



Living in a monument: building and designing the Casino at Marino

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WHEN TURNING ONTO THE MALAHIDE ROAD FROM FAIRVIEW PARK, THE PORTLAND stone of the Casino at Marino begins to shine brightly from a distance. It may come as a surprise to find an architectural gem from the Georgian period amongst the surrounding uniform suburban houses. Designed by Sir William Chambers and erected by Simon Vierpyle at Lord Charlemont's suburban seat, Marino, it is frequently described as Ireland's most important neoclassical building. Furthermore, the Casino stands as the first built example of the 'architecture of magnificence' which emerged in both Paris and Rome between the 1740s and 1750s.¹

Despite numerous articles on the Casino and regular discussions surrounding its primary sources, it is still difficult to find a critical and comprehensive summary of its construction or an analysis of the design process that created it.² Even more striking, there have been no attempts to explain the Casino's peculiar dichotomy between its interior and exterior. This article seeks to provide a comprehensive and critical summary of previously discussed sources, and to introduce new arguments and findings in order to question aspects of the building's chronology.³ By uncovering the construction sequence it is intended to reveal the design process that created the Casino's interior-exterior dichotomy. Why did Charlemont and Chambers strive for both monumental and residential functions within a singular building? How did they reconcile the Casino's refined, delicate and habitable interior with its conceptually disparate monumental exterior?⁴

A VILLA INSIDE A MONUMENT – THE DICHOTOMOUS DESIGN OF THE CASINO

THE SHAPE OF THE CASINO IMMEDIATELY PROVOKES CURIOSITY. FOUR EGYPTIAN LIONS guard three flights of steps that span the light-wells of the basement. Surrounding the building's Greek-cross body are twelve columns that rise above a complex un-

1 – Thomas Roberts, *A LANDSCAPE WITH CASINO* [detail]
1773, oil on canvas, 62 x 96 cm (© Whitworth Gallery, University of Manchester)



2 – The four façades of the Casino at Marino

(clockwise: (a) north, (b) south, (c) east, (d) west) (photos: Christopher Scholer, 2015)

opposite 3 – The interior of the Casino

(clockwise: (a) vestibule, (b) saloon, (c) state room, (d) staircase detail)

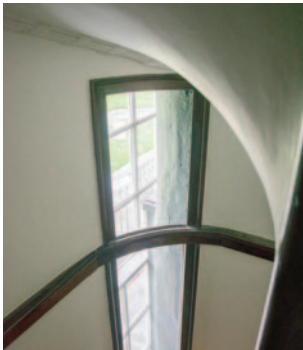
The eastern window illuminates both the study and the stairs (see plate 3). (photos: the author, 2018)

derworld of tunnels and cellars (Plate 2). Despite the heavily rusticated main body, these airy and free-standing columns support a unifying entablature that covers the angular recesses of the Greek-cross body. A heavy attic storey rises above the body, with two statues on each of the north and south elevations and triangular pediments on the west and east elevations.

When visitors enter the building by the stone steps, they might reasonably expect a single space to occupy the entirety of the Casino above ground level. However, upon moving through the monumental door, visitors are surprised by a totally contradictory interior. First, a vestibule with a semi-circular apse leads to a saloon. After experiencing the saloon, one can access either a study or a boudoir through hidden doors. A kitchen in the basement served the principal floor, while the attic features a dressing room, a state bedroom, and a grouping of informal rooms (Plate 3).⁵ The peculiarity of this small building lies in an understanding that the exterior façades do not reflect the internal spatial arrangement. Only the lower half of the entrance door actually opens, signalling a shift in scale between the inside and the outside (Plate 7). In some cases, this lack of cohesion between interior and exterior remains visible, yet well hidden. Even the most profound

architectural necessities are concealed: the hollow corner columns also function as rain-water pipes, while the chimneys are disguised as vases or urns. These smoking urns, the guarding lions, the use of a doric order, a windowless main façade and the building's heavy rustication all evoke funerary associations, imparting a mausoleum-like appearance to the Casino (Plate 9). As the interior and exterior exist as two completely different entities, the design calculation of the resulting dichotomy starts to become clear.⁶

