

Foreword

SIR DAVID DAVIES

Well, what a year it was for the Irish Georgian Society! The City Assembly House was formally opened after its painstaking restoration and once again fulfils its original purpose as an exhibition and performance space in the heart of Dublin's historic south Georgian core. Brilliantly curated by Ruth Kenny, the opening show *Exhibiting Art in Georgian Ireland: the Society of Artists' Exhibitions Recreated* was both a stylish visual feast and an intellectually stimulating experience. Ruth and the IGS can be immensely proud of such a triumph, and while it truly was a team effort involving dozens of committed members of the Society, special mention should be made of Beth Dater in the United States and David Fleming and William Laffan in Ireland whose passionate commitment to this exhibition brought it to fruition. Donough Cahill and all the IGS staff in South William Street also deserve our gratitude for absorbing the extra work that the year's hugely busy programme entailed.

In the context of the exhibition and the evolving scholarship as to the display of paintings in eighteenth-century Ireland, it is very pleasing to hear that a pair of landscapes by George Barret will soon be rehung over the pedimented doors of the Saloon at Russborough, the very position for which they were painted in the late 1740s. The acquisition of these paintings was a cause ably championed by the IGS's representative on the Alfred Beit Foundation, Jerry Healy SC, and were purchased thanks to the Beits' ongoing generosity through the Apollo Foundation.

Another highlight of an exceptionally busy year was the exhibition devoted to the drawings of John Nankivell, which we were able to mount thanks to the generosity of Susan and Coleman Burke. This was an exhibition that I had hoped to see for many years, having first met John in 1988 at the time of his groundbreaking exhibition in Kyburg Gallery in London. It seems extraordinary to note that our showing in the City Assembly House was the first exhibition of his mesmerising drawings of Irish houses (sadly mostly ruins) since then. Kevin Mulligan's study of Nankivell's art, *Vain Transitory Splendours*, is the year's standout book in the field of Irish country house studies, and, as I predicted, looks set to become a classic. Meanwhile, in keeping with the IGS's remit within the decorative arts, in April the Society partnered with the National Museum and Maynooth University to deliver a conference on Irish Georgian

Silver at Collins Barracks. The proceedings of this event are to be published as *Studies in Irish Silver*, with the support of the Paul Mellon Centre.

Notable recent publications – spanning 250 years of Irish architecture – include Conor Lucey’s fascinating study, *Building Reputations: architecture and the artisan, 1750-1830* and Ellen Rowley’s *More than Concrete Blocks: Dublin city’s twentieth-century buildings and their stories*, while a special word of congratulations is due to Christine Casey for winning the coveted Alice Davis Hitchcock Medallion from the Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain for her wonderful book *Making Magnificence: architects, stuccatori, and the eighteenth-century interior*. I also offer the IGS’s warm congratulations to Kathleen James-Chakraborty, the first woman to receive the Royal Irish Academy’s Gold Medal, the highest scholarly accolade in Ireland. Notable exhibitions of Irish art included the Roderic O’Conor show at the National Gallery of Ireland and *Naked Truth, the Nude in Irish Art* at the Crawford Gallery, Cork.

On behalf of the IGS, I offer our deepest thanks to Finola O’Kane for the huge amount of work that goes into editing this journal and congratulate her on another fine issue, which has assumed an unintended yet pronounced Dublin focus, publishing new work on the Wide Streets Commissioners, the Casino at Marino, the Customs House, the Dublin Society, newly discovered drawings by Hugh Douglas Hamilton relating to his *Cries of Dublin*, William Morrison’s Catholic chapels, a Dominick Street town house, the 1979 Taoiseach’s House competition, and the much travelled artist from county Down, Helen Mabel Trevor. We thank Jim Thompson for his generosity, as well as a supporter in the United States who has helped fund the Journal in recent years and who wishes to remain anonymous.

Following the success of last year’s issue dedicated to Castletown, the next volume will highlight new research on the architectural history and material culture of Cork. Scholars with relevant research who may wish to contribute are encouraged to get in touch.

*John Nankivell, Riddlestown Park, county Limerick,
and the Malone-Sunderlin mausoleum designed by James Wyatt at Kilbixy, county Westmeath*
from Kevin V. Mulligan, *VAIN TRANSITORY SPLENDOURS, THE IRISH COUNTRY HOUSE AND THE ART OF JOHN NANKIVELL* (IGS, 2018)

