family, is best known for his design for Blackfriar’s Bridge in London) monopolized architectural commissions from the expanding and increasingly powerful eighteenth-century Scottish aristocracy. Since the Act of Union of 1707, social and cultural exchange rapidly intensified between these two cultures, and Scots quickly began to work successfully in London. The Union also created more Scottish patrons; in the early eighteenth century, after the removal of political power from the Scottish capital to Westminster, the old nobility retreated, allowing a successful mercantile class to come to the fore. This new Scottish oligarchy was eager to establish themselves as gentlemen.

Two of the most successful Scots during Adam’s era were his patrons John Stuart, the Third Earl of Bute (1713-92), who had served as British Prime Minister under George III from 1752-3, and William Murray, the First Earl of Mansfield (1705-93), a prominent barrister, politician, and judge; both acquired sinecures and country estates in both England and Scotland. Bonds among Scotsmen were strengthened by widespread English prejudice against the new Scottish elite, with the exception of Chambers; although he was also a Scot, Chambers stressed to the King his birth in Sweden and

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298 See Sanderson, Robert Adam, 62, 77, & 83.
300 See Michael Fry, The Dundas Despotism (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992); David Allan’s Scotland in the Eighteenth Century: Union and Enlightenment (New York: Longman 2002); P. O’Brien and R. Quinault (eds.), The Industrial Revolution and British Society (Cambridge, 1993); John Stuart Shaw’s The Management of Scottish Society, 1707-1764: Power, Nobles, Lawyers, Edinburgh Agents and English Influences (Edinburgh, J. Donald, 1983); John Bruce, Report on the events and circumstances, which produced the union of the Kingdoms of England and Scotland; on the effects of this great national event, on the reciprocal interests of both Kingdoms; and on the political and commercial influence of Great Britain, in the balance of power in Europe (London, 1799).
international character. David Hume was fixated on the idea that there was an English conspiracy to destroy all things Scottish, convinced that the long-standing animosity between the two countries (since the middle ages Scotland had allied with France against England) could not possibly dissipate within a few generations.

The Portrayal of Patronage in Adam’s Works

Examination of Adam’s Works illuminates three key aspects of the complex relationship between client and employer in eighteenth-century British culture. First, the Works laid out the various levels of patron involvement in architectural projects. Second, its prefaces and plate descriptions reveal Adam’s perspective on courting patrons and fulfilling their expectations. And third, the fifth fascicle of the first volume (June 1778) elucidates Adam’s interactions with royal patrons.

The first three fascicles of volume one of the Works (July 1773, May 1774, April 1775) provide a catalog of the varying levels of patron participation that Adam had encountered in the design process, in which patrons had been variously enthusiasts, advisers, or partners. According to Adam, Lord Mansfield, the owner of Kenwood House (1767-70), played the role of an admiring and enlightened patron, who gave his architect a measure of authority that approached artistic autonomy in the design of additions and alterations to his country house. Adam noted that Mansfield granted him “full liberty” and that “with his usual liberality of sentiment, gave full scope to [his] ideas.”

Contrastingly, Adam related that the Duke of Northumberland, the owner of Syon House (1762 ff.), provided guidelines for Adam to follow in his design of the entry gate

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302 Cited in Yarwood, Robert Adam, 42 & 142.
303 Yarwood, Robert Adam, 42.
and remodeling of this great country villa. In this case, Adam was working with a bone fide gentleman architect, whom his loyal architect recognized and lauded as “a person of extensive knowledge and correct taste in architecture…who possessed not only wealth to execute a great design, but skill to judge its merit.” Adam allowed a guiding remark from the Duke to serve as the lion’s share of the commentary for the plate devoted to the leonine entry gate, explaining that the colonnade and iron rail of the gateway were “intended by His Grace to gratify the curiosity of the public, by giving to travelers an opportunity of viewing from the road, the park, lawn, house, bridge, river, and the house itself at a little distance, closing the beautiful scene.”

Adam also made clear that despite his client’s architectural interests and knowledge, he did not usurp Adam’s role as leading architect, but instead empowered his visionary partner: “In the year 1762, the Duke of Northumberland came to the resolution of fitting up the apartments of Sion House, in a magnificent manner. He communicated his intentions to me, and having expressed his desire, that the whole might be executed entirely [sic] in the antique style, he was pleased, in terms very flattering, to signify his confidence in my abilities to follow out his idea.”

Finally, Adam’s working relationship with Lord Bute at Luton House (Luton Hoo), as it is detailed in the third fascicle of first volume of the Works (April 1775), exemplified a partnership between a gentleman architect and a professional. Adam and other eighteenth-century architects were, of course, obliged to conform to their patrons’ preferences, even if those preferences conflicted with an architect’s style and theories. In his fourth lecture, Sandby reminded his students “how seldom an artist can execute a Building entirely correspondent with the rules of art, or the suggestions of his own ideas.
His employer must be pleased, his fancy honoured and his whims adopted, even at the risk of the artist’s reputation” (the underlining is Sandby’s).\textsuperscript{304} The relinquishment of artistic control was part of both the architect’s professional identity and his duty, and helped to ensure his survival within this highly personal network of patron relations.

The obligation to yield to client’s tastes caused frustration for architects who sometimes came to be known as the authors of designs that had been rendered incongruent with their own style due to a patron’s intervention. Although the widespread knowledge of architectural principles among gentlemen increased the potential for common ground and agreement between the architect and his patron, this did not close the gap entirely. Fundamentally, the patronage system stifled the development artistic autonomy and professional independence, leaving architects with the uncomfortable task of discretely communicating to the public that certain design elements were attributable to the patron. In Adam’s case, the matter was made especially delicate and complex because he had invented a highly personal style and excelled in its execution. This made it difficult for even his most sophisticated clients to offer aesthetic criticism. However, it was exceptional for an architect to consider himself an artist, as Adam did, placing himself so fully in conflict with a tradition that placed commodity and firmness before delight.

Adam faced this problem most publicly in the design and subsequent publication of Luton House, built for the Earl of Bute (1767ff).\textsuperscript{305} An educated Scottish gentleman,

\textsuperscript{304} Sandby, SaT/1/1, Lecture 4, ff. 19 & 20.
\textsuperscript{305} A letter from Adam to his client George Baillie of Jerviswood in the spring of 1778 also highlighted the diplomatic aspects and practical considerations of integrating the client’s alterations to the designs. In his correspondence, Adam appeared to respond to a request from his patron to make his gallery walls more ornate. Adam accepted his patron’s request, while injecting control over the comprehensive vision of his decorative scheme and assuring his patron of keeping costs low: “I see no objection to your putting ornaments in these spaces though the ceiling should remain plain, as they belong to the upright walls of the
Bute had received an extensive liberal arts education that included rudimentary instruction in architecture, most likely based on the study of Vitruvius. In his Works, Adam noted that Bute had commissioned him to prepare many alternate façade designs from which he chose one, and “directed it to be carried into execution.” Adam flattered his patron, remarking that he was “so justly esteemed for his great taste and discerning judgment in the celebrated works of the ancients, and in every branch of the fine arts.”

The architect identified for his reader two aspects of the building for which his client was responsible. Both were notable for their incongruity with the architect’s style, as Adam had made explicit in previous publications. First, Adam related that his patron’s selected design for the principal façade of Luton House endowed it with “a kind of exterior decoration, which resembles that of a publick work rather than of a private building.” This was not meant as praise, because a key aspect of Adam’s “revolution” was the rejection of the modeling of private dwellings on temples, as Palladio and other Renaissance architects had done. Adam based this distinction on ancient precedent, explaining in the introduction to Ruins that the domestic architecture of the Greeks and Romans was entirely distinct from that of their temples. Diplomatically, Adam smoothed over this conspicuous break with his professed theory of architecture, writing that Luton possessed “an air of dignity and grandeur, of which few dwelling-houses are susceptible.”

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307 Ibid., description for Plate III.
309 Adam, Works (1980), Vol. 1, No. 3 (April 1775), 7, description for Plate III.
Adam further noted that Lord Bute had specified the capitals of the Composite order in the “Saloon.”\textsuperscript{310} He explained that these derived from a drawing “which his Lordship brought from abroad, and is an example of the latitude which the ancients often took in compositions of this kind.” While Adam must have been pleased to have the opportunity to emulate the ancient practice of altering the proportions and decorations of the orders, Adam was likely disappointed in the Lord’s selection of the composite capital. Adam had declared in the preface of the second fascicle of the first volume of the \textit{Works} (May 1774), which included designs for Kenwood House, that he found the composite, or “Roman Order,” to be “a very disagreeable and awkward mixture of the Corinthian and Ionic, without either grace or beauty.”\textsuperscript{311}

Adam’s relationship with Lord Bute was significant, complex and emotional, as his surviving letters reveal.\textsuperscript{312} A.A. Tait and others have underscored the often overlooked significance of Lord Bute as a patron for the establishment and growth of Adam’s business and reputation. Bute, a fellow Scotsman, had provided Adam with the key commission for Lansdowne House in 1762, as well as Highcliffe Castle, Hampshire (1773), improvements at South Audley Street, London, and, of course, Luton House. He had also ensured that Adam was appointed as royal architect in 1761. Adam’s loyalty and support of Bute was particularly notable given the Lord’s controversial and scandalous public reputation during the 1770s, the time when the \textit{Works} was published.

Adam’s courtship of patrons was skillful. As might be expected, he lavished praise upon his clients in his publications and promised to safeguard, and even bolster their reputations. In the case of Lord Mansfield, Adam efficiently and artfully achieved

\textsuperscript{310} Ibid., description for Plate VI.
\textsuperscript{312} See James Lees-Milne, \textit{Age of Adam} (London, New York: B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1947).
both goals in a short span of remarks in the second fascicle of the first volume. Adam referred to his Lord as a “noble proprietor” and “friend of every elegant art and useful science,” and then professed to the public that “whatever defects, either in beauty or composition, shall be discovered in the following designs, they must be imputed to me alone.”

Second, Adam deftly demonstrated expert knowledge of upper class culture and the ability to design precisely for needs of the gentry and to meet, and even surpass their expectations. These skills are displayed in the description of the plates for Syon House in the first fascicle of the first volume. Here, Adam composed his lengthiest plate description, a fourteen-paragraph essay on the “art of living,” taking pains to recount how the elite home owners would use each important room, how the servants would circulate through the house, while performing their duties, and how the arrangement of rooms would increase pleasure and convenience for the family and their guests. The explanation for plate five, “the Principal Floor of Sion House,” was an extensive and lively account of not only the domestic architectural needs of this noble family, but also, by inference, of all noble families in Britain. Here Adam flaunted his expert knowledge of the upper-class living and his talent at catering to their every social habit and private routine.

The entire “Explanation of the Plates,” for Syon in fact, sought to fuse the patron and his commission, demonstrating the highly personal nature of domestic works of art. Wholly devoted to the patron, the introduction laid out his ideas, taste, and intended activities within the newly remodeled interior spaces. Adam’s narrative technique showcased his ability to create new levels of intimacy between the inhabitants and their

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home, and reflected his intention to activate the imagination and desires of his patron, while igniting those of future clients. At Syon House, as at many British country villas, the family’s heraldic devices are incorporated into the monument, intensifying the bond between built structure and human inhabitants. For the gate, for example, Adam invented a “lion” order and crowning lion sculpture in reference to the Percy crest.

The final plates of the first fascicle (July 1773) further illustrated Adam’s ability to create customized works and fulfill client’s needs. These plates included “miscellaneous designs of various pieces of furniture done for different [noble] persons.” For the majority of items, the name of the commissioning patron displaced a formal description of the work. This kind of “description of the work” indicated the prestige and immortality associated with the act of commissioning important works of art, and the inseparability during this era of monuments and patrons.

Other skills that patrons prized, which Adam displayed in the *Works*, were profound knowledge of the history of architecture, and sympathy for the upper class tendencies to identify with Roman aristocratic culture and to emulate it. The latter fashion shaped many eighteenth-century commissions in architecture and the other arts.

Each of these abilities was showcased in fascicle four of the first volume (September 1776), dedicated to some of Adam’s public works. Here, he included a reference to Horace (65-8 BC), the leading Roman lyric poet during the time of Augustus, and the quotation of a Horatian ode in an extended footnote. While this passage and its footnote have been interpreted as gratuitous intellectual exhibitionism, to the eighteenth-century reader the reference would have meant more: it would have been considered an appropriate digression that would have helped to orient a reader schooled
in Latin literature within the unfamiliar, whirling discussion of Adam’s new architectural style.

The ode was Horace’s “Against Luxury” (Book II, poem 15), and in the body of the preface Adam offered an English summation of the poem, with the Latin text in a footnote. He explained that Horace was complaining that growing private wealth had incited Roman aristocrats to build houses and neglect public works. In the footnote, Adam argued with conspicuous erudition that the poet’s observation was “singular” and inaccurate. As proof, he enumerated prominent Roman public works built during the time of Horace and Augustus, and he quoted Suetonius’s “Life of Augustus” (from *Twelve Caesars*, 121 AD); not only did Augustus patronize many public buildings, he also “often urged other prominent men to adorn the city with new monuments or to restore and embellish old ones, each according to his means.”

Certainly Adam included this Horatian detour in part to demonstrate his sophistication and knowledge, but also to correct an idea that must have been prevalent in eighteenth-century Britain, where Horace was widely studied, but knowledge of the history of ancient architecture was scarce. Adam needed to refute Horace, lest the British model their patronage of public projects on a misperception of practices during the golden age of Augustus.

Adam’s concern was well-founded. Horatian echoes, references, comparisons, and criticisms infiltrated every aspect of eighteenth-century British literary culture, and

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316 Professor Lucey has suggested in conversation that Might it also have something to do with the luxury debates in mid eighteenth-century England, and specifically the economist Adam Smith’s idea that luxury was the solvent of the social order. See Jules Lubbock, *The Tyranny of Taste: The Politics of Architecture and Design in Britain 1550–1960* (New Haven and London, 1995).
the demand for editions and translations of the poet seemed inexhaustible.\textsuperscript{317} Especially in the first half of the eighteenth-century, but also carrying over into the second half of the century, the study of Horace was almost universal and every educated man perceived himself as his disciple. The style of Horace’s prose was a major force in the shaping of British taste and in the development of what came to be called classical values: meticulously applied rules, precision, propriety, rationality. Vivian Ogilvie put it best when she wrote: “The eighteenth century breathed Horace.”\textsuperscript{318}

The saturation of culture with celebrations of Horace was so thick that many educated people shared the concept that lived reality was essentially the same in Horace’s day and the present.\textsuperscript{319} In 1749, Lord Chesterfield embraced the spiritual identity of his own times with Augustan Rome:

> Without any extraordinary effort of genius I have discovered that nature was the same two-thousand years ago as it is at present: that men were but men than as well as now: that modes and customs vary often but human nature is always the same. And I can no more suppose that men were better, braver, or wiser, fifteen hundred or three thousand years ago, than I can suppose that the animals or vegetables were better then than they are now.\textsuperscript{320}

Although the social, political, economic, and religious frameworks of Augustan Rome bore no relation to the incipient industrial society that flourished in the first half of the eighteenth century, the two societies did possess enough common features to stir a feeling of spiritual kinship.

\textsuperscript{317} Ogilvie, \textit{English Public School}, 46.
\textsuperscript{318} Ibid., 45.
British aristocrats could identify with the Roman elite in several ways. Socially, the English gentleman, like his Roman counterpart, mixed the pleasures of the country with those of life in the busy city. Wealth assured men of both cultures a position in society and the means and leisure to cultivate their tastes for architecture, gardening, painting, and philosophy. The British country houses built in this age of great estate building rivaled those of ancient Rome, such as Pliny’s and Hadrian’s villas. The vogue for Chinoiserie was matched by Roman fascination with oriental embroideries. Politically, as understood by the eighteenth-century British man of wealth, in both Rome and England the governing classes tended to compromise, rather than to compete in order to avoid civil war, and great men, such as Agrippa in antiquity and Robert Walpole (1676-1745) in modern Britain, were successful political managers. Economically, the British believed that their extended trade network mirrored that of ancient Rome and that economics inspired similar imperial designs. Both ages were defined by consolidation and material advance.

This strong association with a past culture was a pervasive and complex act of imagination. And it was largely the British educational system that made it was possible for these moderns to associate themselves with the ancient world. Eighteenth-century Britons acted in the world before a double audience, before their contemporaries and before the gaze of Romans in the age of Augustus. They considered themselves part of the circle of Horace and his literary friends. Thus, while Adam’s brief Horatian reference might seem fairly insignificant, or indulgent, it offers insight into the educational and literary interests and cultural conditioning of the eighteenth-century mind.

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The introductory remarks of the final fascicle of the first volume (June 1778) are strikingly terse when compared to the four preceding fascicles, and they offer a notable lack of flattery of the royal family. Rather than crediting them with the flourishing state of the arts in Britain, he attributed this happy situation to the general “patronage of a people.” Adam, in fact, bestowed no flattering words upon any royal figure; instead, he highlighted a love of country. James Adam’s invention of a “Britannic Order” underscored the brothers’ shared focus and featured a lion and unicorn, symbols of England and Scotland, (respectively), the collar of the Order of the Garter (Britain’s most prestigious order of chivalry), a Tudor Rose, and a smattering of generic British national badges, including an acorn, a thistle, a dove, a scepter, and a crown. (Figure 2.11)

Adam boasted in the *Works* that the Princess Dowager of Wales had commissioned “considerable alterations…to be made upon the plan of [Carlton House],” but that “the declining state of her health” had prevented them from being realized. Chambers, the king and queen’s favorite architect, had been commissioned for much more important work, including commissions for Buckingham House, the gardens at Kew and the Royal Riding House and Stables. Reluctance to bestow major projects on Adam seems to have stemmed in part from the Queen’s insistence that his work was unreasonably priced. Against this Adam protested that “Her majesty of All people has least reason to complain, for I have done many things for her & refused all recompense.” While lamenting the loss of the commission for remodeling Buckingham House, Adam gloomily reflected, “My own situation at court, or rather my own situation

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323 Ibid., Explanation to Plate I.
not at court, prevents me from having it within my power to do what would have been very pleasing to me on this occasion.”

Like the first volume of the *Works*, the second and third also offer insight into Adam’s patronage. The vast majority of the introductory and explanatory texts in Volume II (1779) are devoted to works of art and their makers, rather than praise for patrons and country. This starkly different tone and content of this much shorter volume demonstrate above all the increasing autonomy from patrons of works of art and architecture, and the passing of patronage from aristocracy to municipal and government authorities. The prefatory advertisement for Volume III (1822), published after the deaths of Robert in 1792 and James in 1794, offers an up-to-date view of the significance of patrons, penned by William, the youngest Adam brother. The principal measure of an architect’s worth, William wrote, was his standing in the eyes of important members of British society, and he asserted “The high estimation in which Mr. Robert Adam and his brother were held by Lord Mansfield, and many other noblemen and gentlemen distinguished by their taste in the fine arts, furnishes a convincing proof of their merit.” The nature of an architect’s relationships with patrons not only determined his success in the profession of architecture, but also in all other occupations frequently undertaken by architects in the eighteenth century.

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3. Adam’s Other Occupations

It was common throughout the second half of the eighteenth century for architects to engage in other activities to support themselves, to fulfill client expectations, and to complete building work efficiently and practically. Adam was no exception, but the scale and character of his outside pursuits were exceptional, and he set high standards for his contemporaries in intent, execution, and scope. Taken as a whole, his professional work provides some of the most significant and compelling examples of the variety of activities closely related to the profession of architecture that a practitioner of his time might undertake. Adam’s engagement in other occupations, such as surveyor, builder, manufacturer, investor, author, decorator, and art dealer not only augmented his income, but also boosted his social and professional standing.\(^{327}\) Such a range of occupational diversity also enabled Adam to navigate the volatile currents of the modern market economy.

Surveyor

At an intimate tête-à-tête dinner in Rome in 1755, the well-known letter-writer and connoisseur of French rococo art, Sir William Stanhope (1702-72), warned a young Adam not to practice surveying, but to “confine [himself] entirely to giving designs.”\(^{328}\) Stanhope, though somewhat hard of hearing, offered reliable advice, informed by lessons learned in his extensive social network in England and abroad. (He had recently returned

\(^{327}\) Many architects also occasionally acted as a house-agents and estate-agents, but no record survives that Adam engaged in this kind of work.

from a lengthy tour of European courts.)

Stanhope also had experience as a patron of significant architectural projects: Isaac Ware had designed temples for the grounds of Stanhope’s Buckinghamshire estate, Eythorpe Park (c.1750), and William Kent decorated and furnished his London townhouse.

Adam developed his relationship with Stanhope while both were in Rome in 1755. The aspiring architect made reference in his correspondence to the private dinner at which he sought the nobleman’s advice as to “the proper manner of conducting [himself] in London” and reported that Stanhope “was extremely frank and told [Adam] his real sentiments.” A good part of Stanhope’s advice centered on the occupation of surveying: “[Stanhope] told me that the practice of surveying, which is having 5% of the money laid out in building for the trouble of inspecting, is everyday wearing out as the nobles and gentles complain greatly of it and have continual law-suits with their architects about it.” Adam confessed that he would prefer only to make designs, “though it is not the thousand part so profitable [as the work of a surveyor].”

As Stanhope had warned, surveying tended to entangle architects with their patrons and strain customer relations; estimates for the cost of surveys were often inaccurate and the collection of payment for apparently excessive fees often led to litigation. Stanhope’s admonition also derived from his concern that the young architect not be tainted with associations with non-genteel professions. As the work of surveyors required intimate knowledge and relations with the building trade, they were often ranked

329 Fleming, Robert Adam, 196.
330 Ibid.
331 Ibid., 196-7.
332 Ibid., 197.
as tradesmen by nobility. In a society that placed high value on status and reputation, clients preferred to associate themselves directly only with architects.\(^\text{333}\)

Despite Stanhope’s advice, Adam would practice surveying extensively throughout his career. This work seems largely to have been a financial decision, but also stemmed from the practical reality that all architects necessarily acted as surveyors in the course of their work. Although surveying might have slightly compromised Adam in the eyes of some prospective patrons, it was nearly unavoidable — as philistine, ink-and-mud-spattered and litigious as it may have been.

When clients hired Adam as a “surveyor” it meant that he was appointed to manage, to facilitate, and to oversee the construction of buildings. The responsibilities of a surveyor in this sense were extensive and approximated the work of the occupations we call today land surveyor, quantity surveyor, general contractor, and inspector.\(^\text{334}\) Adam’s role as a surveyor was typically formalized with the client through a contract, and a fee was set in advance of work. His surveyor’s fee was first fixed at two-and-a-half percent and later rose to five percent of the cost of building — the more common surveying rate in Britain.\(^\text{335}\) Of all Adam’s ancillary pursuits, his work in surveying was in most respects the least remarkable. There were, however, three unusual aspects of his surveying work that set him apart from many of his peers.

First, Adam’s lack of engagement with work that involved mensuration and other kinds of numerical precision is noteworthy, given the environment in which he trained

\(^{334}\) In the 1760s, Robert Mylne charged one guinea for a survey report on a London townhouse, composing what amounted to a modern-day building inspection report, citing problems found within the house, including dampness in various locations, and an assessment of the state of the roof and chimneys (Nenadic, “Architect-Builders in London and Edinburgh,” 602).
\(^{335}\) Sanderson, Robert Adam, 84.
and worked. Eighteenth-century Britain, especially Scotland, was a breeding ground for skilled surveyors. The Scottish education system, of which Adam was a product, had superior primary schools compared to their English counterparts, and especially excelled in teaching mathematics and mensuration. More broadly, Britain was renowned for its distinguished history of surveying, and Britons were responsible for nearly all major advances in land and geodetic surveying in early modern history, stimulated and sustained by the redistribution of Church lands after the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 1530s and by the ebbs and flows of the long-running enclosure movement, which significantly accelerated in the eighteenth century.

Despite this climate, Adam was not a measurer; few surviving records indicate that he personally took measurements for his projects and many show he delegated this work. Even when exploring and publishing Diocletian’s palace in Split, Adam’s letters reveal that he employed his now well-known draughtsmen, Laurent-Benoit Dewez and Agostino Brunias, the so-called “Myrmidons,” to measure the buildings.336 In a letter to James, he related, with respect to another project, that he had “an Italian lad who does all the drudgery of putting things in proportion from sketches.”337 Moreover, while in Rome, when Robert was considering settling in London and severing with the family firm based in Edinburgh, he wrote to James: “Accounts will be a plague….I often wish for John’s [his eldest brother’s] Arithmetical head…to keep my legers in order.” He humbly continued, “If it please the Most High in heaven and those on Earth to give me Subject

336 See Brown, Monumental Reputation, 16-7; & Harris, British Architectural Books and Writers, 73.
337 Fleming, Robert Adam, 216.
matter for those perplexing Folios I wish you would think a thousand times on this subject…considering my ignorance & abhorrence of all Maner [sic] of Calculations."

Given Adam’s preference for qualitative, rather than quantitative work, it is not surprising that he also declined to engage in auditing, another exacting occupation closely related to surveying, and also often practiced by architects. Auditing the accounts of tradesmen was an exceedingly technical practice and required intimate knowledge of the building trades and shifting trends in the market economy. This work became increasingly specialized and arithmetical throughout the eighteenth century due to the expansions of the market and the building trades, and had always been far beyond the abilities of clients and even their lawyers. Auditing also proved risky with regard to one’s reputation; while probity, efficiency and accuracy in making estimates for a client’s designs could enhance an architect’s standing, there were many unpredictable factors, especially in dealing with tradesmen, and the results could be compromising. Although Williams Chambers and Robert Mylne, among other prominent architects, were known to audit tradesmen’s accounts, by the end of the century, surveyors subsumed this specialized work and began to publish detailed annual guides or price books for the public. Adam was wise to have avoided dabbling in this kind of work.

A second unusual aspect of Adam’s surveying work compared to the activity of his peers was his delegation to others of nearly all aspects of his responsibilities as surveyor. He rarely had the time or interest to supervise and inspect work on site personally and instead followed the custom of hiring a clerk of works, which he did extensively. Clerks were usually architects themselves and were authorized by their

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338 Clerk of Penicuik Muniments, GD18/4836; cited in Sanderson, Robert Adam, 54.
master to exercise full supervisory authority in the lead architect’s absence. A clerk’s primary responsibilities were ensuring quality of workmanship and materials, helping keep the schedule, advising the contractor, checking measurements as building elements were erected on site, and memorizing the architect’s plans to ensure that the builders followed them. Capable clerks recorded progress at the building site and reported regularly to their masters, especially concerning difficult phases of construction. The Scottish architect John Paterson (d. 1832), who served as Adam’s clerk of the works for several important commissions during the later years of the firm, reported on March 19, 1791, for example, about progress made in erecting the twenty-two-foot monolithic columns at the entrance of the College of Edinburgh:

I am so very throng about erecting our large Collums [sic] at the entry of the College and has the pleasure of informing you that I have got one of them erected this day at twelve o’cloack [sic] without the Smallest Accident takeing [sic] place and very much to the satisfaction of every person heare [sic] and is Certain it will be much more so to You who was the projector of so Noble an undertaking.\(^{340}\)

Adam, grateful to hear from his man on-site, replied, “It gives me much pleasure to hear that the Columns are rising on the East Front…I hope to see something handsome when I get down.”\(^{341}\)

When clerks worked regularly with an architect, as Paterson did with Adam, they absorbed the architect’s style and developed the ability to make suggestions to improve the design and enhance the architect’s original design and aesthetic intentions. Paterson, for example, in 1790, persuaded James Maitland, 8th Earl of Lauderdale (1759-1839) to use a nearly white Craigleith stone rather than red East Lothian stone for his house in Dunbar, Scotland. As he explained to Adam: “[I] advised him to fix on some other Stone of a white colour that would give his House a much lighter appearance. The sun shining

\(^{340}\) Sanderson, *Robert Adam*, 86.

\(^{341}\) Ibid.
on the white stone would express the shade and consequently the movement of your Design…and added I was certain you would give his Lordship the same advice."

Paterson was aware of Adam’s sensitivity to color and the architect’s desire for his houses to complement and intensify the qualities of the surrounding landscape. Adam had publically revealed his sensitivity to the color of exterior stones in his discussion of Luton House (1767-72) in the *Works*: “The House itself, which is built of a bright coloured stone, of a bluish cast, and admirably wrought, adds greatly to the magnificence and splendor of a scene universally admired.”

Yet, close relationships between architects and their clerks could also backfire and intensify professional competition. Such might have been the case with Robert Adam and Samuel Wyatt (1737-1807), a member of his family’s successful architectural firm, and brother of the talented architect James Wyatt (1746-1813). Samuel had trained within his family’s business as a clerk, and he later worked a while for Robert in the same position. When the Wyatt family rose to prominence in London, after the completion of James Wyatt’s Pantheon in Oxford Street, London in 1772, Robert accused them of plagiarism, and perhaps with some foundation. In the third fascicle of the first volume of the *Works*, published in April 1775, Adam wrote that the “new” capital he had invented for the screen of columns in the great stairs at Luton House had been “very closely imitated in various places,” particularly, he commented, “in the Pantheon in Oxford Street,” which was James Wyatt’s design.

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342 Ibid.
344 Walpole, who sympathized with Wyatt, surmised that Adam was again referring to his rival when he referred to Wyatt again when he wrote in the first fascicle about “an artist who feels himself an inability of presenting to the public anything from his own store of invention” (Harris, *British Architectural Books and Writers*, 118). Walpole defended Wyatt, asserting that in designing the Pantheon, Wyatt had “employed the antique with more judgment” than Adam had at Luton House. In 1773 in a letter to the Rev. W. Mason,
Although a clerk was usually appointed for major commissions, the London-based Adam was able to maintain overall control of his most important works through regular correspondence and a number of surveyor’s visits. Improvements in road paving and carriage design allowed faster and improved communication, transport of materials, and travel, all of which meant that Adam could manage more distant projects and more projects in general. As he put it to the British social reformer, writer, and patron of the arts Elizabeth Montagu (1718-1800) in 1766, his growing practice sent him “almost constantly wandering from county to county.”

Adam charged fifty guineas for traveling and subsistence for each journey from London to Edinburgh. He often traveled to inspect work even when, as at the Register House in Edinburgh and many other important commissions, a full-time clerk of works had been appointed. He traveled by post-chaise, the fastest and most expensive method of conveyance on land by mid-century. Post-chaises were carriages invented chiefly to transport mail, and compared to coaches, they were small, light and efficiently designed; they could hold two or four passengers and were driven by a postilion (usually an older man), who rode on one of two or four horses. Servants sat behind the carriage on a dicky, or rumble seat, and luggage was strapped to the top. Travel by carriage enabled Adam to work en route and to transport portfolios of drawings, including the full-scale drawings for workmen. In the last stage of his career, when Adam could not travel personally to building sites, he often dispatched drawings and instructions by means of the new mail

Walpole wrote further: “In his Preface he seems to tax Wyatt with stealing from him: but Wyatt has employed the antique with more judgment, and the Pantheon is still the most beautiful edifice in England” (Bolton, Architecture of Robert & James Adam (1758-1794), 99).

346 Sanderson, Robert Adam, 62.
347 Ibid., 82-3.
348 Ibid.
coaches, despite periodic trouble with documents being stolen, jumbled, or lost. Adam used the mail coach for transporting documents from London to Edinburgh during the construction of the College of Edinburgh in 1790. The service between London and Edinburgh had begun in 1786 — the cost was over £7 and the delivery time was three days.

Because it was especially difficult for Adam to supervise his northern commissions, he may have relied more on pattern-books than he would have done for a contemporary southern client. The use of pattern books, rather than specialized drawings, would have helped to ensure accuracy during construction because local builders were familiar with the designs. Examples of this practice include the floor plans for Moy House, in Moray, Scotland made in 1759 for Sir Ludovic Grant (d. 1790), and some of the interior elements for the house of the Scottish merchant, plantation owner, and advisor to the British government on trade regulations, Richard Oswald (1705-84), built beginning in 1766 in the Scottish countryside. All of these designs were adapted from plates in the Modern Builder’s Assistant: or, a Concise Epitome of the Whole System of Architecture (1742).

Letters sent to Richard Oswald by his business agent testify to the difficulties faced on distant northern building sites, when both architect and the owner were in London:

The whole work in your New house Goes on very slowl y and in Short I have no pleasure in looking at what is done…I do wish & intreat [sic] that you could find some more able person to direct an conduct the execution of the work in the principall [sic] story, so that

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349 Ibid.
350 Ibid.
351 Yarwood, Robert Adam, 174; Sanderson, Robert Adam, 83.
352 Sanderson, Robert Adam, 62.
353 William Halfpenny, et. al., The Modern Builder's Assistant, Or, A Concise Epitome of the Whole System of Architecture : In Which the Various Branches of That Excellent Study Are Establish'd On the Most Familiar Principles and Rendered Adequate to Every Capacity (London: Printed for James Rivington and J. Fletcher ... and Robert Sayer, 1742).
you may have some comfort in the possessing of it, the ornaments that are made look in general very heavie [sic] & are not clear done…\(^{354}\)

One aspect of surveying that Adam was particularly careful to keep under his immediate purview was the siting of country houses. One of Elizabeth’s (Robert’s sister) letters to James in Italy recorded one such instance: “Bob returned from Beckfords on Thursday after fixing the ground for the situation of his house.”\(^{355}\) Working in a role that we would call today land surveyor, Adam and his assistants would have placed one or more markers, usually stones or stakes, to establish the outside corners of the masonry foundation. Locating these cornerstones, or “found stones” was critical, as their positioning dictated many aspects of the design. Owners and architects alike were often anxious to have locations measured and houses “founded,” as it was only then that a project would begin to take significant shape.

Historian David King has observed that Adam preferred to site his country houses on a slope, facing uphill, which allowed both the front main floor entrance and the rear basement entrance to stand at ground level.\(^{356}\) This disposition granted more convenient access and finer views from rooms dedicated to socializing, such as the drawing room and dining rooms, which Adam often placed in the rear of the house.\(^{357}\) Ideally, he also positioned the entrance hall to face the north, allowing southern light to bathe dining rooms, ball rooms, and other well-used, quasi-public domestic spaces.

When Adam could not perform siting personally, he relied on his clerks to report to him about the specifics, which often included information crucial to his design work. Paterson, for example, reported on 15 March 1790: “I am obliged to go… [to the site of


\(^{357}\) Ibid., 8.
the future Seton Castle] tomorrow with Mr. McKinzie [the client]…When I was there last I found there was 50 feet less ground to Build on than you was made to believe by the plan of the ground you got from him.” On April 26, Paterson wrote again, remarking that he had returned to the building site with the owner and “measured the ground before him and pointed out the Spot where the great Tower Should Stand…all of which he was well pleased with and I set of and laid the found stone before I left the place.”

Finally, to his great credit and unlike many of his peers, in his surveying work Adam largely avoided litigious entanglements with clients, which Stanhope had warned were commonplace. It appears that his sparkling sociability, decency, and talent induced most who encountered him to like him. Personal regard for Adam mitigated the tensions that might be engendered by miscalculations and the high costs of building work. For example, when his client, Dr. John Turton (1735-1806) (one of the doctors who treated George III during bouts of his madness), who had previously purchased a house on the Adelphi’s terrace, wrote to Adam to express dismay over high estimates for a villa he commissioned, his regard for the architect shaped the strikingly conciliatory tone of his correspondence:

I have ever admired you as an ingenious, I have ever esteemed you as an honest man. You have been woefully mistaken in your calculations. You have led me to difficulties, but it never had, or I trust will shake my opinion of you. I shall ever follow you with my good Wishes, & rejoice in every good that may happen to you.

We know a bit about Adam’s attractive personality from various sources. The Scottish civil engineer and architect Thomas Telford (1757-1834), for example, described him as

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358 National Library of Scotland, Paterson-Adam Correspondence, 15 March, 1790; cited in Sanderson, Robert Adam, 120.
359 National Library of Scotland, Paterson-Adam Correspondence, 26 April, 1790; cited in Sanderson, Robert Adam, 120.
360 Cited in Thom & Tyack (eds.), Robert Adam and His Brothers, introduction (forthcoming).
“affable and communicative.” Diana Molyneux described Adam as “gay, cheerful, and frolicsome.” Fanny Burney, who met him with other of “the Scotch party” at the house of General and Mrs. Debbieg in March 1770 remarked that he was “sensible, very polite and very agreeable – the most so…of the whole party.” Adam’s own letters also frequently reveal his playfulness and charm. He admitted in one letter home from Rome, for example, that Clérisseau called him “paresseux, fripon and coquin every day” because Adam spent his time “more in laughing and joking than in work.”

While working as a surveyor, it is notable that Adam seemed to have occasionally acted as a building inspector as well, a trade that was in the process of becoming independent from surveying at that time. In addition to inspecting one’s own buildings, architects, especially prominent ones like Adam, were sometimes asked to inspect buildings built by others. He was, for instance, one of the committee of nine architects, whom William Chambers invited in 1791 to inspect the Royal Academy chambers at Somerset House, following reports of loud cracking noises coming from the joists in the Exhibition Room. Adam’s participation is recorded in the lengthy report of the inspection committee, which was published in full on 10 January 1791 in Lloyd’s Evening Post. The consulting architects assured the public that the building was safe.

A second instance of Adam’s activity as an inspector occurred in 1789, when the House of Commons asked him and other architects to assess the threat of fire to the

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361 Cited in Sanderson, Robert Adam, 35.
364 Cited in Fleming, Robert Adam, 185.
365 Sir William Chambers inserted a notice in Lloyds Evening Post following reports of the cracking sounds coming from the joists of the Royal Academy, in which he requested “Gentlemen of eminence in the profession, as architects and surveyors” to inspect the state of the floor in the exhibition room and write a report. See Nenadic, “Architect-Builders in London and Edinburgh,” 615.
Palace of Westminster and Westminster Hall from nearby buildings.\textsuperscript{366} This group presented a report to the House of Commons on 20 July 1789 and noted that the danger was considerable. (Of course, a fire did destroy most of the Palace of Westminster on 16 October 1834, but the tragedy was caused by a chimney fire that resulting from the careless disposal of small wooden tally sticks, which were used by officials of the Exchequer as proof of payments to the king.)

Adam’s willingness to participate in this inspection testified to his interest in high-profile work and also to his concern for safety standards, a weighty and troubling issue. Building inspection would gain autonomy from the profession of surveying in the late eighteenth century due to the growing role of insurance companies, which clamored for stricter enforcement of building regulations, and the surge of cheap, speculative building in London, which led to more fraud, safety hazards, and deliberate fire-setting. A representative call for reform was an article in the \textit{Middlesex Journal} of 1769, which called for a formal system of independent building inspection, controlled by parliament-appointed commissioners and undertaken by “inspectors…who ought to be architects, with good yearly salaries…who visited and reported, for public record, on building schemes in process and also examined brick-kilns, with authority to destroy sub-standard bricks.”\textsuperscript{367} The newspaper reported increases in “frequent and dangerous frauds committed in buildings for sale of hire,” which involved architects and builders, who misleadingly advertised poorly constructed housing made with bad materials, which they claimed to be soundly constructed of durable materials. This duplicitous activity resulted tragically in increasing numbers of houses that were “subject to fall in a few years, and to

\textsuperscript{366} Yarwood, \textit{Robert Adam}, 180.
be burnt in a few hours, to the loss of many lives and much property.” Although nothing came of this particular initiative in 1769, toward the end of the century, architects began to organize in support of reform, in part though the founding of the Architect’s Club in 1791, a primary goal of which was to improve building safety.

Builder

It is difficult to tell, from surviving records, how often Adam acted as both architect and builder. One of the few commissions for which this is known is the Register House in Edinburgh.368 Building was financially risky and stressful work, and, in most cases, Adam chose to pursue more profitable and enjoyable employment, as a practitioner of surveying, decorator, and inventor of designs.

“Builder” in the eighteenth century, as today, was roughly synonymous with contractor, and referred to one who was responsible for finding subcontractors and managing the daily work of construction. These responsibilities overlapped with the work of surveyors, who were also often responsible for hiring and paying subcontractors, and overseeing work on site. The contractor, often employed a foreman to supervise work on the building site, where he worked closely with the clerk of works, a person hired by the architect or client.

In the earliest stages of his career Adam gained experience as a builder while working for the family firm, which made large profits on a variety of projects. He was involved in the 1740s and 1750s in the construction of Inveraray Castle (the foundation stone was laid in 1746 and work was finished by James and Robert in 1789) and

extensions of Hopetoun House (begun by William Adam in 1721 and completed by the sons, c.1750-60). Through this period the work at the Adam firm remained steady, thanks in large part to their long-standing contract with the Scottish Ordnance Board, on which William served as Master Mason from 1730 until his death in 1748. Following the failed Jacobite revolt of 1745, the Ordnance Board built fortifications, barracks, and forts throughout the Highlands. The most significant project under this contract was Fort George (1748-69), a large modern fortress near Inverness designed by a military engineer, Colonel Skinner (whom Robert would deem “the most ridiculous of mortals”\(^{369}\)). The Adam brothers oversaw a labor force of about one thousand soldiers who erected the many massive, stone-faced brick walls. In his role as builder, working at Fort George in the summers from 1750-54, Robert encountered, from a reverse perspective, one of the conflicts that he would later face as an architect and surveyor: the resentment between builders and designers, who builders perceived as intruders in the territory of construction.\(^{370}\)

After Robert’s return from the Grand Tour (1754-58), his most significant activity as a builder was on his own speculative projects. Without question, the most famous speculative building development of his career, and of the entire eighteenth century, was the Adelphi (\(adelphoi\) means “brothers” or “siblings” in Greek).\(^{371}\) Built in 1768-75, and sprawling over approximately three-and-a-half acres of land just south of the Strand (known as Durham’s Yard), this was a terrace of houses, unified by a continuous palace façade, on the north bank of the Thames; it consisted of twenty-four lavish residences,

\(^{369}\) Cited in Sanderson, Robert Adam, 25.
\(^{370}\) Ibid., 114.
\(^{371}\) The details of the Adelphi scheme, from its beginning stages to its bitter end, have been well discussed by various scholars. See, in particular, Bolton, Architecture of Robert and James Adam, 15-118; Rowan, “After the Adelphi”; Sanderson, Robert Adam, 67-75; & Salter, Four Emperors and an Architect, 167-77.
built atop a substructure of giant arches containing commercial warehouse space (Figure 2.2). The monumental undertaking employed many hundreds of workers and was hugely complex: the houses sat atop a network of underlying streets and the entire structure had to navigate the twelve-meter difference in height between the Strand and the river’s edge. The venture attracted both considerable praise and condemnation; the dispossessed wharfmen, members of various governing institutions, including Parliament, the Ordnance Board, and the Corporation of the City of London, offered especially vitriolic dissent. The disastrous national credit crisis of 1772, led to the abandonment of the project and to near financial ruin for the entire Adam family. Following the crash, David Hume wrote to his friend Adam Smith that he feared that the Adam brothers “must dismiss 3000 workmen, who, comprehending the materials must have expended above £100,000 a year.” This debacle initiated rifts between the brothers, which would be widened by subsequent financial calamities, and tragically estrange Robert and John until the end of their lives.

The Adelphi venture reveals a good deal about Robert Adam’s identity as an architect, and, more broadly, the mutable character of that profession in late eighteenth-

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372 The brothers’ first design for the Adelphi, now housed in the King’s Maps in the British Museum, and published by Alistair Rowan in “After the Adelphi” (p. 664), shows plans for at least sixty-five separate houses. The Company hoped to let the warehouses to the Ordnance Board. The construction of the Embankment in the nineteenth century significantly and permanently altered the complex and the central block was razed in 1936. Also in the nineteenth century, the “Adelphi Arches” became sites of encampment for the destitute, and a tunnel leading to them still remains in Lower Robert Street.

373 Scots Magazine reported that the Adam brothers had over two-thousand men working for them, while David Hume estimated their work force to number 3,000 or more. (See Bolton, Architecture of Robert and James Adam, 116). The dispossessed wharfmen voiced their concern in part in rhyme: “Four Scotchmen of the name of Adam/Who keep their coaches and their Madams/Quoth John in sulky mood to Thomas/ Have stole the very river from us.”

374 The Adam family would not go bankrupt until 1801. The Adam’s survived the crisis by the expedients of the lottery and a five-day sale at Christie’s in February 1773 of their collections of pictures, antiques, and personal effects. The lottery sold 4,370 tickets, valued at £50 each and realized a total of £218,500, and was held on 3 March 1774. Many of the unsold tickets, held by the brothers, won prizes and left them large, albeit mortgaged, parts of the Adelphi. (See Rowan, “After the Adelphi,” 667.)

century Britain. Four overlapping and interrelated aspects of the new role of the modern architect were showcased by this project.

First, it revealed the necessity for the modern architect to develop entrepreneurial skills to survive in the modern economy. Adam lived and worked at a time in which it was still unusual and very difficult to found and to develop an architectural firm, and the financial risk was extreme. Speculative building was not a new practice (it had been commonplace in ancient Rome), but it was new to modern Europe, reappearing in mid-sixteenth-century London to meet the housing demands of waves of new immigrants, and it had been adapted to a capitalist laissez-faire economy in complex ways.\(^{376}\) Eighteenth-century Britain demanded developments of unprecedented scale; indeed, the Adelphi was the largest speculative project erected since antiquity.

There are four important points to be made about speculative building. First, modern developers struggled to build quickly and inexpensively enough to succeed within a volatile economy in which the prices of materials and labor changed swiftly and consumer demand was fickle. Unlike developers in ancient Rome, speculative builders in eighteenth-century London did not have the economic and bureaucratic “advantage” of harnessing the system of slavery to erect their buildings, and this substantially increased the risk.

Second, the Adams were one of the architectural firms to develop a vertically-integrated structure, capable of financing its own projects, producing designs, manufacturing and delivering building supplies, and managing work on site. Part of the reason that the Adams were able to vertically integrate was because they were a family

business. Family firms were rare and exceptional social and financial organizations in the eighteenth century. The lucky few, like the Adams, were able to achieve stability by transcending the market during episodes of financial turbulence in the public sphere. The Adam family’s efforts were matched only by architectural firms established and sustained within the Wyatts and Mylnes.

Third, speculative building provided an avenue by which architects could emancipate themselves from the exhausting dynamics of the patronage system, which dominated architectural practice in early-modern Europe, and to exert full artistic control over their designs. In contrast to custom-built or “bespoke” housing, speculative building bestowed on architects the freedom to reject design compromises and to express their views in public. In the case of the Adelphi, Adam communicated his ideas about the future of London’s urban planning and his beliefs about the potential of domestic architecture to shape public life; Pevsner has noted that, with the Adelphi, Adam was among the first architects to introduce to London a palace façade for a row of houses.377

Fourth, enormous construction projects enhanced architects’ social and professional prestige and afforded great financial opportunities. In this high-risk and high-reward enterprise, the largest profits and greatest prestige resulted from constructing large buildings with many dwelling units. Had the Adelphi project been successful, the Adam family would have made a small fortune; the ground rents from the houses were anticipated to be well over £7,000 per year, and income from the warehouses alone, at roughly £2281 per year, would more than pay the annual ground lease of £1,200 that the

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377 Pevsner, *Outline of European Architecture*, 348. Edward Shephard’s Grosvenor Square was perhaps the first, although not entirely successful, example in London. See the chapter on the street house in John Summerson’s *Architecture in Britain 1530-1830.*
Adams paid to the Duke of St. Albans trustees.\textsuperscript{378} A certain degree of prestige was attached to the Adelphi’s success as a fashionable abode. Actor David Garrick (1717-79) was among the first inhabitants, at No. 5 Adelphi Terrace, and the Scottish showman and sex therapist, James Graham (1745-94), whose hall was decorated with the crutches of cured patients, took the center house, No. 6, where he famously opened his “Temple of Health,” which featured a “Celestial Bed” (on which, he promised, perfect children could be conceived), available for his patients to rent at £100 per night.\textsuperscript{379} Topham Beauclerk (1739-80), a celebrated wit and friend of Horace Walpole and Samuel Johnson, leased No. 3. Robert and James resided at No. 4 John Street and established an office at No. 13.

