

Foreword

PATRICK GUINNESS

IT IS A GREAT PLEASURE TO INTRODUCE THIS, THE SIXTEENTH VOLUME OF *IRISH Architectural and Decorative Studies*. The fact that the Irish Georgian Society is now happily ensconced in its new home at the City Assembly House, originally the headquarters and exhibition room of the Society of Artists in Ireland, reminds us that in addition to its key role in protecting our built heritage, since its inception the IGS has had an equally important mandate to conserve, foster and promote the study of Ireland's decorative and fine arts. Following modern scholarship, we interpret this in the widest possible sense so that objects are not treated in a vacuum, but the histories of taste, consumption, fashion, collecting, entertainment and sociability inform and enliven the exploration of all aspects of Irish art, architecture and material culture.

This year's journal offers the usual rich mix of topics and approaches. Patricia McCarthy gives a comprehensive description of the staging of amateur theatrical productions in Irish houses during the eighteenth century; Philip McEvansoneya sheds new light on the nineteenth-century painter George Sharp; Colm O'Brien examines Frederick Darley's church designs for the ecclesiastical commissioners; Roger Stalley explores Waterford Cathedral and its medieval fabric; Eileen Harris considers the work of Thomas Wright (the 'Wizard of Durham') at Tollymore Park; while William Laffan and Kevin Mulligan publish five previously unknown drawings for the sculptural adornment of the Casino at Marino. These newly identified designs by Giovanni Battista Cipriani for the classical figures on the attic of William Chambers' masterpiece will feature in an exciting exhibition at the Casino next spring, *Paradise Lost: Lord Charlemont's Garden at Marino* organised by the Office of Public Works. No doubt this will be one of the Georgian highlights of the year, and a perfect excuse to revisit the Casino. In collaboration with the OPW, the Society will hold a major one-day conference to coincide with this show. (More details to be announced shortly.)

Meanwhile, several recent and forthcoming books will be of interest to our readers. Finola O'Kane's *Ireland and the Picturesque: design, landscape, painting and tourism* (Yale, 2013) is a magisterial account of the Irish landscape and how it has been

shaped, perceived, enjoyed and, indeed, distorted. Alison FitzGerald's *Silver in Georgian Dublin: making, selling, consuming* is due in 2014 (Ashgate). We also wait with anticipation a volume on the history of wallpaper in Ireland by David Skinner (Churchill House Press, 2014). This subject, explored by Ada Leask in issues of the *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* and our own *Bulletin* was close to my parents' hearts. In the early days of the IGS, they rescued several important wallpapers from houses about to be demolished. Most generously, the entire proceeds of the book have been donated to the IGS to help us continue our work.

I should also mention two initiatives in the fine and decorative arts, both of which the IGS is closely involved. Almost a decade ago, in his foreword to Volume VII (2004) of this Journal, my predecessor the Knight of Glin thanked its then editor, Dr Nicola Figgis, for her 'signal service', and announced that she was working on the 'Herculean task' of revising WG Strickland's 'monumental lynchpin', *The Dictionary of Irish Artists*. The Knight expressed the hope that everyone involved in Irish art history 'who reads these pages will give every assistance possible'. Both on an individual and organisational level, the IGS has heeded the Knight's call, with many of our members involved in the writing of the new dictionary, while we are represented on the overall board of the project. Over the intervening years, the project has grown even beyond the ambitious scope that the Knight outlined to encompass a five-volume dictionary covering sculpture, architecture and painting from the medieval period until today. Due to be published next year by Yale University Press for the Royal Irish Academy, the volumes will give the most comprehensive account of the Irish visual arts ever attempted, though with some strange exceptions which would have greatly annoyed the Knight: furniture, ceramics, book bindings, glass, silver, the history of design and the decorative arts generally do not make the cut in the otherwise exhaustive dictionary – an unfortunate and rather old-fashioned assertion of artistic hierarchies. Happily, however, and somewhat filling this gap, progress continues with assembling the enormous exhibition of Irish arts – including the decorative arts – which is being organised by the Art Institute of Chicago. The IGS is working very closely with the AIC on this exhibition, which was a long-cherished ambition of the Knight and which opens on St Patrick's Day, 2015. Book your tickets, as sadly the exhibition will not be travelling to Ireland.

The production and publication costs for this volume have been underwritten by generous funding received from the Apollo Foundation and the J. Paul Getty Jr Trust. Our visual presence online has also been enhanced recently by a complete rebuilding of our website, with the cost met by Tom Tormey of Ohio, whose family have also been long-term supporters. I would like to conclude by thanking our distinguished editorial board for the support they offer the Journal every year, and even more so than in most years, a special word of thanks is due to our editor, Dr Conor Lucey, who, despite relocating to Philadelphia to pursue a Government of Ireland Scholarship, has continued to oversee this annual volume, which I hope you will all enjoy reading.