The Casino was part of a larger plan for Lord Charlemont's seat at Marino, located just outside eighteenth-century Dublin near the northern shore of its bay. Following the most recent trends in England, Charlemont altered Marino House, re-designing its grounds as a landscape garden.⁷ The demesne featured a kitchen garden, lakes and two other small-scale garden buildings. A primitive hut-like hermitage was placed within a grove, while Rosamund's Bower, a neo-Gothic concoction, was situated at an artificial lake and surrounded by large trees. The Casino itself was prominently located at the estate's highest and most exposed topographical position.⁸

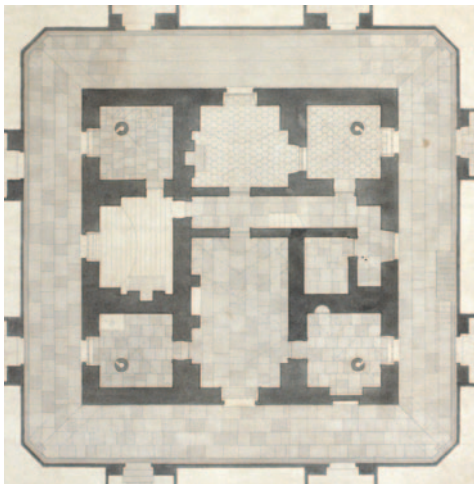
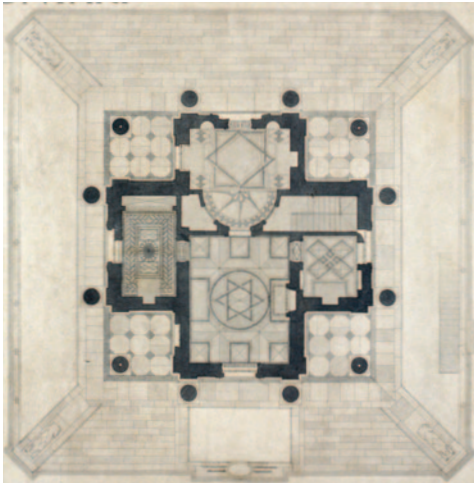
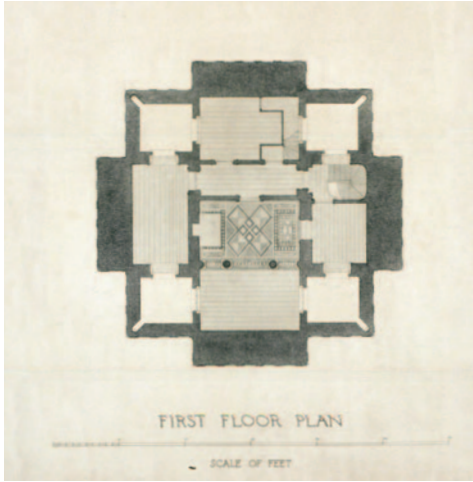


‘PLANTING THE BUILDING’ – A CONSTRUCTION IN TWO STAGES

IN JUNE 1754, THOMAS ADDERLEY offered Donnycarney demesne and a newly built house to his stepson, Charlemont, while the latter was on his grand tour in Italy.⁹ Around the time of Charlemont’s return to Ireland, in the summer of 1755, Adderley bought Donnycarney’s adjacent grounds, called Marino, and this became the estate’s name.¹⁰ Charlemont then began his improvements on site, which must have included the demolition of an older existing house.¹¹ John Rocque’s *Survey of the City Harbour Bay and Environs of Dublin...*, finished in 1756 and published in 1757,¹² suggests that the old Donnycarney House stood very close to the Casino’s present site. Indeed, a recent archaeological survey confirms the proximity of both buildings as traces from either the old house’s foundations or its basements were discovered by a ground-penetrating radar survey.¹³

It is difficult to date the commencement of construction works on the Casino. William Chambers’ *Treatise on Civil Architecture* (1759) only referred to the Casino ‘now erecting’ in Dublin.¹⁴ Later, Thomas Milton claimed in *The Seats and Demesnes of the Nobility and Gentry of Ireland* (1783) that a dedication plaque had been incorporated into the Casino’s fabric at the time of William Pitt’s leadership of the British House of Commons in either 1761 or 1762.¹⁵ This assertion seemingly contradicts Chambers’ claim that the Casino had been under construction in 1759, although the plaque could have also been incorporated into the partially completed building.