\textbf{Manufacturer and Investor}

Beginning in the 1720s and continuing throughout Adam’s lifetime, dynamic changes swept through Britain’s civil and economic infrastructure, and significant expansions in trade and industry powerfully disfigured and refigured the countryside, cities, and patterns of daily life.\textsuperscript{380} In the preface to the third volume of his famous \textit{Tour thro’ the Whole Island of Great Britain} (1724-7), British writer and journalist Daniel Defoe (1660-1731) remarked upon his country’s incipient industrialization: “New discoveries in metals, mines and minerals…new undertakings in trade, engines, manufactures, in a nation pushing and improving as we are…especially shew a new and

\textsuperscript{378} Rowan, “After the Adelphi,” 662 & 665.
\textsuperscript{379} Ibid., 665.
differing face in many places, on every occasion of surveying it.”

The three most significant advances in building materials in this early stage of the Industrial Revolution were the revival and reformulation of exterior stucco, the invention of “Coade stone,” and improvements in the manufacture of cast iron. Adam played integral roles in the manufacture and popularization of each.382

Adam was one of many architects in his generation who sought recipes for new, inexpensive materials. The growing demand for building supplies created opportunities for the making of large fortunes if one could cheaply replicate decorative forms usually made from expensive natural materials, especially marble and other stones. Even greater profit could be made if an architect could find an inexpensive material that was durable enough for exterior application. Adam’s acute awareness of the new power of industry to provide opportunities for class advancement and financial gain, led him to involve himself, directly and through investment, in the production and manufacture of building materials.

In 1766, the prominent English architect and bridge-designer John Gwynn (1713-86) had lamented that “encouragement is not given to some ingenious person to find out a stucco or composition resembling stone, more durable than the common sort, and in which exterior ornaments might be easily wrought at a very easy expense.”383 “Stucco,” an imprecise term for plaster, is a material which had been commonly used in many ancient and modern cultures both to cover interior and exterior walls with protective and

decorative surfaces, and to make sculpture and architectural decorations. The most common ingredients of eighteenth-century stucco were gypsum and water or oil; this mixture has the potential for limitless applications, as it can be molded into any shape and used in any thickness.\textsuperscript{384}

Adam recognized early in his career the potential benefits of finding a successful plaster recipe and, beginning in the mid-1760s, he and his brothers fearlessly acquired the first patents for manufacturing exterior stucco and, sometime in the early 1770s, began manufacturing it in the basement of the Adelphi.\textsuperscript{385} In 1765, they acquired David Wark’s patent, and they worked with it for nearly a decade before abandoning it in favor of a composition developed by John Liardet, a Swiss protestant clergyman, with whom they signed an agreement on 10 May 1774.\textsuperscript{386}

Adam’s use of stucco was widespread. His first significant development Liardet’s recipe was at Kenwood House in Hampstead, north of London, where he applied thin layers of stucco to the façade in order to merge the old house with his new additions. There and at the Adelphi (at which Wark’s stucco had been employed) Adam also cast stucco to form decorative pilasters, introducing a new type of refined, low-relief exterior ornament.\textsuperscript{387} In 1778-79, the owners of new houses on Bloomsbury Square engaged Adam as a stuccoist to cover the brick façades of their new houses, likely inspired by Adam’s use of Wark’s stucco in 1771-74 on an exterior courtyard wall at 20 Saint James Square.\textsuperscript{388} In volume two, fascicle five of the \textit{Works}, published in 1779, Adam proudly

\textsuperscript{385} See Kelsall, “Liardet versus Adam.”
\textsuperscript{386} Ibid., 118.
\textsuperscript{387} Summerson, \textit{Architecture in Britain}, 438.
\textsuperscript{388} Ibid., 439.
mentioned in the description for the main façade of Drury Lane Theater (c.1775, Plate VI, Figure 6.25) that “both the plain and ornamental parts of this front are executed in Liardet.”

Unfortunately, Liardet’s recipe was unsatisfactory, and by 1779 its deficiencies were becoming apparent and Adam’s use of it was no longer an advantage, but a liability. The worst failings were in its application to cover exterior walls, which was a common practice for Adam, and this resulted in the need for repairs, the most extensive of which concerned the south façade of Kenwood House, Mrs. Garrick’s villa in Hampton, and Chevening House, in Kent (1617-30). Lord Mansfield, the owner of Kenwood, barked that given the expense of the repairs, the exterior decoration would have been cheaper if it had been executed in the most expensive Parian marble. Mrs. Garrick, actor David Garrick’s then widow, did not seek legal recourse, but took William Chambers’ advice to cover the house in mathematical tiles (a common tile used for the exteriors of timber-framed houses in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England; it was typically colored black and glazed — the origin of the name “mathematical” is unknown), rather than attempt to repair the stucco. The brothers faced a major claim for damages from Lord Stanhope for the failing stucco at Chevening House, a house which would also be subsequently clad with mathematical tiles.

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390 Even in 1778, a fallen capital at a house in Bedford Square and disengaged wall coverings at houses at Norbury Park testified to the failing stucco (Kelsall, “Liardet versus Adam,” 119). In 1782, Liardet took the brothers to court, when they decided to void the agreement when facing mounting debt from the endeavor. This lawsuit would embroil the family firm for five years, from 1782-87, and drain more funds due to legal fees, but finally freed them from Liardet.
392 If it not known when, precisely, the stucco was applied at Chevening, but in 1779 the Liardet there was failing and one or more of the brothers, the clerk of works, John Raffield, and Liardet himself went to inspect it. In the end, Stanhope was awarded £1500 (Kelsall, “Liardet versus Adam,” 122).
Despite the Adams’ failings to earn a great profit from their investments in patent stucco they hold a significant place in the history of the material for several reasons. First, they were pioneers in the legal protection of industrial innovation; they were the first architects to purchase patents for stucco and they were also vigorous in defending their ownership rights. Indeed, for many years Liardet [and Adams] v. Johnson was regarded as the leading case in patent law.\(^393\)

Second, the Adam brothers were capitalist adventurers — virtual stucco monopolists. From 1774 until 1780, they held the patent for what was considered the only viable exterior stucco in Britain. Despite its faults, Liardet’s recipe was considered the only “stucco that would, in [Britain’s] climate, stand on the outside work exposed to the weather.”\(^394\) Another commentator reflected, in 1778, that “No man in England shall stucco the outside of a house without leave of the proprietors of Liardet’s cement…no lasting cement can possible be made without [his recipe].”\(^395\) Because Adam’s patent restricted the use of Liardet’s stucco to anyone other than the brothers, their reputation greatly suffered, branded by other architects as unprofessional and unpatriotic.\(^396\)

Third, the Adams’ experimentation with stucco was an important contribution to industrial chemistry, demonstrating that water was the only viable base for stucco. Liardet’s stucco was originally oil-based, but it became clear that, especially when used for wall-covering, the oil-based formula encouraged the stucco to separate and fall-off,

\(^{393}\) Kelsall, “Liardet versus Adam,” 118; John Johnson, an architect and speculative builder in Marylebone, was alleged to have infringed the patent and suborned the Adams’ workmen in order to learn trade secrets (Kelsall, “Liardet versus Adam,” 119).


\(^{395}\) An Appeal to the Public on the Right of Using Oil-Cement or Composition for Stucco, etc. (1778), 62-64. Cited in Kelsall, “Liardet versus Adam,” 119.

\(^{396}\) Yarwood, Robert Adam, 159.
and by 1779 the recipe had been altered to use water.\textsuperscript{397} And fourth, and probably most memorably, Robert Adam found in stucco the perfect medium for his new vocabulary of architectural decoration; unfortunately, however, this medium also facilitated speedy and widespread copying of his designs.

The use of plaster was always an integral component of the architectural designs of the Adam firm, beginning with the work of his father William. He, like Robert, used plaster extensively, but in contrast to Robert’s creation of low-relief and finely detailed décor, William designed stucco decorations with larger proportions and often in slightly higher relief, which produced more volumetric forms. The interiors of Arniston House, in Midlothian, Scotland (designed in 1724-25; built beginning in 1725 or 1726), display some of William’s most magnificent decorative work in stucco (Figure 3.1).

Robert manipulated stucco to enable him to create the distinctive forms of his light and elegant neoclassical style. In this work, he moved away from what had become the traditional use of stucco, using it to fashion massy Palladian decoration that emphasized and isolated significant architectural forms, such as door and window frames. In contrast, Robert used stucco to compose increasingly unified interiors, within which the visitor’s eye glided effortlessly and seamlessly from surface to surface, be it wall, ceiling, or decorative element. John Fleming artfully described Adam’s sophisticated stucco detailing in the drawing room at Dumfries House (1750s, Figure 3.2):

> …exquisite patterns of crisply modelled foliage and flowers rippling out from the centers in concentric circles [on the ceiling], dying away in more slowly undulating waves of similar motifs along the frieze, only to be taken up again round the chimney-pieces and picture frames and over-doors, where garlands of pomegranates and peaches and cartouches as light as chiffon, are held by masks of the most advanced rococo asymmetry.\textsuperscript{398}

\textsuperscript{397} See Kelsall, “Liardet versus Adam,” 124.
\textsuperscript{398} Fleming, Robert Adam, 96-7.
Adam struggled, however, to find craftsmen in Britain capable of executing his stucco designs. In the early 1760s, he memorialized this problem when describing the extension that he had made to the house of Lieutenant General Humphrey Bland (1686-1763) and his wife, at Isleworth:

The stucco work pleases them much and I am convinced will please generally, though entre nous it is not executed in the antique taste as it is impossible to get English workmen who will leave their angly [sic], stiff, sharp manners. However, as they know no better in England they cannot be so vexed as I am myself. Nay, perhaps they like it better than they would the other manner.399

The masters of this medium were the Italian stuccatori, although some British artisans, such as Adam’s principal stuccoists, Joseph Rose (c. 1723–80) and his nephew, likewise called Joseph Rose (1746–99), also became experts.400 Adam’s use of stucco, in particular, helped to sustain the production of this material, as his style was quickly emulated throughout the country.

Adam’s increasingly imitated style also played a crucial role in promoting the manufacture of the new artificial medium known as Coade stone.401 This was the most famous new building material of the eighteenth century, and Adam, along with all the leading architects of the day, used it nearly as soon as it came available in the early 1770s.402 Coade stone was produced by one of the most significant women in eighteenth-century European architectural history, the entrepreneur Eleanor Coade (1733-1821). She

399 Graham, Arbiter, 167.
402 Summerson, Architecture in Britain, 439.
manufactured the eponymous material in Lambeth beginning in 1769, using a recipe that had been developed by two predecessors, neither of whom had taken out a patent. It was a cement-like material made of china clay mixed with flint, sand, and glass, which were ground into a powder and, as in the manufacture of stucco, mixed with water to form a paste that was poured into highly finished molds in order to produce pillars, statues, friezes, and other decorative elements. Part of its great success was due to its resistance to shrinkage upon firing.

Adam maintained a close working relationship with Eleanor Coade from 1769 until his death in 1792. While it is difficult to determine the full extent of Adam’s use of Coade stone (because it imitates stone so well) surviving records from Coade’s office reveal that he used it at Newby Hall, Great Saxham Hall, Alnwick Castle, Luton Hoo, Kenwood House, the garden buildings at Croome Court, and the “Cat Gates” at Culzean Castle, which featured Coade-stone copies of the Egyptian lioness statues at the foot of the Campidoglio in Rome. Adam’s extensive use of this artificial stone at the prominent and fashionable Home House in London, now No. 20 Portman Square, proved to be particularly beneficial for the popularization of this modern material.

The Adams’ efforts to promote Coade stone, however, were surpassed by their work to increase the manufacture and use of cast iron. In the mid-eighteenth century the manufacture of cast iron saw considerable improvements, and Adam played a crucial role in the increased use of cast-iron in architectural decoration. In the seventeenth and

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403 For a list of all of Adam’s known uses of Coade stone, see Alison Kelly, “Coade Stone in Georgian Architecture,” 73-76.
eighteenth centuries, iron foundries in Scotland and England, such as Carron and Coalbrookdale, had made significant advances in the technology of smelting and in iron-working.

In the 1760s and 1770s, the Adam family became inextricably linked with the production of cast iron, thanks largely to the efforts of Robert’s brother John, who became director of the Carron Company (of Falkirk) in 1763. All of the Adam brothers were major shareholders in this Scottish company, and through this association they were able to supply clients with iron goods, especially cast iron, for the external decorative metal work for the exteriors of their London commissions. The Carron Company, in turn, introduced elements of the Adam Style into their line of mass-produced domestic fittings, especially fireplace grates and vases. Robert provided the designs, which nearly always needed to be simplified to survive the casting process. In 1764, William went into partnership with John Wiggins, the clerk in charge of the Carron Company’s London warehouse, and their firm, Adam Wiggins, became the company’s London agents.\footnote{Sanderson, \textit{Robert Adam}, 66.}

The Adams believed this to be a savvy investment. Cast iron had seemingly limitless potential to realize Adam’s singular decorative style, and the comparatively low production costs of cast iron, as compared to labor-intensive wrought iron manufacture, meant that products could be cheaply and widely distributed. Isaac Ware noted the significant advantages of this material in his entry for iron in his \textit{Complete Body of Architecture} (1756), which contained several plates illustrating ironwork in the form of gates and railings. Ware wrote: “Cast iron is very serviceable to the builder and a vast expense is saved in many cases by using it; in rails and balusters it makes a rich and
massy appearance when it has cost very little and when wrought iron, much less substantial, would cost a vast sum.”

Adam was the first architect to use cast iron to make such a diversity and quantity of decorative forms. Revolutionary advances in pattern-making and molding skills, demonstrated in the work of the sculptors and Royal Academicians, the brothers William and Henry Haworth, who worked for the Carron Company, created masterful castings of increasingly intricate and refined ornamental details. Among other elegant architectural elements, the Adam brothers introduced to London decorative cast-iron finials and complex railings.

Brickmaking also provided the brothers with an important source of secondary income and made the acquisition and transport of building materials for their own projects more efficient. Among his family’s many business ventures, the Adams owned brickworks in London and Essex, valued in 1772 at £7700. The production and use of bricks exploded in the eighteenth century, driven by the construction of hundreds of new, large country estates with brick garden walls, icehouses and, eventually, housing for estate workers. Brick was hardly a new material for England in the eighteenth century, as it had been common for centuries and had become a hallmark of the country. “England,” wrote the Russian poet, critic, and historian Nikolay Mikhailovich Karamzin

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406 Ware, *Complete Body of Architecture* (1756), Book I, Chapter XXVII, “Of Iron,” 89.
(1766-1826) at the time of the French Revolution, “is a land of brick.” Brick, however, was a relatively new material in Scotland; although the Romans had introduced it there during their occupation in the first century AD, following the collapse of the Roman Empire, its use nearly wholly died out until it was revived in the seventeenth century. The Adams became proficient in making and using brick to cater both to English and Scottish patrons.

The brothers had learned the advantages of having a stake in as many different aspects of the building trade as possible from their father. He had been a tireless and talented entrepreneur, who built an empire of businesses that gave his children the means to study and practice architecture, and for Robert to launch his own architectural firm upon his return from Italy in 1758. Their wealth came largely from interests in marble, glass, timber, and brick, and other materials necessary for construction. In the summer of 1728, just after Adam’s birth, William had a visit from his patron Sir John Clerk of Penicuik, who remarked on his wide-ranging enterprises in his journal:

I took a little time to consider a brickwork belonging to Mr. Adams, Architect. This I found as expensive a piece of work as the nature of it required and I could not enough admire the enterprising temper of the proprietor who had at that time under his own care near twenty general projects – Barley Mills, Coal Works, Salt Pans, Marble Works, Highways, Farms, houses of his own a-building and houses of others not a few.

William, or “Old Stone and Lime,” as his children called him, had trained as a mason, claiming that he was “Bred a Mason and served his time as Such,” but even in the early

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days of his career he became known for far-reaching involvement in other branches of the building trade. His work in contracting, surveying, measuring, masonry, and manufacturing flourished alongside his architectural practice. In 1714 William established with William Robertson of Gladney, his future father-in-law, the Linktown Brickworks, which his sons would inherit. By 1727 he also owned the colliery at Tranent and salt-works at Cockenzie; in 1728 he bought the glass works at Dirleton. William also had his hand in coal-mining, brewing, milling, forestry, and agriculture, and he traded as a merchant in nearly all construction materials, owing a five-sixths share (valued at £6,000) in a building supply company, Campbell & Company. After the patriarch’s death, his son John continued the family tradition, owning timber yards (valued at £17,000), marble yards, and brickworks at London and Essex (the latter valued at £7,700), and he leased granite quarries in Aberdeen, from which came the street paving stones used in Westminster and seven other London parishes. For the better part of the 1800s, the Adam family dominated, if not controlled the Scottish building industry, despite their mounting debt and decline in the last third of the century.

Beginning with the Adelphi project and throughout the last years of their lives, the brothers sank deep into debt and eventually declared bankruptcy in 1801, after the death of all but William, who would pass, nearly destitute, in 1822. Robert and his brothers certainly inherited their father’s entrepreneurial drive but not his head for business. John remained the exception, however, ever cautious and prudent in his business dealings and

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415 NA Scot., CS230/A2/1; NA Scot., GD18/4736 William Adam to Sir John Clerk.
416 Graham, Arbiter, 12.
419 Rowan “After the Adelphi,” 669.
giving fraternal financial advice. Robert, to a great, but not fully known extent, was not as involved in the family business as his three brothers, preoccupied as he was with his design work and, to lesser degrees, his activities as surveyor and builder. James generally took the lead in business matters, representing William Adam and Company in negotiations for the Adelphi project, and, with his brother William, jointly managing the family business after the Adelphi disaster.  

The Adelphi speculation and investment in Liardet’s flawed stucco recipe were enough to have earned the Adam brothers widespread reputations for being poor businessmen. That judgment was seemingly confirmed when they put yet more of their money in the new Battersea and Sand End Company, established in 1780. This was a scheme to establish a saltpeter manufactory at Sand End on the King’s Road and a complementary barrel works at Battersea. James was the architect of the deal, struck with the persuasive “Flemish Empirick” J. P. de Bruges, the brains behind the scientific and technical aspects of the venture, who proved incompetent. After less than a year, Bruges absconded with the funds and left William Adam & Company with a loss of £30,000.  

In October 1781, John lamented to William that the fatal flaw in their business dealings had been excessive optimism and the naïve advancement of funds, particularly to Liardet and younger speculative builders, including John Nash (1752-1835). He

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420 Ibid. 661.  
421 Ibid., 668-9.  
422 Ibid., 668.  
423 Liardet was advanced money in the years 1774-78, in accordance with their agreement struck in 1774, despite annual losses due principally from legal fees for the Johnson lawsuit, damages granted to Stanhope and other clients. The initial agreement provided for Liardet to be paid £100 up front, £100 within six weeks, the first £300 of profit and thereafter half the profits, except when the stucco was used when the Adams acted as builder, in which cases, Liardet would receive one third of the profits (Kelsall, “Liardet versus Adam,” 118).
wrote, “We have been far too long of taking that view of matters and have always begun at the wrong end, by setting great profits before our eyes, and anticipating them by expensive living. Let us now (I hope in God not yet too late) take the contrary sistem [sic] and at least obtain Honour and Honesty as our reward, if we should not be able to accomplish riches.”424 Since “following fantoms [sic] had been their ruin” he urged them to stick to “the plain road of their business.”425 After 1784, their debts never dropped below £30,000.426 The London brothers owed about £25,000 to the cautious John Adam and large sums to many others who had lent them money, including clients and successful craftsmen, like Joseph Rose.427

John pinpointed James’ lack of business acumen as their greatest weakness: “I never knew a transaction of Jamie’s where he did not blunder about the Conditions in the Writings, as he trusts to other people’s attorneys [agents] without examining…We had many instances of this in the Adelphi affairs.”428 Robert’s preoccupation, first and last, was his art; he maintained a casual attitude toward money and continually failed to check the accounts of his commissions. This frustrated and saddened John, who especially deplored Robert’s “foolish expression of indifference” at the collapse of the Battersea and Sand End Company.429 Of course, in addition to the Adams’ ineptitude as businessmen, the demise of their firm was also attributable to the typical fluctuations in the building trade, the war with America, increasing competition among architects, and shifting tastes, particularly towards Greek-inspired building.

425 Cited in Sanderson, Robert Adam, 100.
426 Ibid.
427 Rowan, “After the Adelphi,” 669.
429 Sanderson, Robert Adam, 102.
**Author of Architectural Publications**

Robert Adam was also an ambitious writer “determined, in imitation of Scotch heros [of his acquaintance] to become an author, [in order] to attack Vitruvius, Palladio and those blackguards of ancient and modern architecture, sword in hand.”\(^{430}\) As the author of two significant architectural books and the maker of many fine prints, Adam participated directly in the so-called “revolution in print” that swept Western Europe in the second half of the eighteenth century.\(^{431}\) He was an innovator even among revolutionaries. Adam’s *Ruins of the Diocletian Palace at Spalatro in Dalmatia* (1764) and *Works in Architecture of Robert and James Adam* (published in three volumes between 1773 and 1822) were the first theoretical publications about architecture intended for a wide readership, and he was the first architect to produce books that made visual arguments and established relationships between text and image that were more than purely descriptive.\(^{432}\) He was also among the first architects to exploit the medium of print to market architectural designs.

Adam’s authorship of his two books in some ways mirrored his “authorship” of buildings. In both cases, he designed the overall structure, delegated the certain tasks necessary to realize the project, and passionately supervised the execution of aesthetic details — particularly the character and placement of architectural decoration. In his landmark books, Adam strove above all to present stunning visual arguments, accompanied by abbreviated, yet telling remarks that enriched the images by providing a

\(^{430}\) Ibid., 46.


\(^{432}\) Previous analyses of Adam’s *Works* and *Ruins* can be found in the work of A.A. Tait and Eileen Harris: see especially A. A. Tait, *Robert Adam Drawing and Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 103-34; & Eileen Harris and Nicholas Savage, *British Architectural Books and Writers, 1556-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 83-8.
theoretical framework for their viewing, and distillations of Adam’s most significant innovations in planning and decoration. The topics discussed and the images displayed within architectural publications had to be selected with extreme care in order to illustrate most efficiently a building’s structure, function, and beauty, and thereby advertise its architect’s skill. Adam excelled at this. That his chief interest lay in presenting visual, rather than textual arguments, was apparent in his early publishing aspirations: a revision of Desgodetz’s *Les Edifices Antiques de Rome* (1682) – a book that would image every major antique edifice in Rome –; an exhaustive publication of ancient Greek buildings, intended to surpass Stuart and Revett’s study of Athenian architecture (they would publish *Antiquities of Athens* in 1762); and a monograph dedicated to comparative illustrations of the ancient and modern states of the Baths of Diocletian and Caracalla (no true successor to Desgodetz would be published until the *Architectural Antiquities of Rome* (1821-2) by George Ledwell Taylor (1788-1873) and Edward Cresy (1792-1858)). Adam, however, abandoned all of these projects soon after he had conceived of them due to financial constraints.

The *Ruins* was the first British book dedicated to the study and critique of ancient domestic architecture, a building typology immediately relevant to the builders of the modern country villa. It also joined a new tradition of architectural writing that put aside the authority of Vitruvius and Renaissance treatises in order to offer a critical, modern history of architecture that placed the monuments of ancient Greece and Rome in a broad cultural and architectural context, stretching back to ancient Egypt and forward to eighteenth-century Europe. This kind of writing established a dialogue with nascent

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archaeological literature, the emergent and rapidly expanding discipline of social history, and new models of historical change. *Ruins* also distinguished itself among a small cohort of authoritative publications about Roman antiquities, which included Robert Wood’s (1717-1771) *Ruins of Palmyra* (1753) and the *Ruins of Baalbek* (1757), and Charles Nicolas Cochin (1715-1790) and Jérôme Charles Bellicard’s (1726-1786) *Observations upon the Antiquities of the Town of Herculaneum* (1754). Rather than provide views of monuments rendered with archaeological precision, as those publications did, Adam, however, invited his reader to indulge in the romantic, imaginative reconstruction of an antique monument, set in a picturesque landscape. In this, he introduced a new, sub-genre of architectural publication, the pseudo-archaeological text, which eschewed reconstructing the “accountant’s truth” of the past – whose full reality could never be recovered anyway – to embrace instead the “ecstatic truth,” the reader’s emotional and psychological connection with an idea of the past.434

The *Works* was Adam’s most significant book. Its physical size and elegance of its design were unprecedented in English architectural books, an achievement that was thanks to the skill of the artists and engravers whom he employed.435 The *Works* was also the first book of British architecture to theorize domestic architecture, the first to present an analytical preface, and the first to make a highly sophisticated visual argument with its plates — one that prioritized the perceptual and psychological experiences of the beholder, particularly in interior spaces. This highly original work also had the distinction of being the first architectural publication to lay claim to a “new” style of building, later

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434 Filmmaker Werner Herzog developed the opposing concepts of the “accountant’s truth” and “ecstatic truth” and widely lectured about it in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The author attended one of these lectures in Williamstown, MA in the spring of 2005.

known as the Adam Style; indeed, part of the impetus to publish this work was the urgency Adam felt to define and identify clearly the origin of a style that was already being copied by dozens of designers. An aspect of this was Adam’s aggressive rhetoric of self-promotion — another novelty. Finally, this was the first book of designs to deviate from the established model of pattern books. Unlike that genre of publication, such as James Gibbs’s *Book of Architecture containing designs of buildings and ornaments* (first edition, 1728), Adam’s *Works* was selective rather than exhaustive in its selection of plates, and was analytical rather than purely descriptive in its choice of language.436

It is not known when Adam began to prepare the publication of the *Works*, but it is clear that the project was one of several emergency measures he took around the early 1770s to avert the threat of bankruptcy, which loomed until the successful Adelphi lottery in March 1774. The need to react quickly to the crisis undoubtedly influenced Adam’s unusual decision to issue the *Works* in fascicles, or “numbers,” a method of publishing not yet generally adopted for such grand ventures, rather than trying to finance printing the whole book at once through subscription, which was a difficult and lengthy task. (*Ruins*, in contrast, had five-hundred and forty-four subscribers.437) They most certainly were also aware of the pressure to get into print in advance of the imminent rush of neo-classical pattern books, which flooded the market in the 1774-76.

Adam lived in an era of great expansion in printed material, both textual and visual. There was a boom in literacy, a diverse array of reading materials were now printed for mass audiences (including art prints, books, newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, and journals), and reading and looking at prints became favored pastimes.

436 Ibid., 210.
While the end of the seventeenth century had witnessed the birth of national newspapers, the eighteenth century saw the proliferation of the provincial press, an extraordinary growth in circulating libraries, and huge print runs for some books.\textsuperscript{438} Except for the burgeoning newspapers and magazines, the novel enjoyed the greatest boom, becoming the stock in trade of the new libraries.\textsuperscript{439} In this era, printers, publishers, engravers and print sellers played increasingly important roles in sustaining the economy of London, and helping the city to become the commercial center of Europe. New types of architectural publications included archaeological reports, academic lectures, novels, ethnographic studies, travelogues, lectures, guide books, and dictionaries, and the publication of pattern books and building manuals grew exponentially.

Driving forces behind Adam’s publishing ambition were the prospects of social and professional advancement, but also, chiefly, financial gain.\textsuperscript{440} Early in his career, he had recognized the possibilities for significant profit in the book trade, noting that “neither in England, France, or Italy, can one get a copy of [Desgodetz’s \textit{Edifices}] under double price.”\textsuperscript{441} He designed his own work to maximize returns. The \textit{Baths} project could have also sold for a high price in many countries, especially if it were marketed as, a response to that well-known giant in the world of architecture, Andrea Palladio, whose publication of the Baths, by Adam’s estimation, needed correcting. The selection of Diocletian’s Palace as an object of study and publication was based on Adam’s weak

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\textsuperscript{440} Adam’s commission for the addition to Bowood house was the direct result of the publications of \textit{Ruins}; the owner of Bowood, William Petty, the Earl of Shelburne, had specifically asked Adam to create an addition that resembled Diocletian’s palace. The wing was built and it was called the “Diocletian wing.” It only faintly echoes the south wall of the palace, and incorporates Adam’s “Spalatro” order in its portico (Salter, \textit{Four Emperors and an Architect}, 147).
\textsuperscript{441} Robert to James Adam, 4 July 1755, Scottish Record Office, Clerk MSS; cited in Fleming, \textit{Robert Adam}, 170 & Harris, \textit{British Architectural Books and Writers}, 72.
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financial standing in mid-1757 (following exorbitant expenditures since leaving Edinburgh, he could not afford to travel far) and its status as a significant but still unpublished ancient monument.

The general interest in books on architecture was partly prompted by the building boom of the early part of the eighteenth century, which generated increased interest in architectural history, practice, and theory, and in part because, as historian Rudolph Wittkower has demonstrated, by the closer than ever alliance of architectural theory and practice in Britain during this period.\textsuperscript{442} Architecture, “to an unparalleled extent,” argued Wittkower, was directly created in response to published theory (words and pictures), rather than generating it. The enormous production and accessibility of books especially inspired architect to invent new methods for proportioning orders. Amateurs and expert authors alike began to establish new techniques and standards for aesthetic judgment, which were valued for their critical and speculative character rather than merely practical value.

The proliferation of architectural books made it possible for imported classical idioms to become the British national style. As Italian architecture treatises, particularly Palladio’s \textit{Quattro Libri}, flooded the marketplace in the eighteenth century, this style became accessible to builders across the nation.\textsuperscript{443} Moreover, the eighteenth-century proliferation of architectural pattern books, which showcased the work of individual architects, impelled the heroization of individual architectural styles. James Gibbs’ \textit{Book of Architecture} (1728) was the first British presentation of the work of a single, contemporary architect. In addition to being visually presented, the author’s style was


expressed in critical prefatory remarks, which were intended to define his distinct stylistic character in contrast to his British predecessors and contemporaries. Beginning with the publication of Colen Campbell’s *Vitruvius Britannicus* (published in three volumes between 1715 and 1725), the first book of British architecture to present and to record a national style, architectural books became tools for identity-shaping, advertising and consumerism.

A reading mass public and a culture of critique was fostered by circulating libraries, book clubs, and the publication of books in cheap installments. Astonishingly, Adam’s collaborator Josiah Wedgwood (1730-95), who left school at ten, was reading Voltaire and Rousseau in middle age. This kind of literacy was unprecedented in earlier periods and in other cultures. The explosion in reading created a cultural “seepage” of ideas that eventually saturated every social class. As a result, in Britain, unlike in Enlightenment France, political and social debate took place across a broad swath of society, in both high and low cultures.  

444 Ambitious and vague statements and inconsistencies, often undiscerned or unchallenged when merely heard, were more easily detected and analyzed when encountered on the printed page. Furthermore, because information was increasingly transmitted privately, in writing, rather than publically and socially, in speech, a culture of criticism emerged. The privacy of reading, particularly in a culture steeped in books, encouraged independence of mind, freedom of thought, and deviance from norms. The nation seemed to awake, alive and interested in contemporary issues and galvanized by the engines of printing and the wheels of distribution.

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Adam took advantage of the unique opportunity afforded by books, not only to circulate important ideas, but to display art on a new scale and in a multitude of ways. For each of his publications, Adam created plates that could easily and quickly be removed and either framed and put on the wall, or sold individually. Particularly in the case of Ruins, each print was composed to stand alone as an attractive work of art.

Adam became keenly interested in the production of prints (as an integral part of the making of books) because of their increasing importance to eighteenth-century culture and their quickly rising marketability. Prints rapidly became popular wall decoration for homes and offices, and, for professional designers and connoisseurs, a print collection was indispensable and every artist and art critic had one. The print was the published record of a design, and it was the medium in which it would be seen most frequently and widely by the public, foreigners, and posterity. Engraving was the most popular print technique in the Enlightenment and the significance of the spread of engravings in the art market was elegantly expressed by l’Abbé Gougenot in 1749:

Engraving is to the fine arts what printing is to science and literature. In the same way that through [printing/l’imprimerie] works of genius circulate and are communicated to every part of the globe, so by [engraving/la gravure] the rarest compositions of painting and sculpture are infinitely multiplied, and through engraving the whole world can enjoy what would otherwise be the exclusive property of one man.

By 1700 books about art regularly explained to the general public why they should collect prints. Roger de Piles, translated in 1706, informed them that prints were “the Depositories of all that is Fine and Curious in the World,” and advised that “for


those to be more Happy, and more Gentleman-like, would form their Goût by the study of good things, and have a reasonable Tincture of the fine Arts, nothing is more necessary than good Prints.”

Prints were considered a means of education and taste, which taught people how and what to appreciate in their homes and gardens, and the natural landscape. As a pedagogical tool they were considered particularly effective largely because one could lay out all the works of several masters on a table and compare them:

When at a vast charge a Man has fill’d a large Chamber with Pictures of different Manners, he cannot have above two or three of each, which is not enough to enable him to make a nice judgment of the Character of the Painter, or the extent of his Capacity; whereas by means of Prints, one may easily see the Works of several Masters on a Table, one may form an Idea of them, judge by comparing them one with another, know which to chuse, and by practicing it often, contract a Habit of good Taste.

To this end gentlemen filled portfolios with prints, or bound them in albums to which they would resort to “shorten the time we employ in recollecting those things that have escap’d our Memory, and to refresh it with a glance of the Eye.”

Adam’s work as a printmaker was deeply influenced by the work of the greatest printmaker of his generation, Giovanni Battista Piranesi. Piranesi’s work boldly explored the imaginative range that could be conjured up in perusing the artifacts of the past. His ideas entered the mainstream of Neo-Classical architecture first in France in the 1750s and then in Britain in the 1760s, through the work of Adam and Chambers.

Archaeology became of central importance to Piranesi in the early 1750s, when he began to work with visiting British artists, including Chambers and Adam, who met Piranesi in Rome in 1755. The two held great admiration for each other, and a warm friendship

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448 Ibid., 54-65.
449 Ibid., 54-55.
quickly developed. By 1756, the relationship expanded as Adam had become one of Piranesi’s patrons as well as his pupil. The Scot sent several copies of Piranesi’s published work to his brothers and to agents for sale in England. Piranesi’s work was recognized in England by his election as a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, and Piranesi, in turn, dedicated his plan of the “Campus Martius” to Adam. Their working relationship continued into the 1770s, and Piranesi produced some of the plates for Adam’s Works.

Piranesi’s prints of this era constituted, perhaps, the greatest single influence on the evolution of the Adam Style, although he also learned from the French architectural draughtsman and antiquary Charles-Louis Clérisseau (1721-1820). From both Adam gained deep appreciation for Roman ornament. His new form of architectural composition was dependent upon creative archaeology and fantasy, and rhetoric of naturalism and structural accuracy.

Piranesi’s dream-visions epitomized in the visual form the contemporary written discussion of the “sublime.” They gave the appearance of being based, to a certain extent, in reality: structurally feasible and incorporating representations of actual ancient remains and artifacts. Piranesi’s pseudo-empirical style, along with his ingenious moments of spatial ambiguity, inventions of new kinds of monumentality, wild manipulation of

451 For Adam as an art collector see Fleming, Robert Adam, 112, 134-5, 228, 251, 351, 362; & Wilton-Ely, “Amazing and Ingenious Fancies.”
452 Fleming reported that Piranesi expected Adam to purchase several dozen copies of his book in return for dedicating it to him. “It will cost me some sous,” Adam lamented, “in purchasing eighty or an hundred copies of it.” He realized eventually, however, that he would turn a profit on the exchange by reselling Piranesi’s books through his London bookseller and friend David Wilson. Adam surmised that Wilson could also “make something of it by adding a trifle of additional price to each copy” (Robert Adam, 170).
453 For Piranesi’s role in the plates for Works, see Tait, Drawings and Imagination, 119ff.
viewpoints, and tendency to create views with a nagging sense of incompleteness, worked together to give the illusion of control over – and even ownership of – the past. This effect must have greatly appealed to the imperial sensibilities of British tourists and to emergent artists searching for ways to breathe life into the ancient past. The mixing of ancient and modern buildings, people, and objects, spurned academic rules of coherence on a far deeper level than the Renaissance tradition of anachronism had ventured, communicating a powerful continuity between the historical past and the present.

Piranesi was greatly admired in Britain and his prints inspired thousands to imagine and conceptualize the ancient past and living present of the Eternal City.\textsuperscript{455} Horace Walpole mused, “Study the sublime dreams of Piranesi who seems to have conceived visions of Rome beyond what it boasted even in the meridian of its splendor.”\textsuperscript{456} Similarly, the Scottish writer Tobias George Smollett (1721-71) imagined Rome through Piranesi: “I longed to ...contemplate the originals of many pictures and statues, which I had admired in prints and descriptions...of these [prints] the most celebrated are the plates of Piranesi, who is not only an ingenious architect and engraver, but also a learned antiquarian...”\textsuperscript{457} Adam’s intuition, charm, and natural talents, enabled him to intertwine his legacy with one of the greatest printmakers in history.

\textit{Decorator}

In Robert Adam’s Britain, the profession of the decorator remained tethered to the profession of architecture, but only by a thread. In the final quarter of the eighteenth

\textsuperscript{457} Tobias Smollett, \textit{Travels Through France and Italy} (London: Oxford University Press, 1919), 240.
century decorators began to disassociate themselves markedly from the field of architecture (but never fully separated), in part due to Adam’s significant contributions to the visibility, independence, legitimacy, and refinement of the art of decoration. The large amount and fine quality of the architectural decoration and furnishings that Adam designed were unusual and exceptional for an architect, and his work in decorating helped to emancipate it from the field of architecture. During his own lifetime, and more in the centuries following his death, Adam’s work as a decorator vied with and often eclipsed his work as an architect. The context in which Adam worked as a decorator shaped the nature of his interest in this allegedly “minor” field and his understanding of its relation to the design of buildings.

In eighteenth-century writing on architecture, the term “decorator” referred to one who professionally decorated the interiors or exteriors of private or public buildings, and was expert in the design (or selection) and placement of non-architectural elements, such as furnishings and fine art, and the design and integration of those elements with fixed architectural forms, such as walls, ceilings, fireplaces, floors, windows, and doors. Some of the earliest known references to decoration in the context of architectural design in Britain are in related to the work of the architects John James (1673-1746) and William Kent (1685-1748). Chambers, for example, praised Kent’s work as an architect and as a decorator, writing that “the Earl of Leicester’s house at Holkham is a masterpiece…with regard to the whole interior decoration, it may certainly vie, in point either of magnificence, or taste, with anything now subsistent in England.”

Evidence for the increasing independence of the field of decorating is found in the emergence of the term “decorator” in Adam’s era. Although the verb “to decorate”
(1530) and the adjective “decorate” (1460) had been in the English language for centuries, the noun “decorator” did not enter the English language until the eighteenth century. It first appeared in Johnson’s dictionary in the second edition of 1755, where it was defined as “an adorner; an embellisher.”

In the eighteenth century “decoration” became intermingled and was often used synonymously with “ornament,” a term that derived from Italian art theory. Within Italian Renaissance theory ornamenta was applied to most architectural elements of a building. Palladio, however, also used the term ornamenta to refer to the details, or subsidiary parts, of architectural elements, such as the fluting of a column, or the mantle shelf of a fireplace. In Renaissance England and France “decoration” referred to superficial ornamentation, and was closely related to décor, the state or quality of conforming to shifting, conventionally-accepted standards and tastes. By the eighteenth century in Britain, the term decoration took on new meaning and began to displace the term ornament in architectural theory: like the term ornamenta in Renaissance theory, “decoration” in eighteenth-century British referred to all architectural elements, but was used mostly frequently for objects with plastic qualities such as chimney pieces, gates, and columns. Conversely, in eighteenth-century Britain “ornament” gradually came to refer most commonly to the non-architectural elements of building, such as surface treatments (painting, plasterwork, and gilding) and interior furnishings. Decoration, therefore, was regarded as architectonic, and it thus rested squarely under the purview of the architect, while ornament was an art of the painter or tradesman. Additionally, while decoration was considered to be regulated by good taste and tended to be associated with propriety and the elements essential to construction, ornament was associated with

impropriety, intemperance, and excess. This distinction, while made by architects and patrons in the eighteenth century, would not become common knowledge until the late nineteenth century.

A principle source for establishing the contemporary meaning and significance of architectural decoration in the eighteenth century is Chambers’ *Treatise on the Decorative Part of Civil Architecture*, a work inspired by Marc-Antoine Laugier’s *Essai* (1753, 1755). Chambers’ principal theoretical contribution was to focus the definition of decoration, which had been applied to all *essential* architectural elements. This conceptual shift was inspired by the rationalism of Laugier, for whom “essential” parts were those that were required for construction. To complicate matters, throughout his book, Chambers occasionally oscillated, using the terms decoration and ornament interchangeably; in the preface of the third edition, for example, he referred to his book as a “Treatise on the ornamental part of Architecture.”459 Despite such modest inconsistencies with Chambers, and the lingering period tendency to use the terms synonymously, the distinction between decoration and ornament was beginning to take hold.

In his *Treatise*, Chambers enumerated the elements or “decorative parts” of architecture and devoted separate sections to in-depth discussions of the proper design of orders, arcades, arches, pediments, balustrades, gates, doors, piers, windows, niches, statues, chimney pieces, and ceilings. Some decorative elements, Chambers explained, such as columns and balustrades, could be both ornamental and “of real use.”460 The orders, he wrote, in accordance with ancient and Renaissance theory, remained the

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460 Ibid., 78 & 102.
principal decorations of architecture, found “in almost every building of consequence.”\textsuperscript{461} Chambers advised that the modern architect to look to Rome, rather than to Greece for the use of the orders; Greek architecture, according to Chambers, was wholly “deficient.”\textsuperscript{462}

The emphasis in each section of Chambers’ \textit{Treatise} was on proportion, dimensioning, placement, propriety, materials, and the citation of historical examples. In all cases, he advised strictly neo-classical decorative forms and advised young architects to exercise restraint and avoid totally the excessive use of ornament. Like Alberti and other Renaissance theorists, Chambers believed that the orders were “the basis of the whole decorative part of architecture” and that it was from them that all principal decorative forms were taken.\textsuperscript{463} Adam would offer his own interpretation of this matter in the second fascicle of the \textit{Works}, in which he wrote, “the column is…one of the noblest and most graceful pieces of decoration.”

Further evidence that decorating (in both the design of architectural forms and interior furnishings) was considered to fall within the architect’s sphere in eighteenth-century Britain is found in several other publications on architecture. In Chambers’ \textit{Designs of Chinese Buildings, Furniture, Dresses, Machines, and Utensils} (1757), for example, he wrote that an architect, acting as a decorator, may introduce Chinese decorations into “extensive parks and gardens, where a great variety of scenes are required,” or into the inferior part of “immense palaces, containing a numerous series of

\textsuperscript{461} Ibid., 78.  
\textsuperscript{462} Ibid., 19.  
\textsuperscript{463} Ibid., 17.
apartments.” A more explicit coupling is found within James Peacock’s *Nutshells* (1785), which proclaims that “mere decoration…is…the meanest branch of architecture.”

Notably, this reference also demonstrates the negative connotations often associated with the art of decoration in Adam’s Britain. It was common to precede the terms decoration and decorator with a derogatory “mere,” a tendency that underscored the contemporary belief that the design of décor, although the work of an architect, was far inferior to the design of buildings. In his biography on the life of Samuel Johnson, *Life of Johnson* (1787), John Hawkins’s reduced James and Kent to “mere decorators” who “could do little more than design a saloon, a gallery, or a screen.” Hawkins also made clear that decoration was the designing of rooms and furniture, not exterior architecture. Although the art of decorating steadily declined in status and appreciation throughout the eighteenth century, in comparison to the art of architecture, it nevertheless became increasingly sophisticated and would not fully separate from the art of architecture in Britain until the nineteenth century.

To contrast to developments in eighteenth-century Britain, in France the separation of decoration from the field of architecture had been accelerated. By mid-century French critics and artists no longer considered decoration to be a branch of

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465 James Peacock, *Oikidia, Or Nutshells: Being Ichnographic Distributions for Small Villas; Chiefly Upon œconomical Principles. In Seven Classes. With Occas ional Remarks. By Jose Macpacke, a Bricklayer's Labourer. Part the First, Containing Twelve Designs* (London: printed for the author, and sold by C. Dilly, 1785). This was a collection of plans for small villas, originally published under the name “Jose Mac Packe,” an anagram of “James Peacock.”
467 The first use of the term was by Thomas Hope in 1807, see the *Oxford English Dictionary.*
architecture, and they regarded architectural design and decoration as wholly separate
practices. French painters and sculptors, in fact, declassified decorating as an art form.
Johann Joachim Winckelmann, who took great interested in this movement in France,
related in his Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei
und Bildhauerkunst, (1765) that “the painters and sculptors of Paris” endeavored “to
deprive the decorators of the title of artists, by alleging that they employ neither their own
intellectual faculties, nor those of the connoisseurs, upon works not produced by nature,
but rather offspring of capricious art.”
He also observed that many French decorators
futilely attempted to elevate the status and merits of their field by arguing that the art of
creating decorative forms is an ancient practice, now emulated by moderns, which is
grounded on close observation and imitation of natural forms and processes.
Winckelmann, who accepted the proposition that decorative forms were rooted in nature,
also remarked that a distinctive trait of the decorator was his submission only to one rule,
“variety,” rather than many, and that in “perceiving that there is no perfect resemblance
between two things in nature,” decorators “likewise forsake it in their decorations.”

At a time when the status of decoration was barely tethered to the profession of
architecture in Britain, Robert Adam was often identified as a decorator. Eileen Harris
remarked that he returned from his Grand Tour in 1758 “bearing both the materials and
the desire to create a new style — not so much of architecture as of decoration.”

