

FOREWORD



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## THE KNIGHT OF GLIN

IT IS VERY EXCITING TO PRESENT THE SERIES OF STIMULATING ESSAYS ON IRISH MATTERS that forms volume XIII of our Journal. As is usual, we present a considerable variety of studies devoted to architecture, painting and design.

Beginning with architecture, Anne Casement presents new research that illuminates the mysterious elevations and plans by James Gibbs that have always formed part of the Londonderry Papers in the Public Records Office in Northern Ireland. Keeping with architectural design, Bernard O'Mahony contrasts the plans of the Pain brothers' Board of First Fruits churches of the 1820s with those designs prepared by James Pain for the Ecclesiastical Commission of the early 1840s, highlighting how spatial concerns reflected the changing nature of Anglican worship in early nineteenth-century Ireland. Vandra Costello sheds new light on the alleged French designer of the formal baroque gardens at Killruddery, revealing that the likely author was in fact Edward Brabazon, 4th Earl of Meath.

Turning to painting, Aidan O'Boyle had made a great discovery with a series of early interior photographs of Russborough, county Wicklow, dating from the 1860s. Given that many of the paintings depicted in these views now form part of the Milltown bequest at the National Gallery of Ireland, the rare evidence presented here confirms that the original picture-hang at the house was based on the cabinets of Florence and Rome. Ruth Kenny sheds new light on that most romantic masterpiece by Hugh Douglas Hamilton, the portrait of Richard Mansergh St George at the tomb of his wife. A self-portrait sketch by St George, also illustrated here, reveals the way in which the composition and meaning of the painting was enacted. Caroline Pegum explores the early professional life of the Irish painter Charles Jervas, who distinguished himself by becoming Principal Painter to George I. Reflecting on a newly discovered manuscript source, she explores how Jervas established important circles of patronage and social networks

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*Ballyfin, county Laois (photo: James Fennell)*

during his visit to France and Italy. William Laffan and Kevin Mulligan have identified a pair of paintings of Ballyfin, county Laois, by the renowned eighteenth-century artist William Ashford, which adds greatly to our understanding of his work in the landscape genre.

On the decorative arts, Jane Fenlon has gathered the available documentary material concerning the seventeenth-century tapestry collections of successive generations of the Ormonde family, a reminder of the importance of tapestries in Irish castles and houses throughout the early modern period. Fenlon also mentions Christopher Lovett who made tapestries in Chapelizod, Dublin, and it is interesting to note that Lovett was a cousin of Ireland's greatest Palladian architect, Sir Edward Lovett Pearce. Finally, Tom Spalding presents an interesting account of the provision of public lighting in Georgian Cork. Drawing on a range of archival sources, his article addresses this important quotidian aspect of the early modern city.

Looking back over these fascinating aperçus into our visual and material culture, it is pleasing to note the work of several authors new to this journal which, combined with the published work presented in these pages over the last few years, signals a continuing blossoming in scholarship devoted to our important heritage. Of course, we owe much to the important ongoing academic research emerging from the art history and visual culture departments of Trinity College Dublin, University College Dublin and the National College of Art & Design. Talking of Trinity College, a landmark publication this year is Dr Christine Casey's brilliant gathering of essays entitled *The Eighteenth-century Dublin Town House* – the proceedings of a conference held in the National Gallery of Ireland in May 2008. It vividly illustrates the history, architecture, and cultural life of the city.

Several forthcoming events and publications are worthy of the attention of our readers. One of the great restoration projects that Ireland has seen in many decades is coming to a triumphant conclusion with the opening of Ballyfin as a small hotel. A decade ago, the Society campaigned to rescue its Turner conservatory. At the time, even that seemed a daunting challenge, but now, through one of our Chicago members, the whole house and demesne has been immaculately restored. To mark this, a book by Dr Kevin Mulligan has just been published, *Ballyfin: The Restoration of an Irish House and Demesne*. In an act of great generosity, proceeds of the book accrue directly to the Irish Georgian Society, so please buy a copy directly from the IGS office! In addition to its scholarly merits, it is another beautifully designed and illustrated book from Churchill House Press, producers of some of the most elegant books on Irish art and architecture in recent years.

An important collection of essays, entitled *Eighteenth-century plasterwork in Ireland and Europe*, and scheduled for publication late next year, will be co-edited by Dr Christine Casey and the Journal's new editor, Dr Conor Lucey. On a related matter, it is very exciting to report that an exhibition of Irish painting and decorative arts, drawn from North American collections, is scheduled to be held at the Art Institute of Chicago in

2014. No doubt a number of our scholars will contribute to its catalogue. It is hoped that the exhibition will travel to Boston, and it would be splendid if it could be brought to Ireland. The organisation of this important event demonstrates that interest in our material culture, from the seventeenth to the twentieth century, has developed in leaps and bounds. I would particularly like to pay tribute to Dr Toby Barnard, Fellow and tutor at Hertford College, Oxford, who has done so much to develop interest and enthusiasm for this particular field of academic enquiry.

It is important to note, in closing, that in the tragic economic times in which we find ourselves, the Irish Georgian Society has found it very taxing to obtain funding for this particular volume of our remarkable journal. Given that we have already received a number of essays for the next volume, we urge those who read this plaintive call to act generously on behalf of this important part of the Society's educational remit.

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