Alternatively, the two authors might have been referring to different events. Despite their absence from Chambers’



*Alfred E. Jones's survey
drawings of the Casino at
Marino, 1917-18*

*7 – Cross-sections AA (east-
west) and BB (north-south)
The different scales of interior and
exterior are particularly visible in the
section drawings.*

8 – West elevation

opposite

Plans

4 – Basement

with tunnel entrances

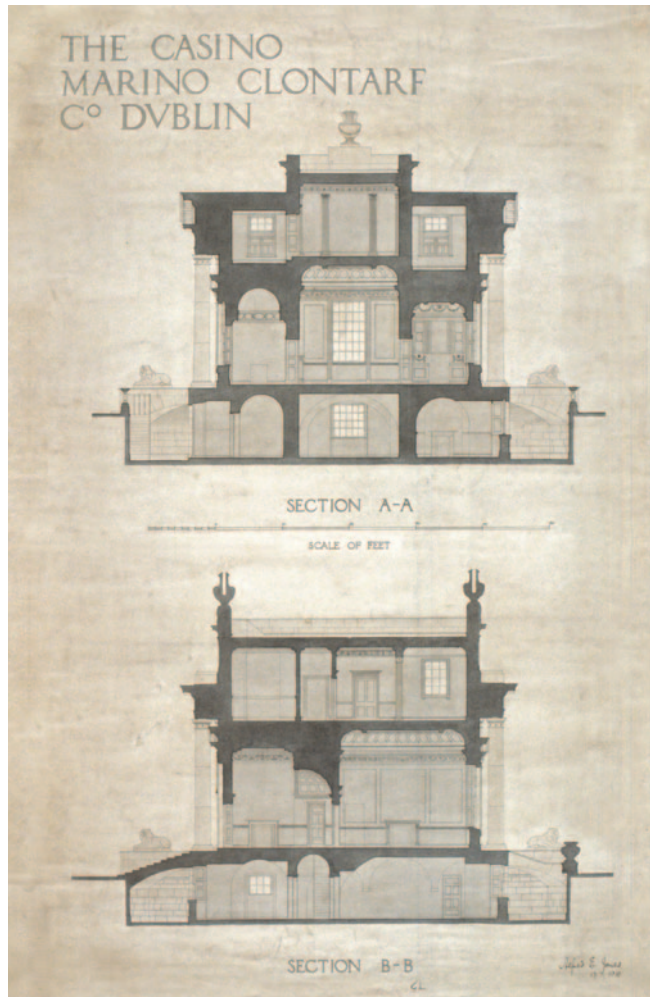
5 – Ground floor

with vestibule leading to saloon

6 – First floor

with central state room

(photos: Gandon Archive, Kinsale)