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468 Johann Joachim Winckelmann (Henry Fuseli, trans.), Reflections on the Painting and Sculpture of the
Greeks: With Instructions for the Connoisseur, and an Essay on Grace in Works of Art (London: Printed
for the Translator, and sold by A. Millar, 1765), 121-2.
469 Winckelmann cited French artists as saying: “We are the followers of nature…like the bark of a tree,
variously carved, our decorations grow into various forms: then art joins sportive nature, and corrects her:
we do what the ancients did: consult their decorations” (Reflections, 122).
470 Winckelmann, Reflections, 121-2. Winckelmann noted here that he had “no mind to plead the bad cause
of our unskillful decorators” (121).
471 Harris, Genius of Robert Adam, 8.
true that in Italy Adam had focused on the study of architectural ornament under the tutelage of Clérisseau, who showed his young student the full range of ancient Roman adornment. Adam described his daily routine and Clérisseau’s determination to keep him from designing buildings until he had mastered the art of ornament:

Ornaments come of themselves as I see and copy every day and have made some progress in sketching them. Whilst I find my idea of architecture are a good deal enlarged [sic] and my principles of the grand more fixt than ever they were before; Clérisseau preaches to me everyday [sic] to forbear inventing or composing either plans or elevations till I have a greater fund. That is, till I have made more progress in seeing things and my head more filled with proper ornaments and my hand able to draw to purpose what I would incline, as he very justly says that inventing indifferently, and drawing so so [sic] ornaments is to fix these in your head and to prevent your getting into the taste of better ones. In spite of these admonitions I must still be scrawling a plan of a temple, or a bit of front now and then makes its appearance…Clérisseau…is not only the most ingenious but the best of mortals, we live in the greatest harmony together…

Adam’s interest in architectural ornament is apparent beginning with his architectural tour of England in 1749-50 taken with John Home. During that trip, he had intended to study and absorb the principles of Palladianism. Early in the trip Home wrote that “from a careful consideration of the best works in that country [Adam] first began to curb the exuberance of his fancy and to correct his father.” But, far from being curbed, Adam’s eye was already drawn to ornamental elements and even away from the classical tradition. His notebooks from that tour are replete with Gothic ornamental details, which he was encountering for the first time, and reveal his particular fascination with elaborate crockets and delicate tracery. In Adam’s mature decorative designs he maintained his youthful attraction to “tinsel” Gothic and Chinese ornaments, like those imaged in the pattern books of William Halfpenny, Batty Langley and Robert Morris — all of which he would have seen in his father’s library. Clérisseau remarked that Robert was “very

ignorant of architecture when he came to me, except the Gothic: but I put him off that and gave him some taste for the antique.”474 The Frenchman’s lessons inspired Adam to argue in the *Works* that without the opportunity to design “works of real greatness,” an architect ought to apply himself to the study of “ornamental decorations”:

> The master, who has not had an opportunity to distinguish himself by displaying his abilities in works of real greatness, will naturally betake himself to other resources, and, following the most approved examples of Greece and Rome, endeavor to call forth the admiration of mankind by the beauty and variety of his forms, by the richness and fertility of his invention, and by the elegance and delicacy of his ornamental decorations.475

Like Robert, his brother James also had an innate interest in ornament, which he termed “the nerves and sinews” of his art.476 James’ passion for ornament, particularly his fascination with arabesque forms, is fully revealed in his journal and in his unfinished essay dated November 27, 1762 (in which Robert conceived of the content and James drafted the arguments while in Rome).477 In the latter, he remarked that by the use of ornament alone “Michelangelo, Algardi, Baldassare di Siena, Pirro Ligorio, John D’Udine, Giorgio Vasari and others…have rendered many morcelles…really precious to us and have imitated in no inconsiderable degree the beauty and elegance of the Ancients from whom they have visibly borrowed their first ideas.”478 James also commended the “sculpture, statues and bas-reliefs together with foliage, trophies, frets, interlacings and a thousand such ornaments which if properly applied give such amazing magnificence and

475 Adam, *Works*, 9, Preface to No. 4 (September 1776).
477 James Adam wrote part of a draft of an essay on architectural theory in Rome. The essay draft is dated November 27, 1762. The MSS is in the Clerk of Penicuik collection deposited at H.M. Register House, Edinburgh. It is reprinted in Fleming, *Robert Adam*, 315-9.
478 Eighteenth-century interest in antique arabesque decoration seems to have owed much to the architect and painter William Kent. From 1709-19 Kent was in Italy and his primary objective was to study painting. Kent’s ceiling of the Presence Chamber at Kensington Palace, for example, draws heavily on the work of the sixteenth-century decorations by Giovanni da Udine and Raphael in the Vatican Logge and Villa Madama in Rome, which were in turn based on antique painting surviving in the Baths of Titus. Kent provided a similar ceiling in the parlor at Rousham Park, Oxfordshire.
render an edifice so wonderfully interesting to every spectator.” He completed his brief discussion of ornament with ringing praise for its use in medieval architecture: “By this means even the Goths found means to delight though unelegant in their sculptures, ignorant of repose and maigre in their proportions. This then is the great Beauty in Architecture and what every artist who would please must study with the greatest attention.”

Although Robert’s interests in the ornament appear to have been longstanding, his interests in the full range of decoration must have been ignited by the nature of his earliest commissions, which were primarily for interior decoration. In 1760 Adam was hired to furnish and decorate Kedleston, and the next year, in 1761, the Earl of Coventry asked him to design Gothic furniture for the church of St. Mary Magdalene at Croome d’Abitot and to renovate the long gallery at nearby Croome Court. Throughout the 1760s and 1770s, Adam would work steadily in the areas of interior furnishing and ornament, some designs of which he would showcase in his Works.

Adam’s identity as a decorator was modeled on the example of William Kent. Kent remains a crucial figure in the history of interior decoration, as he was directly responsible for the expansion of the role of the eighteenth-century architect into this art. Kent was a protégé and close intimate of Richard Boyle, third earl of Burlington (1695-1753), the most influential patron of the Neo-Palladian school of architectural design, and was the first artist in England to design complete rooms in which pictures, furniture, and upholstery were integrated with the design of walls and ceilings, and related to pattern and color. A key step was his use of developed surface drawings. Kent was also the first architect to design a significant amount of furniture and the first to use the Gothic style

479 Harris, Genius of Robert Adam, 19-53.
for decorative work in secular buildings. Moreover, he was the first British architect to make a serious study of ornament, and the first to demonstrate through his designs that the decorative use of pattern and ornament are more important to the character of a room than the compositions of pictures in frames; he used color and iconography, however, to relate pictures to the decorative scheme of the room, a conceit that Adam would later imitate. Adam, in fact, built upon each of Kent’s innovations.

Adam’s work in decoration was as profitable to him as it was enjoyable. In his work at Kedleston, for example, Adam found a patron in Lord Scarsdale (Sir Nathaniel Curzon), who was “resolved to spare no Expence, with £10,000 a year.” Making designs for ornament and furnishings was also especially lucrative, because the making of a single object often required several drawings. Clients who wanted an Adam carpet, for example, had to pay him to make at least two and sometimes three drawings, including a finished watercolor of the whole design and an accurately colored sample of one quarter of the pattern, painted in oil or distemper, to be given to the manufacturer.

In the course of Adam’s career, he would receive commissions purely for decorative work at no fewer than twenty houses in the country and fifteen in central London. This vibrant enterprise demanded a small army of a workforce. His payroll was replete with the names of sculptors, carvers, plasterers, metalworkers, furniture makers, painters, upholsterers, and workers in many other decorative trades. At the head of his team of decorative artists stood the draughtsmen Dewez, Brunias, and the Scot George Richardson, and the painters Antonio Zucchi and Angelica Kauffman: the last two would


481 Harris, *Genius of Robert Adam*, 3.
marry and move to Italy in 1781. Adam also worked closely on certain commissions with
the decorative painters Giovanni Battista Cipriani (1727-85), Biagio Rebecca (1731-
1808), and Michelangelo Pergolesi (active from 1760-died 1801), whose style is
indistinctive from Robert’s. Pergolesi’s, Designs for Various Ornaments (1777-1801)
further popularized the Adam Style.482 He also collaborated with Josiah Wedgwood
(1730-95) in ceramics, Thomas Moore (c.1700-88) in textiles, and Matthew Boulton in
refined metalwork, like ormolu, a new material in Adam’s era.483

From Edwin Lascelles, owner of Harewood House in Yorkshire, Adam received
one of his largest decorative commissions, comprising no fewer than seventeen rooms.
Lascelles had also hired Adam to review and suggest alterations to the designs of the
house, which had been drafted by architect John Carr; some of Adam’s suggestions were
accepted (such as the addition of a south portico), although Carr is usually credited
exclusively as architect. At Harewood, Adam designed ceilings, walls, and
chimneypieces, and he collaborated with the cabinet-maker Thomas Chippendale (1718-
79) to furnish the rooms. Adam Joseph Rose to execute the plasterwork, John Devall to
carve the chimney pieces, and William Collins to model the stucco overmantel panels in
the library and reliefs for the hall.484

Adam was not trained in the making of decorative objects or furniture. For their
production, he made drawings and gave them to furniture-makers and other craftsmen to
execute. Adam engaged many of the leading furniture makers in Britain to realize his
designs; in addition to Thomas Chippendale, these included George Hepplewhite (1727-

482 On this topic, see Conor Lucey, “British Agents of the Irish Adamesque.” Architectural History, 56
(2013).
484 See Musson, Robert Adam, 96.
86), John Cobb (1710-78) and John Linnell (1729-96). In working with furniture makers, Robert continued the practice of his father William Adam. Although there is no evidence that William designed furniture, he worked with the Palladian furniture-maker Francis Brodie, who made architectonic furniture in the “antique” style for stately interiors (fittingly, Brodie used a portrait of Andrea Palladio as his shop sign). Adam drew inspiration from the work of other designers in his compositions for furniture, and many of his early designs are modifications or alterations of the work of others. One of his largest commissions for furniture was for Osterley House, where most of his original furniture remains in situ.

Interior decoration in the neoclassical style had a special attraction for a designer with Adam’s remarkable creative energy because, given the scarcity of authentic ancient furnishing, it was largely a matter of invention. This followed a long tradition. Since the Renaissance, the design of door frames, window frames, chimney pieces, ceilings and other architectural elements was often the site of experimentation with the classical rules of order and an opportunity to display the designer’s creative energy.

Inventiveness was not, however, to be unregulated. In his Treatise, Chambers upheld the long-standing classical tradition of decorative restraint, admonishing: “Variety in ornaments must not be carried to excess. In architecture they are only accessories, and therefore they should [neither] be too striking, nor capable of long detaining the attention from the main object.”

The design of chimneypieces and chimney pots was an especially fertile field for artistic creativity and demonstrated the awareness that Adam and his contemporaries had

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486 Chambers, Treatise (third edition, 1791), 30.
for their role as inventors. Piranesi revealed his delight in chimneypiece design in his final theoretical publication, *Diverse Maniere d'adornare i cammini* (*Diverse Manners of Ornamenting Chimneys*, ca. 1769), in which he strongly encouraged artistic invention and the combination of different styles, including those of Etruria, Greece, and Egypt, in the same composition. Some of his designs from this book were executed for British clients and still survive (Figure 3.3).

In a fascinating passage from the third edition of his *Treatise*, Chambers echoed Piranesi’s call for artists to release the full strength of their inventive prowess for the design of chimneypieces, but, unlike Piranesi, he also argued that it was an English art. He wrote of the dearth of classical precedents, explaining that “as Egyptians, Greeks, Romans…lived in warm climates; where fires in the apartments were seldom or never necessary; they have thrown but few lights onto this subject…”\(^{487}\) It was unexpected, he went on, that “amongst the antiquities of Italy” he did “not recollect the remains of chimney pieces.” To be sure, Chambers noted that Palladio had mentioned two fireplaces, “one at Baia and the other near Civita Vechia” and that Scamozzi had identified three sorts of chimney pieces then used in Italy: “one of these he calls the Roman…another he calls the Venetian…the third sort he calls a Padiglione.” In the face of this dearth of fireplace precedents, it was Inigo Jones, according to Chambers, who was “the first who arrived at any great degree of perfection, in this material branch of the art.” Later English architects, he wrote, have built upon Jones’s initial work to furnish “good inventions of their own.” He added that the chief employment of the many “ingenuous” and “able” sculptors working in England in the present time “is to execute magnificent chimney

\(^{487}\) Ibid., 125.
pieces,” which were “now happily in vogue.” Chambers believed that in the design and execution of chimney pieces, England surpassed all other nations.

Chambers complained to his readers that the situation with chimney pots (what he called “chimney funnels”) was different. They were in need of good designs, and neither Italians, nor Englishmen had succeeded in providing them. He related that these peculiar decorative objects should be uniform, regular, and finished “with a light cornice, composed of few moldings.” While Scamozzi injudiciously recommended the use of designs for obelisks and vases for the design of chimney pots, Serlio, he recalled, offered indecorous designs that resembled towers, and Sir John Vanbrugh “frequently converted his into castles: as may be seen at Blenheim, Castle Howard” and elsewhere. While none of these designs possessed the “grace and propriety” that Chambers required, he contended, surprisingly, that “good ones [still] might be composed” that resemble them.

While it does not appear that Adam designed chimney pots, his designs for chimneypieces are among his most creative, distinctive, and spectacular undertakings. In the first two volumes of the Works, he showcased eleven chimneypieces, including five for Derby House and two for the royal family (at the Queen’s House and St. James’ Palace). More of Adam’s exceptionally elegant chimneypieces include those for the Red Drawing Room at Syon House (Figure 3.4); the entry room and drawing room at Kedleston (Figure 3.5 & 3.6); the great drawing room at Audley End (Figure 3.7); the gallery at Harewood House (Figure 3.8); the Glass Drawing Room at Northumberland

488 Ibid., 128.
489 Ibid., 127.
House (Figure 3.9, now in the Duchess’ Sitting Room, Syon House); the Etruscan Room at Home House (Figure 3.10); and a drawing room at Strawberry Hill (Figure 3.11).

Adam preferred that chimneypieces for significant rooms be composed of white statuary marble, while unpolished stone was recommended for hallways, and white-painted wood sufficed for other ancillary spaces. He occasionally incorporated flanking caryatids or columns into his designs, but most are compositions of panels in various sizes, typically containing finely-carved relief sculpture. One of Adam’s most unusual compositions was the chinoiserie chimneypiece for the music room at Kenwood House (Figure 3.12). This enormously original, eclectic design showcased the client’s gold-framed glazed decorative Chinese tiles, articulated with geometric designs or narrative scenes, and interwoven with ormolu Egyptian sphinxes and grotesque ornament. Unexpectedly, he inserted a nearly semi-circular mirror in the center of the frieze above the central tile.

Adam’s focus on decoration placed his work at the center of the most significant discussions of style and progress in architecture. While Chambers disparaged Adam by claiming that he had created merely a book of ornaments, Adam had framed the *Works within a distinctly modern discourse. Decoration lay at the heart of the discussion of the suitable manner of building in a revolutionary time — when new values in architecture were forming. For Adam, decoration remained a critical tool in shaping architectural character, and its study was a serious and exacting pursuit.
**Art Dealer**

When Robert Adam left for Rome in 1754 he had already acquired acute awareness of the opportunities in Italy for commercial gain. By that date the art market in Italy, especially in Rome, had reached a level of sophistication unmatched in other European commercial centers, and British aristocrats and artists had begun to exploit successfully this new, dynamic and romantic avenue for profit. Roman vendors also placed intense commercial pressure on British Grand Tourists to purchase all kinds of goods, especially art and books. Robert was one of the most significant art dealers of his era, both for the lasting impact of his savvy trading and exporting methods on British collecting habits and for the number of significant works of art that he and his brother James were directly responsible for importing into Britain.\(^{490}\)

Robert’s work as a dealer was extensive and complex. His effective navigation of the art market required deft and Herculean efforts to establish social and economic infrastructures, which allowed him to locate, purchase, pack, and export ancient works of art and replicas to Britain, and then to sell and deliver these objects to clients throughout the country, or to display them at his residence in London. Somewhat miraculously Robert was able to circumvent new laws that severely restricted the export of artworks from Rome, especially those of marble. These regulations had been instituted (and made highly complex) by the papacy, freshly exasperated and saddened by the rapid removal of valuable, native treasures. Evading them was a strong demonstration of Adam’s

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\(^{490}\) Focus on Robert and James as dealers, rather than as merely collectors, has been examined very little. The two foundational sources for this study are the 1773, 1818 and 1821 auction catalogs of their property, published in Bolton’s *Architecture of Robert & James Adam* 324-29; John Fleming, “Messrs. Robert and James Adam: Art Dealers” *Connoisseur*, 144, (July, 1959), 168-71; & Jonathan Yarker’s “‘Antique Mad’: the Adams as Dealers and Their Stock of Antiquities,” in the forthcoming publication, *Robert Adam and His Brothers*. 

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adroitness as a commercial merchant. His success also demanded shrewd social and professional networking skills, expertise in connoisseurship, and the ability to keep up with shifting tastes in Britain.

His talent in selecting works of art that would yield high profits gave him an additional distinct advantage. Adam bought a wide-selection of drawings by Italian masters, including those by Michelangelo, Raphael, Veronese, and Correggio.\footnote{Yarwood, \textit{Robert Adam}, 59.} He also procured a set of drawings of architectural details by Pietro da Cortono, boasting that for it he had paid fewer than £100.\footnote{Ibid.}

Adam appears to have been a highly competent dealer and excelled in all of the requisite skills needed to succeed in that challenging occupation, apart from the estimation of sale prices, for which he demonstrated a marked inability and the same naive optimism that he brought to other financial ventures. For example, he valued Guido Reni’s \textit{St. Catherine} at the “great price” of 200 guineas, but it sold for 55; in this case, however, since he had purchased the painting for around 20 guineas, Robert made a fine profit despite his conspicuous miscalculation.\footnote{Cited in Yarker, “Antique Mad,” 73.} In fact, it appears that in most cases, Robert met his goal to sell Old Master paintings in London at one hundred percent profit or more.\footnote{See Fleming, \textit{Robert Adam}, 228.} Based on prices recorded in the 1773 sale of most of the Adams’ art collection in the aftermath of the Adelphi crisis, it seems likely that the brothers made a respectable overall profit from their activities as dealers, and they might have earned
more if they had not been forced to liquidate the bulk of their holdings, sold *en bloc* at an emergency public auction in London.⁴⁹⁵

Robert’s letters home while on Grand Tour offer insight into his rigorous efforts as a dealer while in Rome, where he spent a significant amount of time at public auctions, antique shops, and the studios of other art dealers and sculpture restorers. He also fulfilled commissions to buy paintings, including some for the Earl of Hopetoun and Robert Dundas of Arniston.⁴⁹⁶ One of his most important activities was the cultivation of commercial contacts based in Rome, who would later assist him in the purchase and especially the sale of antique goods following his return to Britain. Remarkably, the brothers left portions of their stock in the hands of various art dealers in Rome after James’s departure in 1763 (Robert had left in 1757); art from the Adams’ collection was still being sold as late as 1773.⁴⁹⁷ Robert also expended energy to broker the purchase of works of art for wealthy travelers, to fulfill commissions to purchase sculpture for patrons in Britain, and to commission drawings from artists such as Clérisseau, Antonio Zucchi, Laurent Pécheux, and Nicolas François Daniel Lhuillier, for future sale in London.

Robert’s correspondence offers some information about the considerable effort he expended during the final months of 1757 in order to pack his collection and transport it safely from Rome to London. Even after only six months in Rome, he began worrying about the labors and risks in conveying art great distances in turbulent political times. In a letter dated 9 August 1755, Robert bemoaned “Lord knows how I will get all my things home. If the French take any of them I’m undone. I believe I must send them by Leghorn

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⁴⁹⁵ For details of the 1773 auction see Yarker, “Antique Mad,” 73-7.
⁴⁹⁷ See Yarker, “Antique Mad,” 73. It is likely that the collector Charles Townley purchased antiquities from the Adam brother’s stockpile in 1773 in Rome from the dealer Thomas Jenkins.
till all warlike deeds are ceas’d.”

Astonishingly, as early as 24 January 1756, Adam remarked that one of the rooms in his lodgings at the top of the Spanish Steps in Rome, the Casa Guarnieri (on the Via Sistina), was “as full as it can stick from the roof to the floor” with “antique cornices, friezes, figures, bas-reliefs, vases, altars.” The handling of large quantities of diverse and fragile objects required strategic, advanced planning, and the expenditure of considerable sums of money. Earlier on his tour, Adam had neglected to purchase tantalizing works of art because he did not have the means to dispatch them home safely; while in Brussels, for example, he visited a local sculptor’s studio and saw “many models of Figures and Bas-Reliefs in Clay that I should like to buy if they cou’d be conveyed home.” Fleming noted that Robert sent “all this cumbrous merchandise…by oxen-cart down the long dusty, cypress-lined road to Leghorn,” where it was “hoisted aboard a frigate bound for the Thames.”

Unlike the rest of his collection, Robert would not risk sending his drawings by sea. “These come in my trunk,” he insisted, “which is of a most enormous magnitude, made a-purpose to contain all my drawings, sketches and studies, the books necessary on the road...” Robert described the trunk as “the astonishment and admiration of all who see it,” and recorded that its construction had cost him “7 good zecchins which is about 3 guineas and a half.” Inside his custom piece of luggage, he carefully stowed hundreds of drawings — the output of two years of work by himself and the members of his Roman drawing office: Brunias, Dewez, and Clérisseau. He also packed two drawings

498 Cited in Yarwood, Robert Adam, 69.
499 Fleming, Robert Adam, 362.
500 Cited in Yarwood, Robert Adam, 51.
501 Fleming, Robert Adam, 227.
502 Ibid., 228.
503 Ibid.
504 Ibid.
that Piranesi had given him in 1755 (Figure 3.13), and several dozen of Robert’s own drawings, watercolors and gouaches (Figures 3.14, 3.15 & 3.16).\textsuperscript{505}

In addition to weathering the risks of loss or damage to objects during transport, Robert and other dealers also had to budget for costly fees charged by custom houses when re-entering Britain. During his journey home, he related that he had been “very lucky at the Custom house of Harwich.”\textsuperscript{506} There, “the Collector,” wrote Robert, who was “a virtuoso and loves drawings, by seeing mine, let me pass everything free which otherwise must have cost me £10 or £12 sterling.”\textsuperscript{507}

Five key figures in Rome fostered Robert’s success as an art dealer.\textsuperscript{508} The first was the architect Matthew Brettingham (1725-1803), who had left Rome the summer before Adam arrived in 1755. His mercantile accomplishments provided Adam with a clear and successful model for his own dealings. Although ostensibly in Rome to study architecture, above all else Brettingham spent time procuring art works to sell in Britain, principally paintings, sculpture, and molds and casts of well-known antiquities, which he produced himself. He also facilitated the purchase and export of antiquities for British patrons, including Thomas Coke, the 1\textsuperscript{st} Earl of Leicester (1697-1759), who was then finishing the interiors of Holkham Hall, and Charles Wyndham, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Earl of Egremont (1710-1763), for Petworth.\textsuperscript{509} Finally, he accumulated a healthy collection of antiquities to sell on his own behalf in London upon his return.

\textsuperscript{505} Fleming has pieced together a partial list of the drawings Robert transported in this trunk (\textit{Robert Adam}, 228-9).
\textsuperscript{506} Fleming, \textit{Robert Adam}, 243.
\textsuperscript{507} Ibid., 88.
\textsuperscript{508} See Yarker, “Antique Mad,” 63-73.
\textsuperscript{509} Ibid., 63-4.
While Robert was in Rome, he benefitted from the guidance and collaboration of the highly influential art collector and dealer Cardinal Alessandro Albani, the engraver Piranesi, and the sculptor, dealer, and sculpture restorer Bartolomeo Cavaceppi (1716-99). All were enthusiastic supporters of Adam and the chief figures in his development and success in the art market. Albani gave Adam access to his personal collection and allowed him to “mould several things from his originals.”\(^{510}\) It is also likely that Albani facilitated permission for Adam to make casts of sculpture in the new Capitoline Museum and elsewhere in the city. Writing home at the end of 1756, Adam related that “Cardinal Albani and I are turned very thick as he has discovered my hidden talents for the hidden treasures of antiquity…[he] shakes me by the hand like an honest goddam and claps my shoulder. In short, son éminence and me are as grit as dogs’ heads.”\(^{511}\)

Piranesi was Robert’s most important contact. Though renowned as a printmaker, he was also an unusually active art dealer and was one of a handful of men who shaped the contemporary art market in Rome. Piranesi, whose residence on the Strada Felice was crammed full of ancient works, excavated, restored, traded and sold sculpture. From him, Adam learned all the intricacies of navigating the art market in Rome and how to obtain the full value of ancient objects, which were equally useful as commodities and as sources of inspiration for an artist’s own work, including publications. Engravings of antiquities in his collection, which he had restored and sold, provided material for Piranesi’s *Vasi Candelabri, Cippi* (1778).

Like Piranesi, Cavaceppi was a major player in the Roman art market and an important contact for Adam. In addition to his well-regarded and extensive work as a

\(^{510}\) Ibid., 65.

\(^{511}\) Cited in Fleming, *Robert Adam*, 165.
restorer of ancient sculpture, his enormous workshop on the Via del Babuino was a center of antiquarian trade. Cavaceppi restored ancient sculptures for the Adam brothers, and it appears that he extensively coached Robert in the trade of ancient sculpture.

Robert’s brother James also proved to be an adept dealer, and his extensive activity in this field is better recorded than Robert’s. James’ assistance in securing works for clients and his own collecting activities did much to sustain the fledgling practice that Robert had begun in London and provided them with greater liquidity. While James consistently appears to have maximized commercial opportunities, his crowning achievement was the acquisition in 1762 of the drawing collection of Cardinal Albani for George III, one of the most important such collections in modern history, still preserved in the Royal Collection at Windsor Castle.

Robert and James’ activity as art dealers had an enormous impact on their own designs and on British taste and material culture. Their work also shaped British collecting habits and dealing practices into the first few decades of the nineteenth century. The Adams’ own collection was one of the largest to be imported into eighteenth-century Britain and would have a significant impact on the collecting habits of Sir John Soane, who acquired a number of works at their 1818 sale, including a sarcophagus, four cinerary urns, the torso of a seated muse, and many architectural casts, books, and drawings.

In his activities as an art collector and dealer, Adam demonstrated considerable awareness and talent for marketing himself and devising profit-making schemes in a commercial society; these were new professional skills that became increasingly vital in

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513 See Fleming, Robert Adam, 297.
the modern era, and Adam cultivated and exploited them adeptly and peerlessly throughout his career.
4. Adam’s Self-Promotion

Adam lived in an age in which the architect was more visible than in previous eras, and in which the emergence of a celebrity culture and the gradual professionalization of architecture made architects more interesting to the public. Now they wrote books that circulated widely throughout Britain and abroad, executed scores of commissions for private citizens, rather than merely for few elites, and were ever in the public eye, making frequent appearances at art exhibitions and musical and theatrical performances, building sites, and the residences of prospective patrons. In addition to his books and buildings, an architect’s physical health and appearance, personality, social graces and “polite qualifications” (as Adam called them), such as singing and dancing, were evaluated and judged as indicators of taste and character. The architect’s ability to fashion himself was believed to translate directly to his ability to fashion a monument. This belief was linked to the emergence and marketing of individual styles in architecture, a trend in which Adam was a pioneer.

The cultivation of a strong public image consumed Adam throughout his career. The strength and pertinacity of his self-promotional efforts were grounded foremost in his ability to produce rapidly (and seemingly inexhaustibly) great works of art and his boundless and ultimately impracticable ambition. While in Rome, Adam first identified his career-long objectives, which he pursued relentlessly upon his return to London. He desired most fervently to build important public buildings in London, to receive and to fulfill significant commissions from royalty, and to publish a book that would make astronomical profits and be read throughout Europe. None of these came to fruition.

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514 Ibid., 103.
Considerable angst and disappointment resulted from his inability to fulfill his lofty expectations, and this drove him to even greater self-promotional efforts. It is clear, however, that while mourning unreached goals, Adam also found deep satisfaction in the recognition that he received for his many, considerable accomplishments.

Some scholarship has been devoted to study of Adam’s self-promotional strategies, especially the work of John Fleming, Doreen Yarwood, Eileen Harris and A.A. Tait. A chief aim, for example, in Fleming’s masterpiece, Robert Adam and His Circle (1962) was to document and to analyze Adam’s social status, the activities of his youth, the Grand Tour, and his first two years working in London. Harris and Tait’s scholarship has focused on the ways that Adam marketed his two landmark publications, the Ruins and Works.

This chapter builds on this previous scholarship in three ways. First, it briefly examines Adam’s social status and survival within a hierarchical culture that highly valued rank and appearance. Second, it analyzes the social and historical significance of Adam’s work and recognition as an antiquarian. And third, it explores three ways that Adam used his publications to advance his reputation and career: he used his first publication (Ruins), a study of a fourth-century Roman palace complex, to promote his reputation and his own architectural style; he pioneered in the development and branding of his individual style and his introduction of a second “new,” “Etruscan” style of decoration for domestic interiors; and he innovated as a marketer by addressing his publications directly to a new, British reading public, especially the increasingly prominent and influential architectural connoisseurs.

515 See especially Fleming, Robert Adam; Yarwood, Robert Adam; Harris, British Architectural Books and Writers; Brown, Monumental Reputation; & Tait, Robert Adam: Drawings and Imagination.
Cult of Personality: Adam’s Self-Fashioning and Survival in Eighteenth-Century Society

“I have more than once endeavored to convince the world that the Adams and Robertsons [Robert’s maternal line] from whom I come are two of the ancientist [sic] families in Scotland,” crowed Adam in a 1756 letter to his family from Rome, where he rubbed shoulders routinely with titled elites from across Europe. “I tell them the Adams are of so old a family,” he continued, “that since the days of our first father they have never been able to trace them.” Adam liked to spin his elaborate, ancestral legend to great lengths fictionally, elevating his first known ancestor, the stonemason John Adam, to the rank of knight: “[I tell them]…the first of [my ancestors] I ever heard of was one Sir John Adam who had a cross erected to his memory at Forfar on account of his great actions in war and wise councils in peace.” He told his family that he concealed “like grim death” the truth — that his forebear was “but the operator and head cowan of said cross,” unequivocally and unapologetically confessing his method of social advancement: “A good lie well timed sometimes does well.”

To survive and to advance in the ruthless, class-conscious environment of eighteenth-century Europe, middle-class architects such as Adam had to construct upper-class identities from the ether. Their professional existence hinged, in fact, on their ability to straddle upper and middle class social strata, a burden Adam made lighter through “good” and “well timed” deceptions. Although the vast majority of architects, including Adam, came from middle-class families and carried no rank or title (having little or no land and no discoverable family standing), they were educated like courtiers and

516 Fleming, Robert Adam, 1.
517 Ibid., 1-2.
518 Ibid., 2.
expected to assimilate into elite culture in order to cultivate patrons of the highest social rank.

In the eighteenth century, an equipoised social position was a defining characteristic of the architect, rather than an exceptional, unnecessary trait, as it had been in the early modern period in Europe. Fascinatingly, although the architect’s successful participation in both the middle and upper class, was usually intentionally obscured or overlooked, particularly by members of the upper class, it was sometimes publically celebrated. Robert Mylne’s uncle, John Mylne (d. 1667), for example, architect of the Tron Kirk in Edinburgh and descendant from a line of Master Masons, was honored on his tombstone with the following engraving:

> Rare man he was, who could unite in one
> Highest and lowest occupation,
> To sit with Statesmen, Councillors, and Kings
> To work with Tradesmen, in Mechanick Things

Adam expended considerable energy in the cultivation of an upper class persona and thus successfully elevated his social standing. While abroad, anonymity provided him a great opportunity for social advancement and acceptance: concealing his identity as an architect when in the company of nobility, he played the fictitious part of a “Scottish gentlemen.”

This was a relatively modest and believable claim, and enough to give him credibility. Particularly while abroad, but also later as a practicing architect in Britain, Adam endeared himself to elites with his dazzling clothing, great skill in the polite arts of dancing and singing, and winning social graces. Epistolary evidence also tells us that as a student in Rome, Adam wrestled for extended periods of time with the proper allocation of his time, torn between hobnobbing and studying, which he perceived

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as equally essential to his success. His greatest handicap during his travels on the
Continent was his inability to speak foreign languages well, a deficiency that he worked
tirelessly to overcome. He must also have encountered (both as a student and throughout
his career) the English prejudice against Scots, although there is no evidence that this
impacted his work significantly.

Adam left for his Grand Tour from Edinburgh on 3 October 1754, and by the time
he had reached Brussels in early November the cunning architect-in-training had become
fully aware of the professional advantages a higher social rank could bring. While in
Belgium, he penned a long letter home in which he reflected calculatedly, “if I could play
Lords it would be of infinite service to me,” and acting on this observation, he
subsequently posed as a “gentleman,” the lowest rank of the landed gentry. Fleming has
artfully noted that it required all of Adam’s “native wit to retain the modest station of a
Scottish gentleman among the bucks and macaroni of cosmopolitan Italy in whose eyes
an architect was little better than a tradesman.” To facilitate his deception, Adam
instructed friends and relatives to “avoid putting the word Architect on the backs of
letters” and to address him as “Robert Adam Esquire,” or “Robert Adam Gentilhomme
Anglois,” since it was “not always proper one’s profession should be known and the
Italians are very curious.”

Adam’s construction of this persona was aided considerably during the first leg of
his Grand Tour by his traveling companion, the Honorable Charles Hope, the younger
brother of the Earl of Hopetoun. Hope had asked the promising young Robert to
accompany him to Italy and had offered to pay the lion’s share of their traveling expenses

521 Ibid., 112.
522 Ibid., 2.
523 Ibid.
in a gracious act of support. In his letter from Brussels, Adam also remarked that “the cavalier Hope,” as Adam called him, “seems to make no scruple in letting me partake of everything with him, without thinking my station or manners in any way inferior to his own.”

Hope unflinchingly introduced Adam to polite society as they traveled toward Italy, but by the time they reached Rome in late February 1755, he appears to have developed distaste for Robert’s “playing” the lord and began to distance himself from the non-genteel student in surreptitious and underhanded ways. Robert complained to his mother about Hope’s unkind activities in Rome: “was I to write to you the many thousand, sneaking, scrubbing dirty actions [Charles Hope] is and has been guilty of you would despise the wretch as much as I do.”

Hope, for example, had invited various nobles to dinner in his name only, with the result that the guests would invite him back in return, but, as Adam complained, “never ask me, though I pay the half of everything.”

He told the abbé Grant that “Mr. Hope was undermining me of my house” by attempting to convince the Roman landlord to rent the house to him instead.

In due course, Robert came to believe his break with Hope to be “rather a service” because it allowed him to focus more intently on “improvement” as an architect, and he discovered that he had no need of Hope once established in Rome.

He wrote to his sister Jenny (Janet) only weeks later, “I have no reason to complain, as I have received visits from most of the English now at Rome.” Hope and Adam remained civil and

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524 Ibid., 112.
525 Ibid., 150.
526 Ibid., 150-151.
527 Ibid., 150.
528 Ibid., 151.
529 Ibid., 158.
eventually their relationship improved. Upon his return from the Grand Tour, in fact, Hope extended a helping hand to the fledgling architect (as did their mutual friend Allan Ramsay) by canvasing his friends on Robert’s behalf:530

While playing the role of a gentleman, Adam outfitted himself accordingly. He cut the figure of a gentleman with panache and reveled in the acquisition of expensive and opulent attire, which he considered a necessity and a sound investment. He understood well that in eighteenth-century society, the clothes made the man. Adam wrote to his mother and sisters effusively from Paris about his transformation into a creature of the beau-monde:

Would you incline to know the appearance of your once plain friend? Read the description and you have him. A most Frenchified head of hair, loaded with powder, ornaments his top: a complete suit of cut velvet of two colors, his body – which is set off by a white satin lining; white silk stockings and embroidered silk gushets, his legs: Mariguin pumps with red heels, his feet: stone-buckles like diamonds shine on his knees and shows. A gold-handled sword, with white and gold handle knot, ornaments his side: Brussels lace, his breast and hands: a solitaire ribbon, his neck: a smous hat his oxter. In the mornings he honors his head with a large hat and white feather, his side with a gold belt and hanger, and in cold weather his whole body is wrapt in a white freeze cloak with black velvet neck and sleeves, which is the mode amongst the Seigneurs of this kingdom. In short, were I to enumerate the collection of curiousities which at first adorned my body and made me laugh but are now as familiar to me as my garter, I should both divert and surprise you. What I cut the best figure with is a white beaver cap which represents a crown of an old hat with two turn-ups, one before and another behind, with gold lace round the edge of it and a gold button a-top. It is likest to a cap worn by His Grace of Argyll and is both warm and commodious for travelling, for which purpose it was bought. I often burst out a-laughing upon this single thought – of what you would all say were I for a moment to show myself in the drawing-room thus metamorphosed.531

On his way to Rome, Adam went shopping. In Lyons, his “teeth watered” (a favorite expression) as he coveted silks and also bought “a Gold Stuff Vest” and “one of the Genteelest and richest embroider’d Vests that I ever saw.”532 Hope encouraged Adam’s new, refined indulgence, guiding him in the art of self-fashioning. Adam explained in a letter home: “there was no help for it as Hope thought I could not do without them and he

530 Cited in Yarwood, Robert Adam, 91.
531 Cited in Fleming, Robert Adam, 113.
532 Ibid., 117.
had shown me an example by taking 3 of much the same kinds with mine. His embroidery is in Silver, narrow, mine in Gold and Broad. Both upon rich, rich, vast rich thick silks of a Red colour." 533 In Brussels Adam purchased “a suit of ruffles of lace,” and at Genoa he and Hope both purchased “Black Velvet Suits with which we can wear all our waistcoats by turns” and for every day wear, “uncut velvet suits, quite plain.” 534 Adam endearingly grieved that he could not share this newfound sartorial pleasure with his mother and sisters back in Edinburgh: “My Teeth water’d after some of the prettyest things for Ladys which I saw in Shops in [Genoa]. Head caps, Breasts for covering the Stays of Gold and Silver, and Mon Dieu, magnifique, and of the best Taste imaginable. But I could find no way of transporting them.” 535 In Rome, Adam continued to add to his growing fashion collection, acquiring a camlet suit with only “slight gold lace and red Persian lining” and a suit of silk cloth. 536

Other assets of social advancement that Adam prized were his graceful and endearing manner and refined skills in leisure pursuits of the upper-class. In his Memoir, John Clerk frequently wrote of Robert’s amiability, mentioning his “lively genius and spirit,” recounted that he sang “delightfully well,” and that he had become the “admiration and darling of all the eminent men who then resorted to his father’s house.” 537 Especially in Italy, amateur dancing and musical performances were nightly distractions, and were the principal opportunities for social interaction, other than gaming. One night in Rome, Adam claimed to have danced no fewer than two hundred minuets and three hundred country dances. “This may appear exaggeration or the tale of a

533 Ibid.
534 Ibid., 112.
535 Yarwood, Robert Adam, 53.
536 Fleming, Robert Adam, 157-8.
537 Ibid., 80.
traveler,” he said, “but anybody who knows the manner of their dancing abroad will tell you that in twelve hours they dance twice that number.” Adam was also a singer, bragging to his sisters during his last autumn in Rome, “I have the impudence to sing here publicly, to the great amusement of the Italians who are vastly diverted with the sound their airs have from a foreign mouth.” He performed frequently at the house of Margarita Doddi, accompanied by a harpsichord, and he memorably sang on Christmas Day in 1757, shortly before he left Rome, with an intimate circle of Scottish friends in Rome: “I bore my little part and opened the concert with an Italian air,” he wrote: “my Lord Elgin sang droll Scots songs, Mrs. Elliot some merry French ones, and Mr. Anderson some Highland pibrochs.” When he returned to Britain, Adam would continue to draw on these social skills to bolster and sustain his reputation, to impress future clients, and to strengthen his friendships. Fanny Burney recorded in her diary in March of 1770s, that although “he [had] little or no voice…he sung with so much taste and Feeling, that few very fine voices could give equal pleasure…”

The most distressing difficulties Robert faced while a student was trying not to let his social life interfere with his studies, and not to let his studiousness tarnish his social status. He feared that to appear in public as an artist would ruin his standing: “if I am known in Rome to be an architect, if I am seen drawing or with a pencil in my hand, I cannot enter into genteel company who will not admit an artist or, if they do admit him, will very probably rub affronts on him in order to prevent his appearing at their card-

538 Ibid., 131.  
539 Ibid., 219.  
540 Ibid., 226.  
541 Fanny Burney (later Mme. D’Arbley), Early Diary and Letters, 1768-78, Vol. 1, April 1770. Cited in Sanderson, Robert Adam, 78.
playing, balls and concerts.” He wondered anxiously, “Shall I lose my introduction to the great...or my taste for the grand?”

Robert’s anguish and conflicted feelings led him to seek the advice of the English sculptor and future Royal Academician Joseph Wilton (1722-1803), who suggested that he abandon the “Great ones” in favor of study. “When you go to Rome,” counselled Wilton, “you may be introduced to [Cardinal] Albani &ca., and as soon as you have got your introductions you may leave Rome and go for eight or ten days to Naples.” He recommended that Adam then “return incognito from Naples to Rome and live private, indulging amongst your acquaintances, pursuing your studies and improving.” Wilton steadfastly believed that planning and staying out of sight would serve him well: “And in this way you will find much more satisfaction that from having paid twenty visits to the same Duchess or Countess and will have more to boast of when you get home.” Adam also sought the advice of abbé Grant, who advised Adam to socialize in moderation “only once or twice in a week” and to pose as a dilettante in public, while applying himself diligently to the drawing board in private.

In the fall of 1757, Adam explained in a letter to his family how he fended off offers of hospitality in order to spend time with his studies: “They invite me to dinner, to breakfast and supper, so that I don’t get sufficient time for application, and I am about falling on some expedient to refuse them without offence in order not to lose my time, which is not growing precious from its shortness in this place.” He began to suffer

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542 Cited in Fleming, Robert Adam, 140.
543 Ibid., 141.
544 Ibid.
545 Ibid.
546 Ibid.
547 Ibid., 148.
548 Ibid., 220-1.
great angst from the thought that he would not learn enough while in the Eternal City. It was therefore not surprising that Adam grew weary, impatient, and resentful of the manner in which the aristocracy, he supposed, wasted their time, energy, and resources, on trivial and frivolous pursuits, like gaming. He increasingly mocked the upper class for their stupidity, writing that he was troubled by the “thought of mis-spending so much time to no purpose, among a most ridiculous, stupid set of people and gamesters.” He desired to leave Rome full of memories of the “bas-reliefs and antique architecture,” rather than “the Borghese, the Gabrielli, the Viani and the Cheroffini.”

During his three years in Italy Adam devoted considerable time and energy to learning French and Italian, which he had not studied previously, but which he soon learned were essential for his work. At Pisa, for example, Adam unexpectedly encountered a relation of the Medici family, Signora Gianni, and spent several days in her company. He reported ruefully in a letter to his family that “Hope, who gibbers Italian, was soon in close conversation whilst I stared but could say nothing. Think how I cursed all Italian and all foreign languages!”

Later that evening, at the opera, with Signora Gianni, Adam recounted that he was “again…moralized with some vehemency on the use of different languages and soon concluded it to be a diabolical invention.” The next evening went better, however, with the help of a translator: “I found an abbé who interpreted for me and I made a language of my own, half English, half French and a little sprinkling of Italian – to her great amusement.”

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549 Ibid., 159.
550 Ibid., 127.
551 Ibid.
552 Ibid., 128.
By the time Adam left Rome, he was proficient in both Italian and French. His French was particularly enviable, as he had spoken it daily with his tutors, the Frenchmen Pecheux and Clérisseau, and read French both while studying and in his leisure hours. Among his reading was La Fontaine’s *Fables*, often considered children’s literature, which he mentioned in August of 1757. He was less proud of his Italian, confessing late in 1757 that it was “broken” and “bad,” but by then he was clearly able to converse sufficiently with the Italian nobles, and he frequently sang Italian songs at parties. Upon Adam’s return to London, his brother James attested to his proficiency, complaining to their sisters that “Bob and his Italian [the artist Agostino Brunias (1730-1796)] are quivering away…to such a degree that I can’t write a word.” After having achieved some fluency in French and Italian, Robert found his incompetency in other languages nearly intolerable. When in Germany in November 1757, he grumbled, “I am once more in the miserable situation of understanding nothing and no body. Nothing but German gibberish reigns here…I am convinced it was the Divil [sic] who invented the German Language and that is what I most dread in Hell.”

When Adam arrived in London in January 1758 he faced the task of establishing himself as a professional architect. He was armed with immense skill in his art, but had little money, no lodgings, no clients, and had lost his fictional upper class persona, forced to return to middle-class status and to wear his identity as an architect on his sleeve. Adam faced the challenge fearlessly. Thanks to his time on the Continent his initial efforts were bolstered by his new, sophisticated identities, now a distinguished

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553 Ibid. 163.
connoisseur, antiquarian, and collector of ancient and Old-Master art. He also immediately leaned on family for support. James joined Robert in London right away, and the brothers quickly set up a furnished house in St. James’s Place “at a damn’d high rent,” as James explained, “which we take by the week until something passable casts up, but we found it impossible to be longer in a vagabond situation.” Daily, Robert steeled himself and sallied forth to visit possible clients, trying to impress them and convince them of his merit with his elegant speech and dress, and the promotional efforts and the value of having a well-furnished house: “Bob still continues to pay his respects to the great and as he has now got a place for showing his things, he is ready to admit strangers.”

The Adams soon relocated to a more spacious house at 75 Lower Grosvenor Street. The household comprised Robert, James, their two sisters Jenny (Janet) and Betty (Elizabeth), Brunias and Dewez, his man servant Donald, and a maid. Robert asked his brother John for a loan to secure the house, which John granted, at a four-percent rate of interest. This remained home to the Adam brothers until their removal to the Adelphi in the 1770s. (In 1786, Robert would move to No. 13 Albemarle Street, where he lived until his death in 1792.) To prepare his house for visitors, Adam artfully arranged his antique sculptures, architectural fragments, and collection of Old Master paintings, which he had professionally cleaned before hanging. The care that Adam took in the arrangement of his art collection was captured in a memorializing sketch he made of a tidy, symmetrical display of some of his antique marbles (Figure 4.1).

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557 Ibid., 92.
558 This sketch was published in Fleming, Robert Adam, 251.
garden, which he decorated with painted grotesque ornament of his own invention in order to showcase this style to prospective clients.

Adam transformed the public rooms of his house into something like an art gallery or museum, which demonstrated his discriminating taste and talents as a collector, connoisseur, and antiquarian. Adam understood that potential clients would judge his architectural ability, not only on his physical appearance and demeanor, but also on the design and decoration of his home and garden, and the works of art that he displayed and created. The adornment of his house and his person seems to have had the desired effect on would-be clients, as John Clerk reported: “With his taste and productions and manners everyone went away enchanted.”

Certainly, his self-presentation greatly helped to earn him one of his most important early commissions, the remodeling of Kedleston Hall. Robert related that after Curzon had inspected his art collection at Lower Grosvenor Street, the nobleman had been “struck all of a heap with wonder and amaze.” Robert further recounted that “every new drawing made [Curzon] grieve at his previous engagement with [the architect, Matthew] Brettingham” and that, Curzon, quivering with excitement about Adam’s talent and the potential designs the young architect could provide for Kedleston, “carried [Robert] home in his chariot about three and kept [him] until four…asking [Robert’s] opinion.”

His brother James offered a more mundane description of Adam’s highly choreographed efforts, writing about “the long London mornings when Bob used to hold forth to his company, at the expense of much time and many words.” While Adam was uniquely energetic in his self-promotion, it was widely

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559 Cited in Sanderson, Robert Adam, 53.
560 Fleming Robert Adam, 257.
561 Ibid.
562 Cited in Sanderson, Robert Adam, 53.
understood that talent alone was not enough to win jobs. Walpole put the situation in a nutshell: “merit is useless; it is interest alone that can push a man forward.” He cynically continued, “by dint of interest one of my carriage-horses might become poet-laureate, and the other physician to the house-hold.”

However, Adam’s carefully devised courtship of patrons was not always successful, and he frequently wrote about “going off in a huff” after having faced rejection by a client. (This would become a favorite expression.) One of the most dramatic rebuffs was at the hands of the implacable Lord Bute (1713-92). When Robert had first met the nobleman, Adam noted that he was “booted and spurred” as if he were just going out. Bute did not ask the architect to sit and cut short the interview, nonchalantly returning the copy of Piranesi’s *Antichita Romane* that Robert had previously sent him as a gift. “No sooner we were out of hearing,” Alexander Carlyle recalled, “Than Robert Adam…fell a-cursing and swearing. ‘What! He had been presented to all the princes in Italy and France, and most graciously received, to come and be treated with such distance and pride by the youngest earl but one in all Scotland?’”

Bute’s chilly reception came despite the recommendations of Adam’s stalwart friend Gilbert Elliot and Bute’s own secretary John Home. A mildly traumatized Adam confided to a friend in Edinburgh that he had concocted a vivid fantasy of revenge against the lord, in which he perished darkly and poetically, crushed by falling architectural folios. Adam penned bitterly, “I have a great mind to go out to Kensington and when [Bute] and Madame la Princesse are stewing together I’ll have them put in a boat naked and brought down the river like Adam and Eve and I’ll fell him dead with

Piranesi’s four folio volumes from Westminster Bridge.”  

Of course, as Alexander Carlyle recounted, Bute and Adam “were better friends afterwards and Robert found him a kind patron, when his professional merit was made known to him.”

Adam the “Antick”

Adam’s identity as an antiquarian also remained a crucial component in the formulation of his professional identity and social prestige. The antiquarian’s work focused on the study and collection of non-literary physical remains of the past, such as inscriptions, coins, topography, and ruins and is considered to have a factual or empirical basis rather than a theoretical one. It is also a discipline often compared to history and archaeology. Unlike the historian and archaeologist, the antiquarian did not focus on interpretation and causation, but on cataloging, description, and the imaginative reconstruction of past monuments based on the study of architectural ruins and collections of intact artifacts or fragments. This material evidence was considered useful in clarifying and correcting literary remains. While the historian and the archaeologist analyzed and contextualized findings, and interpreted them as part of the dynamic processes of historical change and cultural evolution, the antiquarian worked at the more basic level of collecting and categorizing.

Like the archaeologist, however, the antiquarian excavated cultural remains and carefully recorded these artifacts with drawings, descriptions. The careful measuring of architectural fragments had begun in the Renaissance. Aware that generations of the most

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564 Ibid., 255.
talented Italian sculptors and architects, beginning with Alberti, Brunelleschi, and Donatello, traveled to Rome to measure and draw the ancient buildings, the eighteenth century British architect proudly continued this method of investigation. Thomas Sandby and his colleagues at the Royal Academy considered Renaissance methods of instruction and design to be an essential part of the training of the modern architect:

[Students should] make drawings and exact measurements of such buildings already erected which have stood the test of criticism, and are standards of taste. The student, by this means, will avail himself of the practice of his predecessors; he may profit by avoiding their errors, and fix in his own mind such permanent ideas of beauty and proportion, which no precepts can establish, and no time can obliterate.\(^{566}\)

Sandby made clear that Renaissance architects, like their classical and medieval forebears, were not infallible and, in fact, made many errors. These ranged in kind from imprecision in measuring and surveying, to making implausible reconstructions and altering the orders in distasteful ways that strayed unproductively far from classical intentions and traditions. Their method of study, however, unlike their work itself, was difficult to improve upon and was worthy of emulation.

Adam’s claim to the title “antiquarian” rested largely on the publication of *Ruins*, in which he represented the eighteenth-century ruins and imaginative reconstructions of Diocletian’s palatial complex (4\(^{th}\) century AD) and the nearby Temples of Jupiter (305 AD) and Aesculapius (4\(^{th}\) century AD). He carefully described the site, plan, and appearance of each ancient building. His analysis of the palace included an impressive discussion of the function of each interior space.

With this work, Adam joined other contemporary authors of illustrated books devoted ancient sites and sculpture, who were developing a more scientific form of antiquarian study and establishing art history and archeology as autonomous disciplines.

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\(^{566}\) Sandby, SaT/1/1, Lecture, 4, f. 56.
Adam’s significance as an exponent of scientific antiquarianism in *Ruins* has not previously been remarked upon.567

When Adam lived in Rome between 1755 and 1757, he began to identify himself as an antiquarian “or as we say in Scotland an Antick.”568 Beginning then and throughout the rest of his career, he also embraced and delighted in the antiquarian pastimes of art collecting, visiting art galleries and salesrooms, and pouring over ancient works of art, and modern books, drawings, and engravings dedicated to ancient remains. Even before the publication in of *Ruins*, in 1761 Adam was recognized for his special enthusiasm for these activities by election to the Society of Antiquaries of London. This was a great honor, and members of the society were eager to make known this mark of distinction. Allegedly, upon his election in the spring of 1761, Winckelmann acquired a list of the current members, added his own name, and framed and hung the list in his personal chamber.569 (Later, upon its foundation in 1781, Adam would also be admitted to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland.)

As an antiquarian Adam allied himself with powerful cultural forces that significantly increased his reputation. Antiquarianism had been the bedrock of European

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567 Adam’s books charmingly adopted the convention in antiquarian writing of leading a reader through an imaginatively-reconstructed location. This tradition began at least in the fourteenth century with the Italian scholar and poet Petrarch (1304-74), who is also often regarded as the first modern antiquarian. One of Petrarch’s best known antiquarian works, *Africa* (c. 1350), was an epic poem inspired by his exploration of Roman ruins with Fra Giovanni Colonna (c1298-c1343). In the poem, Petrarch made an attempt at the reconstruction of Rome in Scipio’s day in the form of the description of a guided tour given to the Carthaginian envoys. Adam, following in this tradition, contributed to this specialized genre with *Ruins*, and used the literary form as a model for his discussion of Syon House in his *Works*, when he guides the reader through his great country house, as if it were an archaeological site (see Harris, *British Architectural Books and Writers*, 84).


education and culture since the beginning of the early modern period. Nurtured for centuries within humanist circles across Europe, this intellectual tradition had been a unifying force in elite social circles, where ancient literature and ancient architectural remains provided the vocabulary and scenery of ruling-class life. In the eighteenth century, antiquarianism was a highly prestigious pursuit among royalty and nobility. Antiquarians in the age of Adam were commonly associated with knowledge, tradition, elite culture, and travel, especially the Grand Tour, and the artist-antiquary evolved into a romantic and idealized figure.

The intellectual tradition of antiquarianism in Britain had been continuous since the second half of the sixteenth century. John Leland (1503-1552), often considered Britain’s first antiquarian, sought to inventory her ancient and medieval remains, to chart her topography, and to learn ancient British languages. Generations of antiquarians followed Leland’s lead, most notably William Camden (1551-1623), whose *Britannia* (1586) surveyed British topography and antiquities, partly in order to demonstrate the importance of Britain in the Roman Empire, and partly to show foreign scholars that antiquarian scholarship in England could match continental achievements. It was Camden’s work that inspired the foundation of the Society of Antiquaries of London in 1586. This society was discontinued sometime after 1604, and its re-establishment in 1717 reflected renewed interest, sparked by an increasing number of discoveries of ancient artifacts across Europe.

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571 Levine, *Between the Ancients and the Moderns*, 75.
Around the middle of the eighteenth century, antiquarianism underwent major transformations, as it began to splinter into the modern “scientific” disciplines of history, art history, chorography, numismatics, archeology, and epigraphy. Researchers were now expected to adopt more scientific and historical methodological frameworks, mimicking the practices of their new disciplinary counterparts, and the old kind of antiquarianism, at this stage, came to be considered as a useless, outdated pursuit. Horace Walpole summed up the growing dissatisfaction with old-fashioned antiquarian interests: “I love antiquities, but I scarce ever knew an antiquary who knew how to write about them. Their understandings seem as much in ruins as the things they describe.”

Concurrent with the development of this critique of unscientific antiquarianism, was the growing opinion among progressive writers that any study of the ancient world was useless, indulgent, and irresponsible. Study of the past, many argued, took valuable time away from active participation in the present, and some, in both upper and lower social classes, began to consider too much learning a dangerous thing. Erudition was taken as a sign that one was not contributing to society, was indifferent to the operation of the modern world, and preferred leisure to labor. This challenged the humanist belief that the acquisition of knowledge of all kinds was a noble pursuit and essential to cultural progress, which had remained in the center of European culture since the early Renaissance.

It was thus critical at this time of challenges, then, that antiquarians demonstrate how study of the past contributed to modern progress and adopt scientific methods. In many cases, however, these tasks proved exceedingly difficult. History seemed an

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574 Ibid., 101.
ungovernable force that was too deep, complex, and varied to be understood and to written about rationally. The dimensions of history were rapidly expanding and new artifacts were unearthed nearly each day in the archaeological flurry of mid-century — artifacts that presented new dimensions and facets of the great historical puzzle that was the past.

Astutely appealing to this shift in public perception, Adam was one of the few architects who effectively identified himself as the new kind of scientific antiquarian, whose work directly and immediately contributed to modern society. To impress upon the reader his status as a modern-day antiquarian, he peppered the text of *Ruins* with demonstrations of his scientific methods, beginning in the introduction, where he explained the advantages of the site: “By good fortune its remains are, in many places, so intire [sic], as to be able to fix, with the utmost certainty, the form and dimensions of the principal apartments.” He went on to note that in the assignment of names to rooms and in the determination of the use of each, he was guided by ancient sources — the descriptions of Roman villas by Pliny and Vitruvius. Throughout the plate descriptions he continued to emphasize his objective, first-hand observation of artifacts, including his observation of small details like the fact that some roof tiles bore the stamp “S.P.Q.R.”

As a scientific antiquarian, Adam clearly distinguished between those parts of the complex that were original and those that were modern. He remarked, for example, that even the “smallest Parts” of the door frame of the Temple of Aesculapius survived, protected from erosion “by Means of the projecting Portico.” (Figure 4.2) Adam also offered his opinion in the debate over the number of temples that were original to the site,

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575 Robert Adam, *Ruins of the Palace of the Emperor Diocletian at Spalatro in Dalmatia* (Cannitello [Reggio Calabria]: Biblioteca del Cenide, 2001), 46.
attesting that his observation of the remains suggested that there were two temples, rather than four, as had been previously thought. He made transparent his methods of analysis. In his description of the “Section of the Temple of Aesculapius” (Figure 4.3), for example, he noted “I was able to fix pretty nearly the Distance betwixt the Pilaster and Column of the Portico, both in this Section and in the last Plate, by observing that Vacuity left by one of the Plinths of the Columns which were removed before I went to Spalatro.” Adam frequently reiterated that his illustrations were accurate and exploited the plate descriptions to underscore the precise rendering of his observations.

To give the reader a sense of the dirt-splattered reality that he faced in Split, and to demonstrate his skill as an archaeologist, Adam described his excavation and he expressed his desire to unearth more of the palace in order to create a more precise reconstruction. For example, he identified a subterranean vault, running north to south beneath the palace, and surmised it was a common entry to all underground offices. Adam explained that these had been “partly destroyed” and “partly filled up,” and lamented that he had been unable to excavate them: “without great labor and expense in digging, it was not possible exactly to discover their disposition, or to form any possible conjecture concerning their different uses.”576 He recounted that he had attempted several times to “dig in various quarters of the Palace, and very probably might have made some useful discoveries” had not the Governor ordered him to desist on suspicion of espionage.577

Adam’s repeated stress on the accuracy of his work functioned in several important ways. Crucially, it demonstrated his knowledge of ancient and modern

576 Ibid.
577 Ibid.
architecture and his capabilities as a “modern” antiquarian, who was dedicated to the
critical and scientific study of the past. Of even greater importance, Adam established
that his restorations of the palace, because there were made using exacting antiquarian
and archeological methods, were relevant and useful in modern Britain — providing
important models for the design and construction of contemporary residences. In his
introduction and in the plates, Adam demonstrated that the study of an ancient building
could suggest solutions for composing dramatic progression of modern spaces, creating
visually powerful decorative motifs, managing the circulation of people in large spaces,
circulating water and heat, and understanding how cultural habits directly inform the
design of interiors.

**Rhetoric of Ruins: Anachronism and the Adam Style**

Adam’s first publication, *Ruins of the Palace of the Emperor Diocletian at
Spalatro in Dalmatia* (1764), crucially reinforced and advanced Adam’s reputation as a
modern antiquarian. Yet, in a subtle manner, this sumptuous folio also introduced his
distinctive architectural style to the world. By making understated alterations to the
architectural details of Diocletian’s palace and the adjacent temples, Adam presented
formal aspects of the style that he had been crafting for nearly a decade. In its
presentation of the “Adam Style,” and as an agent of architectural change, *Ruins* was a
crucial precursor to the *Works*. The integration of picturesque plates and the romantic
pairing of ancient ruins and with complete reconstructions both contributed significantly
to the book’s success.
In 1757, Adam traveled to Split (then called Spalato, and dubbed “Spalatro” by Adam) in the Venetian territories of the eastern Adriatic coast, in present-day Croatia to excavate, to measure and to make archaeological and reconstruction drawings of the palace of the Roman Emperor Diocletian (Figure 4.4).\textsuperscript{578} The work took five weeks. Fleming notes that Adam’s choice of Split was dictated by limitations of time and resources in this last stage of his tour, rather than great interest; it was “only unpublished site…he could afford to visit.”\textsuperscript{579}

As Iain Gordon Brown and others have noted, Adam’s book was the product of a team of people.\textsuperscript{580} He took four artists with him to help: Clérisseau, the Italian engraver Giuseppe Zucchi (1721-1805), and the draughtsmen Laurent Benôt Dewez (1731-1812) and Agostino Brunias (1730-96). Robert was exceeding proud of his efforts, writing to his family on 6 July 1757 that “this jaunt to Dalmatia with my four people makes great puff even in Italy and cannot fail doing much more in England.”\textsuperscript{581} Because of modern alterations and additions to the palace, a considerable amount of excavation was required in order to locate the ancient Roman foundations. Adam’s investigative activities caused the local government to believe that he and his team were there under false pretense, and that Adam was actually a British spy studying how to construct fortifications. With their situation made uncertain by this accusation of espionage, Adam’s team was forced to complete all of the work within five weeks and under considerable duress.

\textsuperscript{579} Fleming, “Spalatro,” 103.
\textsuperscript{581} Cited in Salter, \textit{Four Emperors and an Architect}, 85.
The text appears to have been the product of at least three individuals. Adam’s cousin, the renowned historian William Robertson, wrote a four-page introduction, which Adam greatly admired. The short piece briefly described the significance of ancient architecture, both public and private, and Adam’s journey to Split for this undertaking. While in the town of Augsburg on his way back to London at the end of his Grand Tour, Adam collected mail from Scotland, including Robertson’s draft introduction. He expressed admiration and gratitude for his cousin’s expertise and artfulness:

I cannot enough express my surprise and admiration of Willie’s preface…if anything can make me think more highly of his abilities than I did for his History it is his masterly penning of my preface. It is beautifully said and in a few words contains the full sense of what would have taken many pages from any other historian of his age but himself…I beg you will send Willie a present of 20 dozen of Maxwell’s best claret on my account.

It is likely that Robertson also aided Adam in authorship of a second, thirteen-page introductory text, a “Description of the General Plan of Diocletian’s Palace as Restored Explaining the Manner of Disposing the Apartments in the Houses of the Ancients,” and in composing the ensuing plate descriptions, entitled “Explanation of the Plates with Occasional Remarks on the Style of the Architecture.” Adam’s discussion of the palace, and especially the interior, is remarkably thorough, describing each room and suggesting the function and decoration of each space, all of which flaunted Adam’s exceptional knowledge of Roman houses. Winckelmann, an expert on ancient Greek and Roman cultures, whom Adam had met on his Grand Tour, served as the reader.

Production of the title page and sixty-one plates, which offer representations of the eighteenth-century state of the palace and imagined reconstructions of their

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582 See Brown, Monumental Reputation, 28-31.
583 Cited in Graham, Arbiter of Elegance, 149.
584 It is likely that Adam met Winckelmann through Cardinal Albani, who had hired the German intellectual to be his librarian and to study his collection of antiquities in his villa at Porta Salaria. Fleming noted that Adam saw Winckelmann occasionally during the summer of 1762 (Robert Adam, 307).
appearance in the fourth century, required coordinated efforts of over a dozen people. Supervised by Adam, the artists Clérisseau, Brunias and Dewez made sketches on site and worked them into finished drawings. Brunias and Dewez executed the measured drawings, and Clérisseau created the picturesque views, perspectives, and topographical drawings of the principal buildings. The drawings were divided into two groups, which were sent to Venice and London, where, in preparation for the making of prints, teams of artists made new versions of the drawings. These were closely based on the originals, but adjusted to create more pleasing compositions. Adam approved of the introduction of atmospheric effects, changes to the landscape that did not misrepresent the topography, and the introduction of human figures. Working in London, Paul Sandby drew in human figures to the drawings meant for engraving, and Thomas Hollis designed the frontispiece, which shows two men drawing the remains of the ancient palace and a view to the town of Split. (Figure 4.5) Teams of engravers in Venice, Rome, and London then transferred the images, in reverse, to the copperplates and cut them.

The work of transferring and finalizing the engravings took years. Adam and Clérisseau sent engraving proofs back and forth several times between Venice (where Clérisseau worked and supervised engravers) and London (where Adam oversaw a second team of engravers). In each location Adam and Clérisseau checked the plates for accuracy against their memories and the original drawings, and issued instructions for retouches and alterations. When the artists had completed the plates, they were brought together in London for the inclusion of inscriptions on representations of architectural monuments, key letters (which corresponded to explanatory descriptions in the book) and titles. Also in London, the introductory texts and plate descriptions were printed (on

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paper that Adam had specifically procured in Rome for his future publications), and the sumptuous bindings were executed. These elaborate bindings were color-coded for various recipients: scarlet morocco leather bindings with gilt-stamped borders of palmettes and a gilt-decorated spine (lettered “Ruins of Spalatro”) for the royal family; blue for the Knights of the Garter; green for the Knights of the Thistle, a Scottish order; and brown for less illustrious elites.586 As Robertson noted in the preface, this work, executed between 1757 and 1764, was undoubtedly one “executed at considerable expence” and was the “effect of great labor and perseverance.”

Damie Stillman has remarked that Robert incorporated few motifs from Split into the decorative repertoire of the Adam Style.587 The architect’s use of what he called the “Spalatro Order,” however, is well known. In some of Adam’s earliest commissions, he incorporated adaptations of this ancient Roman order, which he had observed in a pilaster of the peristyle of Diocletian’s palace and had published in Ruins.588 (Figures 4.6 & 4.7) Initially, Adam understood this order as an extremely liberal alteration of the Doric order, and only later did he christen it the “Spalatro Order.” Adam freely altered this relatively plain order, marked with fluting and acanthus leaves, for use in his own designs, including the anteroom at Kedleston Hall (Figure 4.8), the exterior portico at Bowood House, the saloon at Saltram House, the dining room at Shelburne House in Berkeley Square, London, the entrance room at Osterley House, the portico of a villa at Hampton Court, and the exterior rear façade of No. 20 St. James’s Square, London.589

586 See Brown, “With an uncommon splendor”; Brown, Monumental Reputation, 47; & Salter, Four Emperors and an Architect, 96.
587 Damie Stillman, Decorative Work of Robert Adam, 34.
588 Salter, Four Emperors and an Architect, 133-50.
589 Russell Taylor Architects has noted that Adam also used this order externally at the rear of No. 20 St. James’s Square (now destroyed). (See rtarchitects.co.uk/diocletian-robert-adam-and-blackfriars-road-aug-16/)
While Adam may not have borrowed many decorative motifs from the buildings at Split, he learned other lessons in design at the site. For example, the View of the Peristylium of the Palace (Figure 4.9), shows an exterior space that prefigures the Adam interior galleries that terminate in screens of columns, such as the library at Kenwood House, where he remodeled the interior from 1764-79 (Figure 4.10). Adam also borrowed from Diocletian’s peristylium (Figure 4.11) the strategy of centering a small portal behind a large columnar screen, and the resulting suggestion of the extension of space, as the viewer glimpses into the room beyond, through the smaller portal. Adam also imported the design of the peristyle of the palace in the creation of the Marble Hall at Kedleston Hall and the entrance portico at Osterley House (Figures 4.12-4.14).590

In seeking to illustrate the eighteenth-century state of the palace and temple ruins at Split and to create imagined reconstructions of these monuments and their details, Adam and his artists faced the challenge, common in the eighteenth century, of striking an appropriate balance between archeological precision and poetic invention. At some point during the production of the book, James Adam wrestled with this difficult task, wracked with anxiety about whether or not Robert and his artists could remember the precise appearance of the palace and temples, which they had seen years before and had recorded only in hurried sketches.591 James was also aware that Robert and his artists had already altered the engravings in ways that did not respect archaeological truths. In the end, James suggested to his brother that they abandon the effort to make accurate renderings of the palace ruins in favor of romantic images.592 He reckoned that the most

590 Salter, *Four Emperors and an Architect*, 135 & 144.
592 Ibid.
appealing plates, especially the picturesque illustrations, might be best marketed as ornamental prints for decorative purposes, rather than as archaeological documents.\textsuperscript{593}

Robert, however, did not follow his brother’s suggestion and marketed the publication as a showcase of archeological truths, maintaining that the reconstructions were works based on meticulous study of the actual remains and great learning, resulting from years of studying ancient monuments. In reality, Adam and his artists chose archaeological truths selectively and combined them with invented details, in depicting the ruins and making reconstructions; even the frontispiece was an invention, depicting actual architectural elements of the palace removed from their original setting and artfully arranged together in a fictive scene. A notable and important exception to Adam’s practice of altering the truth for the sake of art and personal gain, however, was the plan of the palace, which was, impressively, precisely accurate. One discerning reader, Edward Gibbon, hazarded to point out the liberties taken in the plate renderings: “There is reason to suspect,” he remarked, “that the elegance of his design and engravings has some what [sic] flattered the objects which it was their purpose to represent.”\textsuperscript{594} Reinhart Koselleck called this process the “aesthetisation” of history and recognized it as a foundation of historicism.\textsuperscript{595} Stephan Bann has remarked that the period between 1750 and 1850 saw an increase in the production of “pseudo-historical forgeries,” conceptual works posing as historical originals.\textsuperscript{596} This poetic mode of imaging demonstrated the

\textsuperscript{593} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{594} Cited in Salter, \textit{Four Emperors and an Architect}, 96. \\
conviction that the past can be brought into a new and inspiring relationship with the present; a historical attitude promulgated in the work of Piranesi and Winkelmann.

Although Adam’s public believed they were looking at accurate renderings of the monuments at Split, in actuality, they were viewing emblems, or symbolic representations of the past, rather than of historical facts, or empirical knowledge. The creative freedom that he exercised remained difficult to detect largely due to the lack of comparative resources — Adam’s was the only publication of the ancient palace, and travelers rarely reached Split. The images of ruins and reconstructions were also uncritically received because they represented, respectively, two familiar and co-extant traditions of eighteenth-century architectural drawing, the Piranesian and Neo-Palladian. Both of these were more popular than archeological renderings. In choosing to market his book as an archeological study, while illustrating it in visual idioms that were widely understood, Adam ensured that his book would appeal to the broadest possible audience.

The inventiveness of the illustrations has not gone completely unrecognized. Iain Gordon Brown and Eileen Harris have noted the compositional liberties taken by Clérisseau in the creation of his picturesque scenes for the book, including invented landscapes and the insertion of human figures and vegetation, which was a symbol of deterioration and decay.\(^{597}\) They argue that each formal decision was calculated to induce an emotional response from the viewer, while capturing the expressive capacity of ancient architecture and ruins. Brown has also noted that Adam “improved” upon the ancient Romans by representing certain architectural features as he thought they ought to

be, not as they actually were; this, of course, “interfered with his role as an archaeologist recording the remains with scholarly impartiality.”

Detailed analysis of the ways in which Adam and his team altered the architecture of the palace and temples is rewarding. Some changes were made to improve pictorial compositions, and this entailed alterations of the shape, contour, and massing of architectural forms, and selective modifications to the stone work, including the shape and placement of blocks, and the distribution and thickness of mortar joints. The imposition of artful, uneven distribution of light and shade heightened the romantic aesthetic, and also altered how the buildings were perceived.

Yet, Adam and his artists imposed these changes not merely to increase pictorial effect of the prints, but also to advertise in cognito Adam’s personal architectural style. Throughout the plates for the palace complex the draughtsmen made systematic choices that endowed the ancient ruins with a false degree of stylistic cohesion and unity, and an untruthful resemblance to Adam’s work. Adam’s artists altered some details of ornament that actually existed in the palace complex, and replaced them with new decorative forms.

Alterations made to surviving ancient forms in order to imitate Adam’s style are found throughout the book. All of the palace’s ornamental details were endowed with more regular spacing, more consistent patterns, deeper relief, additional flourishes, and thinner, more precise lines. These changes endowed the palace, untruthfully, with greater decorative complexity, refinement, lightness, and elegance—characteristics closely aligned with Adam’s decorative syntax. Furthermore, in nearly each plate, in both views of ruins and restorations, the draughtsmen regularized and elongated the proportions of

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598 Brown, Monumental Reputation, 38.
architectural details, especially columns, capitals, and arches. For example, the capitals of the columns of the peristylium of the palace are, in reality, each of different character and proportion; in *Ruins*, Adam and his artists depicted them as identical, elongated them, and to give each additional ornamental detail. (Figures 4.9 & 4.11) The balcony corbels of the peristylium (Figure 4.11) were similarly regularized and made less angular, and Adam’s draughtsmen also removed the impost blocks on the Porta Aurea (Figures 4.15 & 4.16), which existed on the actual ancient structure, and altered the stringcourse to increase the façade’s unity. (Figure 4.17)

The manipulation of features of the interior of the Temple of Jupiter, made by Clérisseau, who created all of the picturesque plates for *Ruins*, mimicked the visual experience of an Adam interior. In the “View of the Inside of the Temple of Jupiter” the meticulously and vividly rendered architectural ornament within molding and entablatures revealed more fully the interior’s complexity and beauty than viewing the space in person. (Figure 4.18) Clérisseau also gave the interior exaggerated dimensions and emphatically delineated the outline of each stone and brick in order to breathe artificial life into the patterns in the marble jointing, arches and brickwork that would not be apparent to the naked eye. These changes enlivened the image and activated the eye to move continuously. In this ancient interior, however, unlike modern Adam interiors, much of the kinetic energy of the surface was created by the patterning of the masonry, and by stone carving, rather than molded sculpted stucco and paint.

All of the visual distortions made by Adam and his draftsmen are anachronistic acts. These images depict decorative tendencies favored in present-day eighteenth-century Europe, especially by Adam, as if they had already existed in the ancient past and
were developed by the Romans. The manipulations were subtle enough so that it appeared that Adam had merely taken inspiration from Roman invention, rather than copied their achievements.

Adam also used this publication as a means to legitimize his penchant for intricate ornamentation in the decoration of interiors. In an age that associated excessive ornamentation with immorality and impropriety, as exemplified in the out-of-fashion and often condemned baroque and rococo styles, Adam found justification for his decorative exuberance in both aesthetic theory and historical precedent. He noted that although the decorative band that articulated the door of the Temple of Aesculapius (Figure 4.2), “may indeed be objected with Reason, that it is too much ornamented for an Outside Door…we have many Examples in Palmyra and Baalbek, of Outside Doors very much loaded with Ornament.”

In his explanation of the door of the Temple of Jupiter (Figure 4.19), Adam claimed that “the Dressing of this Door, though uncommon, has been a bold and pleasing Effect.”

Adam was likely encouraged to pursue his inherent stylistic tendencies by his friend and mentor, Piranesi. In the plates of the great printmaker’s *Della Magnificenza e d'Architettura de'Romani* (1761), he posed a visual argument that the Romans were exceptionally creative precisely because of their decorative exuberance. Piranesi defended his own passion for abundant ornamentation, writing “it is not the multiplicity of ornaments which offends the Spectator but the bad disposition of them.”

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599 Adam, *Ruins* (1764), Description for Plate XLVI, “Part of the Door of the Temple [of Aesculapius] to a Larger Scale.”
600 Adam, *Ruins* (1764), Description for Plate XXXII, “Part of the Door of the Temple [of Jupiter] to a Larger Scale.”
601 Piranesi, *Della Magnificenza e d'Architettura de'Romani* (1761).
It is also significant that in their depictions of eighteenth-century state of the palace and temple, Adam and his artists drew heavily on Neo-Palladian interpretations of ancient architecture as well as archaeological evidence. The viewer who compared the image of the ruined palace and its reconstructed façade was asked to perceive the latter as the logical corollary of the former, although it was not. Conditioned by looking at images of architecture in Neo-Palladian publications such as James Gibb’s *Book of Architecture* (1728) and Colen Campbell’s *Vitruvius Britannicus* (1715-25), among others, most viewers would likely have accepted Adam’s invented details as fact, rather than fancy, because they had seen no alternatives. Some of Adam’s most inventive Neo-Palladian “corrections” included the decorative details of the south wall of the palace. (Figure 4.20) All of the crowning elements of that wall, including the continuous entablature, the weighty entablatures over all three “Modern Venetian Windows,” and the crowning stories of the symmetrical, flanking towers, were Adam’s creations. In the description of the plate that shows both the ruinous state of the palace and his reconstruction, he wrote:

In this Plate [VIII] I’ve given the Ancient Wall of the Crypto Porticus in its present State, to shew my Authority for the Restored Elevation. The Center Part over the Door into the vaulted Story, is now entirely destroyed, which I have supplied, by following the Style of the two End Windows next to the Towers, and from the Porticus to the Vestibulum. In Imitation of which I have put a Triangular Pediment, as I think it extremely probable the Architect to this Palace would chuse to distinguish the center of so long a Building, and the Vacuity answers to this Decoration. The Whole of the Arcade and Basement Story of this Front, are built of the beautiful Free-Stone from Tragurium, which appears little inferior to Marble. The Columns of the two End Windows are of Granite.

The invented central pavilion, with a pediment, completed the transformation of the palace into a work that resembled a contemporary building. Adam, in fact, transformed the palace into a modified Palladian villa, complete with a tripartite façade composition, perfect mirror symmetry, and a lucid system of harmonic proportional relationships.
Adam’s presentation of his own stylistic innovations, and to a certain extent established Neo-Palladian forms, in the guise of ancient precedent was a radical and revolutionary form of “untruthfulness,” but one which was not detected in his own time. This was more than merely an architectural marketing technique; it also betokened Adam’s participation in the transformation of architectural publishing. Throughout the century, architects published sumptuous illustrated books of measured drawings that did not report historical facts. Pattern books, for example, often depicted idealized representations. Other publications were untruthful in the sense that they were primarily advertisements of their author’s work and taste, designed to flatter the author’s most important patrons.

Blomfield identified Colen Campbell as “the most conspicuous offender” in the authorship of architectural books that could not be trusted. He argued that the first three volumes of Vitruvius Britannicus demonstrated unmistakably that “Campbell was either uncritical or ignorant of the best work then done in architecture, or that he was malicious and uncandid.” Blomfield was particularly offended by Campbell’s resistance to recognize the contributions of Sir Christopher Wren, or to include a sizeable sampling of Wren’s many important buildings. Likewise, he found Campbell’s preoccupation with recognition and flattery of various noble patrons and his emphasis on the correctness of designs according to academic rules, rather than to “reasonableness or imaginative power” to be “the worst part of his book.” These “untruthful” works should be understood as part of the modern tendency to privilege individual points of view.

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603 Ibid.
604 Ibid., 218.
It is significant that in this landmark publication, Adam represented two Romantic ideals: the ruin and the original masterpiece. In architecture, ruins were often linked to the idea of fragment, and the dialectic of “fragment” and “wholeness” permeated architectural and philosophical writing in the second half of the eighteenth century. The new, modern idea that fragments, or remnants of past monuments could function as tools in the construction of credible images of the past was foundational to the development of several modern disciplines, such as antiquarianism, archaeology, and art history.

Eberhard Östermann’s Das Fragment: Geschichte einer ästhetische Idee (1991) explained that a fragment was seen as an aesthetic postulate that questioned the classical ideal of beauty, which was associated with “completeness” and “perfection.” Adam’s study and presentation of ruins echoed contemporary theories of the sublime, a concept with which beauty was often paired, especially in relation to ruins. As Sandby noted in his first lecture on architecture, “when we contemplate the noble Ruins and Monuments of Antiquity, we are struck with that awe and admiration, which naturally attends the survey of objects, that excite ideas of the Sublime & Beautiful.”

The “Adamitic mode,” Etruscan Style, and the Idea of Style in the Age of Adam

The first half of the eighteenth century had been the era of English Palladian architecture and, with some great exceptions, such as Lord Burlington’s Chiswick House,

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605 Eberhard Östermann, Das Fragment: Geschichte einer ästhetische Idee (1991). The main chapters of Östermann’s study are concentrated on the fragment as an aesthetic concept in the Romantic literature in the writings of Schiller, Goethe, and Schlegel, on the significance of the notion in the history of philosophy of Ernst Bloch, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor Adorno, and finally on the question of fragment in the philosophy of Nietzsche and in so-called post-structuralism of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. As Östermann presented it, the “history” of fragment is far from being a linear development of the concept; it is rather a set of glimpses, recoveries of the notion employed in the discourse on art and history.

606 Sandby, SaT/1/1, Lecture 1, f. 5.
London (completed in 1729), architects adopted a conservative, academic aesthetic, which had been codified in Renaissance treatises, rather than expressed individual tastes. Looking back on this phenomenon in the later nineteenth century, the Blomfield bemoaned that that the “weak point” of “early eighteenth-century architects is their lack of strong individuality.” He continued, “There is abundant indication in their work of knowledge of architecture, but little trace of enthusiasm or inspiration. It is a trifle cold and colorless; so much so that, without documentary evidence, it would often be difficult to say whether a given building was by James, or Archer, Kent or Campbell.” Overtly rejecting the impersonal uniformity of Palladianism, Adam refreshingly insisted on the significance of defining a distinctive, idiosyncratic style, which distinguished him in the increasingly competitive and visually sophisticated culture of eighteenth-century Britain.

Adam also played an important role within the field of architecture in the eighteenth-century’s larger project to define the idea of “style” and to emancipate the study of forms from purely idealistic or cultural matrices. In his perception of style as a phenomenon that could be given shape by an empowered individual artist, Adam participated in a widespread Romantic movement that began to filter into Western Europe in the second half of the eighteenth-century. His intention and success in presenting two “new” styles to the modern world (his “Adam Style” and the Etruscan Style), and his introduction of a distinctive, personal visual language radically broke with the living traditions of eighteenth-century British architecture. Adam was ambitious and his work helped to reorient the discourse surrounding one of the most pressing and rapidly developing aesthetic concepts of his era.

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608 Ibid.
Adam biographer Doreen Yarwood has aptly remarked, the ingenious architect “was alive to the stylistic debate of his time, but would not waste himself in argument.”609 Although he did not deliberate about the idea of style, Adam’s frequent use of the term in the Works set it apart from other books on architecture of his era. In just the first volume, one can identify four uses of the term, which reflect the complexity and breadth of its use in the period: while the first and second of his uses of “style” referred to cultural idioms and taste, respectively, the third referred to method of design and the fourth denoted architectural character. In the preface to the first fascicle, Adam referred to “the gothick style” and, later, to a “national style of ornament” (which Adam claimed to have invented), and, then, in the preface of the third fascicle, he described a brass candelabrum executed in the “style of modern Italy.” In these three cases, Adam associated style with culture and, more abstractly, to nationalism. Contrastingly, in the preface to the third fascicle, Adam explained that he had made “various designs for Luton House in different styles.” Here, “style” took on its most abstract meaning, denoting taste. Next, in footnote B of the same preface, he boasted, that he had invented a “new stile of composition for those parts of interior decoration,” which departs from that of the Palladian tradition; in this case, Adam used “stile” to mean a method, or process of design. Finally, in preface to the second fascicle of the first volume (May 1774), he remarked that the decoration of orders should adhere to “the stile of the building where it is employed.” “Stile” in this example designates character, or decorum.

609 Yarwood, Robert Adam, 15.
The “Adamitic mode”

In a letter of 1777 to the Countess of Upper Ossory 93, Horace Walpole, remarked:

I do wish you had Lord Villiers's house….it is brave, magnificently furnished, and in good taste….there is a noble hall and staircase, an excellent drawing-room to the street, vast eating-room, and another chamber. On the first floor an anteroom, and three more very large rooms all four quintessenced with Adamitic mode, and yet not filigreed into puerility like the Hotel de Derby.610

It is clear that by “Adamitic mode” Walpole referred at least to a mode of interior design, and one which was evolving quickly. The “Hotel de Derby” that Walpole mentioned was the London townhouse on Grosvenor Square that Adam had designed for the Earl of Derby in the mid-1770s. While the “Adamitic mode” here referred to interior design, as the bulk of Adam’s work encompassed renovations of existing houses, it was also applied to exteriors, for which Adam had developed an almost equally distinctive and personally attributable formal language.

The idea of the “Adamitic mode,” more commonly called in later centuries the “Adam Style,” has become commonplace in modern architectural discourse. Even in his day, Adam designs were distinctive and recognizable. John Fleming and others have shown, using surviving epistolary evidence, that the Adam Style may be attributed nearly wholly to Robert and not, as is often supposed, the product of joint work.611 All of the defining monuments of the Adam Style, including Kedleston Hall and Syon House, were designed by Robert and executed under his personal supervision, during James’s three-year Grand Tour through Italy (from May 1760 to October 1763) and before James joined the firm in 1763. James accepted his secondary role very early in their partnership. In a letter from Rome to his family, for example, he wrote: “tell Bob that I…pardon him for

610 Bolton, Architecture of Robert and James Adam, 112 & 114.
611 Fleming, Robert Adam, 312.
superior merit...I am much less ambitious than Caesar, I am contented to hold a second place.”\textsuperscript{612}

Robert Adam had established his distinctive style in the publication of the \textit{Works} and, as discussed previously, also anachronistically in \textit{Ruins}. At the time of the publication of the \textit{Works} it was still a fairly new practice to sell books of designs by a single, contemporary architect. This trend had begun in 1728 with James Gibbs’s \textit{Book of Architecture}, containing \textit{designs of buildings and ornaments} and was thus forty-five years old when the first fascicle of the \textit{Works} appeared in 1773. A cousin to Gibb’s work was Colen Campbell’s \textit{Vitruvius Britannicus} (published in three volumes between 1715 and 1725), which was the first book of British architecture to present a national style.

At this time it was also unusual for an architect to market his designs as possessing a unique style, rather than conforming to a “true” or “universal” style of architecture. The “true” style of architecture, as Gibbs and others explained in the prefaces to contemporary pattern books, was governed above all by proportion, i.e. the relationship of the parts to the whole, and a generalized sense of simplicity and regularity. A true style might allow the modification of universal principles as outlined in the classical canon to accommodate regional customs, climate, and practical needs.

In the eighteenth century, individual designers were typically identified with individual monuments, whether book or building, rather than styles. An exception was “Palladianism”, the sole eponymous style prior to the appearance of the “Adam Style.” It took the name from association with the books and architecture of the Italian architect Andrea Palladio (1508-80), but also drew inspiration from the theories and forms of sixteenth-century Italian architecture more generally.

\textsuperscript{612} Clerk of Penicuik Muniments: GD18/4884. Cited in Sanderson, \textit{Robert Adam}, 34.
In the history of style, Adam is distinguished as one of the first architects in Britain to raise new questions concerning the origin and nature of that unstable concept. Simultaneously, in the Works, he claimed to work within a universal style, to have created a national style of architecture, and to have invented a distinctive, individual idiom. While previous discussions of style had chiefly concerned the working of local cultural influences upon universal ideals, the introduction of the idea of individual style now inflected the debate. This upended the longstanding custom in architectural writing and practice of subsuming individual identity within a universal standard. In the Works, moreover, while other books of designs had set out conservative statements of adherence to the ideal of universal architectural style, Adam proudly proclaimed his improvement and distinctive manipulation of it, the product of which was a unique and superior style that showcased his personal preferences over universal ideals.

Chambers called Adam’s Works a “presumptuous book” for boasting to have significantly improved the universal “True Style of Decoration.” Adam’s rival also expostulated that he had decorated “Melbourne House…in a manner almost diametrically opposite to [Adam]; and more, as I flatter myself, in the True Style, as approaching nearer to the most approved style of the Ancients.” At the heart of Chambers’s riposte lay his disapproval of Adam’s assertion that an individual architect’s style might eclipse the true and universal style. This conservative architect perceived Adam’s contribution to be trifling, consisting of only “little poor ornaments and extravagant forms.”

**Etruscan Style**

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The second style Adam introduced has come to be known as the “Etruscan Style,” and the preface of the first fascicle of the second volume of the Works is dedicated to its presentation. Adam modeled the style on the decorative motifs found on “Etruscan” pottery. Adam reported that this unusual style had debuted in the dressing-room of the Countess of Derby’s London townhouse (Derby House) which Walpole would disparage. He explained that this “new style of decoration” differs “from any thing [sic] hitherto practised in Europe,” and revealed that both the color and the “style of the ornament” of the dressing room were “imitated from” recently unearthed Etruscan vases and urns. Addressing potential patrons, he underscored the uniqueness of this design idiom, as he had done when introducing the Adam Style, claiming that this was the first instance in either the ancient or modern world when Etruscan vase decoration had been applied to interior design.

Adam’s friend and colleague, the prolific and polemical Italian print-maker and architect Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-78), undoubtedly inspired Adam’s ideas about the orders and the Etruscans and encouraged his drive to innovate: Adam considered Piranesi’s “amazing and ingenious fancies” as “the greatest fund for inspiring and instilling invention in any lover of architecture that can be imagined.” Piranesi had openly ridiculed the Renaissance’s indiscriminate adherence to architectural rules and championed the idea that it was the Etruscans, not the Greeks, who had lifted architecture to perfection.7715 Ironically, Piranesi’s “Etruscan” style, like Adam’s, was chiefly shaped by the newly excavated Greek Attic pottery, which the Etruscans had imported into Italy.

7714 Robert to James Adam, 18 June 1755. Cited in Fleming, Robert Adam, 167. Also reprinted in Eileen Harris, Genius of Robert Adam: His Interiors (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 1. Piranesi did not produce much as an architect. His architectural work includes the Aventine Chapel and its piazza, Castel Gandolfo; and interiors in Rome; he also designed furniture and fireplaces for English patrons.
7715 See Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Della Magnificenza ed Architettura de’ Romani (Rome, 1761).
as grave goods in the fourth and fifth centuries. Adam’s contemporary and collaborator Josiah Wedgwood also legendarily mistook Greek wares from the fourth and fifth centuries as Etruscan, even naming his new pottery manufactory “Etruria.”

For inspiration and guidance in the composition of his prefatory remarks on the Etruscan style, Adam relied on the work of his friends, Allan Ramsay and Piranesi. Ramsay’s *Dialogue on Taste* of 1755 appears to have provided greatest assistance, yet Adam also heavily depended upon Piranesi’s *Della Magnificenza* and “Apologetical Essay” in the *Diverse Maniere d’Adornare I Cammini* (1769). None of these sources appeared in the footnotes of his preface, however, inflating the perception of Adam’s unique erudition in this specialized field.

Just as a principle aim of the first volume of the *Works* was to identify the origin of the style of decoration that came to be known as the “Adam Style,” a chief purpose of the second volume was to identify the origin of his Etruscan Style. Adam claimed his authorship boldly: “we have mentioned these circumstances, with more particular attention, in order that, if judges in architecture shall think any praise due to the discovery of another class of decoration and embellishment, they may know to whom the art is indebted for this improvement.” The urgency in making this claim arose from the rapid proliferation of the newly introduced Etruscan Style, which (much like the Adam Style) was instantly popular. Adam boasted that “several apartments [in the Etruscan Style] were immediately designed, and have been executed under our direction at the house of Earl Bathurst, and that of the Countess Dowager of Home in Town, and at Mr. Child’s at Osterley Park, in the Country of Middlesex.”
Adam justified and promoted his innovation by appealing to his patrons’ high estimation of Roman culture and linking the Etruscans and Romans. He argued that “the Romans borrowed, not only many of their customs, their civil institutions, and religious ceremonies, but also their first knowledge of every art and science, from their ancient and ingenious neighbors, the Etruscans.” He especially stressed this indebtedness in the field of architecture, noting that “the Romans had derived from Etruria such information as enabled them to make a very considerable progress in many branches of architecture” and that it was from the Etruscans that the Romans derived “the great and masterly style in which they planned and constructed their public works.”

Adam marshaled in the footnotes of this fascicle an extensive bibliography both to support the claims made in his text and to extol in greater detail the virtues of Etruscan building, which were attested by various ancient and modern authors. Adam reported, for example, that the Greek writer Heraclides Ponticus (387-312BC) posited that “the Etruscans, by their laws and constitution, gave all possible encouragements to the polite and to artists.” (By “constitution,” Adam referred to their cultural practices, beliefs, values, and memories.) According to the Marquis Scipio Maffei, the Etruscans “had an admirable quarry of marble near Luna [thought to be Carrara, Adam mentioned], and were famous…for their skill in architecture and masonry.” Maffei also asserted that “the noblest amphitheaters in the world were those of the Etruscans.” Moreover, Livy wrote that when Tarquin “determined to build a temple to Jupiter” he “applied for” Etruscan, rather than Greek artists. Adam referenced further scholarship that corroborated the extraordinary inventive prowess of the Etruscans, who were credited with first use of atria (courts), and, Adam added that Leon Battista Alberti credited the Etruscans with
creation of the Doric Epistylium (the lowest part of the entablature of the Doric order, which rests directly on the abacus). Curiously, Adam neglected other significant points that Alberti made about the Etruscans. In book six, for example, the Italian architect wrote that the Romans inherited not only “miraculous…labyrinths and sepulchers” from the Etruscans, but also “old and excellent precepts about the building of temples.” Then in book seven, Alberti attributed the invention of statues to the Etruscans. Finally, Adam reminded the reader of the well-known Etruscan Order.

Despite the extensive evidence of Etruscan prominence in building that Adam mustered, their architectural contributions were a matter of debate in eighteenth-century Europe. Two erudite figures close to Adam held some of the most polarized views: while Piranesi believed that the Etruscans had brought architecture to perfection, Chambers derided their efforts, writing in his unpublished notes, “the Etruscans could not teach the Romans what they were themselves ignorant of…whoever reads Pliny's description of Porsenas Sepulchre at Elusium, the masterpiece of Etruscan architecture, must see that the taste of decoration was absurd in the highest degree.” It was not Etruscan architectural inventions that most interested Adam, however, (hence the relegation of their architectural achievements to footnotes), but their decorative abilities, especially those of vase-painting, which could also be seen in their architectural decoration. The anthemion, a decoration with radiating petals, for example, is frequently found both on vases and on temple acroteria.

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617 Ibid., 7.16.133-5
618 Chambers, CHA 1/1/1-6, Lecture 2, f. 30.
The Idea of Style in the Age of Adam

Adam’s invention of two styles should be considered in the context of the discourse surrounding the idea of style, which in the eighteenth century grew increasingly complex and nuanced. Theoretical debate about style reached a climax of convolution, during Adam’s time, driven in part by the urge to classify and in part by the needs and increasing complexity of a modern, global, commercial society. The widespread use of the term “style” in architectural history is indicative of significant changes in eighteenth-century European culture. One major change was the growing awareness of the people, ideas, and objects of different cultures, which had been largely isolated in previous centuries. The continuing exploration of the new world, the expansion of trade, the emergence of a global economy, the proliferation of printed materials, the increase in travel and archaeological investigation, and the flourishing of consumerism brought these wide-spread people and things together and accelerated cultural circulation, integration, and transformation. In architecture, the discussion of style tended to center upon the construction of tidy abstract frameworks for classification, which could accommodate all aspects of the multifaceted profession and art of architecture. One of the most significant features of the eighteenth-century consideration of architectural style was the fracturing of the concept of a single, universal style of architecture into distinct cultural idioms, and with this came the development of more precise meanings and usages for the terms “classical,” “architecture,” and “style.”