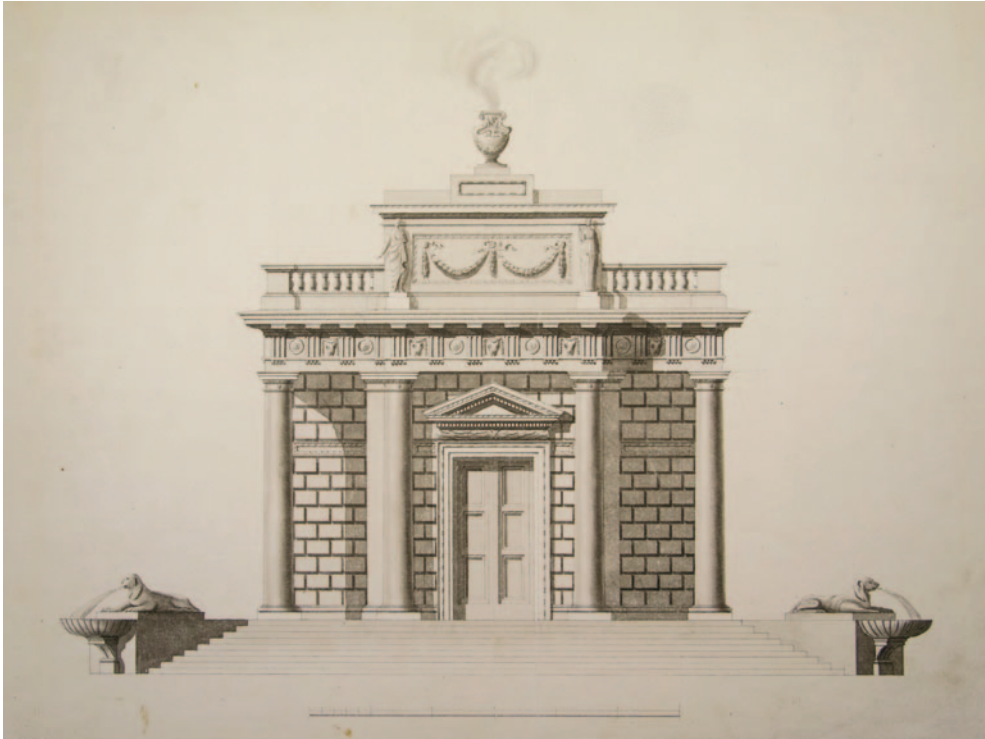


archived drawings,¹⁶ the Casino's basement is surrounded by eight tunnels of varying length (Plate 4). The tunnels were not only used for storage, but also as substructures for an artificial mound that increased the Casino's elevation, providing a new explanation for their purpose.¹⁷ When remodelling the topography of a garden, Chambers recommended making such hollow structures to stabilise the groundwork and decrease expenses.¹⁸ Such preparatory measures might have preceded actual works on the Casino itself.¹⁹ The demolition of Donnycarney House and the erection of the Casino's extensive tunnels and mound could explain the difference in dates between Chambers' and Milton's accounts. Given the near complete detachment of the Casino's main body from the retaining walls, Thomas Milton was probably referring to the erection of the actual building as per Chambers' plan, while the architect himself might have been referring to the beginning of more general works.

This analysis narrows down the dates of the Casino's commencement, as John Rocque's depiction of old Donnycarney House in 1756 and Chambers' account in 1759 provide a time frame. This is supported both by Charlemont's invitation to Simon Vierpyle to come to Dublin in 1757,²⁰ and by his mortgages on various family properties. These mortgages gave Charlemont access to £20,000 in September 1757, and to another £10,000 in 1760.²¹ Construction works must have commenced soon after Charlemont received a wooden model of the Casino, a model for which a bill existed from February 1758.²² Thus, the excavations and foundation works would have started in the following summer, providing appropriate working conditions.²³

The next record for the building process of the Casino appears in Horace Walpole's correspondence with George Montagu, 2nd Earl of Halifax.²⁴ In the November of his first year in office as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland (1761-63), Montagu visited Marino and claimed that the Casino either had been or will be 'finished in about twelve months'.²⁵ Unfortunately, the lack of context here does not allow for an interpretation of the twelve months as either retrospective or predictive. However, considering Montagu's statement that 'the design, by what I can judge of it, will be vastly pretty', he must have seen the Casino's shell in a fairly finished state.²⁶ He indicates that the lower part of the Casino had been erected and clad in Portland stone by referring to 'stone from England' and the position of one of the stone lions.²⁷ In 1763, Lady Northumberland, wife of the succeeding Lord Lieutenant, visited the Casino after stopping at Marino's kitchen garden and the other garden buildings. She remarked on the Casino's unique qualities: 'We then went to the Temple. The Stonework is admirably well executed all of Portland Stone, it is a beautiful Building but very ill qualified for a Dwelling House.'²⁸ Again, this does not greatly assist in determining the Casino's state of construction, but her judgement of it being a 'beautiful Building', yet 'ill qualified' for residential purposes, suggests the completion of the Casino's exterior at least. She may have based her dismissive judgement on a brief viewing of the interior, unfinished at the time of her visit.