It was not until the eighteenth century that the meaning of “classical” stabilized in the writings of British, French, and German authors. As a reference to ancient virtue, “classique” was first recorded in France in the sixteenth century. In the eighteenth
century, “classical” took on various meanings in Britain with reference to architecture. Principally, the term designated the set of constructive and decorative forms found in the buildings of ancient Rome (widespread admiration for Greek architecture would not arise until near the end of the eighteenth century) and later imitations and iterations of Roman forms throughout the world. But it also referred to a method of design and attitude toward form, structure, and content that transcended cultural boundaries, being rooted in universal ideals, which was thought, however, to capture the spirit of ancient buildings.

The championing of the ideal of a single, great, universal and true style of classical architecture almost automatically entailed cultural control, and evolved as a strategy for establishing and validating a hierarchy among the styles at a time when their multiplicity was being discovered. The classical forms of Roman architecture stood at the top of this hierarchy and were identified as analogous to the social elite (who were also expected to appreciate them) as opposed to the emerging democratic public, who were seen as an increasing threat to the ruling classes. The model for the hierarchy of architectural styles, all of which were perceived as rooted in classical ideals, was the established hierarchy of languages.

Classicism as a canon had its roots in the expression of grammatical Latin. The Roman writer Aulus Gellius first formulated the term “classicus” to refer to the solution of grammatical problems by adopting the usage of a model author. Gellius stressed, however, that the model writer must come from an elite tax-paying class: “some one of the orator or poets, who at least belong to the older band, that is, a first-class tax-paying author, not a proletarian.”

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based on property qualifications, and citizens of the first class were soon called simply *classici*. 620

The concept of a “classical canon” thus first applied to language and referred to both proper grammatical construction and high social standing and intellectual capacity of its author. For fifteen centuries Latin was the elite and universal language of Europe, and its use connoted class, culture, power, and prestige. Proper Latin distinguished the learned from the ignorant, the civilized from the uncivilized, and the correct from the incorrect. This linguistic matrix was imported to the arts, and the use of the classical language of architecture was considered an underpinning of traditions, identity, and meaning in modern society. More practically, as Sandby remarked in his third Royal Academy lecture, working within the classical idiom of the Romans was advisable because it ensured some degree of professional success:

[The ancients] have shown us the way & it will be our faults if we quit the road that leads towards it. From the many elegant & noble remains of theirs, they have transmitted down to us an Architectonic alphabet, if the Rules & lessons derived from thence may be so called, which like that of Languages, is capable of furnishing us with innumerable combinations. In this let the ingenious professors of our Art, employ their talents; a diligent and judicious application of those Rules will be the most likely means of insuring success. 621

The acceptance of a single, ideal style of architecture found resistance, however, among those who were weaving the new fabric of modern society. A culture of vigorous criticism characterized late-eighteenth and nineteenth-century intellectual life, driven by the expansion of middle-class patronage and the diffusion of texts. This climate of debate disfavored collective agreement about the hierarchical nature of styles and about which style (or styles) embodied architecture’s most basic and truest principles.

621 Sandby, SaT/1/1, Lecture 3, f. 47.
Indeed, during this period, many “classical” styles of architecture proliferated, which provoked redefinition of the term “architecture” itself. Before the eighteenth-century, the term “architecture” denoted only the architecture of ancient Rome and buildings inspired by Roman architecture in the Renaissance. In the eighteenth century, however, the meaning of the term expanded to embrace the idea of building according to universal principles and rules, which might, however, shift according to cultural and geographic conditions, and might be executed in any number of historical styles. The idea of a single “true architecture” had weakened as cultural relativism gained ground.

Inspired by the variety of forms and design strategies in the ancient architecture of Asia, Africa, and Europe, and driven by a belief in liberty and the romantic ideal of the creative potential of the individual, architects of the later eighteenth century embarked on experiments that emphasized the visual power of built forms and new knowledge of a “universal” but diverse and global history of architecture. Because architects of the eighteenth century traveled much more extensively than their Italian Renaissance counterparts, they became aware of the different cultures of the present and acquired a more correct and comprehensive vision of the past.

This was the first time in history that one culture had confronted such a variety of historical styles, classical and otherwise. In Britain, this diversity was almost overwhelming. There, Gothic architecture had never died out, Palladianism (associated with the sixteenth century rather than antiquity) was potent, Northern Renaissance (or Dutch) architecture had been a steady presence for at least two centuries, and knowledge of the architecture in Egypt, India, and China was steadily increasing due to expanding trade. The archaeological investigation of Greek architecture established a third classical
standard alongside the ancient Roman and “Italian manner” (Renaissance) modes of building. Eighteenth-century European architecture also comprised archaeologically-based reproductions, recapitulations, and imaginative reconstructions of all known styles from ages past. These included Neo-Assyrian, Neo-Egyptian, Neo-Roman, Neo-Greek, Neo-Gothic, Neo-Romanesque, Neo-Renaissance or Palladianism, Indian, Persian, and Chinese.

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Coincident with Robert Adam’s advertisement of his personal style and the growing awareness of the many styles associated with diverse cultures, Adam’s contemporary (and acquaintance) Johann Joachim Winckelmann’s refined the art historical use of the concept of style in his *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums* (1764). In it, he applied the term to ancient Greek art, which he defined and compared to Roman art, judging Greek to be superior. In part, he argued that while forms reflected, represented, and embodied cultural attributes and values, they were not tied to single cultures. It was in the work of Winckelmann, and other early art historians, including the German writers Goethe and Heinrich Wackenroder (1773-98), that notions of historical periodization also begin to develop.622

Style is a complicated topic in part because of the expansiveness of its meaning and the gigantic historical span of its use. From a distant perspective, throughout history, style can be seen to have been often employed to cope with difference, or as a force of reconciliation. Style has remained a useful index of the variations of extant, evolving conditions. The unique nature of a style frequently depends not on invention, but on the

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accommodation of new conditions, ideas, and things within existing frameworks and systems.

Since the nineteenth century, style has been closely connected to historicism, the new sense of history that emerged in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in which history was understood as a process of dynamic change, comprising events and epochs of markedly different character or style, yet equal value. A central tension in the historicist vision was the relationship between continuity and recurrent, often violent change and cultural diversity.

In Britain, stylistic change began to be thought of as evolutionary in the time of Christopher Wren. It was perceived to evolve both through successive applications of the fundamental principles of geometrical beauty, functional utility, and structural stability, and as a result of changing customs. Thus, each style bore the imprint of the particular society – its unique values and ideas – that created it. The choice of historical styles was believed to be a choice among associative cultural meanings and values. To select a particular style was to identify contemporary society with the earlier cultures that had created and/or used it.

Prior to Adam the British architect who contributed most to the national discussion of architectural style was Wren. He was the first Briton to alter significantly the classical canon and to shift the paradigm of style from universal to cultural. His most significant contribution to a new perception of classicism was his conception of architectural change. Wren understood architecture to be evolutionary, susceptible to improvement, but also to decline. Change, he believed, was fundamentally dependent on cultural conditions.
For Wren, the classical orders, architectural style, and beauty were all products of specific and unique cultural circumstances and customs, rather than universal law. He did postulate, however, that the orders were both natural and divine in origin and that the root of all the orders was the so-called “Tyrian” or Phoenician order, which was based on the form of a thick tree, and which had been used by builders from Tyre, a city in Phoenicia, to erect the Temple of Solomon. Subsequent orders, he reckoned, represented the values and ideals of the peoples who made them. The creation of new orders, for Wren, took great imagination and judgment, because the process must embrace the conditions of particular cultural groups.

Beautiful architecture, Wren argued was the direct product of one nation and was relative — only recognized within the cultural context in which it was created. His belief that concepts of beauty were subject to changing cultural conditions went hand in hand with the idea that culturally-specific notions of beauty might conflict with theories of beauty set forth in the classical canon. Wren believed that men could be convinced to accept what was not inherently beautiful, such as oblique lines, extreme proportions, and irregularity, if they became familiar due to “customary causes.”

Wren also had a significant impact on the expanding acceptance of newly identified “classical” styles, such as Egyptian and Phoenician. Like his contemporary, Austrian architect Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach (1656 –1723), Wren believed that the architectural orders had originated in ancient civilizations all over the world, including the Near East and Far East, and even ancient Britain, as evidenced by Stonehenge, whose monolithic colonnade was then thought to be an ancient variant of the

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624 Ibid., 137.
Tuscan order. The Phoenician, Hebrew, Assyrian, Roman, and Greek orders, Wren believed, were formed by cultural exchange and were equally valid classical styles. He and subsequent architects in Britain, however, did staunchly believe in a hierarchy among the greater and lesser forms of classicism.

In eighteenth-century Britain’s academic culture, Royal Academy Professors consistently discussed the relationship between cultural and universal ideals and instructed students to learn to combine them judiciously. While Reynolds, for example, maintained the primacy of the universal, professing that “…the whole beauty and grandeur of the art [of painting] consists, in my opinion, in being able to get above all singular forms, local customs, particularities, and details of every kind,” he also acknowledged the significance of “secondary truths,” in an attempt to rationalize the growing trend of art that depicted regional conditions and cultures:

If what has been advanced be true, that beside this beauty or truth, which is formed on the uniform, eternal and immutable laws of nature, and which of necessity can be but one; that besides this one immutable verity there are likewise what we have called apparent or secondary truths, proceeding from local and temporary prejudices, fancies, fashions, or accidental connexion [sic] of ideas; if it appears that these last have still their foundation, however slender, in the original fabric of our minds; it follows that all these truths or beauties deserve and require the attention of the artist, in proportion to their stability or duration, or as their influence is more or less extensive. And let me add, that as they ought not to pass their just bounds, so neither do they, in a well-regulated taste, at all prevent or weaken the influence of those general principles, which alone can give to art its true and permanent dignity.

Like the painter, the architect was expected by the academy to reconcile universal and regional ideals. Sandby, in his fourth Royal Academy lecture, reminded his students that while the principles in architecture remained constant, the rules must change according to regional necessities:

When the true taste of architecture was revived, under the patronage of the earl of Burlington, we reformed these prodigious openings, and, by servilely following the

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625 Reynolds, *Discourses on Art*, 44 (Discourse III, s. 103-5).
626 Ibid., 141-2 (Discourse VII, s. 779-92).
Italian mode, we made great piers & falling windows. Falling immediately into the common channel of reformation, we introduced obscurity to avoid sunshine: both extremes are wrong. The number of windows proper to an Italian house is too few for an English dwelling. In Italy you would avoid the sun; in this island he is generally a welcome guest. One sort of a house has the appearance of a bird cage, the other the gloom of a prison. The present age has adopted a proper medium between these, and the improved manner of sash-making has contributed much to the appearance of many new houses.\(^627\)

In his fifth lecture, he underscored the importance of adaptation, through the relation of a humorous anecdote about a misguided contemporary:

Our great veneration for antiquity has not yet carried any one so far as to servilely copy a Greek habitation. Indeed, it would be remarkably extravagant to imitate them in this country. Every intelligible being knows that their genius, government and politics were formed on such different principles from this, and most European States, that it would be a strange absurdity to propose it, much more to put it in practice: and whoever attempts a project of this sort, will soon be convinced of his error, and pull down more hastily than he built up.

We had an instance of a similar case not many years ago. A certain nobleman in his travels eastwards resided a considerable time at Constantinople, and made curious remarks on their government & mode of living. On his return to England he began to remodel his house and to finish it in the Turkish style. He converted his chairs into soplias fixed against the walls. He stopped up his fireplace, proposing to warm himself by a moveable stove fixed under his table. He shut up all his doors except one in each room, and cut off all communication with the staircase in a suit of rooms, excepting one antechamber. The work was begun - it proceeded with all possible dispatch under his own inspection till completed -- and what was the consequence? - before the expiration of three months he awoke from his delirium - he found chairs, doors, & fireplaces so very rational & necessary accommodations in an English house, that he reversed his former decree & reinstated everything he had banished from his apartments.\(^628\)

In Adam’s time, stylistic variation was more commonly associated with cultural, geographic, and temporal differences, than with the creativity of individual architects. In general, Western architects tended to emphasize geography more than history in defining styles. Sandby and Chambers, for example, only demarcated the epochs of British architecture in terms of the broadest outline of British history, such as “early” and “late” Gothic. They referred to traditions, or styles that evolved outside Britain in geographic terms only, for instance, “Chinese” or “Indian,” without reference to time.

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\(^{627}\) Sandby, SaT/1/1, Lecture 4, ff. 65-66.
\(^{628}\) Sandby, SaT/1/1, Lecture 5, ff. 38-9.
Despite widespread discussion of style in eighteenth-century architectural writing, the term was not assigned architectural meaning in British dictionaries until the nineteenth century. It does appear, however, in eighteenth-century references to architecture’s sister arts of painting and music. The 1775 edition of Johnson’s *Dictionary*, for example, gave two new definitions of the term: as a “mode of painting” (its new third definition); and as a mode of music (“It is likewise applied to music,” the new fourth definition). In this same edition, “stile” was defined as: (1) a set of steps to pass from one enclosure to another; and (2) a pin to cast the shadow in a sundial.\(^{629}\)

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the term “stile” in English remained predominately associated with modes of speaking and writing, although it was also applied to other arts, especially music, painting, and architecture. The meaning expanded during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to refer also to a composition’s rules of decorum; the expression of thought with the minimum of words; the character of an author’s language; and the appropriate conveyance of meaning within a given genre, regardless of the author’s individuality of language. In the eighteenth century the term stile was often used synonymously with manner, mode, and taste.

The variant spelling, “style,” appeared in eighteenth-century British architectural publications in which it referred specifically to the appearance of architectural forms, especially the orders. The word *style* derives from the ancient Greek word *stylos*,

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\(^{629}\) Before the eighteenth century, the word *style* had long been used for rhetoric and literary criticism. It derived from the Latin word *stilus*, an small, needle-like writing tool used to inscribe wax tablets, and was first applied to writing in the 1st century AD by Horace and Virgil. “Stile” referred to the form and essential expressive mode of orations and poetic compositions, such as epic, sacred, or pastoral, and denoted a manner or quality of writing, rather than content. Greek commentators (e.g. Theophrastus, *On Style*) had also associated style almost exclusively with rhetoric, relating it to the latter’s persuasive function and used its categories to distinguish among various rhetorical means and effects in contrast to the substantive assertions communicated. In the eighteenth-century, the spelling of this term, stile, reflected its origin in the Latin *stilus*, rather than in its Greek equivalent *stylos*.
meaning column. By the nineteenth century the two variants of the term merged into single usage of “style.”

The most common synonyms for style remained “order,” “class,” and, more rarely, “species.” Adam explained in the July 1773 preface of the Works that the tabernacle frame is a “species of ornament.” Here he summoned the nested hierarchical system of Swedish botanist and physician Carl Linnaeus (1707-78), the father of modern taxonomy, in his Systema Naturae (first edition 1735). Use of the term species was less common in architectural writing, and more common in contemporary philosophical writings, particularly the writing of Adam’s friend the Scottish philosopher David Hume. Sandby, in his Royal Academy lectures, however, employs the term species as a synonym for style.

_Adam and the Eclectic Ideal_

Adam has been characterized as an eclectic architect since the late nineteenth century. The connotations of this are negative and have reduced Adam’s place in architectural history to an architect of compromised ability and ambition. Blomfield, for example, was among the first scholars to anoint Adam the father of the “eclectic school,” which he described as a “morbid development” in British architecture.630

Architectural scholarship has generally argued that the use of multiple historical architectural styles —often diffusely labeled an eclectic, latitudinarianist, pluralist, or historicist a practice —was a primary characteristic of the era between 1750 and 1920. This period, according to modern scholarship, was a disappointing interlude of

architectural design that interrupted an otherwise continuous tradition of building in accordance with established principles and rules. In the long nineteenth century, so the story goes, architects abandoned this method of innovative design to embrace a lower method of design rooted in copyism and rote imitation.

Significantly, eclecticism was not used in reference to architecture in the eighteenth century. The term had origins in ancient philosophy and meant in Adam’s era “a philosophy whose structural character is that of deliberately planning to select some doctrines out of many philosophies and fit them together.” Although this concept was not well known in antiquity, the practice of philosophical eclecticism survived through the Middle Ages and began to develop seriously in the late Renaissance. It maintained an essentially positive connotation as a practicing method, but there is evidence that distinctions were made between good and bad mixtures of doctrines for different sources.631

By the eighteenth century, philosophical eclecticism became well known as an ideal philosophical method, to which philosophers and intellectual historians should aspire. In Johnson’s 1792 edition of his dictionary, “eclectick” was defined as “selecting” and “choosing at will.”632 The definition of eclectic in John Ash’s dictionary matched that of Johnson’s, but added a second meaning: “the ancient philosophers, who, without attaching themselves to particular sect, selected those opinions which they judged to be most consistent with reason.”633 The insertion of the words “judgment” and “reason” was crucial, as it reinforced this practice as consistent with classical ideals. In his

632 Johnson’s Dictionary (1792).
historiography of the concept of eclecticism, eighteenth-century writer Jakob Brucker (1696-1770) wrote that “the eclectic method of philosophizing, long approved by intelligent men and practiced by philosophers of the greatest ability” reached a zenith in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the work of the Giordano Bruno (1548-1600), Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626), Tommaso Campanella (1568-1639), Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), René Descartes (1596-1650), Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716), and Christian Thomasius (1655-1728), “men who renewed the universal eclectic philosophy.”

In a similar spirit, in his monumental encyclopedia, Denis Diderot (1713-84) praised the eclectic philosopher for his modern courage, grounded in his use of reason, and radiant in his exercise of intellectual freedom:

The eclectic is a philosopher who, by riding roughshod over prejudice, tradition, antiquity, universal consent, authority, in a word everything that subjugates the mass of minds, dares to think for himself, goes back to the most clear and general principles, examines and discusses them, while admitting only what can be proven by experience and reason. After having analyzed all philosophical systems without any deference or partiality, he constructs a personal and domestic one that belongs to him. I say a “personal and domestic philosophy” because the ambition of the eclectic is to be the disciple of the human race rather than its teacher, to reform himself rather than others, to know rather than to teach the truth. He is not a man who plants and sows; he is a man who reaps and sifts. He would peacefully enjoy his harvest; and he would live happily and die unknown, if enthusiasm, vanity, or perhaps a more noble feeling did not cause him to act out of character.

Brucker, Diderot, and other modern thinkers, thus, appropriated the term “eclectic philosophy” from antiquity, but separated their understanding of it from the ancient

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634 Brucker, Eclectica philosophandi methodus, Dudum viris prudentibus commendata et a maximi ingenii philosophis culta: Historia critica philosophiae a mundi incunabulis ad nostram usque aetatem deducta (Leipzig, 1742-1744). The quotation is from vol. 4, part 1, 190, of the 2d ed. (Leipzig, 1766-1767); & Restauratores philosophiae eclecticae universae : ibid., vol. 4, part a, 543.

635 L'éclectique est un philosophe qui foulant aux pieds le préjugé, la tradition, l'ancienneté, le consentement universel, l' autorité, en un mot tout ce qui subjugue la foule des esprits, ose penser de lui-même, remonter aux principes généreux les plus clairs, les examiner, les discuter, n'admettre rien que sur le témoignage de son expérience et de sa raison; et de toutes les philosophies qu'il a analysé sans égard et sans partialité s'en faire une particulière et domestique qui lui appartienne ... il n'y a point de chef de secte qui n'ait été plus ou moins éclectique ... les Eclectiques sont parmi les philosophes ce qui sont les souverains sur la surface de la terre, les seuls qui soient restés dans l'état de nature, où tout étoit à tous. (Encyclopédie, art. "Eclectisme," vol. 5 [Paris, 1755]). This definition may be compared with Historia Critica, vol. 4, 4; for Diderot's dependence on Brucker in the philosophical articles of the Encyclopédie cf. J. Proust, Diderot et l'Encyclopédie (Paris, 1962), esp. 247-84 & 548-55.
practice of selecting sources and fitting them together. To eighteenth-century thinkers, eclecticism was defined by the practitioner's use of judgment and reason in their selection of doctrines and the artistry used to fashion them together into a single, coherent, truthful, and rhetorically persuasive argument. This was an innovative method that showcased the ingenuity and creative energy of the maker. Ancient writers were not, thus, regarded as eclectics, but rather as syncretists, by eighteenth-century philosophers, who considered them to be concerned chiefly with reconciling widely different opinions, rather than with seeking truth, however judiciously. For Brucker, for example, the ancient form of eclecticism (what he deemed syncretism) only resulted in the production of a “heap” (massa), a “largely shapeless mass…that diseased reconciliation of doctrines and opinions which are utterly discrepant” that infected modern philosophy in later centuries.636

In the final decades of the eighteenth century, changes in German philosophical thinking, especially in the work of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), dislodged eclecticism from its former high status. In this period, eclecticism became known as a negative and destructive practice, both in ancient and modern times, and in its different guises. Aversion to the ancient and modern practices of eclecticism continued to grow in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when it was gradually imported into writing on architecture to describe the combination in a single work of elements of different historical styles.

Although in the late eighteenth century the term eclecticism was used primarily in reference to philosophy, the essence of the modern idea and practice of eclecticism was

636 Brucker Eclectica philosophandi methodus (Leipzig, 1742-44), vol. a, 190 & vol. 4, part 1, 750. Brucker derived the name syncretism from Plutarch De frat. am. 490B, although he knew very well that in antiquity the term had not had this meaning. Cf. vol. 4, part 1, 750.
an active and guiding force in both architectural writing and practice. In the composition of architectural history, the eighteenth-century architect looked to the work of historians for rhetorical models, and the dominant methodology for history writing between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries was eclectic. Following in the tradition of British historians, British architectural writers, including Sandby and Chambers, drew upon a variety of architectural writings as models, rather than any single, favored author.

In architectural practice, the concept of eclecticism had an impact because it provided a blueprint for a method of design that resulted in innovation and personal expression. Both in Britain as in France, works that drew on a variety of styles became strongly associated with the nation’s deep preoccupation with liberty and the pursuit of truth. The quality of the “eclectic” work was considered to depend on the architect’s individual talent, judgment, and dedication to his studies and working methods. An architect’s judgment found nourishment, it was believed, not only in his innate ability, but also in his careful study of past styles, and his heterogeneous design was evaluated on the quality of his selections, and on how he joined various styles and forms together to produce a coherent, truthful, and beautiful whole.

The great champion of eclecticism in the late eighteenth century was one of Adam’s closest friends and a mentor, Giovanni Battista Piranesi. Piranesi’s commitment to eclecticism was perhaps first sparked in him during his apprenticeship in the early 1740s with Giovanni Antonio Scalfarotto (1697-1764), an architect known for the anti-academic character of his works and his ability to challenge classical rules and eclectically compose variegated types, such as S. Simeone Piccolo, Venice (completed in 1738). This interest was no doubt enhanced, energized, and augmented from a sustained
period of living within a fragmentary and chaotic Rome, devastated and dominated by rural archaism, and filled with architectural monuments lacking any organic relationship with each other; the landscape of Rome, characterized by crowded islands of Renaissance, Counter-Reformation, and Baroque monuments, allowed the visitor to walk through time to observe the trajectory and the major developments of the history of Western architecture in Europe. The conclusion to Piranesi’s *Divers* emphatically underscored his long-standing and evolving theory of eclecticism, and established him as the first architect to arrive at a position of historical relativism, or architectural eclecticism. Here, he wrote that architects should consult not only the Greeks for ornamental ideas, but also the Etruscans and Egyptians: “And by prudently combining the Grecian, the Tuscan, and the Egyptian together, he ought to pen himself a road to the finding out of new ornaments and new manners.”

In the eighteenth century, then, the idea that to work within the classical tradition was an act of eclecticism became increasingly accepted. With the fracturing of the classical, now known to be present in many different cultures, and the expanding dimensions of variety found in classical works, architects working within this tradition engaged an act of composition through selection and combination of the best aspects of each tradition. The increasing stress on organizing architecture into its various elements, or parts also suggested that the perception of architectural design and of all artistic invention was rooted in eclectic processes.

**Making Architecture for a New British Public**

Adam wrote for a large audience of those with architectural interests, not just architects. He explained that he conceived the *Works* to convey “instruction to the artist,”
but also that he was “desirous of submitting [his] ideas to the consideration of the public.” Adam wrote further that his first publication was meant to afford “entertainment to the connoisseur,” while he expressed hope that Ruins “might produce entertainment to the public.” With the presentation of these illustrated folios, the architect succeeded in establishing a formidable reputation, painting himself not only as an architect of considerable expertise in planning and decoration, but also as a scholar, connoisseur, and critic. Significantly, both books provided useful insights into the period’s conception of the new, emergent public, and, particularly, the architectural connoisseurs, to whom the publications were specifically directed. Adam’s books were didactic instruments publications, which subtly aiding the connoisseur of architecture to develop particular expertise in Adam’s works. With the marked increase in architectural publication in the eighteenth century, and especially the circulation of works dedicated to defining and exploring the newly demarcated branches of study that the field of architecture comprised, connoisseurship in architecture emerged as a distinct area of specialization, and the significance and number of architectural connoisseurs rapidly climbed.

The manner in which Adam’s oversized folio books appealed to artists are more readily perceived than the nuanced ways in which he catered to the general public and the connoisseur. Although neither publication was conceived principally as a pattern book, Adam intended for practicing architects to use them as a sources for designs. To facilitate imitation or copying, Adam maximized the legibility and visibility of architectural elements throughout, with large, detailed and measured plates of the most significant and

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intricate decorative forms, such as capitals, entablatures, and door frames. The inclusion of meticulously-rendered measured drawings also broadcasted to his contemporaries, and especially to artists, his desire to influence taste and to set trends in architectural style.\textsuperscript{639}

Already by 1755, Adam had established a reputation as a leading light among his peers. While living in Rome, he played the part of a rich dilettante and patron towards his fellow students and artists. “I am here like the King of Artists and have flocks of them daily about me, who come to pay court to me.”\textsuperscript{640} In authoring the \textit{Works}, Adam would have anticipated that artists would highly covet detailed renderings of his work. With this important book, he not only provided models to be copied, but he also taught artists how to extrapolate ideas and to create innovative designs from careful study of ancient works. Notably, Adam established his own work as an equally valid source of inspiration, alongside the remains of the ancient past.

Deference and connection to the “public” is a unifying thread that ran throughout the \textit{Works}. In the prefaces of the first and second fascicles of the \textit{Works} (July 1773; May 1774), for example, Adam wrote that only the “impartial public” is capable of deciding whether his works have contributed to the improvement of architecture in Britain. He further claimed that edification of the “public” in the “beautiful art of decoration, hitherto so little understood in most of the countries of Europe” was a principle aim of his efforts. At the start of the preface of the second fascicle, Adam announced that during the interval of time that elapsed since the publication of the first fascicle, he “listened with respect to the opinion of the public concerning the first number.”

\textsuperscript{639} Adam, \textit{Works} (1980), Vol. I, No. 5 (June 1778), Plate II, “Details of the Carlton House gateway; entablature and order;” & Vol. II, No. 3 (April 1775), Plate VI. “Details of the Dining Room at Shelburne House.”

\textsuperscript{640} Fleming, \textit{Robert Adam}, 159.
The presence of an idea of the public in the *Works* stands in sharp contrast to the absence of such a presence in *Ruins*. Unlike the *Works*, *Ruins* was dedicated to the King, George III, whom Adam served as Architect to the Kings Works, and reference to a “public” appeared only once, off-handedly and conventionally, in Robertson’s introduction. Adam addressed this first book to the monarch, but his second folio to a discerning public body. The shift to marketing to a dynamic public was a significant and a marker of the rise of more democratic ideals in modern eighteenth-century society.

Surviving epistolary evidence tells is that for Adam, with regard to the fine arts, the public comprised five hierarchical “classes.” These, he wrote were artists, connoisseurs, “men of taste,” “pretenders to [taste],” and what Adam called the “ignorant rabble.”641 While the term “public” in the eighteenth century typically denoted all classes, it was also used to refer specifically to Adam’s last category, the common herd. It would not be until the nineteenth century that writers, including Antoine-Chrysostome Quatremère de Quincy (1755-1849), the secretary of the French Academy, would redefine “public” as the literate, educated members of society, rather than to humanity as a whole, or only to the uneducated masses.642 It was generally believed that the opinions of the elite classes shaped those of the lower ranks.

Although addressing a book to “the public” was a longstanding literary convention, in the eighteenth century it took on new meaning. Adam lived in an era characterized by a new kind of public — one defined and shaped by the circulation and

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642 For Antoine-Chrysostome Quatremère de Quincy (1755-1849), writing in the early nineteenth century, the merely curious or simple user of a building, who but exercised his physical visual faculty, was not a member of the architectural public proper, and becomes such a citizen only by learning a theoretical framework, the product of education and enlightenment.(See Sylvia Lavin, “Re-Reading the Encyclopedia: Architectural Theory and the Formation of the Public in Late-Eighteenth-Century France,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (Jun., 1994), pp. 184-92).
consumption of printed information. Heretofore, the public constituted only people gathered in physical proximity, for whom oral, rather than written communication was primary.

A mass reading public emerged in the company of new, circulating libraries, book clubs, and the publication of books in cheap installments. The widespread literacy that characterized the second half of the eighteenth century in Britain was unprecedented. The boom in reading promoted social cohesion and because information was increasingly transmitted privately, rather than only publically and socially, a culture of critique emerged. The privacy of reading, particularly in a culture steeped in books, opened up possibilities for independence of mind, freedom of thought, and deviance from norms. Ambitious and vague statements and inconsistencies, often undiscerned or unchallenged when merely heard, were more easily detected and analyzed when encountered on the printed page.

For architecture, the new predominance of communication through print media had important effects. The public gained knowledge and shared opinions about architecture in real time and space, while looking at buildings. In the late eighteenth-century, people increasingly experienced architecture virtually, through printed images and descriptions. This virtual encounter with buildings completely altered the sense of what it meant to know an architectural monument. Members of the public might now discuss, form opinions and write about buildings that they had not visited. The interpretation of printed reproductions of architectural plans and the imagining of a building’s appearance (in three dimensions and in situ) based on written descriptions

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became important skills for the public, principally the elites, which enabled them to understand buildings more fully and deeply than ever before. This was particularly true because engraved plans of buildings were heretofore rare and expensive, exteriors often failed to make clear a building’s internal layout, and public access to interior rooms was usually restricted.

One of the most significant consequences of the emergence of a reading public was the way in which an architect’s anticipation of public opinion shaped what he wrote. The new, abstract sociopolitical categories of “public” and “public opinion” now began to take on unparalleled imaginative force and presented conceptual and practical challenges for architects, critics, and connoisseurs. In this new climate, governed by the public and the press, young architects, like Adam, began writing to promote themselves and their work beyond the limited circle of those who could know their buildings first hand. These authors faced the new challenge of communicating with a disembodied public by means of ideas, words, and images, rather than the experience of the building itself.

This new environment of printed words and images fostered a shift in the conceptual orientation of architectural theory and the proliferation of this suddenly popular genre. Amateurs and experts began to write critical, abstract literature, which complemented the practical manuals and pattern books, and established new techniques and aesthetic standards for the public to evaluate architectural monuments. In this new literature, the focus shifted from the individual’s personal and subjective aesthetic response to buildings, to one that was merely personal and subjective, to one that was also public and objective. Architects now stressed, for example, the powerful capacity of
architecture to symbolize the power, achievements, and values of the enlightened public, rather than those of absolute monarchs, or aristocrats. As Adam wrote in the preface to the fourth fascicle of volume one: “Public Buildings are the most splendid monuments of a great and opulent people….this country, when roused, is capable of admirable efforts of native genius.” He staunchly believed that great architecture was the direct result of a “refined and discerning Public.” Architectural writers also emphasized objective standards of quality and beauty, and equipped individuals to recognize them and to demand them in private and public construction. Gradually, the built landscape in Britain came to be understood as a human force that “spoke” on behalf of the people. This discourse created a unified, or collective public experience and a coherent body of public opinion, for whom architecture was one of the most significant means of self-definition. The inherent publicness of architecture, the rise of tourism to visit public buildings and country houses, and the increase in literacy also contributed significantly to the construction of this conception for a newly aware and critical public.

The critical importance of the new public in making and evaluating architecture was recognized even in the early eighteenth-century. Anthony Ashley-Cooper, the Third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713). Shaftesbury argued in his “Letter Concerning the Art, of Science of Design” (1710), that “the people are no small partys in [erecting buildings]. Nothing moves successfully without ‘em. There can be no PUBLICK, but where they are included.” Shaftesbury also argued that the new public is not only concerned with public works, such as government and institutional buildings or cathedrals, but also important private commissions: “Even those pieces too are brought under the common

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644 Anthony Ashley Cooper, 7th Earl of Shaftesbury, “A letter concerning the art or science of design; written from Italy, on the occasion of the judgment of Hercules, to my Lord,” The Present State of the Republick of Letters, 1, (London, 1728), 100.
censure, which, tho rais’d by private men, are of such a grandure [sic] and magnificence, as to become national ornaments.” Shaftesbury warns that the public is discerning and unrelenting if offended, noting that “great men” will find “little quarter from the publick, if instead of a beautiful pile, he raises, at a vast expence, such a false and counterfeit piece of magnificence.” Yet, Shaftsbury notes too that the public is a controllable force, as the “whole people” readily follow the opinion of connoisseurs, “knowing men in art.”

In Adam’s era the connoisseur was a relatively new, elite member of the public and provided leadership in an age increasingly preoccupied with aesthetics and art criticism. The French term “connoisseur” had been imported into England in the early eighteenth century, while the idea of “connoisseurship” emerged at mid-century. This cultivation of aesthetic appreciation first arose in Renaissance Italy along with the corresponding term conoscitore, who became the connoisseur in seventeenth-century France. The word’s ultimate derivation is the Latin cognoscere, to know (Greek root in gignōskō), but neither Romans, nor the Greeks had a corresponding noun.

In a letter to his mother that Adam wrote from Rome in November 1756, he demonstrated his awareness of the typical period view that one of the connoisseur’s most important roles in modern society was to shape public opinion. He advised that their family firm should show designs for unbuilt works only to connoisseurs, who “in chanting your praises,” and in “praisy[ing] their own skill in being able to judge of and

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645 Ibid., 99-100.
646 Ibid., 100.
criticize them…[spread] your fame… in a…polite way.” The principal, although non-genteel way of spreading one’s fame in eighteenth-century London was to engage with coffeehouse culture, which catered primarily to the growing middle class. Adam rejected this, fearing the ill social and financial effects of showing his unbuilt projects to “every dirty artist in London,” who would have them “to spit at over a mug of porter.”

Adam expressed particular anxiety about publishing his unbuilt works, concerned that they would serve as blueprints for buildings erected without his involvement: “that would be throwing your most precious works into the public’s hands and removing that desire of seeing and admiring them at your own house…it would enable them to execute without your advice.” “Connoisseurs,” along with “true men of taste,” Adam informed his mother, could be trusted to guide the taste of the public and cause “pretenders,” who imitated the praises of learned men “to hide their utter ignorance.” In the second fascicle of the first volume of the Works, Adam crowed that from “men of taste,” the brothers have received “the most flattering approbation,” which has given him “greater confidence” to publish more.

In eighteenth-century society, the connoisseur was defined by his public activities: travel, writing, and contributions as a public figure. Connoisseurs depended upon academic training and especially travel to develop their skill, which chiefly depended upon having seen many originals. The significance of first-hand observation to experts on architecture, who comprised a very small percentage of the public, was

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648 Robert Adam to his mother, 13 Nov. 1756, Clerk of Penicuik MSS., Scottish Record Office, Edinburgh; cited in Fleming, Robert Adam, 363 & Harris, British Architectural Books and Writers, 71.
649 Ibid.
650 Ibid.
651 Ibid.
underscored in the introduction to *Ruins*: “They who aim at eminence, either in the knowledge of in practice of Architecture, find it necessary to view with their own eyes the works of the Ancients which remain, that they may catch from them those ideas of grandeur and beauty, which nothing, perhaps but such an observation can suggest.”

Connoisseurs in all arts were also almost without exception avid collectors, who were expert in issues of attribution and provenance. Collectors valued art not only for its aesthetic value, but also for its ability to demonstrate the history and values of human cultures and the wonders and beauty of the natural world. In the eighteenth century collections of art and other artifacts were understood to be microcosms of the world that showcased the power, wealth, and knowledge of their owners. Because of this, the collector’s and connoisseur’s mastery usually resided in the description and analysis of formal details, function, and historical context and significance of objects.

The period’s perception of the connoisseur was formed largely in reaction to the writings of the early-eighteenth-century drawing collector Jonathan Richardson. In *Two Discourses: An Essay on the Whole Art of Criticism as it Relates to Painting and an Argument in Behalf of the Science of a Connoisseur*, first published in 1719, he stressed the social importance of a “Gentleman of Taste” and the civilizing influence of the fine arts on a nation — comprising “the reformation of our manners, refinement of our pleasure and increase of our fortunes and reputation.” Richardson used “connoisseur” in a sense which combined a degree of sensibility and discrimination with the factual knowledge and understanding that might be expected of an amateur. As the century advanced the word acquired a rather more specialized implication. In 1752 the *Dictionnaire universel* defined “connoisseur” as a person completely knowledgeable
about the qualities of any object submitted to his judgement, distinguishing a connoisseur from an amateur with the observation that although it was not possible to be a connoisseur without being an amateur, it was possible to be an amateur without being a connoisseur.

Anxiety and awareness of the existence and proliferation of counterfeit connoisseurs of architecture both steadily rose as the eighteenth century progressed. Johnson’s Dictionary reflected this awareness, defining “connoisseur” as: “a judge, a critic [sic]. It is often used of a pretended critic [sic].” Architecture was a field particularly vulnerable to counterfeits, or “pretenders” as Adam called them, because it seemed more accessible and decipherable than the other arts and inspired a false sense of familiarity and a presumptive right to judge, based on quotidian experience of living and working in buildings.

There was also widespread skepticism and negative opinions of this new public creature, the connoisseur. In the third edition of his Treatise, Chambers integrated a colorful anecdote about the negative social impact of connoisseurs in his revised “Origin and Progress of Architecture.” In a comparison of the climate of critique in ancient Rome and eighteenth-century Britain, Chambers described the connoisseur, historically, as an agent of oppression, who had long prevented progress in the noble art of architecture. He reminded his reader that Vitruvius “complains loudly of this hardship” and recounted a tale in which the architect Apollodorus, famed designer of the Forum and Column of Trajan, was put to death by a “connoisseur,” the emperor Hadrian, “for having ventured a shrewd remark upon a temple, designed by that emperor, and built under his direction.”

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654 Chambers, Treatise (third edition, 1791), 23.
Because Chambers and other founding members of the Royal Academy believed that connoisseurs were responsible for the demise of the Society of Arts (established in 1760 in Spring Gardens) and deep problems in the Dilettanti Society, due to infighting, they banned these opinionated experts from membership.655

Because connoisseurship had been associated primarily with paintings, works on paper, and sculpture, the architectural connoisseur faced slightly less well-defined criteria for fulfilling his public and prestigious role. While experts on painting had been provided with very specific lists of pictorial qualities by writers such as Jonathan Richardson, with which to evaluate paintings, no such guidance existed for experts on architecture. Part of the barrier that had to be surmounted by the connoisseur of architecture was the practical difficulty of grasping the nature of a building, especially compared to paintings and works on paper. Sandby, in his fifth Royal Academy lecture, discussed the stress of coping, aesthetically and critically, with the extraordinary number of parts in a single edifice:

But all complicated buildings have a different effect. They must be considered in portions successively; and the various impressions the mind receives from a number of different parts, and those dissimilar, can never equal the force of one entire impression. We are lost & bewildered in the variety of forms that present themselves to our observation in buildings of this sort; for our attention is divided between so many different objects.656

Not only the public, but architects, too, struggled with comprehending the scale, positioning, and sheer number of a building’s many individual parts. During the design process, the architect also had to envision the integration of many unlike things, and many things that could not been seen in a single view, in order to conceptualize and execute an architectural design. As Chambers argued in his Treatise:

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656 Sandby, SaT/1/1, Lecture 5, f. 4.
The painter’s canvas and the sculptor’s block, are their ultimate objects; but the architect’s attention must at once be directed to the grandeur or beauty, strength, duration, fit contrivance, and economical execution of his compositions – qualities that ever clash, and which it often is exceedingly difficult to reconcile. His different plans, elevations, and sections must all be considered at the same time, and like the parts of a piece of music, be contrived to harmonize and set each other off to most advantage.  

Additionally, the rules and methods for composing buildings remained uncodified and varied widely. Although the broadest conceptual task remained clear (architects should base designs on ancient precedents), the details remained unresolved; in the second half of the eighteenth century, not only rules, but also principles, varied according to each modern architect’s individual style. Because of the lack of agreement about the “proper” architectural style, connoisseurs of architecture faced challenges unlike those writing about sister arts.

Guidebooks provide valuable insight into the ways in which connoisseurs navigated the murky and shifting waters of contemporary architectural theory. They show that an architectural connoisseur was chiefly a student of the architectural orders, proportions, and propriety, and that this knowledge was superficial. This focus reflected the shallow training and limited interests of the gentleman architect. His expertise resided principally in being able to recognize and name the various orders and their many esoteric parts, and to have a rough idea of the proportions, dimensions, and character of the orders as described by Vitruvius and Palladio. The architectural connoisseur also had some knowledge of the appropriate proportions of rooms and the decorations befitting various functions. Guidebooks also revealed a growing interest in domestic architecture and the art and “curiosity” collections of great houses, which drew large numbers of the gentle public, who were often able to visit simply by proffering their cards at the gate, and aroused in visitors a curiosity about the history and decoration of the buildings. The

author of the *English Connoisseur* (1766) besought nobility and gentry to “make their cabinets and collections […] accessible to the curious.” Thus, connoisseurs of architecture also were expected to become historians of important local houses, and experts in the collections they contained.

The two most common pitfalls for early connoisseurs of architecture were the conflation of architectural prints with the buildings they represented, and the confusion of architectural fragments and ruins with the buildings from which they derived. Connoisseurs often had more familiarity and expertise with architectural prints, drawings, and fragments than with the architecture itself because of the availability, portability, and size of printed materials. Connoisseurs of architecture were also often collectors of architectural drawings, prints and fragments, and, frequently, the study of these objects displaced study of the buildings themselves.

In the eighteenth century, the patterns of architectural connoisseurship determined that architectural prints and fragments functioned as more than beautiful illustrations of buildings. They began to generate their own context, and to combine with other prints or fragments to create a complex, new system of representation that was not directly related to buildings. Providing vital information about distant architectural monuments, prints and fragments began to take on autonomous meanings, which were often more powerful and interesting to critics than the study of the buildings to which they were related.

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Adam’s Cultivation of the Architectural Connoisseur

Adam’s great, illustrated architectural folios were intense illuminations of the role of the eighteenth-century architectural connoisseur. Influential and visible, the connoisseur enjoyed the status of the most important audience for architect’s books. Throughout both, Adam aimed both word and image toward the connoisseur’s interests and professional responsibilities, and sought to broaden and to define more vividly the skills of this vocal public actor. Adam especially urged connoisseurs to become specialists in analyzing, appreciating, and discussing actual buildings (particularly his own buildings), rather than merely studying architectural prints and fragments. Furthermore, Adam encouraged connoisseurs to approach architectural prints and fragments as representations of built monuments, rather than on merely aesthetic terms. To aid the connoisseur in his architectural education, Adam built a bridge between architecture and painting, an art with better known methods of connoisseurship and criticism, arguing in the preface to the fourth fascicle of the first volume that composing buildings was not unlike composing paintings.

Adam demonstrated his awareness of the significance of the connoisseur to his career and his reputation as an innovator in the content, structure, and writing style of each of his books. He took guidance from four familiar, intellectual leading lights. In authorship of the text of Ruins, he was indebted most to his cousin, William Robertson, and Winckelmann, who served as a reader and advisor. Winckelmann’s subsidiary essay on the connoisseur in his book Reflections on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks: with Instructions for the Connoisseur and an Essay on Grace in Works of Art (first edition 1755, second edition 1756) shaped Adam’s Ruins and Works, as well as the
perception of connoisseurs in all arts. Winkelmann’s book was available in English, in 1765, thanks to the efforts of the English artist and Royal Academician Henri Fuseli, who translated the work.

The text and images of both of Adam’s books instructed the connoisseur in many aspects of architectural expertise. While Adam did not offer explicit instructions to his reader, the connoisseur would have instinctively extracted lessons about the method and practice of connoisseurship. He also made clear that the practice of connoisseurship was ancient.

Adam referred explicitly to connoisseurial skill in Ruins, complaining that connoisseurs are “fond” of the dramatic progression of rooms, or, as he explained, the “gradation of lesser to greater…which they distinguish by the name of a Climax in Architecture.” He noted that the progression in the Palace of Diocletian, from the porticus, through the vestibulum and atrium, and arriving in the “Crypto Porticus…exemplifies what connoisseurs call a Climax in Architecture,” as the visitor would sequentially encounter rooms of increasing dimensions and grandeur.

At least four more skills were requisite for achieving connoisseurial competence in architecture and all were implied in Adam’s Works. First, he must possess the capacity to recognize and appreciate beauty. Second, an expert of architecture was expected to be able to describe the effect of a building on a beholder with eloquence. Third, the connoisseur should balance meticulous attention to details with consideration of the whole, a particularly difficult skill when applied to architecture. Finally, as Winckelmann described in his essay, the connoisseur must be able to focus his attention on the “idea” of a work of art, meaning “its grandeur or meanness, its dignity, fitness, or unfitness,” rather

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659 Adam, Ruins (2001), 36.
than “workmanship.” In *Ruins*, Adam conspicuously failed to value the “idea” over the “workmanship,” in his explanation of the door of the Temple of Jupiter in Split (Figure 4.19): “The Dressing of this Door, though uncommon, has been a bold and pleasing Effect. The Ornament upon the Swelling Moulding is of a very fine Workmanship…the particular Enrichments of this Door are so finely executed, that they afforded me the highest Satisfaction.” The failure to draw a distinction between the idea of a work of art and its workmanship commonly plagued the evaluation of drawings and architectural-design exhibitions, but it was a pitfall connoisseurs were expected to avoid. For example, in 1776, a critic who called himself “Philo-Architectus” admonished the viewers of the architectural drawings on display at the Royal academy “not to let the excellence or vileness of the drawing influence [their] judgement, and simply [to] consider what effect the design would have if executed.”

Closely related to these connoisseurship skills were the abilities to assess originality and to make attributions. In Adam’s discussion of his own work, he guided the reader to distinguish between rote copying and the judicious imitation of works of art. In Winckelmann’s words, the connoisseur had to “be attentive to discover whether an artist had ideas of his own, or only copied those of others; whether he knew the chief aim of all art, Beauty, or blundered through the dirt of vulgar forms; whether he performed like a man, or played like a child.” Similarly, the connoisseur must distinguish a copy from an original work and distinguish a copy from an imitation. Elucidation of the latter distinction was offered by Winkelmann: “copying we call the slavish crawling of the hand and eyes, after a certain model: whereas reasonable imitation takes just the hint, in

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661 Cited in Anderson, 197, n 22.
order to work by itself.” Copyism was of great concern to Adam, since the luster of his reputation depended upon distinguishing his work from that of his many copiers. Related to the ability to identify originals, copies, and imitations was aptitude in attribution — identifying the distinctive hands of master craftsmen, whose styles were often inextricably linked to the style of the architect for whom they worked.

The connoisseur also required grounding in history, style, and language. It was essential, for example, that he contextualize monuments and their motifs within both the broader frameworks of ancient and modern European architecture and contemporary theories about style. Also critical were proficiency and fluidity in speaking the language of architecture, which included mastering abstruse terms and concepts and learning to apply them correctly and appropriately. Especially in the footnotes to the preface of the first fascicle of the *Works*, Adam armed connoisseurs with the words with which to describe his art with precision and erudition.

Finally, Adam’s writings challenged the connoisseur to sharpen his abilities as a critic. As a critic, as Adam exemplified throughout *Ruins* and *Works*, the connoisseur evaluated the success of ancient designs and devised corrections and improvements. This activity was closely related to the goal of having connoisseurs educate the general public in these matters.

Adam deeply believed that the modern architect should improve ancient designs and was a ruthless critic of ancient works, especially in *Ruins of the Palace of the Emperor Diocletian*. In that book, Adam identified defects and suggested aesthetic improvements that would make the buildings more pleasing to the eighteenth-century eye and satisfy its taste for Neo-Palladian motifs. Adam complained, for example, that in the

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663 Ibid., 256.
principal gate of the palace, the baseline of the upper story arcade was broken from below by the crowns of two round-headed niches (Figure 4.15): “The lower Niches on each Side of the Gate, as well as the Arch over it, incroach [sic] too much upon the superior Order, and do not seem to add to the Beauty of the Building, either by their Form or Situation.”

He also criticized the exterior of the Temple of Jupiter, expressing dismay at the double pedestals that supported the columns: “The Grandeur of the Collonade…is in some Degree impaired by the Double Pedestal, which goes round the Temple.” (Figure 4.21) Within the same plate description, Adam also critiqued the disposition of the entry stair, writing, “The Stairs to the Temple seem to me very defective, by being so much confined between the large Pedestals on each Side.” He then offered an idea for their improvement: “had they extended the whole Width of the four Columns in Front, it would undoubtedly have added greatly to the Magnificence of the Building.” Finally, in his plate description for part of the door of the Temple (Figure 4.19), Adam lamented that the “Modillions in the Cornice are not perpendicular over the Trusses, and offend the Eye greatly…” and that “the Angular Modillion…seems…to be no additional Ornament.”

In the conclusion of his critique, Adam, perhaps unwittingly, elucidated an important distinction between the critic and the historian, who, unlike that of the critic, was expected to delve into intentions and motives. After describing the design flaws in the elevation of the Porta Aurea, he wrote, “It is not my part to enquire into the reasons that

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664 Adam, *Ruins* (1764), Description to Plate XIII, “Geometrical Elevation of the Porta Aurea and Octagonal Towers.”

665 Adam, *Ruins* (1764), Description to Plate XXIX, “Geometrical Elevation of the Temple of Jupiter.”

666 Adam, *Ruins* (1764), Description to Plate XXXII, “Part of the Door of the Temple to a Larger Scale.”
might induce Diocletian’s architect to make this disposition, which appears to me much inferior to many other parts of the building.\footnote{Adam, \textit{Ruins} (1764), Description to Plate XIII “Geometrical Elevation of the Porta Aurea Octagon Towers.”}

Adam’s awareness of his connoisseurial readership shaped not only the content of his books, but also their structure. Although rare in eighteenth-century European books on architecture, the prefaces of both \textit{Ruins} and \textit{Works} offered detailed and carefully considered guidance for navigating the ensuing images. Adam had originally envisioned \textit{Ruins} to model Wood and Dawkins’s accounts of the \textit{Ruins of Palmyra} of 1753 and the \textit{Ruins of Balbec} of 1757, and for the book to function as a kind of travelogue, offering a history of a place and an account of the life of its people.\footnote{Tait, \textit{Robert Adam: Drawings and Imagination}, 104.} A draft of the introduction based on this model was written sometime before November 1757, and it was thought to have been written by Adam.\footnote{See Tait, \textit{Robert Adam Drawings and Imagination}, 104, n. 3 (SRO/GD 18/4953).} Called “Reasons and Motives for Undertaking the Voyage to Spalatro in Dalmatia,” it was cast in two parts; the first described Split and the surrounding country and provided a chronology of the Adam expedition; the second was a social and political portrait of contemporary Dalmatia. This essay was put aside when Robertson convinced Adam to make an argument in the text that the plates would illustrate.

Like \textit{Ruins}, Adam’s \textit{Works} differed from most eighteenth-century books on architecture in that its prefaces were not merely descriptive. An important precursor to Adam’s work in this respect was James Gibbs’s \textit{Book of Architecture, containing designs of buildings and ornaments} (1728). Unlike his early-eighteenth-century contemporaries, Gibbs explained his distinctive architectural ideas in a critical prefatory text. Adam’s
theoretical prefaces in the *Works in Architecture*, however, considerably advanced Gibb’s prototype and thunderously broke new ground, launching a distinctive, new format for British books on architecture. This format was also likely inspired by French architect Germain Boffrand’s (1667-1754) *Livre d’architecture* (1745), with its substantive theoretical prefaces. Adam would have known the work of Boffrand well through Clérisseau, one of his most talented students, and Boffrand was also known well in London; the French master was elected a fellow of the Royal Society of London in 1745, upon the publication of his book.

Adam and Boffrand’s books, however, have significant dissimilarities, as they were crafted to meet the needs and expectations of remarkably different audiences. Boffrand’s preface comprised four formal essays, composed primarily for an academic audience – the professors and students of the French Academy of Architecture –, and these were nearly wholly unrelated to illustrations of his work. Adam’s book, on the other hand, was intended chiefly for connoisseurs and men of taste, rather than academics, although it would be examined closely by members of the Royal Academy and French Academy. And in it, text and image were more closely linked.

In the creation of both of his publications, Adam demonstrated his awareness that eighteenth-century readers, especially connoisseurs, had come to favor illustrations of architecture that possessed the clarity and comprehensiveness of the printed word. To help achieve this, in the *Ruins* and *Works*, Adam provided footnotes, which variously cited bibliography, explained key terms, elaborated on important ideas, and demonstrated

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670 Boffrand wrote four prefatory essays entitled: “Dissertation on what is commonly known as good taste in architecture”; “Principles of architecture derived from Horace’s *Art of Poetry*”; “Proposals on the proportions that may be assigned to the three orders of architecture when used one above the other in the elevation of a building”; & “On interior decorations and furnishings.” (*Book of Architecture*, Paris, 1745)
his expertise, scholarly credentials, and experience. This format, as A. A. Tait has noted, was inspired by Stuart and Revett’s *Antiquities of Athens* of 1762. In addition to allowing Adam to supply this supplemental information while preserving the clarity and cohesion of the principal text, the footnotes provided options for reading the book, permitting the reader to grasp ideas and to refer back to the notes easily and swiftly.

Adam took other effective measures to achieve his rhetorical goals. In order to declutter both text and plates in *Ruins*, he inserted letters in the illustrations and provided tables with the corresponding keys in order to identify the various monuments and rooms of the palace complex. In the *Works*, where a wealth of information had to be conveyed, the letters-and-key system would have made the reader fatigued and dizzy, and so Adam added pithy descriptions to be engraved in elegant, flowing script and placed adjacent to the represented objects and within rooms in floor plans. In both books, elevations and plans were drawn to the same scale for ease of reading, and unnecessary structural details were eliminated. To increase legibility of the more complex plates in the *Works*, which displayed multiple designs on a single page, Adam adjusted the scale and arrangement to maximize attractiveness, to guide the viewer’s eye seamlessly from object to object, and to reinforce that all the elements were parts of a unified design.

Adam also deftly shaped his prose to maximize its effectiveness with his target audience of connoisseurs. Since the spread of his reputation depended upon the ability of connoisseurs to understand Adam and spread that understanding to members of the public, he wrote highly quotable plate descriptions that resembled a connoisseur’s mode of speaking: short, yet vividly composed, they were designed to be read quickly and digested, memorized, and repeated verbatim. The style was aphoristic, and although

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written in elevated prose, the descriptions were not burdened with excessive, cumbersome, or ambiguous terms or technical details. The result was unequivocal, compact, clear, and explicit. Adam also inserted short odes and prose quotations from well-known ancient authors, including Livy and Horace, which the connoisseur could use to enliven his own discussion of Adam’s work and so inflame the public’s interest in his architecture. Because Adam made his publication accessible and gave experts the vocabulary with which to define his distinctive style, they were induced to like it.  

Adam strove to achieve comprehensiveness and selected designs for his *Works* that would demonstrate his artistic range. In the preface to second fascicle of the first volume, he explained that this required some careful organization: “We have reserved the remaining designs of Sion for some future number…by giving specimens of some of our other works, we should add greater variety to our undertaking, without diminishing its utility.” Completeness also entailed the making of engravings that distorted reality, in order show more in a single image. In the perspective of the bridge over the Thames at Syon House, for example, a façade of the house is shown that would not have been visible from that vantage. (Figure 4.22) Similarly, in the depiction of the end of the Great Hall at Syon, where the statue of the Dying Gaul reclines, the view through the doorway into the anteroom includes architectural details unseen in reality. (Figure 4.23) To demonstrate his range, Adam included plates of unexecuted and unfinished works, such as the bridge and Grand Saloon at Syon, despite his fear that publishing unbuilt works would render the plates and the book less valuable and inspire copyism.

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672 Adam’s publications, however, were prohibitively expensive, especially when compared with similar titles by George Richardson and Michelangelo Pergolesi.
In both publications, Adam took great advantage of the difference between firsthand experience of a building and encountering a building in print, either in prose of illustrations. The savvy architect seemed to understand instinctively that this provided significant room to manipulate the reader’s opinions. Carefully composed images now guided the connoisseur in his maturation as a specialist in Adam’s idiosyncratic style and in the field of architecture more generally, and this training conditioned the connoisseur’s in-person viewing of buildings.

Conclusion

Adam’s many revolutionary and pioneering self-promotional efforts were also characteristically modern and deeply romantic. His great interests in the elegance and refinement of his physical appearance, language skills, and polite hobbies, and his adoption of a fictional upper-class persona, made Adam one of the earliest dandies in eighteenth-century Britain—a distinct, new kind of revolutionary figure. His alliance with the emergent field of scientific antiquarianism, “new” styles of architecture and decoration, a recently transformed, literate British public, and the neoteric connoisseur of architecture, also complemented and augmented his identity as a revolutionary, modern architect. And, Adam’s belief in the power of the individual to enact revolutionary change, his close alignment of his own architecture with ancient architecture, and his dandyism, spectacularly displayed his romantic inclinations within an age that increasingly promoted romantic values.
Robert Adam thought and wrote about many of the significant aesthetic issues that were debated by contemporary theorists, including the purpose and function of art, the foundations of architecture, and its relationship to nature. Although Adam was not a prolific writer and did not produce a coherent body of theory, as did Joshua Reynolds (and to a certain extent William Chambers), he held deep, long-standing interests in aesthetics and philosophy. Adam’s commitment to design and the demands of his profession, however, prevented his serious pursuit of writing; moreover, he was one of the few writers of architectural theory in eighteenth-century Europe who was unaffiliated with an academy and did not write to support his teaching. As he wrote to Lord Kames on 31 March 1762, “The practice of architecture rushes so fast upon me that I have but few moments to dedicate to theory or speculation.”

Yet, it is a mistake to disregard the significance of Adam’s few published written works or to belittle them because of their brevity, perceived arrogance, and undeveloped argumentation. With a few strokes of his pen, Adam shrewdly demonstrated selective argumentation, which alternatingly typified the intellectual currents of his era and made revolutionary strides in broadening the forms and appreciation of classical architecture. Because Adam’s concepts are underdeveloped, the passage of time makes grasping the full significance of his writing increasingly difficult. The appreciation and understanding of Adam’s written and built work requires an understanding of the aesthetic theory that lies behind his carefully chosen words and phrases, and the identification of the most significant aspects of this dense and provocative theory.
Close study of Adam’s texts in conjunction with analysis of his designs reveals that his selective prose consisted chiefly of complex and cutting-edge aesthetic ideas, and that his brief texts are seeded with words and phrases that are the tips of mountainous icebergs of contemporary theory, which would have been much more easily recognized by an educated reader in his time than they are today. With this premise in mind, this chapter undertakes close examination of Adam’s written and artistic monuments to demonstrate his uncanny ability to put pressure on the most controversial and deeply-rooted theoretical questions about the nature of architecture, and to create innovative, deeply complex, masterful interior spaces that are at least the result of intense spurts of reflection on contemporary aesthetic theories.

Adam was a “romantic-classicist,” and his conception of architecture was governed foremost by a pervasive idea of “taste.” The “picturesque” was also profoundly important in his work, especially his interiors, where it can be seen, in part, in their scenographic and theatrical aspects.

*Romantic Classicism*

Adam lived in a period, which extends roughly from the middle of the seventeenth century through the close of the eighteenth, which can be understood as an era of transition that witnessed the volatile collision of two dominant movements of modern thought. These two movements are usually called “classicism” and “romanticism,” conceptions which are intentionally loose and broad, and provide frameworks for two different bodies of assumptions, inclinations, and values, although both are characterized by heterogeneity. Both classicism and romanticism branch in so many directions that no one work of art is completely typical of either movement.
European Romanticism may be defined as a turning away from the classical standard of ideal nature, as developed in antiquity and the Renaissance, and from the accompanying conviction that the full exercise of reason may grasp that ideal. In place of objective premises, it substitutes the belief that truth is found primarily in or through the exercise of some imaginative or emotional (rather than rational) faculty or capacity in man. It therefore inclines to be somewhat individualistic and subjective, rather than general and objective. Classicism, contrastingly, stressed moral knowledge and cultivation, rather than scientific investigation of the external world, and stood opposed to any conception of art that could be designated as personal or local – be it sheer emotional experience, intellectual amusement, or propaganda.

Adam’s work, as much any other European architect of the second half of the eighteenth century, is the product of this convergence: “romantic classicism.” His enviable capacity to reconcile apparently inconsistent ideas in his writing and built works not only catapults Adam into the spotlight as a seminal and representative figure of his time, but also casts him as a leading participant and contributor to the unique, two-centuries-old British tradition of pushing against and re-shaping Italian and French ideas of classicism, gradually infusing them with a broad-minded and expansive empirical relativism. This tradition was especially strong in the work of Scottish philosophers, including Adam’s close friend and frequent correspondent Lord Kames (Henry Home), in whose writing empirical tendencies frequently appear side by side with neoclassical values.

Of singular import in this empiricist British tradition was the rejection of the Renaissance divide between “subject” and “object.” Art historian Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968) summed up this division in his *Idea* (1952), in which he argued that in the Renaissance, for the first time in Western art theory, the two postulates of reality – as perceived by the senses or as objective truth – were recognized to be contradictory rather than complementary. Whereas the subjective and objective ideas of reality were inseparable companions in previous centuries, they were now seen as incompatible. This occurred in large part as a result of the increasing separation of the humanities from the sciences in education. In the ancient world, and during the medieval period, the words “arts” and “sciences” were used synonymously. Their disjunction had important implications for how artists understood creativity.

By the eighteenth century, European culture coped with relativity and variety by focusing on the subject, particularly the viewer’s experience, rather than the object. Concomitant with this attention on the subjective was an intense commitment to “sensibility,” a topic well discussed, particularly in the history of ideas and philosophical discourse. But although the pendulum swung toward the subjective, the objective was never abandoned. British modern thought distinguishes itself in its dedication to holding the subjective and objective together, through reconciliation, or choreographed contrast, and Adam’s work is particularly characteristic of this trend.

At least three significant intellectual traditions shaped the distinctive compromising plasticity of the British mind and its deep interest in the reformulation of the classical cannon. First, was the rapidly growing interest in the new discipline of science, grounded in empiricism and focused on the study of physical change, led by Sir
Francis Bacon and Sir Isaac Newton; in the eighteenth-century, George Berkeley (1685-1753) and David Hume became primary exponents of the British School of Empiricism, and, like their predecessors, vigorously defended empiricism against the rationalism of René Descartes, Gottfried Leibniz and Baruch Spinoza (1632-77). Second, the inheritance of a particular strand of Neo-Platonism, rooted in the ideal of symbolic unity, which had been developed by Marsilio Ficino (1433-99) and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-94), and was imported into Britain through Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536) and John Colet (1467-1519). And third was the reality that Britain almost entirely lacked an ancient past and possessed few artefacts of its early history; in the eighteenth century, there was widespread agreement that Britain lacked an indigenous style, and this empowered architects to be markedly critical and eclectic in their approach to design.

It is notable that the illustrations in Adam’s *Ruins* and *Works* asked the viewer to shift between different modes of viewing, which was a result of Britain’s embrace of both the empirical and the rational. The empirical mode of viewing was activated by engravings of perspectival, “phenomenal” scenes of monuments within a picturesque setting. (Figures 4.9 & 4.22) These approximated how the monument appears in the world and elicited an emotional response from the viewer akin to encountering a monument in reality. The rational, or theoretical mode occurred when looking at schematic, or diagrammatic drawings, such as plans, or architectural detail placed in an otherwise empty field (that is, the book page); these abstractions, showed aspects of the building that the eye could not see, or which did not match other sensory experience. (Figures 4.21 & 5.1) These “rational” illustrations were typically rendered with a precision that built works do not possess. Both kinds of drawings helped the viewer to
identify how the building, or one of its parts, functioned, how to look critically at the building, and how to derive maximum pleasure when viewing and thinking about it.

Adam and the Idea of Taste

For Robert Adam the idea of “taste” was of singular importance; it was the governing concept in creating and writing about art. It is significant that he was one of the first architects in Britain for whom taste played this leading role. “Taste,” which generally referred to all that enters into aesthetic judgment, possessed this exceptional significance for him because, during his era, the foundations of architecture had come to be considered particularly vague and perplexing.674 “Taste” provided a reasonable foundation for an art that did not possess, as Adam described, “an immediate standard in nature to which the artist can always refer, and which would enable the skillful instantly to decide with respect to the degree of excellence attained in any work.”675 In the second preface of the first volume of his Works (May 1774), he offered one of the most important claims of his revolutionary movement, remarking conspicuously that “excellence” in architecture “must be formed and improved by correct taste, and diligent study of the beauties exhibited by great masters in their productions.” He continued, “It is only by profound meditation upon these that one becomes capable of distinguishing

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674 For Chambers, the idea of taste was an inadequate basis for the evaluation and composition of architecture: In his Treatise, he wrote of the particular difficulties in attaining mastery in the architectural profession: “Whoever has applied to the study of architecture will readily grant that there are few pursuits more perplexing: the vague foundation on which the more refined parts of the art are built has given rise to such a multiplicity of arguments, that it is exceedingly difficult to discriminate or distinguish what is real from that which is merely specious, the connexions which constitute truth or fallacy being often far distant, beyond the sight of superficial observers. Whence the merit of performances is too often measured by the fame of the performer, by the taste of the age in which they were produced, by vulgar report, party opinion, or some other standard equally inadequate, and not seldom by precepts delivered some centuries ago, calculated for other climates, other men, and other customs” (Treatise (third edition, 1791), 60).

between what is graceful and what is inelegant; between that which possesses, and that which is destitute of harmony.” Adam also made it clear throughout Volume I that his most important audience was “men of taste.”

Although most members of the eighteenth-century public probably considered “taste” diffuse, empty, and simply a synonym for personal preference, the term held specific, nearly sanctified importance to members of Adam’s tight-knit intellectual circle, including Joshua Reynolds, Lord Kames, Allan Ramsay, David Hume, and Samuel Johnson.676 Robert maintained affectionate regard for the work of Scottish philosophers, especially Lord Kames, with whom he appears to have concocted a theory of what they called “sentimental” architecture.677 This is known from a letter Robert wrote to Kames, in which he referred to taste as “the je ne sais quoi of Roman architecture,” and remarked he studied carefully the writings of David Hume.678 In 1754, most of the members of this circle, but not Adam, participated in an essay competition that sought a more precise definition of the term.679

676 The most prevalent meaning of taste in the eighteenth-century was “preference,” which was considered a term that described that which is personal, emotional, and untruthful, and fluctuated radically. The critical word taste was generally used to describe an undefinable subjective sentiment that explained personal aesthetic preferences. A writer for the World (1753) despondently concluded, for example, that “no idea at all” could be attached to the “poor monosyllable TASTE.” It was most commonly applied to what one likes or dislikes, whatever be the subjective or objective qualities. Reynolds wrote of the two meanings of “taste” in Discourse VII. As a term that means an expression of personal preference, he writes it is “an airy nothing, a fancy which has no foundation” (s.152-3) Yet its other meaning is “a determination concerning those truths which refer to the most general and most unalterable principles of human nature” which refers to the works which are only to be produced by the greatest efforts of human understanding” (s.154-6). The crude form of taste, “preference,” Reynolds believed is the result of a joint pleasure in novelty and excitement and in the evoking of associations which are either personal or else imbibed from immediate and accidental social custom; and the temporary and unschooled pleasure from such a reaction leads many people mistakenly to attribute “beauty” to the cause which elicits it.

677 Fleming, Robert Adam, 307.

678 Ibid.

Although contemporary philosophers defined taste in slightly different ways, all of the philosophers with whom Adam was familiar agreed that the idea rested on two bases, both rooted in an idea of “truth.” The first principle of taste was the imitation of nature. This principle was immutable and uniform and did not give weight to individual opinions, transitory social customs, or partialities. Imitation of nature in this sense was what Adam called “harmony” in the passage quoted above: “It is only by profound meditation upon these that one becomes capable of distinguishing between what is graceful and what is inelegant; between that which possesses, and that which is destitute of harmony.” The idea of an artistic harmony that was rooted in natural harmony, ultimately derived from Plato’s account of a natural world governed by numerical relations, or geometry, in the Dialogue of *Timaeus* (c. 360BC). The conception of a universal ideal, with a consequently unalterable standard of taste as its corollary, is one of the great legacies of Greek humanistic thought. It was important to eighteenth-century aestheticians to establish an objective perception of taste because of the tradition (strong in European culture since the Renaissance) of regarding moral and aesthetic sensibilities as closely related.

Empiricism was the second principle upon which taste was predicated in the late eighteenth century. For the empiricist, knowledge derived from sensation, or from reflection and meditation upon sensation. Eighteenth-century “sensibility” questioned the existence of an objective basis of beauty and elevated the role of feelings. Sensibility had always existed, of course, but eighteenth-century sensibility meant specifically that which was dictated chiefly by the senses, as opposed to reasoning faculties. Reason, however, remained indispensable because it sanctioned the impressions of individual sensibility,
which fluctuated, and guided the imagination to create great art. Sensibility was synonymous with the instinct, imagination, the directness of emotive experience and also aesthetic pleasure derived from sensory response.

In the empirical world, truths are found in the local rather than the general, and the variable rather than fixed. The empiricist believes there are opinions and prejudices that have temporary validity and that artists should select (from fluctuating, empirical truths) those that have been approved in other societies as well as one’s own, and which are durable, widespread, and unfluctuating. True freedom in artistic creation, empiricists believe, can only occur when artists transcend the floating, transitory desires of the immediate society around them.

Adam openly admired this empirical mode of thinking. In the fourth preface of the first volume of the *Works* (April 1776), he lauded Britain’s achievements in “the culture of science” and contended that they were “greater” and “more meretricious” than those in the country’s culture of “taste.” He hailed Bacon, who had died more than a century before he was born, as the first thinker to point out “the path by which genuine philosophy should advance to the discovery of truth,” and then praised Newton and Locke for their use of Bacon’s methods to discern truth in “nature” and the “human mind,” respectively. Bacon had sowed the seeds of artistic license by claiming that truth and knowledge were not legitimized by authority alone, but were the fruits of observation and inductive reasoning. He argued further that “men have been kept back,

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681 Ibid.
as by a kind of enchantment, from progress in the sciences by reverence for antiquity, by
the authority of men accounted great in philosophy, and then by general consent.”683

Crucially, for empiricists such as Adam, art drew from both reason and
imagination, and the two were often conflated as components of the cognitive machinery
that created and perceived art. As Adam noted, in the fourth preface of the first volume of
the Works, great compositions in architecture “strike the mind” by “imposing on the
imagination.” The imagination, with its energizing capacity, was but “another name,” as
the English poet William Wordsworth (1770-1850) would later write, for “Reason in her
most exalted mood.”684 The standard of taste was understood by empiricists as a meeting
place of the intellect and the senses, and as an intermediate faculty that allows sensory
data to connect to ideas through its reliance on both reason and the imagination. Taste
provided empiricists with an elegant method to reconcile subjective aesthetic pleasure
with an objective to evaluate objects of pleasure (art).

As the concept of taste matured throughout the eighteenth-century, a notion of
“correct” taste emerged to create an objective standard for the evaluation of art; artists,
including Adam, cultivated the idea and developed a discourse around it in order to
elevate their work. The idea of “correct taste” was related to the belief that taste was good
or bad depending on its conformity or difference from universal principles and also in

683 Cited in Woolhouse, Empiricists, 5.
684 The coupling and near fusion of reason and imagination in British thought contrasted sharply with
developments in France, whose leading philosophers employed the two terms as separate, opposed
headings under which all of human knowledge was reductively organized within a single publication, the
new literary form of the encyclopedia, the first pf which was published by Denis Diderot (1713-84) and
Jean le Rond d’Alembert (1717-83) beginning in 1751.684 In Diderot’s initial prospectus of 1750 for this
Encyclopédie, architecture was classified under the heading “Reason,” on the grounds that it originated in
the human need for shelter. However, within d’Alembert’s revised prospectus published of 1751,
architecture shifted from “Reason” to “Imagination.” The Encyclopédie’s now famous foldout engraving of
the “Système figuré des connaissances humaines,” placed architecture within the fine arts, with painting,
sculpture, poetry, and music. In France, the imitation of nature unified the fine arts.
proportion to its capacity to gauge the extent and quality of an artwork’s beauty. “Correct
taste,” as Adam noted, was acquired, and depended particularly upon the “diligent study
of the beauties exhibited by great masters and their productions.”

Two qualities of “correct taste” prevented its widespread attainment and helped to
ensure its association only with elites. First, artists commonly argued that taste was an
inborn faculty and could not be reduced to a science or summarized by any set of
precepts and taught. Second taste was considered to rely on individual experience and
knowledge, both of which were believed to mature and broaden one’s imagination,
instinct, and intuition. The artist and critic were expected to cultivate correct taste, as
opposed to general taste, through augmentation and guidance of this instinctive capacity
through constant, thoughtful inquiry into the nature of man, his past, and his habits. This
project was expensive and time-consuming, entailing intensive study and travel,
becoming conversant with great works, and language study. Sandby argued that “refined
taste,” a corollary to the eighteenth-century notion of “correct taste,” must be cultivated
by “exact observations, study, attention, drawing, measuring, & the like.” Careful and
ample study of great works, he wrote, allowed one to “treasure up a large stock of ideas
in the memory,” and thus “to separate noble, graceful, & elegant forms from those
fluctuating, & trifling images, which continually intrude on our minds, & to fix a proper
boundary to luxuriant imagination.” Similarly, “taste,” for David Hume, was also very
closely linked to learning, knowledge, intuition, and man’s memory and total
associational response, and his work also promulgated the ideas that all of these faculties

686 Walter Jackson Bate, From Classic to Romantic: Premises of Taste in Eighteenth-Century England
687 Sandby, SaT/1/1, Lecture 6, f. 3.
fuel the power of the imagination and ensure a constant breadth of insight and fonts for 
innovation in artistic creation.

Adam’s Rules and Orders

The idea of taste was a valuable tool for Adam and his contemporaries because it 
allowed them to advance toward a primary objective: expanded artistic freedom, which 
had been increasingly narrowed since the Renaissance by the proliferation of rules. Taste 
provided an indispensable means to determine when the rules were to be broken and 
when not.

Adam’s attitude towards rules is memorialized in his Works. In the introduction to 
the first fascicle of volume one (July 1773), he announced that “the rules and orders of 
ariculture, are so generally known, and may be found in so many books, that it would 
be tedious, and even absurd, to treat of them in this work.” He continued, “We beg 
leave, however, to observe that among architects destitute of genius and incapable of 
venturing into the great line of their art, the attention paid to those rules and proportions 
is frequently minute and frivolous.” In an implicit critique of Renaissance 
“improvements” to his art, Adam concluded this paragraph by pointing out that “the great 
masters of antiquity were not so rigidly scrupulous” and that “they varied the proportions 
as the general spirit of their composition required, clearly perceiving, that however 
necessary these rules may be to form the taste and to correct the licentiousness of the 
scholar, they often cramp the genius and circumscribe the ideas of the master.” An 
important echo of these remarks appears the unpublished essay of 1762. This essay 
propounded, “In vain should we sit down and prescribe rules to the sculptor if his eye

were not formed to judge with correctness and elegance.” 689 The argument continued, “betwixt the inimitable statues of the ancients and those of a second rate, that immense difference I say consists in such minute changes that it is never to be subjected to Rule or even expressed by language.”

Adam’s antipathy to the proliferation of rules and indiscriminate adherence to them was characteristically British. 690 English writer Sir William Temple (1628-99) admirably encapsulated modern British sentiment toward rules in art when he wrote that they could do no more than “hinder some men from being very ill Poets, but not…make any man a very good one.” 691 British architect James Lewis (1751-1820) also summed up well the era’s estimation of rules when he wrote in his Original Designs in Architecture (1780) that “implicit adherence to…rules cannot be, in all cases, productive of good effect…a servile attachment to any system …is… incompatible with elegance and propriety.”

By Adam’s era, the codification of rules was generally considered a symptom of artistic decay, and ancient, classical writers and artists became increasingly admired for their indifference to them. Significantly, British aversion to architectural rules requires an adjustment of the meaning of the term “classical.” Rather than submission to long-standing rules, in the context of modern Britain, classicism implies the breaking of some rules, manipulating others, and exercising judgment when adopting any rule.

689 Unpublished essay of 27 November 1762; reprinted in Fleming, Robert Adam, 315.
690 These ideas stood in direct opposition to the ideas of Leon Battista Alberti (1404-72), the father of Renaissance theory, who believed that to follow consistent measure is “the mark of true art.” Alberti, as other Renaissance architects did, remained uncompromising in his adherence to absolute standards: “Yet some would disagree who maintain that beauty, and indeed every aspect of building is judged by relative and variable criteria, and that the forms of buildings should vary according to individual taste, and must not be bound by any rules of art. A common fault, this, among the ignorant – to deny the existence of anything they do not understand.”
691 Cited in Bate, From Classic to Romantic, 45.
Rules were considered useful, however, as a means to define the limits of reason, as a foil against which to define more precisely and definitively the emergent idea of taste, and, especially, as a teaching tool. Pedagogical obligations imposed on Sandby, Reynolds, and the other professors at the newly-founded Royal Academy (1768) led them to stress the rules of art more strongly than they might have done otherwise. Sandby explained in his first lecture that rules were particularly useful in engineering projects and were to be relied upon in architecture as well, chiefly because of the rarity of genius. Rules, he pontificated, “at least prevent the young and inexperienced from running into gross errors & absurdities.” 692 He further expounded “…was every student possessed of those native talents for Architecture, which distinguished Shakespeare in Poetry, it were to be wished no Rules had been established.” 693 Irregularity and rule-breaking in Shakespeare’s plays were celebrated in the eighteenth century as an exhibition of English liberty, and it was contrasted with the French slavish devotion to rules and precedents. Samuel Johnson famously wrote in defense of Shakespeare’s neglect of artificial decorum in the presentation of character, his disregard of the unities of place and time, and his intermingling of comedy and tragedy. He described these as illustrative of freedom in artistic creation. 694

While Sandby recommended adherence to rules in certain circumstances, he also invoked the long-standing British belief that rules encouraged specious imitation, and he encouraged his students to invent: “those who confine themselves to one rule or mode of proportion, are mere copyists while the ancients, though they preserved the character of the Order, were perfectly original.” He implored his students not to imprison their minds

692 Sandby, SaT/1/1, Lecture 6, f. 65.
693 Ibid., Lecture 1, f. 39.
694 Cited in Bate, From Classic to Romantic, 70.
in the cage of mathematical matrices, and to combine precise draftsmanship with the visual effects of freehand-drawing, which provided opportunity for a broader range of expression:

To conclude, it is seriously recommended to the young students in Architecture, after having qualified themselves to copy the works of the great masters with fidelity and exactness, by accurate measurements and are sufficiently grounded in Geometry, Perspective, that they accustom themselves to draw after real Buildings without the use of Rules and Compasses, in the manner of the Landskip Painters. For a readiness and facility in drawing by hand, this will correct that hardness which is generally too predominant in the works of those who never draw but by Rule & Compass.

Evaluation of artistic rules became a leitmotif in architectural writing in the second half of the eighteenth century, and Adam provided some of the most precise, mature, and idiosyncratic writing about them. In Britain, in Adam’s time, the manner in which an architect defined himself in relation to rules determined his worth. Since the Renaissance, the most significant rules of architecture were those that governed proportion, and thus, the composition of orders; for centuries these rules of proportion were the primary standard against which critics judged the qualities of architecture. The manner in which an architect handled the composition of the orders became a principal medium whereby he asserted and defined his commercial artistic identity. Adam was one of the earliest architects to seize upon this new marketing opportunity.

Aware of the nature of Britain’s critical climate, Adam dedicated the entire preface of the second fascicle of volume one (May 1774) to an explication of his attitude towards the rules of the orders. Like the first preface, the second preface contained material copied almost verbatim from his letter to Lord Kames from 1763 (written at Kames’s request to explain Adam’s attitude toward the rules and the orders) and the unpublished essay of 1762. His primary goals were to present himself as an artist guided

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695 As the English architect William Thomas argued in his *Original Designs in Architecture* of 1783, “it appears that ORDERS ALONE are determined by fixed Rules of Architecture” (preface).
by objective natural truths (harmony) and empiricism, demonstrate his erudition and mastery of his art through the selective adherence to rules, and display his competence and maturity by avoiding the many disputes over artistic rules, which Adam pronounced “extremely frivolous.”

Like most of his British contemporaries, Adam believed that the architect was not subject to precise rules in only very few cases. For him, rules relating to the orders were among these exceptions, and were of the greatest consequence. These unavoidable rules included the parameters for the diminution and proportion of columns, and the composition of the capitals of orders, of which he recognized three: Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian. Moreover, capitals, he reckoned, required more rules than any other element of architecture because of their exceptional complexity. At the end of this preface, Adam added passing remarks concerning the design and proportion of entablatures and the curvature of moldings. His selection of rules was the product of intense thought and consideration, and the distinctiveness of his selections branded his singular style. Regarding the diminution of columns, Adam stated that it had been his “constant practice” to calculate the vertical curve of a column “by means of the instrument used by Nicomedes in describing the first conchoid,” which he thought “has exceeded in elegance any other method hitherto employed.”

The “correct taste of the skillful and experienced artist” and the development of a sophisticated and judicious “eye” Adam argued, were crucial for the establishment of the proportional ratios for the design of the orders and rooms because these were not subjected to any precise rule. The architect, he asserted, must vary the design of these elements to accommodate the column’s “situation” — i.e. its position relative to man-

made and natural surroundings, its function, and the position of a beholder’s eye.

Whether a column was located inside or outside, was freestanding or engaged, and was level with the eye or raised high above it, were factors to be considered in determining proportions and designing ornaments, especially those for capitals. Adam asserted that he saw “no reason for assigning to each order its precise entablature, fixed down unalterably both in figure and dimension.”697 The enlightened, modern architect, he argued, should ignore the tedious recitation and squabbling about rules and measurements, which had preoccupied architects since the sixteenth century, and engage in a more elevated dialogue centered on “situation and propriety.”

With regard to capitals, Adam unequivocally criticized Renaissance architects for injudiciously adopting inelegant and irregular features, and believed that contemporary architects should invent new rules that would ensure the design of more beautiful forms.698 In execution of Doric capitals, for example, Adam prescribed elongation of the neck, or the space between the astragal and the annulets, to a “much greater height” than that recommended by Palladio and “many other moderns.” (Figure 5.2) He also called for variable enrichment of the newly extended neck — a tantalizing opportunity for architect’s to further flaunt his skill and to introduce a distinct, personal idiom.

In his letter to Lord Kames from 1763 Adam offered further insight into his view of the Doric order. He argued for greater enrichment of the Doric when used in indoors (it was traditionally used in entrance halls, in particular), and for the judicious addition or substitution of some elements of the order, and rejection of certain common parts. Yet Adam cautioned that the alteration of what had become standard versions of the Doric

697 Ibid., 6.
698 Ibid., 5.
order, as those published in the treatises of the Italian Renaissance, required great skill: “it is a dangerous license, and may do much harm, in the hands of rash innovators, or mere retailers in the art, who have neither eyes nor judgment.” Adam’s use of the term “retailers” and his call for both “eyes and judgment” is revealing, pointing up his consciousness of the destructive aspects of the modern commercialization and his increasing insistence on the significance of visual perception in the design and evaluation of art. Although the “eye” had always been an important concept in artistic training, in art theory previous to the late eighteenth century, its role had been subsumed to that of “judgment”, or the role of the mind. Here, Adam sets the eye and mind against each other as equally significant mechanisms of artistic creation.

Adam’s partiality for the Ionic order is apparent both in the length of his discussion of its capitals and in its prevalence in his built work (Figure 5.2). For him, it possessed just as much “dignity and magnificence” as the Corinthian, an order Adam considered overused. He preferred that Ionic capital volutes be “square to the front,” rather than angled, as in the Temples of Concord and Manly Fortune at Rome, and as found in the work of Renaissance architects, including Michelangelo (1475-1564) and Vincenzo Scamozzi (1548-1616). Adam further recommended that the diameter of the volute be smaller than that used by the Greeks and larger than that used by the Romans: “We have…taken a mean between them…making them in width about one half of the superior diameter of the column, and observing that the center of the eye of the volute is nearly perpendicular to the extremity of said diameter.” He also advised that architects follow Greek precedent to form the volute with a double filet, to produce “more light and shade,” and to bend and to ornament the “channel” that connected the volutes. Finally,
Adam emphasized the treatment of the astragal and the neck, which were of “chief importance towards completing this capital,” and that the neck, “as in the Doric, should be filled sometimes with various enrichments, more or less ornamented, and sometimes, perhaps, should be left altogether plain, according to the stile of the building where it is employed.”

One of Adam’s most elegant interior designs for the Ionic order is found in the dining room at Audley End House in Essex (1771-4, Figure 5.3). He then directed the reader to the fourth plate of that fascicle, where he showed an example of an Ionic capital (Figure 5.2) that required a plain neck and fillet in order to ensure that it did not appear “flat and meagre.”

Adam made only one recommendation for the Corinthian capital, whose foliage and stems made it “not only magnificent but also extremely gay and graceful,” advising architects to keep the body of the capital (“the vase”) convex, while making the abacus concave, in order to create a formal pairing which “contrasts in a beautiful manner.” He was specifically critical of Corinthian capital bodies with a concave, “cyma recta” shape (swelling towards the middle and bending in at the bottom), which he called “unpleasant” because it made the capital appear to “rest ill upon the shaft of the column.” (Figure 5.4) Adam, flaunting his connoisseurship and literary erudition, added that this common “error” had “probably been introduced from a defect in the drawing of the plates of Desgodetz.”

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699 Ibid.
700 Ibid., 6.
701 Les édifices antiques de Rome dessinés et mesurés très exactement sur les lieux par feu M. Desgodez, architecte du roi. Nouvelle Edition (Paris: Claude-Antoine Jombert) 1729. Early in Adam’s career, he had plans to publish a revised version of Antoine Desgodez’s (1653–1728) publication Les édifices antiques de Rome dessinés et mesurés très exactement (Paris 1682), which provided detailed engravings and precise measurements of the monuments and antiquities of Rome. Les édifices was reissued in 1729 and again in 1779.
Illustrations of Kenwood House (1767-70), a work that exemplifies important aspects of Adam’s ideas about interior and exterior use of orders, accompanied this preface. In the description of Plate III (Figure 5.5), Adam opened by highlighting the aspect of the façade that harbors his meticulously-executed columns: “The portico of the north is the only part of that front which is new.” In this plate, he juxtaposed the north and south façades so the reader can examine his innovative use of the orders, which he variously deployed in pilasters and engaged columns on the south façade, and as free-standing columns on the north.

Adam must have also relied heavily upon the writing of Vitruvius to formulate his ideas about the perception of the architectural orders. In book six, chapter two, Vitruvius wrote of the methods of determining proportions in architecture and the vital role of optics. In this passage the ancient writer explained that proportional systems were “developed by reasoning” and judgment with regard to the “nature of the site, or the building’s appearance, or its function.”\textsuperscript{702} For Vitruvius, a successful building must “seem to have been designed correctly with nothing wanting in its appearance.”\textsuperscript{703} It was therefore the architect’s responsibility to take into account in his design the relative position of the viewer and the building and the viewer’s faculties of vision.

Vitruvius described human vision as unreliable and human perception as relative. He remarked that vision is often confounded by natural and manmade optical illusions, as when a body is placed in water and becomes distorted, or when painted forms appear three-dimensional, as on theater sets. A building, he further remarked, may have many appearances: “one kind of appearance for a building that is close by, another for the one

\textsuperscript{702} Vitruvius, \textit{De Architectura}, 6.2.1.\\
\textsuperscript{703} Ibid.
that is far off, yet another for an enclosed space, and another in the open.”

Because the viewer’s perception of the building shifts according to the viewer’s position, the architect, therefore, must account for the building’s range of expressive potentialities and its relationship to the eye of the beholder. Vitruvius instructed the architect in this difficult endeavor to rely upon two aids: his “sharp” and “sound” judgment and the implementation of “standard methods” and “systems…on the basis of which any change can be incorporated without hesitation.”

The work of French architect and professor of architecture at the Académie Royale d’Architecture (founded 1671), François Blondel (1705-74), also shaped Adam’s empirical approach to designing orders. In his *Cours d’Architecture* (1771), Blondel argued that ancient architects made adjustments to produce desired optical effects — for example, adjusting forms in order to counteract the influence of optical laws, which in some cases make a well-proportioned building appear ill-proportioned to the eye. Blondel also successfully used this argument to explain, in part, the discrepancies between the figures he had drawn of ancient monuments for the *Cours*, the measurements of Desgodetz, and those recorded by other writers on ancient architecture. Blondel argued vociferously that the discrepancies did not undermine his theory because he imputed to the ancients a sense of proportions of which there was no trace in their actual works.

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704 Ibid., 6.2.2.
705 Ibid., 6.2.2-5.
706 François Blondel, *Cours D'architecture Enseigné Dans L'academie Royale D'architecture ..* (2. ed., augm. & cor. Paris: Chez l'auteur, 1698), V, 779: “Il me semble que j'entends quelqu'un qui me reproche que ... j'impute à la plupart des Architectes anciens et modernes des sentimens qu'ils n'ont jamais ... pensé et qui n'y sont point en effet. Ce que l'on peut, dira-t-on, facilement reconnoître, au moins dans les desseins des Bâtimens antiques, dont nous avons à present des descriptions de la dernière justesse, et dont les véritables mesures sont assez éloignées de ces proportions que je leur donne...Sur quoy je dis que bien que je fasse beaucoup de cas de l'exactitude dans les mesures, et que je sois persuadé que l'on a beaucoup d'obligation à ceux qui nous ont donné celles des Bâtimens antiques dans la dernière justesse; il ne faut pourtant pas croire .. que ce soit toujours l'Architecte qui ait fait la première faute dans son dessein.”
Blondel further rejected the proposition that the discrepancies could be explained as adjustments made for optical effect, while acknowledging that they might be explained as faulty execution by unskilled builders.

Blondel’s impact on the empiricism of British architecture was very apparent in Chambers’s *Treatise*, which paid steady attention to visual effects, particularly in the design of orders. Chambers’ most lucid and complete discussion of his interest in vision occurs in his discussion on the Doric order. (Figure 5.6) Here, he identified an optical illusion that is apparent when it is viewed from below; when looking upward, the ovolo in the cornice appears to the viewer to be significantly larger than the recessed capital of the triglyph, cast in shadow, beneath it; in reality, however, they are nearly of the same dimensions.\(^{707}\) He then pointed out that even if the ovolo were dropped below the viewer’s eye, then another type of optical distortion would result: thus relocated, the ovolo “would appear considerably lower than any flat member of the same height.”\(^{708}\) Chambers’ examples offered support to his ensuing claim that because of the nature of human vision, “a strict attachment to harmonic relations seems entirely out of the question, since what is really in perfect harmony may in appearance produce the most jarring discord.”\(^{709}\) Chambers, like Adam, replaced the Renaissance standard of precise measurements and absolute mathematical relationships with the variability of visual principle.

Throughout the *Treatise*, Chambers cited many unsatisfactory visual effects. No architect, drawing, or treatise is off limits to his critique: “it being absolutely necessary to examine every precept, composition [and] design, with scrupulous nicety, before their

\(^{708}\) Ibid.
\(^{709}\) Ibid.
value can be determined. Effectually to enter upon so difficult an enquiry requires an unprejudiced mind not to be biased by great authorities.”

Even Palladio’s most emulated work, the Villa Capra (or Villa Rotunda, 1566-71, Figure 5.7) is faulted. Chambers critiqued the profile of the entablature, which he perceived as graceless and overly curvaceous:

>The frieze, as in the former design, is low and swelled; but it will be better to raise it to the same height with the architrave, and keep it upright as before directed, for the swell gives it a clumsy form, and, appearing a continuity of the same undulations which compose the architrave and cornice, serves to render the outline of the whole entablature confused and much too abundant in curves."

The bulging frieze, which appears to be squashed under the taller, planer architrave above it, ruins the visual expression of the building. Chambers continually reminded his readers that one such defect can spoil the visual integrity and character of the whole. In an earlier section, he carefully explained that the pleasure derived from viewing a beautiful building partly arose from the architect’s arrangement of forms of a building in such a way that the essential parts caught the eye successively, “from the most considerable to the least, according to their degrees of importance in the composition, and impress then images on the mind, before it is affected by any of the subservient members.”

The Idea of Order

British architects of Adam’s time were highly critical of the Renaissance conception of classical orders, which had been promulgated as an improvement upon ancient architecture, but which was now seen to inhibit invention, progress, and the expression of genius. The term order (ordine), in reference to architectural style, was first

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710 William Chambers, RIBA Archives, CHA/1/1-6, Lecture II, ff. 2-3.
712 Ibid., 138.
used c.1519 in the circle of Raphael, Bramante, and Peruzzi on the construction site of the new St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome.\footnote{713}{See Ingrid D. Rowland, “Raphael, Angelo Colocci, and the Genesis of the Architectural Orders” \textit{Art Bulletin,} Vol. 76, No. 1 (Mar., 1994), 81-104.} “Order” thereafter swiftly supplanted Vitruvius’s term “genus” as a descriptor of the classical system of column-cum-entablature and signaled a new approach to architecture characterized by precision and method. While all architectural writers before c.1519 had set no limit on the number and character of genera (orders), in pursuit of precision, and overwhelmed by the variety visible in ancient architecture, the architects in Raphael’s circle limited the orders at five: the Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, Tuscan, and Composite, all of which had ancient precedents, and they invented the “Attic Order,” as a category for square piers used in lieu of columns.\footnote{714}{Vitruvius stated that the four genera he described were merely those for which he knew names (\textit{De Architecture}, 4.8.4-6).} In a ruthless Procrustean act, Renaissance master, Scamozzi standardized the proportions of the orders, depicting them with the same diameters and increasing heights. (Figure 5.8) Within this new, rigid system, architecture constituted a microcosm of universal order, and the architectural orders become symbols, heavily endowed with semantic value, of Platonic harmony.

For eighteenth-century architects, the Renaissance’s imposition of “order” was seen to remove an essential sense of freedom of expression from architectural design to produce a deadening effect. “Nothing is more sterile and disgustful,” wrote Adam, for example, “than to see forever the dull repetition of Dorick [sic], Ionick [sic], and Corinthian entablatures, in their usual proportions, reigning round every apartment, where no order can come or ought to come.”\footnote{715}{Adam, \textit{Works} (1980) Vol. 1, No. 1 (July 1773), 1, n 2.} He continued, “It is astonishing to think that this has been almost invariably the case from the days of Bramante down to our
time.” Commiserating with his rival, Chambers also lamented the deleterious effects of this Renaissance inheritance: “besides [having] giving a wrong idea of the character of these different compositions, [it] has [also] laid a foundation for many erroneous precepts and false reasoning.” To remedy this, Chambers advised architects to look directly to ancient monuments, rather than mimic Renaissance architectural forms.

**Adam’s Unseating of the Orders**

One of Adam’s most important, revolutionary contributions was to diminish the role of the orders in classical architectural design. As Arthur Bolton noted, Adam’s regard for ancient domestic architecture (established publicly with the publication of *Ruins*), rather than focusing on column-bedecked public architecture, “called in question the validity of the system of the orders which had been the subject of so much study since men had first turned to the remains of Roman antiquity as a new basis for building, in the earliest days of the Renaissance.” As Harris has remarked, “from the mid sixteenth century at least until the early twentieth the classical orders were the primary and constant subject of architectural books” and “were the absolute criteria for design in architecture.”

Adam believed that the character of modern domestic architecture was confused, irrational, inappropriate, and groundless, lacking ancient precedents. In his assessment of the state of modern architecture, he also was particularly critical of the villas of Palladio and their offspring in Italy and elsewhere in Europe. For Adam, the Palladian villa corrupted the true nature of private or domestic building chiefly through the overuse of

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the orders. Conversely, the astylar buildings of the Renaissance, for Adam, were useful building experiments that would to find an autonomous language for domestic buildings.

Not only did Adam unseat the orders as the centerpiece in architectural writing and design, but he also shifted the focus of the discussion of the orders from proportions and measurement to ornamentation. He considered the orders to be just one group of actors in a large cast of equally powerful, beautiful, and important decorative characters within the drama of architectural composition. He found them most useful as elements that highlighted variety within large, integrated decorative programs that he devised for rooms or exterior façades. Some of Adam’s most spectacular integrations of the orders are found in the suite of rooms he designed for Syon House (Figures 5.9-5.12), the dining room at Culzean Castle, the drawing room at Saltram House, the small drawing room at Audley End (Figure 5.13), and the libraries at Kenwood House (Figure 4.10), Mellerstain Castle (Figure 5.14), and Newby Hall.

Adam’s thinking about the classical orders contrasted markedly with that of Chambers, who asserted in his Treatise that “the orders of Architecture…are the basis upon which the whole decorative part of the art is chiefly built…[and in] their combination, multiplied, varied, and arranged in a thousand different ways, architecture is indebted for its most splendid productions.” Moreover, while Chambers advised architects to keep the orders in mind “even where no orders are introduced” because “in [the orders] originate most of the forms used in decoration, they regulate most of the proportions,” Adam believed that the proportions of the orders do not dictate, but rather reinforce or complement the proportions of architectural elements.

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Adam’s de-emphasis of the orders was new in British architectural writing, but it had precedents on the Continent, where throughout the eighteenth century, writers on architecture had demonstrated strong interest in the construction of new architectural languages and establishing an alternative foundation for architectural theory. Johann Bernard Fischer von Erlach (1656-1723), for example, often called the father of the Austrian Baroque, offered no exposition of the architectural orders or, for that matter, of their proportions, in his pioneering history of world architecture (Entwurf einer historischen Architektur, 1721). While providing a broad historical exploration of architectural structure and form, Fischer did not embrace the norms of the architectural treatise, which usually provided a catalogue of the orders.

French architect Germain Boffrand’s (1667-1754) Livre d’architecture (1745) might have inspired Adam. None of the multiple prefaces in Boffrand’s work follow the traditional format of the Vitruvian-inspired treatise or book of orders. Rather than present that familiar material, Boffrand addressed the aesthetic issues that had been raised by the French Academy’s attempts to create a coherent system of architectural theory in the face of the inconsistencies that had been found in ancient buildings and architectural treatises and Claude Perrault’s empiricist critique of the long-claimed connection between proportions and beauty.

Adam’s ideas were coeval with those of the French architect and theoretician Nicolas Le Camus de Mézières (1721-89). In his Le Genie de l’architecture, ou l’analogie de cet art avec nos sensations (1780), Le Camus focused on the expressive or meaningful aspects of architecture, which, for him, meant attending not only to the orders, but also to the “whole” of a building “with a character all its own, capable of
He argued that architecture could elicit a full range of sensual responses in viewers, who were no longer defined by social standing or rank, but by their unique physical and psychological traits, feelings, and desires.

Adam and the Invention of New Orders

Robert appears to have been hesitant to invent new orders, rather than to make slight adjustments to established ones, or to import recently discovered ancient ones, as in the case of his “Spalatro order.” James, on the other hand, indulged in the often disparaged practice. His “Britannic Order” (1762) was somehow tolerated by Robert, who not only permitted it to be published in the fifth fascicle of the first volume of the Works (June 1778), but also allowed his brother to defend it; in the plate description for the original order, the brothers claimed as precedent the practice of the ancients, who “very frequently…[indulged] themselves in compositions of fancy; introducing into their capitals and entablatures the various symbols of those divinities to whom they erected temples. A licence of the same kind has been hazarded here.” Additionally, James created designs for a “Scottish” or “Scotch” order (1761 or 1764), composed of gracefully entwined thistles above a mantle of acanthus leaves, and a nautical-themed order (1760s) that featured mermen as volutes, dolphins, and a necking of oak and lotus

721 Adam, Works (1980), Vol. 1, No. 5 (June 1778), Description to Plate II, 11.
leaves. It is likely that each of these orders is associated with James’ scheme (1762/3) for a new Parliament building in London.

This kind of innovation received mixed reviews. A proponent was English architect Isaac Ware (1704-66), who paraphrased Laugier’s *Essai sur l’architecture* (1753, London 1755) in his *Complete Body of Architecture* (1756) to maintain that the established orders were “an affair of taste and genius” and were also ordained by natural law, and that the artist was at liberty, within the bounds of nature, to invent something “new absolutely.” Ware reckoned that successful execution of this difficult task required consummate skill: “he who shall set about it must first be a perfect master of the design of every part and proportion of the others [Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian.”

Revealing an idealist and romantic outlook, he then prophesied, “…some true architect, inspired with the full spirit of the science, may rise and strike out to us a beauty the antients [sic] never found; for it is in the compass of nature not yet exhausted.”

The more established, critical view was held by William Chambers, who considered the invention of new orders a fool’s errand and a professional embarrassment. “The fettered human imagination” and its “scanty store” of ideas,” he argued, had yet to create anything that surpassed the perfection of the ancient orders. Innovation in the orders, he found, tended more “to complicate and confuse the form than to augment its grace or contribute to its excellence.” Chambers added that “the ingenuity of man has

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722 James’ designs for these orders are in the collection of the Sir John Soane Museum. For his nautical-themed order see Adam vol. 26/172 and vol. 26/161; for his Scottish order see Adam vol. 7/163.
723 Some of James’ designs for a new building for Parliament in London are held in the Sir John Soane Museum.
724 Ware, *Complete Body of Architecture* (1756), Book II, Part III, Section I, Chapter 1 “Of the origin and number of the orders,” 129-30.
725 Ibid., 129.
726 Ibid., 130.
hitherto not been able to produce a sixth order…All that has ever been produced amounts
to nothing more than different arrangements and combinations of [Doric, Ionic, and
Corinthian] parts, with trifling deviations scarcely deserving notice, the whole generally
tending to diminish than to increase the beauty of the ancient orders.”

The sudden alteration of the essential characteristics of the orders was, for
Chambers, an arrogant denial of the long, slow, and gradual historical process that had
revealed truth and beauty. He believed that the orders were the result of hundreds of years
of collective creativity, experimentation and refinement, and that a new order could not
develop within the passage of several generations, let alone in the lifetime of a single
man. Even if a newly invented order possessed beauty, this would not be perceptible
without the “sanction of time.” Chambers noted that attempts to alter the “primary
forms” of the orders was nearly always “attended with dangerous consequences” and was
“seldom, if ever, successful.”

Heavily influenced by Chambers thinking, Thomas Sandby professed to his
students in his first lecture that “time and experience had ripened” the “judgment” of
ancient architects, and “established those beautiful forms [the orders] as the criterion of
elegance in Architecture.” He warned students against endeavoring to design a new
order, citing the folly of “the French,” who “attempted to introduce a new order, by
placing cocks and flowers on their capitals.” “Other nonce orders…[composed
of]…military weapons, dolphins, rams heads and many other productions of the animal
and vegetable world,” he continued, “can never rank in competition with the regular

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728 Ibid.
729 Sandby, SaT/1/1, Lecture 1, f. 35.
730 Ibid.
Orders, which have been composed on more natural Principles. The others are only the productions of whim or caprice.”

Robert’s reluctance to radically alter the appearance of the orders is an important marker of his grasp of the workings, meaning, and significance of evolutionary change in the history of his art. His fearless revision of traditional uses of the orders, however, was an important turning point in British neoclassicism and contributed significantly to his reputation as a revolutionary artist. Robert’s unusually strong motivation for unseating the orders was grounded, ultimately, in his deeply-rooted desires to fulfill larger artistic visions, especially within new kinds of domestic interiors, in which the orders did not play leading roles.

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731 Ibid.
6. Robert Adam’s Picturesque and Scenographic Interiors

Adam lived and worked in a culture saturated with ideas about scenography and the picturesque, and he held nearly lifelong interests in both of these intimately-related concepts. “Picturesque” was a term originally used in eighteenth-century landscape gardening and, beginning at the close of the eighteenth-century, was subsequently imported into other arts, where it evoked compositional strategies borrowed by gardeners and from “classical” landscape painting, notably the works of Claude Lorrain (1600–82), Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665) and Salvator Rosa. The foundation of this innovative work rested upon the application of general principles of painting theory to architecture, especially compositional rules regarding grouping of figures and other elements, variation in contour lines, the play of light and shadow, and the construction of backgrounds. “Scenographic” is a twentieth-century term used for the design of stage sets, which has only recently been applied to certain kinds of “scenic” and “theatrical” architectural interiors — although Adam did not use the term “scenographic” to describe his work, he did employ the closely-related term “scenery,” and described the visual effects of his architectural interiors as similar to those of stage sets. One of Adam’s most significant contributions to architectural theory was his application of picturesque and scenographic ideas into every branch of architectural design. His picturesque and scenographic house interiors were among the best and most innovative European architecture of the second half of the eighteenth century, and they have never lost their luster.
Adam’s Picturesque Interiors

Adam’s work has long been associated with the idea of the picturesque. He was himself perhaps the first to associate his work with this idea, as he termed himself a “picturesque hero” when in Italy on his Grand Tour. This has been taken up by twentieth-century scholars, among whom the idea that his pervasive yet adumbrative theory of movement lies at the heart of a picturesque theory has become commonplace. A. A. Tait, for example, has argued that the significance of Adam’s Works lies principally in its introduction of a picturesque style and a conception of architecture that is inseparable from the landscape. Some work has also been done on Adam’s “picturesque” drawings.

Despite the substantial amount of scholarship that has aligned Adam with the picturesque, the depth and precise meaning and function of this concept in Adam’s interior designs has yet to be explored. Likewise, the correlation between Adam’s concept of movement and the picturesque, particularly with regard to interior spaces, is unacknowledged in current scholarship, in which his interior design work is interpreted as merely an embrace of decorative variety and the spatial manipulation of architectural forms.

The picturesque in modern times is largely the result of the reformulation of aesthetic ideas set forth by a cluster of British artists, landscape designers, and writers — most prominently, William Gilpin (1724-1804), Sir Uvedale Price (1747-1829), Richard Payne Knight (1751-1824), and Humphrey Repton (1752-1818). A watershed date for the establishment of the idea of the picturesque in artistic culture is 1795, when the first

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732 Fleming, Robert Adam, 310.
733 See Tait, Robert Adam: Drawings and Imagination.
734 See note 53.
publications of the latter three theorists appeared and when public controversy over the
meaning and value of the picturesque swirled most intensely. Framed more broadly, in art
historical scholarship, the period between 1780 and 1830 is often considered the
apotheosis of the picturesque.

What happened earlier, including Adam’s engagement with the picturesque, is
typically framed as a pre-history. While some scholars have made a case for the concept
beginning in the depiction of landscape on Italian Renaissance paintings, and others note
the legend that the picturesque is a European appropriation of much older Chinese
landscape ideas, today, the picturesque is generally understood as an ensemble of
concepts that drew on eighteenth-century thinking and continued to play a role in the
nineteenth and twentieth centuries, where it has been applied very broadly across cultural
theory.

Proliferation of picturesque theory in the second half of the eighteenth-century in
Britain satisfied a number of the needs of generations that were increasingly subtle and
sophisticated in the aesthetic appreciation of nature and art. The adaptable and convenient
concept dovetailed effortlessly with the equally expansive ideas of the sublime and
beautiful. During the 1750s and 1760s, these two terms were redefined and enlarged to
function within new theories of art that were grounded in sensory experience,
psychological effects, and other considerations that lay outside the classical canon. The
picturesque can be understood, then, as a response to the newly fashionable idea that the
purpose of art was to raise feelings and to excite the imagination, and it acted as the
connective tissue between sensory experience and emotions. Fundamentally, the
picturesque was grounded in the relation of pictorial forms to visual experiences.
In Adam’s era, picturesque values increasingly displaced the ideal of symmetry and the orders in the design of architecture. He lived and worked in a moment steeped in ideas of the picturesque, although they had not yet matured into a structured and defined discourse. Many of the ideas concerning the picturesque that British writers would explore and clarify near the end of the eighteenth century were nascent and intermingled at the time when Adam was bringing them into his work and theory. His embrace of an expansive sense of the picturesque is discernable in the handful of appearances of the term in his *Works*, and in the visual arguments he made in both his drawings and built works. Distinctively, this enlightened “picturesque hero” was one of the few designers to import this aesthetic mode into interior space.

Adam’s ideas on the picturesque were visibly shaped by eighteenth-century painting and aesthetic theory, and his picturesque sensibilities were piqued at an early age by Paul and Thomas Sandby—master painters and brothers, who had each instructed the aspiring artist in landscape painting at different moments in the early 1750s. Adam’s general familiarity with the ideas of the Enlightenment also proved a rich source for his understanding and development of the picturesque, as did his conversations while in Rome with members of the circle of the French Academy.

*Architecture & Painting*

One of the most significant of Adam’s uses of the picturesque was as a theory of how to design, or how to make architecture. This theory was grounded in the beliefs that key ingredients of the picturesque were the acuity and judgment that was gained from the study and making of pictures, and that the compositional strategies of architecture, both
interior and exterior, could productively borrow from those of painting. Adam also marshaled the study of paintings to develop sound aesthetic judgments about architecture, and especially the connoisseurial critique of country estates. The formal traits of painting compositions, including variety, unity, color, distribution of light and shadow, were believed by Adam and most of his contemporaries to be essential to design great buildings as well (see “Adam’s Training as a Painter,” pp. 118-25). Within this design theory, Adam used the term picturesque to refer both to entire compositions and to their individual formal aspects.

Not only was Adam interested in applying general principles of painting theory to architectural design, but he was also fascinated with the idea of merging the formal qualities of these arts to create what can be understood as picturesque architecture. The interiors that he created in this pursuit were often notable for the flatness of their wall surfaces, typically ornamented by a system of low relief and painted ornament, which tended to appear as a set of planes that were devoid of constructional significance, mass, and volume. Adam, evidently believed, however, that the integrity of architecture was not shattered in these kinds of interiors, but maintained and showcased, through the unification (through decorative elements) of architecture, painting, sculpture, and furnishings. In this regard, Adam was a follower of architect William Kent, who was one of the first British architects to consider objects as enhancements of the form and decoration of a room, rather than as detracting, obscuring, or distracting elements.

A central tension of Adam’s picturesque rooms was between his planar decorative schemes and the role of interiors as containers for three-dimensional furnishings. Adam showed great concern about placement of furniture, sculptures, paintings, and other

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decorative objects within his interiors, and he mitigated, and in some cases intensified, the tension between the flatness of his decorative schemes and the three-dimensionality of decorative objects through the careful placement and limited use of the latter. This tension was exemplified in the long gallery at Syon House (1762, Figure 5.11), the entrance hall at Osterley House (1767, Figure 6.1) the drawing room at Northumberland House (c1772, Figure 6.2), and the Etruscan Room at Home House, at No. 20 Portman Square, London (1775, Figure 6.3). In these spaces, three-dimensional objects have restricted roles in the figuration of space, and function principally to emphasize boundaries, frames, and limits of the interior, and to enhance the mental and physical perception of flatness in the surrounding space through contrast. Objects were, thus, often displayed with only a single or partially-visible profile, as in the dining room at Syon (1762, Figure 5.12), and were sometimes rendered illusionistically on the wall surface, as in the Etruscan drawing room at Osterley House (1775, Figure 6.4). They were also typically positioned along the perimeters of rooms, as in the gallery at Harewood House (1777, Figure 6.5), within niches, between column screens or pilasters, as in the entrance hall at Osterley House (1767, Figure 6.1), the anteroom at Syon House (1764, Figure 5.10), and the entrance hall at Kedleston (1760, Figure 6.6). Adam also restricted the projection of furnishings into interior space by placing them in niches, apses, and other recessed spaces, as in the dining rooms at Lansdowne House (1766-9, Figure 6.7) and Syon House (Figure 5.12), and the jewel-like small drawing room at Audley End (Figure 5.13). Adam’s furniture was also often heavily patterned, thus flattening its appearance, and sometimes it is upholstered in the same pattern as the wallpaper or tapestries of the room, which unified the space and created a camouflaging, planar effect (a ploy first
ventured by Kent, Figure 6.8), as in the drawing room with the Palmyra ceiling at Osterley House (Figure 6.9), the drawing room at Kedleston Hall (1759-65, Figure 69), and the Tapestry-Room at Croome Court. (1769-70, Figure 6.11) For the Etruscan drawing room at Osterley, Adam designed chairs that appeared to merge with the wall, with which his furniture shared patterning, color, and the use of *tromp l’œil* urns. (Figure 6.4)

Architecture, painting, and sculpture, for Adam, were interdependent in the achievement of a great style. He wrote to Kames: “Painting and sculpture depend more upon good architecture than one would imagine. They are the necessary accompaniments of the great style of architecture; and a building that makes no provision for them, and does not even demand them as necessary adjuncts, I would at once pronounce to be wretched.” Adam was keenly interested in launching a new era of interior design in which attention focused on shaping the overall experience of the setting, rather than the experience of looking at individual objects.

Adam faced particular challenges in England in creating this kind of comprehensive interior experience because he was often obliged to incorporate the paintings from his patron’s private collection in his decorative program, as at Harewood House, Kedleston Hall, Syon House, and Osterley House. Typically, only paintings from the owner’s collection hung on the wall of Adam interiors. As the art historian Frank Herrmann has pointed out, “the English were almost unique in their love of surrounding themselves with objects of beauty from many previous ages in the rooms in which they

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and their families passed their lives.” Elsewhere in Europe throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, such family art was usually confined to special display cabinets and long hallways.

The result was that British houses increasingly came to function as galleries or museums for the display of collections of fine art and archaeological objects, taking on an ambiguous public/private character that called for new systems of presentation and modes of spectatorship that reflected the emergent “culture of exhibition.” Concern arose that interiors might begin to feel too public, and would too closely resemble an art-dealer’s shop or exhibition room (such as the Exhibition Room at Somerset House, Figure 6.12) not only in their decoration, but also in the mode of display. Adam was careful neither to crowd rooms with paintings, nor to arrange them in a line, which were two of the most prominent conventions for contemporary display of paintings in public exhibition spaces. The taste for large numbers of framed pictures gradually eliminated the opportunities for the use of paneling, which Adam often designed. In order to infuse interiors with a sense of domesticity, certain trends in interior design – including the use of wall tapestries, wallpaper, decorative relief sculpture and ornamental painting – were undertaken by architects (gloriously, in the case of Adam) to differentiate house interiors from the public institutions whose functioning they otherwise resembled.

Whenever possible, Adam preferred to have paintings specifically executed for decorative purposes, which, in contrast to those in the collections of his patrons, were

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tailor-made for particular places and functioned as integrated parts of larger, unified programs. Typically, these subsidiary paintings were recessed into walls or ceilings, and given a low-relief frame that projected only slightly from the wall, as in the saloons at Nostell Priory (1775-6, Figure 6.13) and Kedleston Hall (Figure 6.14). The scale of these recessed painted panels was often relatively small, and the subjects were often single or multiple human figures, landscapes, or portraits that resisted reference to any specific place or time. Typically, these paintings are executed in color, but depending on the larger ornamental scheme of which they were a part, they were occasionally painted in grisaille, as in the dining room at Lansdowne House. (Figure 6.7)

**Architecture and Perception: Movement and Architecture**

The picturesque also operated as a theory of perception for Adam. His use of the term connected it with a new conceptual framework that elevated visual sensory values and gave primacy to creating movement and other pleasurable effects for viewing. The picturesque lured the viewer into a state of heightened awareness of the act of looking, and of the nature and limits of both sight (the sensory information taken in by the eye) and vision (the relaying of visual information captured by the eye to the brain and the interpretation of images). In this context, “picturesque” described the dynamic

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740 Although Palladio barely printed a word on paintings in interior decoration, the few images displayed in his *Four Books* and the temples on which they are based exerted tremendous influence on Adam. Palladio’s impact on Adam was to impress on him the necessity of the compartmentalization of stucco and paintings into appropriate fields demarcated for ornamental use. Two example in the *Four Books*, Book 2, Chapter 9, “On Corinthian Halls” and the panels displayed on the Temple of Mars Ultor. From Palladio, Adam would have seen clearly the impact of bounded and framed images within an architectural design. The boundaries, or frames, not only asserted the primacy of architectural form, but they disallowed the interruption of architectural order.

741 In his use of grisaille, Adam’s practice aligned with the theory of the Renaissance architect Sebastiano Serlio, who argued that monochromatic painting, or grisaille, was desirable in architectural interiors because it does not break-up the “order” of architecture. By order, Serlio referred to the dominance of architectural form and proportional relationships.
relationship between the viewer and scenes found in nature and in certain kinds of art. This relationship was dependent upon establishing precise distances between object and beholder, and particular viewing angles.

The most important aspect of the picturesque for Adam was its role in his theory of “movement.” The idea of movement guided him in designing plans, elevations, and interior designs, and it lay at the heart of their picturesque compositions. As mentioned previously, Adam dedicated a footnote in the first volume of the first fascicle of his *Works* (July 1773) to discussion of “movement.” ⁷⁴² Here, he explained that the picturesque composition of exteriors entailed variety and the careful disposition of parts to create contrast, and likened pictorial and architectural composition.

This footnote on “movement” is reminiscent of the opening paragraphs of the unpublished essay of 1762, entitled “Of the Elevation and its Movement.” ⁷⁴³ In both cases, movement was discussed as a quality of the exterior façade, as a set of formal attributes, and as a trait shared by landscape paintings and architectural façades. In 1762 essay draft, however, greater and more explicit emphasis is placed on the urgency for architects to learn from landscape painters, and, crucially, more is made of position of the spectator in the successful inducement of the effect of movement:

Nothing contributing half so much to the beauty of buildings viewed from a distance as movement, for at a considerable distance we must of necessity lose all graces of details and decoration so that we have nothing remaining but the beauty of a well disposed variety of high and low projections and recesses. For with us, as with landscape painters who chose for their subjects a variety of hill and dale to render their scenes interesting, nor are they less attentive to the dispositions of light and shade, upon which likewise much of their success depends; for this reason they who study after nature take the evening or the morning when the sun is low and the shadows are broad. What is so

⁷⁴³ Ibid. This footnote from the *Works* is reminiscent of the opening paragraphs of a more extended section on movement entitled ‘Of the Elevation & the movement’, from the draft of an unfinished essay by James Adam on architectural theory, of 1762 (with additions of 1772) in NRS, GD18/4954. This is transcribed in Fleming, *Robert Adam*, 315–19.
material an excellence in landscape is not less requisite for composition in architecture, namely the variety of contour, a rise and fall of the different parts and likewise those great projections and recesses which produce a broad light and shade.744

This passage also underscored Adam’s belief that movement is an issue of perception, existing within the eye and mind of the beholder, rather than a formal quality of a building.

Adam extracted his ideas about movement, unity, and the ability of art to attract immediately the beholder’s eye from the painting theory of French artist and critic Roger de Piles (1635-1709). In De Piles’s well known and widely circulated Cours de peinture (published in Paris in 1708 and in London in 1743), he claimed that a painting must affect a coup d’œil: that is, it must first attract the eye through a purely visual effect before any identification of subject. He argued that an immediacy of perception could be achieved by disposing parts in such a way that presented a whole. This entailed the disposition of the whole surface of the painting – all its lines, colors, and tones, and whatever object they represent – must be disposed to produce the whole; De Piles exhorted “tis not proper to leave the eye to gaze at random; because it should happen to be detained on any one side of the picture, this will frustrate the painter’s intention.” The coup d’œil was largely effected by what de Piles calls clair-obscur, the overall distribution of light and shade on the painting surface. He summed up these visual aspects of painting as the prerequisites for the work to have unity, or l’unité d’objet. The idea of the clair-obscur, equivalent to chiaroscuro in the Italian writing on art, had great historical significance because in the eighteenth century it came to displace the idea that

744 The MSS is in the Clerk of Penicuik collection deposited at H.M. Register House, Edinburgh. It is printed in an appendix to Fleming’s Robert Adam, 315-19.
unity in paintings derived principally from *unité de sujet*, the correct arrangement of the persons and things represented.

In the footnote on movement from the *Works*, Adam cited several examples of buildings that demonstrated movement. In St. Peter’s at Rome and in Louis Le Vau’s Collège des Quatre-Nations at Paris (1662 ff.), he admired the “the effect of the height and convexity of the dome...contrasted with the lower square front and the concavity of its court.” They also demonstrated the supremely important contribution that movement made to the beauty of buildings viewed from a distance, when, as he explained, viewers must “of necessity lose all the graces of detail and decoration so that we have nothing remaining but the beauty of a well-disposed variety of high and low projections and recesses.” Adam identified one of his own designs, the south façade of Kedleston Hall (Figure 6.15), as having the most movement and contrast than any of his other works.

Adam’s hero of picturesque design was Sir John Vanbrugh, whom he described as a “genius...of the first class.” In particular, he admired Vanbrugh’s Blenheim (Figure 6.16) and Castle Howard (Figure 6.17), noting that “in point of movement, novelty, and ingenuity [Vanbrugh’s] works have not been exceeded by anything in modern times.”

Movement in the exterior composition of a building was epitomized, for Adam, in the effective grouping of light and shade and an agreeable and diversified silhouette, created by the careful disposition of the various parts of a building. Simplicity and grandeur had to be the governing formal elements: over-ornamented elevations, with many projections, recessions and sculptural elements, produced a great sense of chaos or confusion, rather than movement. The clever architect was careful to calculate every exterior ornament to avoid unnecessary congestion, and projecting elements and parts had
to be carefully disposed across the façade, so that the effective display of architecture’s secondary qualities – light and shade – was brought to a zenith.

In support of these general principles, Adam developed guidelines for the composition of exterior façades, all of which were exemplified in Kedleston Hall’s south façade (Figure 6.15). Adam preferred to vary the silhouette of an elevation through the interjection of projections of various shapes and heights, largely of sculptures, vaults and domes. Inspired chiefly by the work of Vanbrugh, Adam created contrast in light and shadow and variety in his exteriors through the variation of shapes, heights, and massing of various forms; he varied the depths of wall planes, often elongated elements of the architectural orders, and composed façades in which large blank surfaces and judiciously decorated fields alternated rhythmically. He used the orders sparingly — but conspicuously, typically only for the entrance portico. His exteriors orders were invariably giant, or colossal, i.e. rising more than a single story. To prevent crowding, the dressing of doors, windows and niches was left plain when paired with a column screen, but, where no order prevailed, these decorative elements became the principal objects of the compositions and were adorned with columns, unbroken entablatures and pediments.

Although Adam discussed movement as a characteristic of exterior elevations, he also introduced the concept to his theory of interior design. In his introduction to the plans for Syon House in the first volume of the *Works*, he wrote, for example, that he had managed the “inequality of levels [of the old floors of Syon House]...in such a manner as to increase the scenery and add to the movement, so that an apparent defect has been converted into a real beauty.” Adam as here discussing what he has called the greatest challenge in the renovation of the interior of the great country house: coping with the
various heights of the floors. Adam’s principle solution to this problem was to insert “a few steps,” which he said, “gives an additional picturesque to the scene.” (Figure 5.9)

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Scholars have long argued about the meaning of Adam’s idea of movement. Arthur Bolton offered one of the earliest and most original explanations in his *Architecture of Robert and James Adam* from 1932, in which he argued that the theory of movement was a “revolt against the over-systemization of the orders, and was a claim to treat buildings as a sculptural unit that could be shaped at will, as an affair of relative masses, dependent on light and shade for an effect which might even become merely pictorial.” Bolton was fundamentally correct in claiming that Adam shifted the discourse concerning architectural structure, decoration, and character away from the orders and toward abstract architectural values, in which light generated form, and that he led a turning away from mathematical strictures and toward optical perception. Bolton, however, avoided the complex project of defining Adam’s concept of “movement,” and overemphasized the sculptural aspects of movement, while neglecting the pictorial ones. He also did not provide his readers with examples of movement found in Adam’s built work.

Emil Kaufmann, writing in 1968, argued that although Adam’s idea of movement was quite clearly expressed in words, it did not find clear expression in his buildings: “[Adam] held in high esteem the ‘movement’ of Baroque structures, and flattered himself

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745 The various heights of the floors were original to first building on that site, the medieval monastery Syon Abbey, from which the house derived its name.
that he had outdone his predecessors in this regard. However, we do not find in his work, “movement,” but rather “frozen forms.”

Bolton and Kaufmann’s interpretations, however, remain outliers in Adam scholarship, which typically offers many examples of movement within Adam’s architectural work, and accepts his designs as heavily imbued with movement. The recent state of this scholarship is usefully summarized in Eileen Harris’s *The Genius of Robert Adam, His Interiors* (2001). Harris quoted Adam’s definition of movement from the *Works* and the unfinished essay of 1762, and noted his admiration of John Vanbrugh. As examples of “movement,” she listed Adam’s strategies for diversifying contour lines and creating the play of light and shadow, his emphasis on the variety of architectural forms and decoration, and his interest in giving the illusion of depth to shallow spaces. Missing from this correct but narrow interpretation is a discussion of the meaning of Adam’s use of the terms “picturesque” and “movement,” and of how those concepts functioned within his work.

The proper understanding of Adam’s idea of movement requires a shift from considering it as a formal quality in designs and buildings, to a characteristic of perception in the viewer. Adam composed his forms in such a way that they will be perceived to move, and that that perception is active and engaged, entailing the actual movement of the beholder’s eye, brain, and feet. John Macarthur has explained how this kind of movement operates and finds its full significance as the fulfillment of the ancient doctrine of mimesis: “The movement of the eyes is a kind of imitation of the inanimate

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748 See Harris, *Genius of Robert Adam*, 4-5.
object…in imagination we then transfer this movement to the object we are imitating.”

Thus, the movement of the eye when actively looking is transferred, or projected onto the object, and consequently animates the object, in our minds.

This interpretation of movement, as primarily a characteristic of vision, is found in the fifth preface of the first volume of the *Works* (June 1778). Here, Adam discussed movement for a third and final time, in a passage on the progress of modern architecture:

Architecture has already become more elegant and more interesting…greater variety of form, greater beauty in design, greater gaiety and elegance of ornament, are introduced into interior decoration; while the outside composition is more simple, more grand, more varied in its contour, and imposes on the mind from the superior magnitude and movement of its parts.

In this passage, Adam related his interest in viewership and belief that movement occurs in the mind and is a perceptual experience. Art historian Caroline van Eck has argued that Adam’s ideas of movement bear comparison with passages in Quintilian where movement was a rhetorical category that linked the formal qualities of artworks and affects.

Evidence that Adam associated movement with the eye is found in the unpublished essay of 1762. In discussing movement and elevations, much is said about the experience of the eye when viewing certain architectural forms. The essay noted, for example, that architects “must not omit a caution not to give excess [of movement], not to torment the eye.” Later, architects are admonished, when designing elevations, not to “fatigue” the eye “with a long examination of minute parts that seem to be pieces put together by chance.” Similar criticism is made of entablatures with frequent breaks.

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which offer “no repose for the eye,” and compositions that appear “both little and trifling to the instructed eye.” On the other hand, the essay praised the “effects so extremely agreeable to the eye” that were produced by varied contours.

Discussion of the movement of the active eye was widespread in the eighteenth century, and Adam’s near contemporary William Hogarth (1697-1764) provided one of the most well-known and popular analyses. Hogarth was at his best when describing the pleasure induced by the movement of the eye when engaged in active viewing. He began by asking his reader to imagine a ray, drawn from the center of the eye to the form under observation: “We shall always suppose some such principal ray moving along with the eye, and tracing out the parts of every form we mean to examine in the most perfect manner: and when we would follow with exactness the course anybody takes, that is in motion, this ray is always to be supposed to move with the body.” The eye derives the most pleasure, he asserted when it followed a serpentine line, such as a winding path or river. This type of “intricate form,” he continued, “leads the eye in a wanton kind of chace [sic], and from the pleasure that gives the mind, intitles [sic] it to the name of beautiful.” This is the famous serpentine line, Hogarth’s “line of beauty” (Figure 6.18), which graced the cover of his treatise, The Analysis of Beauty (1753). It was essentially a distillation of the baroque and rococo’s impulse toward motion.

The pleasure induced by the observation of forms was far “more lively,” Hogarth argued, when the form under observation was in actual motion. Hogarth recalled a childhood experience of this sensation, when watching a country-dance:

I can never forget my frequent strong attention to [the pleasure given from the eye in motion], when I was very young, and that its beguiling movement gave me the same kind of sensation then, which I since have felt at seeing a country-dance; …my eye eagerly pursued a favorite dancer, through all the winding of the figure, who then was bewitching to the sight, as the imaginary ray, we were speaking of, was dancing with her all the time.
In this anecdote, the pleasure of looking was associated with innocence, youth, and play, but also with sexual energy. The complex forms that lead the eye in a “kind of chace” were thus linked to distant memories, physical instincts, and the maturation of sensory skills. Through experience, the eye becomes more muscular, deliberate, and precise. The act of looking is transformed from a passive to an active experience that establishes intimacy with the observed form. This heightened and eroticized sensory experience challenges the passivity inherent in British pseudo-empiricism. However, even in the case of looking at the dancer, with whom the eye becomes a dancing partner, looking remains essentially passive because illusion and reality cannot merge.

Adam induced movement of the eye by diversifying the forms of architectural elements and decorative objects, creating plays of light and shadow, varying the heights and sizes of rooms, emphasizing the variety of architectural forms and their picturesque decoration, and making shallow spaces appear deep. Importantly, the resulting gymnasium for the eye that Adam created in his decorative schemes was intended to exercise the senses and emotions rather than the intellect.

Adam’s idea of “movement” referred not only to the movement of the viewer’s eye, but also to the movement of his feet and, ultimately, of his imagination, galvanized by sensory and mental responses to diverse forms. Adam prompted the movement of the feet principally by establishing tantalizing sightlines between spectacularly and variously decorated rooms — a visual stratagem directly inspired by stage-set design. Movement was also stimulated by varying room heights and by making intimate pockets of space that invited movement to and through them. In this interior, the empowered...
spectator participated in a new mode of perception that entailed the movement of the body through space.\textsuperscript{752}

Adam’s movement of the mind was more poetic than the movement of the eye and of the feet, and concerned activating and pleasing the imagination, pervasive eighteenth-century pursuits. In the \textit{Works}, Adam expressed his desire to create stimulating and provocative architectural designs that “leave room for the imagination to play”; this notion was a corollary of the period interest in the “pleasures of the imagination,” explained most fully in the work of the English writer Joseph Addison (1672-1719). Addison posited that two kinds of pleasures arose from sight — direct and associational: “those that proceed from objects before our eyes and those which flow from the ideas of visible objects when the objects are not actually before the eye, but are called up into our memories.”\textsuperscript{753} In consonance with that widely held view, Adam deployed forms and iconographic systems to activate both the mind and body, soliciting both intrinsic and associational, or relative responses from visitors. And while a principal function of his work was to evoke memories of the Grand Tour, undertaken by his well-to-do clients and guests, he also cleverly designed environments that, like stage-sets, conveyed a more general sense of history — transcending a particular moments, events, or periods — primarily through an eclectic approach to design and the use of landscapes,

\textsuperscript{752} The new kind of observer that emerged in the 18th century is explored extensively by Denise Oleksijczuk, \textit{First Panoramas: Visions of British Imperialism}. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011) and Jonathan Crary, \textit{Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century} (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992). Oleksijczuk argued that the panorama enabled two modes of perception: “a static mode in which the viewer perceives depth by focusing on one perspective point, and a mobile, haptic mode of visuality, in which the observer confronts the objective qualities of the panorama’s multiperspectival construction” (70). She asserted further that these meanings were important for a new conceptualization of the self. Crary asserted that, in the 1820s and 30s, vision became inseparable from the mental and physical make-up of the human body, and, therefore, subjective rather than objective, as classical models had suggested. This shift, however, occurred decades earlier that Crary argued it did.\textsuperscript{753} Joseph Addison, “On the Pleasure of the Imagination,” \textit{Spectator}, No 411 (21 June, 1712), 473.
rather than narrative scenes as wall decoration. The success of his picturesque and scenographic interiors in part depended on their timelessness or ahistoricity. For this task, he drew on generalized iconographical systems, and stock forms and motifs.

One of Adam’s most radical experimentations with architectural spaces that stimulated movement of the inhabitant’s eyes, feet, and mind is found in a garden structure he designed in the early 1760s for Croome Court. The main building was a square, punctuated by recessed, semi-circular porticos on each face and unified by regularly and symmetrically placed apses in the porticoes and corners, each filled with an identical urn. One of the porticos led to a central stair that terminated in a second-story cylindrical tower and surrounding viewing platform (the top of the square lower story), which provided panoramic views of the surrounding countryside. The tower had at least one window, a longitudinally-oriented rectangle, which would have acted as a “picture” frame for the scenic view the inhabitant would have seen through it.754 (Figures 6.19 & 6.20) While approaching the tower, the visitor would have identified the tower as an enticing destination, but would have been forced to search for its nearly-concealed stair, as only one of the four porticos gave access to it, through a central, narrow apse in the darkest part of porch. The disorientation caused by passing through identically-designed spaces (save for the portico with access to the central stair) would have forced the viewer to invent strategies to become oriented, both in relationship to the surrounding landscape and within the structure itself. This was a bold and original design that showcased

754 The tower was eventually built according to a modified design, possibly by James Wyatt. The square main building was replaced by a circular portico that united each of the four apses and dramatically increased the visibility and accessibility of the previously hidden central stair. See Bolton, Architecture of Robert and James Adam, 188-9.
Adam’s playful talent for activating the senses and imaginations of visitors to his buildings.

Engagement of the Eye over the Intellect

Like Adam’s notion of movement, his concept of the picturesque was rooted in active viewership. It was part of a theory of aesthetics that acknowledged personal sense and feeling and that was alternately objective and subjective, universal and individual. Within Adam’s picturesque aesthetic theory, mental pleasure existed as “movement” induced from sensory experience, rather than on the level of intellectual reflection.

The viewer is everywhere in Adam’s writings and architectural design. In the Works, he called for an end to the tradition of painted ceilings, with their large narrative scenes, because they required much looking and contemplation and could not be viewed with ease; he complained, “they tire the patience of every spectator.” Adam greatly preferred grotesque paintings, which “in any situation, are perceived at the glance of an eye, and require little examination.” Adam chiefly used grotesque decoration in ceiling designs (Figure 6.21) and occasionally in wall designs, as in the long gallery at Syon (Figure 5.11), the music room at Number 20 St. James’s Square (Figure 6.22), and the State Dining Room at Nostell Priory (Figure 6.23), and within other framing decorative elements, such as door jambs and wall moldings. The rise of picture collecting in early eighteenth century abetted Adam in his war on painted ceilings, which were now perceived as distracting visitors from paying attention to the house owner’s collection.

A crucial aspect of Adam’s theory of picturesque interiors was his antipathy toward decoration that required concentrated and prolonged looking, and which thus prevented the easy, fluid, and pleasurable movement of the eye and mind. These ideas
about interior painting were influenced by Renaissance and contemporary theory on painting. Serlio, for example, wrote in his book on architecture that *istoria* paintings, unless executed by a master painter, such as Raphael, should be avoided in interiors, principally because they were often highly complex and included many over-lapping figures, and exhausted the eye. In Adam’s era, Friedrich Melichoir Grimm wrote in 1756:

> I have always disliked enormous constructions in painting and poetry...the artist strays from his aim as often as he undertakes epic poems, painted ceilings, immense galleries, in a word, those complicated works that have throughout the ages received such injudicious praise...Our mind cannot embrace many objects or many situations at the same time. It gets lost in that infinity of details which you believe enrich you work. It wants to be struck at first glance by a certain ensemble, without hindrance and in a strong manner.

Adam’s conception of the picturesque included his theorizing of the distinctive style of ornament that he invented. Sometimes called “grotesque,” this was a formal language marked by balanced asymmetry, lightness, intricacy, and emphasis on surface, pattern, and clear structure. Inspiration for Adam’s ornament came from the inventions of Clérisseau, extensive studies of the grotesque ornament in the Vatican Loggia, and his own observation of ancient cornices, friezes, ceilings, wall paintings, statues, and vases.

A hallmark of Adam’s interior picturesque decorative elements was also lightness. In pursuit of the desired visual effect of “lightness,” he embraced low-relief carvings, a pastel palette for wall colors, and elongated classical orders. The elongation of the orders was also intended to make the orders appear to be subsidiary elements without a unified decorative scheme. It is likely that Adam found inspiration and justification for this aesthetic preference in the work of leading contemporary French architects,

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especially Jacques-Germain Soufflot (1713-1780). Soufflot also advocated the abandonment of certain classical rules in order to unite the virtues of classical and Gothic architecture. This was apparent in his Panthéon (1758-90, Figure 6.24), a church dedicated to Ste. Geneviève in Paris, in which, Soufflot claimed to have combined the structural lightness of Gothic with the purity and magnificence of Greek architecture.\footnote{Pevsner remarked that while “Adam lightened his models instinctively, Soufflot [lightened his columns] according to a well-considered [rationalist] theory” (Outline of European Architecture, 364).} Younger writers, including Duperron (Discours sur la peinture et sur l’architecture, Paris 1758) and Gauthey (Mémoire sur les règles d’Architecture (about 1774), were confident that this blending of Gothic effect with classical form would lead to perfection in art.\footnote{Wolfgang, Hermann, Laugier and Eighteenth Century French Theory (London: A. Zwemmer, 1985), 90.}

Sometimes Adam’s decorative and ornamental styles are described as a kind of belated rococo.\footnote{See Pevsner, Outline of European Architecture, 353-6, & 368. Pevsner described Adam’s style as “Rococo if anything,” and as “Rococo-Classical.”} In Britain, both the Baroque and the Rococo lacked an independent status comparable to their standing in Germany and France. On the contrary, in Britain, the Baroque and Rococo remained less autonomous and were subsumed in other interests. This was particularly true of the commingling of the Rococo with the earliest revival of Gothic architecture. Many of the visual values of the Rococo underlie the ostentatious “Gothick” style of Horace Walpole’s Strawberry Hill (1748-1766) and kindred buildings. Gothic revival and rococo merged in their shared commitment to the use of vegetal forms, arabesques, gilt and stuccoed decorative frames, and the complex geometry of decorated ceilings. The use of patterned decoration across large expanses of interior walls, ceilings, and floors was a hold-over from medieval architecture that became merged with a Rococo aesthetic in the mid- and late-eighteenth centuries in
Britain. The counterpoint to the “all-over” decorative patterning characteristic in architecture of this era was the tendency to decorate walls with alternating passages of ornamental intensity and paucity; Adam exploited both decorative ploys. The play of classically-derived forms, mingled with vegetal and arabesque elements and used in asymmetrical arrangements, was increasingly popular. Adam and those who emulated him used this formula to create a kind of order without rule that was designed to satisfy the eye, with its balance, variety of serpentine and other curved lines, and variety of form and color.

Scenographic Interiors

Inextricably linked with Robert Adam’s picturesque sensibility was his conception of his domestic interior in “scenographic,” terms, using the techniques of the theatre to make them and the language of the theatre to describe them. Theatrical language stands out in the descriptions of his own architecture in the first volume of the Works, published in 1773. There he remarked that, in his renovations at Syon House (from 1762), the “inequality of levels [of the old floors] has been managed in such a manner as to increase the scenery and add to the movement, so that an apparent defect has been converted into a real beauty.” In his discussion of the same house’s majestic anteroom, he boasted that six columns of “verd antique marble … form the room and heighten the scenery.” And when he described his plans for Syon’s intended “great circular saloon,” which was never executed, Adam avowed that the “scenery, like the
decorations of a theatre, apparently increases the extent, and leaves room for the imagination to play.”

For Adam, “scenery” referred to the architectural forms that had been manipulated to make spaces appear larger and more complex than they were. He made the theatrical pedigree of this contrivance explicit, informing his readers that the technique derived from traditional practices in the construction of theatre sets, which often incorporated illusionistic effects to make the shallow, simple space of the stage appear deep and complicated. The illusionistic treatment of space was an important aspect of Adam’s scenographic interiors, but it was only one element of his vast and sophisticated scenic repertoire.

There are many salient points of intersection between Adam’s architecture and the theatre of his era, the so-called “Golden Age” of British theatre. These can be identified throughout his architectural practice, but especially in his great houses, and there are a few important examples of his actual work for the theater, when he designed temporary structures for celebratory occasions, which were intended to be used only for one night.

760 Adam, *Works* (1980), Vol 1, No 1 (1773), Description to Plate V, 3.
761 A complementary view of the intersection between architecture and theatre in the 18th century is provided by the work of the French architect Germain Boffrand (1667–1754). In his *Livre d’Architecture* (1745), Boffrand presented architecture quite literally as theatre, arguing that buildings operate as stage-settings and as actors, announcing their character to the audience through their composition and ornament. This idea became a starting point for the architectural aesthetics of character. Boffrand’s book is also significant because its design in many ways prefigures the advanced layout of Adam’s *Works*. Both books began with theoretical discussions before giving brief descriptions of the works, followed by plates with explanatory captions.
Scenography

To apply the term “scenographic” to particular types of interior space – such as those spectacularly executed by Adam and, later, Sir John Soane (1753–1837) – is a recent trend.\textsuperscript{762} In the 18th and 19th centuries, the word denoted the representation of three-dimensional objects in perspective and was associated almost exclusively with draughtsmanship and painting — without any implication of theatrical use of allusion. According to the \textit{Gentleman’s Magazine} of 1743, for example, “scenography is the representation of a place drawn according to its appearance in perspective, and is such a view of it as a painter would give.”\textsuperscript{763} In his dictionary, Samuel Johnson similarly defined scenography succinctly as “the art of perspective.”\textsuperscript{764} In this sense, scenography has always been strongly associated with architectural drawing; and the closely related term “scenery,” as we have seen above, was applied directly to architectural interiors and most commonly denoted something approximate to “beautiful appearance.”\textsuperscript{765}

In the twentieth century, the use of the term was broadened to refer also to the design and creation of theatre scenery, and to the design of performance environments, including lighting, costumes, and special effects. Eventually “scenographic” took on an expansive abstract connotation that embraced all the visual, experiential, and spatial aspects of performance, as well as audience reception and engagement. In the twentieth

\textsuperscript{762} See Kondo, \textit{Robert and James Adam}, 70ff (“Scenographic Appeal”).
\textsuperscript{763} \textit{Gentleman’s Magazine XIII}, 1743, 584.
\textsuperscript{764} Johnson, \textit{A Dictionary of the English Language} (2nd edn, Vol. 2, 1755-6). The definition remained constant in later editions of Johnson’s dictionary at least until the end of the 18th century.
\textsuperscript{765} Use of the term “scenery” in reference to architectural interiors is also found in the letters of Adam’s contemporary, the author and politician Horace Walpole (1717–97). Walpole, for example, described a staircase in William Kent’s miniature palazzo for Lady Isabella Finch on the west side of Berkeley Square as “as beautiful a piece of scenery, and considering the space, of art, as can be imagined” (cited in John Cornforth, \textit{Early Georgian Interiors} (London & New Haven: Yale University Press for Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2004), 177, n 65). Similarly, Walpole, in consideration of the great Elizabethan prodigy house at Burghley, exclaimed “Burleigh. A noble Pile! The Inner Court is beautiful Scenery” (cited in P. Toynbee, ed. \textit{Horace Walpole’s Journals of Visits to Country Seats}, (Walpole Society XVI, 1928), 58). I would like to thank Jeremy Musson for bringing the latter quote to my attention.
century the term was also applied to architectural monuments: John Summerson considered John Nash's composition of Regent Street in London (1809–26), for example, to be an exercise in scenographic composition, since his building façades were designed to be seen in perspective and experienced as a series of episodes.\textsuperscript{766}

\textbf{British Theater in the Age of Adam}

Robert Adam lived during the so-called “Golden Age of Theatre” in Britain, between around 1730 and 1830, when the fine and theatre arts were more closely intertwined than ever before or since.\textsuperscript{767} This was also an age of popular theatre, when a high proportion of the population attended performances, as had been the case in fifth-century Athens and Elizabethan London. The expansion of theatre-going and theatre-building has never been matched: in 1740, the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, was the sole established playhouse in London, but by 1805 over 280 places of regular theatrical entertainment existed. The Irish playwright and biographer Arthur Murphy in his \textit{Life of David Garrick} (1801) mused that “theatre engrossed the minds of men to such a degree … that there existed in England a fourth estate, King, Lords and Commons, and Drury Lane Playhouse.”\textsuperscript{768}

While theatre was thus becoming more closely allied to the fine arts and simultaneously providing gripping entertainment for the British masses, it underwent a

\textsuperscript{767} This era in theatre is difficult to study, in large part because no British theatres survive in their 18th-century states and are generally not captured well in contemporary images. Moreover, although most English landscape and genre painters of the period — including many Royal Academicians — were involved in decorating either stage or theatre, none of their work of this kind survives, and their names were not advertised on theatre bills until the arrival in London in 1771 of the painter and set-designer Philip James de Loutherbourg (1740–1812). See \textit{London Stage}, volume 4, cxvii ff: also Mackintosh, \textit{Georgian Playhouse: Actors, Artists, Audiences and Architecture, 1730-1830}, (London: Arts Council of Great Britain (exhibition catalogue), 1975), Preface XII, ‘The Splendor of the Scenes’. In spite of these challenges, however, we do know enough to examine the “scenographic” nature of Adam’s work.
\textsuperscript{768} Mackintosh, \textit{Georgian Playhouse}, Introduction, and Preface to part 1.
gradual but dramatic stylistic shift under the guiding hand of one of the most prominent British actors and theatre managers of the eighteenth century, David Garrick (1717–79). His career spanned the transition in the history of British theatre from an insistently aural art, centered on showcasing an actor’s rhetorical skill (represented by the sonorous James Quin), to a primarily visual one. This shift demanded the transformation of the playhouse from a space reminiscent of an aristocratic residence to one in which every aspect of architecture and scenography was designed to transport the spectator’s imagination to the “other worlds” that the spectacle of performance sought to conjure.

Before this transformation of the theatrical experience, early and mid-century Georgian theatres recalled grand domestic interiors in terms of their decoration, lighting, and the presence of picturesque landscape scenes (used as scenic backdrops in theatres). Moreover, like the great houses of the era, they were sites for the complex dynamics of spectatorship and highly choreographed social rituals. It was not uncommon for members of the audience to move freely during the performance to socialize and to express their opinions stridently, and they were often seated on the stage itself.

The domestic character of the theatre and the close relationship between actors and their audience were seen as damaging to new ideas about theatrical representation that began to circulate in the 1730s. Garrick campaigned tirelessly to remove the audience from the stage, a tradition he treated comically in his first dramatic work Lethe, or Aesop in the Shades (performed at Drury Lane on 15 April 1740). In that play, the

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Fine Gentleman is made to say: “I stand upon the stage, talk loud, and stare about, which confounds the actors, and disturbs the audience.” In 1762, more than twenty years later, Garrick was finally able to banish spectators from the Drury Lane stage.\textsuperscript{771}

Although Garrick’s crusade to make the theatre more scenic and illusionistic began as early as the 1750s, the transformation was not complete until well after his death in 1779. It was not until the early 1840s that eighteenth-century performance practices (where the audience and actors shared the same architectural volume, light, and condition of reality), would be entirely replaced. The new scenic theatres in Britain had divided interiors with discrete architectural spaces for spectators and actors, now separated by a decorated proscenium through which a fixed and silent audience watched the performers on the brightly-lit stage from the dimly-lit auditorium.\textsuperscript{772} Adam witnessed this transition, seeing his own bright decorations for the audience-filled auditorium at Drury Lane (Figure 6.25) “all put out by painting over them” in 1783, less than a decade after their making. At that time, the house scenic artists Thomas Greenwood and William Capon covered Adam’s work with somber, darker tones that focused the attention of viewers on the proscenium stage.

\textsuperscript{771} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{772} A significant feature of the Georgian stage was that the auditorium remained almost as brightly lit as the stage. The introduction of gas lighting in London between 1817 and 1827 enabled the auditorium lights to be dimmed for the first time. Chandeliers, suspended over the stage – a convention since the opening of the theatres in 1660 – were abolished in the mid-18th century, as they were a deterrent to illusion and obscured a complete view of the stage. Inspired by Continental lighting practices, Garrick insisted on doing away with them. They were replaced with lamps fastened to strips of tin installed out of sight of the audience on either side of the stage (see C. B. Hogan, \textit{The London Stage, 1776–1800: A Critical Introduction} (Vol 5 of Avery, E L and Scouten, A H, gen eds, \textit{The London Stage, 1660-1800: A Critical Introduction}, 1968), lxv–lxvii. Concerning “picturesque” scenery, it is notable that many Royal Academicians began their careers in the field of landscape as scene painters for one of the London theatres, and that the grander playhouses, such as Drury Lane and Covent Garden, paid scene painters liberally. A 1750s source states that “All these [stage-set scenes] should be done by a Master, if such can be procured; otherwise, they should be as simple and unaffected as possible, to avoid offending a judicious Eye.” See C. Baugh, “Scenography and Technology,” in J. Moody and D. O’Quinn, (eds.) \textit{Cambridge Companion to British Theatre, 1730–1830} (London: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 44.
Adam was an amateur performer (a singer) and a life-long theater-goer, both while on his Grand Tour and in London, and he was familiar with all aspects of theater. He must have learned a considerable amount about stagecraft and theatre design from his long working relationship with Garrick. The actor and impresario commissioned Adam in 1754 or 1755 to redecorate his London townhouse at 27 Southampton Street and to add a portico to his villa at Hampton (Figure 6.26). In 1772 Garrick purchased a residence in the Adam brothers’ Adelphi development, and in 1775 he hired Robert Adam to redecorate and renovate Drury Lane, the hundred-year-old father of English theatres (Figure 6.25). Adam supposedly walked to Drury Lane each Wednesday evening to watch Garrick perform; and late in life his brother James seems to have used his cousin Willie’s influence with R. B. Sheridan to secure a box there as a “favor.” Another source of theatrical experience in Adam’s life was Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720–78), who was a stage designer as well as an artist, and a maker of hundreds of scenographic prints. Adam’s lifelong friendship and working relationship with Piranesi began with their sojourn in Rome.

*Adam and Scenographic Illusion*

The theatricality of Robert Adam’s interior designs is apparent in his own descriptions of his mode of working, especially in his discussion of how to “apparently increase the extent” (i.e. illusionistically enlarge) or otherwise alter the perceived character of a room. As others have noted, like a set designer, he accomplished these effects by employing a remarkable number of shrewd and varied methods. These

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included what Adam called “piercings,” or openings between rooms (as in the proposed rotunda for Syon, Figure 6.27); through the insertion of shallow recesses, niches and apses (as in the dining room at Kedleston Hall, Figure 6.28); through illusionistic ceiling and floor patterns (as in the long gallery at Syon, which appears wider than its actual dimensions, Figure 5.11); through the use of large mirrors (as in the library at Kenwood House, of 1768, which seems wider and taller than it is in reality); through the placement of columns (as in the Syon anteroom, which seems square, although it is rectangular, Figure 5.10); through the elongation of the proportions of architectural orders; through the avoidance of “ponderous compartment ceilings” and other weighty and projecting forms; and through the application of light colors to walls and ceilings.  

In all of these strategies for manipulating appearance, a *Leitmotif* is the continual play with plane and recession, whereby precise depths remain imperceptible to the distant viewer. Sometimes Adam made recesses, such as niches, apses and alcoves seem untruthfully shallow. He achieved this flattening illusion by avoiding the use of framing elements, and by muting shadows through the application of light-colored paint and intricate decorative patterns. Conversely, at times, Adam also created an illusion of depth by using dark paint and dark-toned wall decorations, and by incorporating architectural forms that articulated intricately organized space, as in the library at Kenwood.

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775 In his preface to the first number of the *Works* (1773), Adam enumerated, specifically and vividly, the innovative forms he had introduced into modern interiors, all of which create the illusion of increasing a room’s dimensions: “The massive entablature, the ponderous compartment ceiling, the tabernacle frame, almost the only species of ornament formerly known, in this country, are now universally exploded, and in their place, we have adopted a beautiful variety of light mouldings, gracefully formed, delicately enriched and arranged with propriety and skill. We have introduced a great diversity of ceilings, freezes [sic], and decorated pilasters, and have added grace and beauty to the whole, by a mixture of grotesque stucco, and painted ornaments, together with the flowing rainceau, with its fanciful figures and winding foliage” (Adam, *Works* (1980), Vol. 1, No.1 (1773), “Preface,” 1.)
At Syon, Adam played even more complex *trompe l’oeil* games, creating moments of striking spatial ambiguity by inserting elements that made the space, at the same time, seem untruthfully shallow and deep. In the dining room, for example, the patterned decoration in the apse and the continuation of the wainscoting from the adjacent walls work together to make the space appear shallow, but conversely the door-frame and dark paint in the niches make the space seem deep. (Figure 5.12) In the vestibule, an undersized door behind the column screen frames a niche and statue in the distant back wall of the adjoining imperial anteroom, creating the illusion that the wall continues where an opening (a doorway) exists in reality. (Figure 5.9) The greatly contrasting colors of the two rooms, and the intrusion of part of the entablature from the anteroom’s own screen of columns, disrupt but do not fully break the illusion of a continuous wall.

One of Adam’s most spectacular scenographic designs, the unbuilt rotunda at Syon, would have been a masterpiece of theatrical spatial manipulation (Figure 6.27).776 “The form” of the rotunda, Adam bragged, “is new and singular; it is a circle within a circle, the smaller opening into a larger, by eight piercings, adorned with columns, and terminated with niches and statues.”777 In the center of this dramatic space, the inhabitant would have seen the statue-filled niches of the outer ring framed seamlessly by the openings of the inner ring, creating the illusion that the inner ring was pierced only four times, rather than eight, and that the outer ring did not exist.

Adam’s mastery of scenographic illusion was undoubtedly inspired and shaped by the innovations in Italian baroque scenography made by the architect and painter Ferdinando Galli-Bibiena (1657–1743), and popularized by his book, *L’architettura*

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776 The rotunda had been originally intended to display the sculpture collection of the owners, the Smithson family.
His style was brought to culmination in a visual art not directly associated with theatre, in the engravings of Adam’s friend and adviser Piranesi, who drew heavily from stage designers of the time, and in turn inspired them.

The making of these spatial illusions was often accompanied by the artful mimicry of materials. Adam’s well-known tromp l’oeil effects included the faux marble foyer of Home House (1775–7, Figure 6.29), the imitation bronze plaque above the fireplace in the anteroom at Syon (Figure 6.30), and the fictive Etruscan vases at Osterley (1761–80, Figure 6.4). Although he played with tromp l’oeil illusions to induce both spatial and material deceptions, Adam never drifted into the realms of the fantastic or delusional, which were investigated by Piranesi and Clérisseau. In their prints and drawings, both Piranesi and Clérisseau frequently shifted points of orientation and created alternate, imaginary worlds. In contrast, Adam played within the realm of the rational and created games for the senses that kept viewers actively engaged with the actual architectural interior and their own experience.

One building for which Adam was publicly acclaimed for his scenographic skills was, fittingly, his renovation and decoration of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, in 1775 (Figure 6.25). One reviewer enthused: “At first view I was a good deal surprised to find that by some means or other the ingenious Artists had contrived to give an Appearance of greater Magnitude to the House. I knew it was not rebuilt but only repaired, and

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778 Among Galli-Bibiena’s most significant contributions were the introduction of angled perspective (scena per angolo) and the enlargement of the scale of architectural features to make only a small portion of a building visible to the audience (rather than the entire building, as was the previous tradition). Angled perspective is a convention that organizes perspective designs around two or more vanishing points, often placing the architectural features in the middle of the painting with the vistas out to the sides. The implications of both innovations are highly significant in part because they invite the spectator to complete the stage picture in his or her imagination.
consequently that there could be no additional space within the old Walls and Roof.”

To achieve this effect of enlargement, Adam drew upon techniques he had employed in domestic interiors. As shown in the well-known engraving of Drury Lane by the Italian printmaker Benedetto Pastorini (Figure 6.25), and attested by contemporary descriptions, he substituted slender piers for the weighty ones that Christopher Wren had used to support the two balconies, raised the ceiling by twelve feet, made the forestage shallower, and deepened the galleries. Significantly, Adam’s renovation at Drury Lane would set the pattern for all other theatres in Britain. In addition to these structural changes, he also made radical decorative alterations that transformed the auditorium’s character: he painted the walls and seating boxes pale green and pale pink and inlaid the pilasters, which decorated the slender piers, with colored glass to create an effect described as “leste [lustrous] and brilliant.” The rhythm of the intercolumniation and decorations worked together to create the appearance of greater magnitude and spaciousness, as contemporaries noticed. Pastorini’s engraving, which Adam commissioned for publication in the third volume of the Works, exaggerated this scenic quality, as the human figures are far too small and the proportions of the house are amplified.

**Adam and Scenographic Sculpture**

The profusion of figural sculpture, much of it gesturing theatrically, is another scenographic element of the Adam interior. Like many aristocrats, Adam’s patrons collected sculpture and displayed it in their houses, and they sometimes had pieces made

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779 *Public Advertiser*, 30 Sept 1775.
for particular spaces, or engaged the Adams to acquire particular pieces on their behalf.\textsuperscript{782}

This was part of the larger culture of exhibition in Britain, which showcased the wide variety of decorative objects that were brought home along the rapidly expanding travel and trade routes that linked Britain and the rest of the world. Within this culture of collecting and display, statuary had a distinctive theatrical connotation, since comparisons of sculpture and actors were commonplace – particularly analogies between the “body language” of actors and the \textit{Apollo Belvedere} (c 120–140 AD, Figure 6.31) and the \textit{Laocoön} (c 27 BC – 68 AD, Figure 6.32).\textsuperscript{783} These ancient works were popular not only because of their historical significance and visceral visual appeal, but also because they played starring roles in contemporary aesthetic debate. Copies of both statues were originally intended for the entrance hall at Syon, unmistakably signposting its theatricality; sadly, however, the \textit{Laocoön} replica was never executed.\textsuperscript{784}

In contemporary thinking, eighteenth-century actors and ancient statues were considered equivalent objects of aesthetic contemplation that could similarly lead the mind to a “pleasing train of ideas.”\textsuperscript{785} The successful tragic actor was expected to embody the classical ideal of ancient sculpture, and the legendary British actors Sarah Siddons (1755-1831) and John Kemble (1757-1823) were both said to have deliberately

\textsuperscript{782} For instance, for Adam’s sculpture galleries at Croome Court and Newby Hall see Harris, \textit{Genius of Robert Adam}, 48–53, 215–21. Also, for sculpture collecting in 18th-century Britain generally see Ruth Guilding, \textit{Owning the Past: Why the English Collected Antique Sculpture, 1640–1840} (New Haven & London: Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2014).\textsuperscript{783} On the relationship between actor and sculpture in late 18th-century Britain, see Shearer West, \textit{Image of the Actor: Verbal and Visual Representation in the Age of Garrick and Kemble} (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1991), 119–22.\textsuperscript{784} See G. E. Lessing, \textit{An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry} (1766) for a discussion on the \textit{Laocoön}, and J. J. Winckelmann, \textit{History of the Art of Antiquity} (1764) for a poetical celebration of the \textit{Apollo Belvedere}. For a brief discussion of the \textit{Laocoön} replica intended for Syon House see Harris, \textit{Genius of Robert Adam}, 66.\textsuperscript{785} The first chapter of Lord Kames’s \textit{Elements of Criticism} (Edinburgh, 1762), “Perceptions and Ideas in a Train,” made popular the concept of a “pleasing train of ideas” and inspired the pervasive use of the phrase, subsequently found throughout aesthetic discourse of the 18th and early 19th centuries.
modelled the poses they assumed during monologues on classical statuary (Figures 6.33 & 6.34). These theatrical associations, which viewers would have made with the classical sculpture on display in domestic interiors, were given heightened significance by the era’s quasi-philosophical notion that actors were exemplars of controlled behavior. The statues would thus have fueled the contemporary debate about “proper,” modern conduct, particularly in domestic settings, and would have also stirred musings about the conspicuous status of the actor and the burgeoning culture of modern celebrity. In this “age of the actor,” talented players received far more attention than the plays themselves, and books, pamphlets, critiques, prints and paintings of the time reveal the public’s ruthless and fetishistic scrutiny of actors’ public personae and private lives.\(^786\)

**Scenographic Framing**

Prominent framing devices were another key aspect of Adam’s scenographic interiors. Like the theatre, with its proscenium, and the picturesque landscape gardens that were inspired by carefully framed painting compositions, Adam’s interiors were artificially constructed scenes that benefitted from framing. Although Adam drew heavily on the Palladian tradition of compartmentalized architectural ornament and the convention of dividing the wall into panels, he went beyond these precedents to employ emphatic frames for dramatic effect, to unify his interiors. Adam was also compelled to engage with the period’s enthusiasm for arranging and displaying large numbers of framed paintings within architectural interiors.

The strong proscenium motif was Adam’s most celebrated scenographic framing device, and its usual form was the column screen, exemplified in his iconic library at Kenwood (Figure 4.10).\textsuperscript{787} Hyperbolically accentuated door jambs and fireplace mantels, niches and apses, mirrors, and framed panels on walls and ceilings also acted as proscenia. Significantly, at precisely the time that Adam was designing these interiors, Garrick was campaigning to give new importance to the proscenium arch in the British theatre, where it had long functioned as a mere decorative device, set in the background of the thrust-stages (Figure 6.35).\textsuperscript{788} As related previously, Adam’s friend Garrick insisted that henceforth the proscenium should act as a fixed boundary between audience and stage — between the viewer and the viewed (Figure 6.36).

Adam played with the tension between framed easel paintings and the framed compartments of his architectural wall decoration. Both systems directed attention to the rectangular, neoclassical architecture of the room – the room’s form – rather than the pictorial representations they enframed. In this frame-heavy design matrix, the framed easel painting became a subversive instrument of Adam’s comprehensive spatial scheme, providing eruptive glimpses of fictive depth that counterpointed the optical flatness of the surrounding wall decorations. This dynamic scenographic interplay exploited painting’s illusionistic potential and intensified the viewer’s awareness of the basic paradox of pictures: to appreciate the artistry of their spatial illusion requires recognition of their actual flatness. Adam’s framing games also lured the viewer into a state of heightened awareness of the act of looking, and of the nature and limits of both sight (the sensory information taken in by the eye) and vision (the relaying of visual information to the

\textsuperscript{787} For Adam’s use of column screens as proscenia see Harris, \textit{Genius of Robert Adam}, where they are discussed for their “picturesque and scenic” effect.

\textsuperscript{788} See Baugh, “Scenography and Technology.”
brain, where images captured by the eye are interpreted). He achieved this primarily through the play between the perception of depth and flatness, whether real or imagined.

**Architecture as Landscape**

Two further elements in Adam’s architecture combined the scenographic and the picturesque. The first was the bringing of picturesque scenery indoors, which Adam sometimes accomplished by enlivening his interiors with dramatic picturesque landscape *capricci*. This conceit had a long tradition in the theatre, particularly in Italian and French opera. An example in Adam’s practice was the four painted panels in the music room at Harewood House (1759–71, Figure 6.37), and he made even more illusionistic use of painted landscape panels in the dining room at Osterley House, where he centered picturesque paintings of ancient ruins by the Venetian artist Antonio Zucchi (1726–95) on each end wall (Figures 6.38 & 6.39). The large size, crisp detail, sharply angling, and chiaroscuro treatment, made these paintings more potent than the views of real scenery glimpsed through the windows.\(^789\)

Adam also brought natural scenery indoors by manipulating views of the surrounding landscape through the canny placement of windows and mirrors.\(^790\) At Gosford House (1790–1800, Figure 6.40), for example, the triplet Venetian windows on the west elevation of the main block command a panorama of the city of Edinburgh and the Firth of Forth. At Kenwood, Adam’s strategy was different: he set mirrors in square recesses on the north wall of the library that duplicate by reflection the panorama of the city of London and the River Thames, seen through the windows on the opposite side.

\(^{789}\) See Kondo, *Robert and James Adam*, 71.
\(^{790}\) Ibid, 72.
Yet, Adam did not merely import representations and glimpses of picturesque landscapes into his houses; he also conceived of his interiors much like landscape gardens, and sought to create an experience in walking through them that was akin to walking through nature. In order to achieve this effect, the architect must rouse in the visitor associations and ideas comparable with those generated by the variety and picturesque qualities of natural scenery. Adam did this by constructing a consecution of diverse exterior and interior spaces—“scenes,” differently illuminated by the interplay of natural light and shadow. Adam also configured some interiors to mimic caves, although the details were man-made; the sculpture gallery at Newby Hall (1767–76), which resembles a system of underground chambers, is a prime example (Figure 6.41). These innovations paralleled trends in contemporary British stagecraft, which reached an apex in Philip James de Loutherbourg’s *Eidophusikon* (opened February 1781, Figure 6.42), a miniature mechanical theatre that sought to recreate “natural phenomena”—the sounds, light, weather and scenery of the natural world.\(^{791}\)

Significantly, Adam also believed that experiencing a house and a landscape were roughly equivalent. The general commonalities between architecture and garden design had been developed in the writings of his contemporaries, the French theorist Marc-Antoine Laugier (1713–69) and Adam’s friend Lord Kames, but they did not discuss the particular relationship between interior design and landscape that Adam embodied in his

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\(^{791}\) De Loutherbourg (1740–1812) left Drury Lane during the winter of 1780–1, to open a miniature theatre (sometimes referred to as an early panorama) called the *Eidophusikon* in Lisle Street, just off Leicester Square. The stage was eight feet by six feet. He was inspired to construct this theatre in order to create visual effects that could not be achieved at Drury Lane. *The Morning Herald* of 12 March 1782 advertised the second program of scenes of the *Eidophusikon*: “sun rising in the fog of an Italian sea port, the cataract of Niagara, Storm at Sea, Setting of Sun after a rainy day, with a view of the Castle, town, and Cliffs of Dover, the rising of the Moon, with a Water-Spout, exhibiting the effects of Three different Lights.” The effect of the *Eidophusikon* was significant and was remembered by scenic artists and painters for several decades after its presentations in the 1780s.
work. Adam’s devised interiors in which the sensory and mental experience of the visitor or viewer was energized by borrowings from the experience of moving through a garden. Significantly, in both the house and the garden the spectator controlled the method and organization of this viewing, and the pace at which information was processed. Although the artist or architect determined the parameters and content, the spectator’s experience of either house or garden was subjective, contemplative and associative, centered on identifying relationships among objects and natural phenomena, and between these elements and one’s own worldly experience.

**Adam’s Scenographic Temporary Structures**

Robert Adam’s temporary structures, designed and built for elaborate royal and aristocratic parties and celebrations, were his most literally scenographic creations. At least five such fabrications have been attributed to him: an architectural screen holding three large “transparencies” (over-size glowing colored images, created by painting on calico or linen canvas, soaking the material in varnish and setting it before lamps), made for the garden at Buckingham House for the 25th birthday of King George III on 4 June 1763 (Figures 2.9 & 2.10); a bridge for the same event (Figure 6.43); a bridge and pavilion erected in the open central court at Syon House for a ‘Grand fête’ held in honor of the King of Denmark (George III’s son-in-law) in October 1768; the spectacular pavilion built for one of the most extravagant parties of the eighteenth century – the fête champêtre of Lord Stanley (Edward Smith Stanley, later 12th Earl of Derby), staged at

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Marc-Antoine Laugier in the fifth chapter of his *Essai sur l’architecture* (Paris, 1753) wrote of using a garden as a model for city planning. Lord Kames, in volume 3 of his *Elements of Criticism*, discussed general similarities in a chapter entitled “Gardening and Architecture.” Notably, Kames also wrote in a chapter in volume 1 (on “Emotions and Passions”) that ‘furniture increaseth in appearance the size of a small room, for the same reason that divisions increase in appearance the size of a garden.” See Kames, *Elements of Criticism* (1762, vol I), 216.
The Oaks, near Carshalton in Surrey, on 9 June 1774 (Figures 6.44-6.46)\(^{793}\); and the various interior settings at No. 3 (later 26) Grosvenor Square, London, including a temporary glass dome over the staircase (an installation which required the partial removal of the roof), when that house was significantly altered for the extravagant ball and supper hosted by Lord Stanley on 31 March 1773.\(^{794}\)

Each of these ephemeral creations provided a dramatic setting for a social “performance”: dancing, singing, instrumental music, and choreographed rituals for the costumed “actors”—namely the host and guests, who dressed in special clothing for the event. Lord Stanley’s celebrations were particularly theatrical. An advance notice in the *Morning Chronicle* of 31 March 1773 reported that his festivity at Grosvenor Square would boast a “grand Quadrille, consisting of eight, habited in the dress of the four seasons.” In this quixotic dance, Lord Stanley personified Spring, dressed in white “spangl’d all over with little Tufts of real Violets.”\(^{795}\) At the same party, tea was served by “Vestal Virgins,” young women garbed in white lutestring (a glossy silk fabric) with blue ribbons.\(^{796}\) At this lavish *fête champêtre*, the playful host “was dressed like [the


\(^{794}\) The diary of the Duchess of Northumberland recorded that “The Top of the Staircase was taken off & a Cupola carried to a vast height & beautifully illuminated with a profusion of Lamps of almost every colour in the Rainbow & appeared like a Fairy palace.” Cited in Doderer-Winkler, *Magnificent Entertainments*, 60; see also J. Greig (ed), *The Diaries of a Duchess: Extracts from the Diaries of the First Duchess of Northumberland, Elizabeth Seymour Percy, 1771–1776* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1926), 36. The same diary also tells us that “The Ball Room had one of the Side Walls taken down & a large Orchestra & 2 Niches carried into the Garden” (Ibid.).

\(^{795}\) Cited in Harris, *Genius of Robert Adam*, 279.

\(^{796}\) Ibid.
Flemish painter Peter Paul Rubens, and Lady Betty Hamilton like Reubens’ wife,” while many guests and all performers wore “pastoral” costumes.\footnote{Cited in Doderer-Winkler, *Magnificent Entertainments*, 65. See also A. Hall (ed), *Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany* (London: R Bentley, 1862, vol 2), 1 (Mrs Delany to Mrs Port, June 1774).}

In the conception and creation of these astonishingly lavish and complex projects, Adam played the roles of theatre manager and stage designer to create structures that embodied the qualities of theatrical architecture. His designs, however, were ahead of contemporary practices in the art of theatre and looked forward to those of the next century. Like nineteenth-century stage sets, each element of Adam’s ephemeral entertainment spaces was carefully crafted to play a role in shaping a theatrical setting for a carefully planned program of choreographed, sequential actions. These temporary structures were encompassing, integrated, total environments, in which the viewer’s experience was even more intense that in even Adam’s intricate and unified domestic interiors. They were designed to shape moods strongly and to exhilarate the participants through the use of flamboyant architectural decoration, extravagant illuminations, and dramatic changes in setting, which recalled scene changes at a theatre performance.

Like the theatre, Adam’s temporary structures brought to the fore complex issues of representation and spectatorship. Objects on a theater stage and on Adam’s “stages” functioned both symbolically and practically, creating spaces that on the one hand realized illusions (as a remove from practical reality), and on the other resisted being categorized as illusions because of their tangibility and practical functions, which rooted both actor and viewer in immediate experiences. Thus a table on a theater stage or in the staging of one of Adam’s theatrical fêtes was both a table and the symbol of a table. (In contrast, objects in Adam’s scenographic domestic spaces were never so genuinely
theatrical: while they approached the symbolic, they never attained the level of illusion and detachment achieved by objects on stage or in elaborate party pavilion).

Adam’s temporary structures were spaces of both symbolic and aesthetic representation. Many of the objects he brought into his settings were authentic artworks, intended to induce sensory pleasure simply through their beauty. Thus, as on a stage, a table in one of Adam’s temporary monuments was not only a table and a symbol of a table, but also an autonomous work of art.

Adam’s temporary structures, like later theatres, were both absorptive and theatrical settings, in which audience and actors alike oscillated between awareness of a beholder’s gaze (theatricality) and obliviousness of it due to engrossment in activities other than spectatorship (absorption). This oscillation occurred because inhabitants in these scenographic environments acted simultaneously as self-conscious performers on view for the pleasure of others, and as mundane participants in meticulously-planned entertainments. Dining, dancing and firework-viewing, captivated party-goers and temporarily suspended self-awareness.

Among these projects, that most directly connected to the theatre was Adam’s pavilion for the fête champêtre at The Oaks in 1774 (Figures 6.44-6.46). As Michael Burden has shown, this astonishing structure inspired Philip James de Loutherbourg’s (1740-1812) sets for the staging at Garrick’s Drury Lane of The Maid of the Oaks — an expanded version of the “sylvan masque” that General John Burgoyne (Lord Stanley’s uncle) had composed especially for the fête at the Oaks. In his design, Adam used a real theatrical device — raising a curtain to reveal a new scene, which delighted and surprised inhabitants.

798 Here, the terms “theatricality” and “absorption” are imported from Michael Fried’s study of French painting of the second half of the 18th century, Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot (University of California Press, 1980; reprint University of Chicago Press, 1988).
Lord Stanley’s guests. After a long time spent dancing minuets and cotillions in the ballroom, the explosion of rockets notified the revelers of the shift in program from dancing to dining; to their amazement, the six crimson ballroom curtains (which they had assumed were window curtains) were then drawn up to reveal the enormous U-shaped dining room that encircled the dancing space.799

Adam’s Oaks pavilion thus afforded guests a series of engaging spatial experiences, culminating in a dramatic, sudden surprise. Upon entry in the relatively confined octagonal vestibule, guests would have viewed the ballroom at an angle that concealed its great size. The discovery of its unexpected dimensions would have been succeeded by the astounding revelation of the encircling dining room.

In creating this grand event space, Adam encountered the same problems faced by those who designed public auditoriums and strove to facilitate an intimate experience for hundreds of people who watched a play or other performance. And this had to be achieved at a colossal scale. The Oaks pavilion included the largest rooms that Adam ever designed or decorated: the U-shaped supper room comprised 4,000 square feet and the ballroom nearly 4,200. This must have been a thrilling venture for an architect who always yearned for large-scale public commissions.

Conclusion

Adam’s domestic interiors, like contemporary British landscape architecture and theatre, were designed to operate in a world of active viewership in which the closely

799 For descriptions of this effect see Doderer-Winkler, Magnificent Entertainments, 68; Gentleman’s Magazine XLIV (June 1774), 264; also Mrs. Delany to Mrs. Port, June 1774, in Hall 1862, Mrs. Delany, vol. 2, 2.
related concepts of the picturesque and scenographic were of great importance. Although these elements can be recognized in the work of earlier British architects, including William Kent and James Stuart, Adam applied them to every branch of architectural design. In his experimentation with the scenographic and picturesque, Adam contributed to the powerful contemporary idea that a room was not merely a form and its contents, but the synthesis of space and the experiences of its inhabitant and architect. For Adam, the picturesque qualities and “scenery” of a room were inseparable from the inhabitant's sensory and emotional experience; an uninhabited room was not complete.

Adam’s experimentation with picturesque and scenographic interiors was a component of the eighteenth-century fascination with theatrical, romantic, and archaeologically inspired spaces, which were dedicated to the stimulation of pleasure and desire. His interiors may be productively be compared with Clérisseau’s “Stanza della rovine,” (c 1760) in Santissima Trinità dei Monti, perched above the Spanish Steps in Rome, in which he painted all four walls and the ceiling of a monastic cell to create the illusion of a ruin (Figures 6.47 & 6.48).

Adam’s work also should be considered more carefully within the context of the new, rapidly expanding and transformative contemporary theories of vision. The popularity of his interiors is an index of his success in creating a visual medium that brought contemporary spectators to full awareness of the connection between sight and movement. This was an arena for a new idea of selfhood, grounded in external phenomena, physiological conditions, and an awareness of the consequences of complex and profound relationship between the human mind and body. These circumstances promised a seemingly limitless potential for heightened and meaningful experiences.
In the age of Adam, vision was not considered to concern chiefly the mechanics of light and optics, but rather subjective experience, in which mind and body were closely linked. In the eighteenth century, research into the holistic phenomena of vision and visuality developed out of the science of optics and led to a new conception of vision as both mental image and somatic effect. This developed at the same time that Adam was creating interiors that were designed to connect visual experience to the dynamic movement of the body through space. At the same time, French philosopher Pierre Maine de Biran (1766-1824) was reformulating and expanding René Descartes’ notion of *cogito ergo sum* (“I think, therefore, I am”), into “I exist because I move and I think.” Maine de Biran recognized that alongside mental activity, “bodily conditions exercised a strong, even commanding influence over consciousness.” Focusing on mobility, he reasoned that in the effort to move against the resistance of the muscles, individuals perceived that they exist. Maine de Biran’s insistence on the active element in perception led him to break with the school of sensationalism, led by Étienne Bonnot de Condillac (1714-80), which had attempted to reduce all consciousness to transformations of passive sensations.

Robert Adam’s picturesque and scenographic interiors, although created for private clients, prefigured the forms of the new public architecture that his generation of designers was beginning to create for the revolutionary society of the late eighteenth century. The scenographic adventure of the unbuilt Syon rotunda (Figure 6.27) and the

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801 Cited in *First Panorama*, 86.
802 Ibid.
803 Ibid.
804 Ibid.
picturesque garden structure at Croome Court would soon be enlarged and eclipsed by the illusions conjured up in the new “panoramas,” invented and introduced in Edinburgh in 1788 by Robert Barker (1739–1806, Figure 6.49 & 6.50). The display of aristocratic sculpture collections that Adam had orchestrated (as in the dining room at Syon, Figure 5.12) were already in the process of being replicated in the first public museums, like the Museo Pio-Clementino at the Vatican (founded 1771, Figure 6.51). And insofar as his richly complicated interiors induced modern eyes, feet, and minds to wander productively, they laid a foundation for the visual culture of the next century – including the “phantasmagoria” that the German philosopher and critic Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) would see in the nineteenth-century shopping arcades of Paris (Figure 6.52). In short, Robert Adam’s picturesque and scenographic architecture both encouraged modern viewers to step from the audience onto the stage and become actors in the drama of their own lives, while also providing models for the public architecture that these modern actors would inhabit.

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805 The medium of panorama was first patented on 17 June 1787 by Robert Barker, an Irish artist living in Edinburgh. In his first exhibitions, in Leicester Square in London, Barker’s design was built by the Scottish architect Robert Mitchell. From a central raised platform one could view 360-degree representations of a scene on a scale of 1:1. He called his invention “La nature a coup d’oeil,” which he translated in his London publications as “nature at a glance.” In 1791, Barker changed its name to panorama, derived from the Greek terms pan (everything, the whole world, all) and orana (a vision). This neologism described both the specially designed rotunda and the circular painting it housed. The patent specifications made clear that the spectator was to be completely surrounded by the massive, continuous picture and the goal was to give the impression that they were “really on the very spot” rather than in an architectural interior. To create this effect, Barker specified that the platform existed to prevent viewers from getting too close to the surface of the drawing or painting; a roofing component hid the picture’s top edge, and skylights were placed directly above the picture to bathe it in natural light, leaving the platform in relative darkness.
7. Coda: A Modern Architect

Adam’s revolutionary traits and activities were also those that shaped and exemplified the identity of the modern architect — a figure considered to have emerged in Europe in the second half of the eighteenth century. An important “modern” aspect of Adam’s working methods, and those of his contemporaries, included the insistence on the establishment of architecture as a distinct profession, defined by specialized training, circumscribed and clearly demarcated duties, adequate and appropriate methods of compensation, and institutional support. “Modern” tendencies also comprised the adoption of new theoretical attitudes toward style, aesthetics, and, above all, the past.

Summerson described the beginning of the modern era, or the “new spirit” that emerged at mid-century, as one that characteristically embraced an “essentially historic view of antiquity.” This meant that antiquity was newly understood in the eighteenth century “as something fundamentally separate not only from the Dark and Middle Ages but from the revival of antique art and literature at the Renaissance.” He also explained that at this time “European man, instead of looking back on his past as a single continuous cultural stream, unhappily broken by the medieval collapse of classical values, beg[an] to see it in distinct compartments – the world of antiquity, the medieval world, and the world of the Renaissance.” With the “springing into relief” of these “separate entities belonging to the past,” he continued, three new concepts, automatically emerged:

First, the concept of art through archaeology, that is, of the enrichment of the present by persistent inquiry into the nature of the past...Second, a wider concept of eclecticism, of the power to choose between styles or to combine elements from different styles. Third, by analogy, the concept of a modern style, a style uniquely characteristic of the present.

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With this framework, Summerson implied that for the first time in Europe, the perception emerged that the Renaissance had ended and that a new historical epoch had begun. The central project of the late-eighteenth-century architect, then, was to define himself in relation to the present, and, therefore, also the past.

Evidence of this new historical awareness is found throughout writing from the second half of the century, including in the work of Adam and other architects. For example, in the preface of the first edition of his Treatise (1759), which contemporary Horace Walpole deemed the “most sensible book and the most exempt from prejudices that ever was written on that science,” Chambers presented a vision of mid-eighteenth century Britain as basking in the culmination of nearly three hundred years of work to advance architecture:

No subject hath been more amply treated of than Architecture, nor any by persons more capable; insomuch that few things remain either to be discovered or improved, every branch of the Art having been maturely considered, and brought very near the utmost degree of certainty of which it is capable. 807

Chambers then explained that perfection in architecture could have only been attained through distance from the Middle Ages, an era devoid of architectural progress. He solemnly admonished his readers not to judge too harshly their Renaissance forebears:

It is not to be supposed that so difficult an art as architecture, after having lain many centuries absorbed in the general cloud of barbarism, should at once emerge in full perfection; or that the first restorers of the ancient manner of building could at once bring it to a degree of purity, incapable of further improvement. With very little assistance from books upon the subject, and that often obscure, unintelligible, or erroneous; while they were laboring to separate beauty from deformity; endeavoring to restore to light what length of time, casualties, war and violence had been active to deface; to annihilate; we must neither censure with severity their omissions, nor wonder at their mistakes… 808

Ten years later, on October 9, 1769, in the opening pages of his first Royal Academy lecture, Thomas Sandby similarly painted a portrait of his age as one on the

808 Chambers, Treatise (third edition, 1791), Preface, iii.
cusp of perfection in the art of architecture, having benefitted from the work of European forebears:

Gentlemen, from the happy institution of the Royal Academy we have the satisfaction to find that the progress of the Arts hath been equal to our most sanguine hopes, and answered in every point our warmest expectations…I flatter myself that we are every day advancing by a gradual and there perhaps imperceptible progress towards perfection; & that time is not far distant, when this country shall become as eminent for superior taste and skill in Architecture, as she already is in almost every other art and science. 809

Nearly twenty years after the publication of Chambers Treatise, in the preface of the fifth fascicle of the first volume of the Works (June 1778), Adam similarly acknowledged the steady progress in architecture achieved by their “ancestors,” which, he believed, had recently reached perfection. Adam had previously mourned, however, that constraints on his time prevented his intention to uphold the long-standing British and Continental tradition of recounting this familiar narrative of progress as a preface to books of architecture:

We intended to have prefixed to our designs a dissertation concerning the rise and progress of architecture in Great Britain; and to have pointed out the various stages of its improvements from the time, that our ancestors, relinquishing the gothick style, began to aim at an imitation of the Grecian manner, until it attained that degree of perfection at which it has now arrived…but to digest and arrange these would require more time that we can command…we, therefore, reserve the subject for some period of greater leisure. 810

All three architects considered themselves tasked with taking up the mantle of architectural advancement and correcting their forebears’ mistakes. Each intended to provide the modern world with a guide to the refinement of architecture and its eventual perfection. While Chambers book largely looked backward, selecting and emphasizing the best of what the past has left behind, Adam predominately looked forward, engulfing the reader in their self-proclaimed innovative designs and boldly crediting themselves with having initiated a new era in architectural design in their native Britain: “In the

809 Sandby, SaT/1/1, Lecture 1, ff. 3 & 10.
works which we have had the honour to execute, we ... have brought about, in this
country, a kind of revolution in the whole system of this useful and elegant art.”

Sandby, in his lectures, forged a kind of middle ground, content in his constant reflection
on the merits of past achievements and simultaneous careful adoption and interweaving
of contemporary aesthetic and philosophic theory into tradition principles of architectural
design.

In his many architectural designs, Adam created spaces for a new modern public
— one energized by new values and interests, and one that greatly valued an increasingly
romanticized perception of “home,” a site that became quasi-public with the rise of
private collecting and the significant expansion of leisure pursuits and domestic
entertaining. The gifted architect helped this generation to realize their full potential by
arguing that central tasks of the professional architect were to design and decorate
interiors, and that domestic architecture should be considered equal in importance to
public works for what were called improvement, or progress, and nation-building.

Adam also played a crucial role in designing domestic spaces for women in modern

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811 Ibid., 1.
812 Previous to the eighteenth century, books dedicated to interior design did not exist. Rather, books on
architecture were broken into categories that included books on the orders, the designs of individual
architects, archaeology, and practical manuals that dealt with the mechanics of carpentry, descriptions of
tools, pricing, and tables of measurements. The construction, design, and decoration of interiors was
typically discussed in a small section, often found towards the end of a book, which focused primarily on
the dimensions of rooms, the use of the orders, the size and placement of windows, designs for door
frames, window frames, and fireplaces, and the quality and types of materials to be used. These individual
aspects of the interior were treated in relative isolation and corresponded to rules and ideals of the exterior.
Interior design was considered important, but secondary to the more public and unified design problem of
exterior design. Ornament was supposed to be modest and elegant (restrained), and to derive from the
architectural orders. Adam’s presentation of rooms in the Works was thus unprecedented in Britain.
Previously rooms were never isolated in their presentation, if shown at all. Colen Campbell, for example,
had illustrated interiors merely in plan, while James Gibbs showed interiors in cross sections, in the style of
Palladio, and in plan (his sections were detailed, but the interior was presented principally in relation to the
exterior, and one could read one in the other).
society, who became involved in public life in powerful and more widespread ways during the second half of the eighteenth century.

Robert Adam was possessed the ability to improve the lives of everyone who encountered his art. Each of Adam’s designs can be considered a fulfillment of his personal motto, *Qui vitam excoluere per artes*, which comes from Virgil’s *Aeneid* (VI, 663) and may be rendered as “those who infuse life with grace through art.”

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Figure 6.34 Sir Thomas Lawrence, P.R.A. (Bristol 1769-1830 London), Portrait of John Philip Kemble (1757-1823), full-length, as Rolla from Sheridan's Pizarro.
Figure 6.35 Thrust Stage in Christopher Wren’s Drury Lane Theater, London, 1674.

Figure 6.37 Antonio Zucchi, Painted Panels in the Music Room, Harewood House, Yorkshire, 1759-71.

Figure 6.38 Antonio Zucchi, Landscape Panels with Ruins, Dining Room, Osterley House, Isleworth (West London), mid-1770s.
Figure 6.39 Antonio Zucchi, Landscape Panels with Ruins, Dining Room, Osterley House, Isleworth (West London), mid-1770s.

Figure 6.40 Robert Adam, Gosford House (a panorama of the city of Edinburgh and the Firth of Forth, as seen from the triplet Venetian windows on the west elevation of the main block), Longniddry, East Lothian, Scotland, built to Adam’s plans by the 7th Earl of Wemyss, 1790 – 1800.
Figure 6.41 Robert Adam, sculpture gallery at Newby Hall, Skelton-on-Ure (North Yorkshire), 1767–76.

Figure 6.42 Edward Francis Burney, *A view of Philip James de Loutherbourg’s Eidophusikon* c.1782 (Pen and grey ink and grey wash, with watercolor). Visitors watching “Satan Arraying his Troops on the Banks of a Fiery Lake, with the Raising of the Palace of Pandemonium” during a performance of Milton’s “Paradise Lost.”
Figure 6.43 Robert Adam, Design of a Bridge Illuminated in Honour of His Majesty's Birth Day, The 4th June 1763. By Order of Her Majesty 1763, Pencil, pen and ink and watercolor | 48.0 x 63.5 cm (sheet of paper) | RCIN 917643.c.

Figure 6.44 Plan of the pavilion for the Earl of Derby’s fête champêtre at The Oaks, Surrey, designed by Robert Adam, 1774; published in Works in Architecture of Robert and James Adam, Vol. III (1822), Plate XX.
Figure 6.45 Antonio Zucchi, the ball-room in the pavilion erected for the Early of Derby’s *fête champêtre* at the Oaks, Surrey, designed by Robert Adam, 1774. (In the collection of the Earl and Countess of Derby).

Figure 6.46 Antonio Zucchi, the supper-room in the pavilion erected for the Early of Derby’s *fête champêtre* at the Oaks, Surrey, designed by Robert Adam, 1774.
Figure 6.47 Charles-Louis Clérisseau, Sketch of Painting of the Western Wall of the “Ruined Room” in the Trinita dei Monti, Rome, c. 1760; from the series Views of Father Leseur's Cell in the Trinita dei Monti.

Figure 6.48 Photograph of Clérisseau's “Ruined Room” in Trinita dei Monti, Rome.
Figure 6.49 Exterior of Robert Barker’s Panorama in Leicester Square, London, 1789.

Figure 6.50 Interior Cross-Section, Robert Barker’s Panorama, Leicester Square, London, 1789.
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Figure 6.52 François Jean Delannoy, Galerie Vivienne, 1823, Paris.