In the same year, 1763, Charlemont became earl,²⁹ which not only increased his social status, but likely sparked an enthusiasm to erect a town house in Dublin city as the appropriate place to fulfil his benevolent role in society.³⁰ In March 1763 he leased a large site north-west of the gardens at the Lying-In Hospital (now the Rotunda Hospital) for this purpose,³¹ and Chambers described a design for a town house (Charlemont House,



9 – Sir William Chambers, 'Elevation for the Casino at Marino'

1757/8, pen and ink, pencil and grey washes, 33.7 x 43.2 cm (© Victoria & Albert Museum, London)

This drawing of the north elevation was widely published in Chambers' TREATISE.

Its articulation evokes associations of a monument or mausoleum.

later to become the Hugh Lane Gallery) in a letter from the same month.³² Payments to Simon Vierpyle suggest that construction of the town house progressed continuously from 1763 to 1767, while works at the Casino came to a halt.³³ No accounts for the Casino's construction in these years have survived, save for a few payments to Simon Vierpyle that Charlemont issued for unspecified works at Marino.³⁴ These payments may refer to refurbishment works at Marino House that most likely took place before Charlemont's marriage in 1768.³⁵

Thereafter, the correspondence on the Casino between Chambers and Charlemont began to increase, especially between 1767 and 1771.³⁶ The fact that most of these letters refer to works of decorative nature suggests that the Casino's brickwork, Portland stone cladding, internal walls and ceilings were finished by the time of the interruption from 1763 to 1767. This is supported by John O'Keeffe, an Irish playwright, in a series of recollections: 'About the year 1766, walking with a friend through Donnycarney, he [Charlemont] was standing on the entrance of his splendid villa and grounds; he invited us in, and showed us his Casino.'³⁷ O'Keeffe does not comment on the completeness of the interior. However, photographs from the 1980s restoration reveal a significant detail: they show that the Casino's shell was complete but that its interior was still in an unfinished state in 1768. In Chambers' design, the saloon features four doors – two of them

leading to the boudoir and study, while the other two are false doors. The photographs from the restoration reveal that two recesses were built into the brickwork to accommodate those false doors.³⁸ This indicates that the completion of the saloon's interior was after March/April 1768, when two letters reveal Charlemont's and Chambers' unanimous decision to leave out the two false doors, thus freeing up space for furniture.³⁹

Consequently, the main construction works at the Casino seem to have been finished by 1763, with Lady Northumberland's visit marking the end of a first building phase. After a four-year period of inactivity, Charlemont's payments and Chambers' letters illustrate a second building phase for the work on the Casino's interior between 1767 to 1771.⁴⁰ In September 1767, Chambers requested precise measurements for one of the Casino's rooms from Vierpyle, whose engagement with the projects at Marino and Charlemont House can be deduced from weekly payments made to him in that period.⁴¹ Many other letters sent from Chambers to Charlemont followed this request, mostly concerned with designs for the ceilings, chimney pieces, furniture, statuary, paving, floors and some exterior details. In addition, regular payments to local craftsmen and requests for materials like mahogany, boxwood, lead and Portland stone continually accompanied these works.⁴² Chambers' letters mostly concerned themselves with the ground-floor rooms and external details, indicating his small influence on the first-floor interiors and supporting the assumption that the main bedroom was decorated with little input from Chambers.⁴³ The bedroom's fashionable Greek style, a design approach often rejected by Chambers, also supports this conclusion.⁴⁴ Furthermore, Charlemont barely travelled to London during this time, a decision regretted by Chambers and one which increasingly led him to defer to Charlemont's own aesthetic judgements and design decisions.⁴⁵

The sequence of rapidly assembled building shells and slowly executed interior designs must have been documented in drawings that Chambers sent to Dublin from London and that are now lost.⁴⁶ Since he apparently never travelled to Ireland, Chambers had to manage his projects either by sending over drawings or by personally meeting his clients in London.⁴⁷ His remarks on an unexecuted design for Charlemont's hunting lodge, along with comments on two of his buildings for Trinity College in Dublin, demonstrate a pattern of sending over design drawings while waiting for the final execution of the building shell according to his plans.⁴⁸ In the case of the Casino, Simon Vierpyle provided Chambers with the actual dimensions of the rooms so that he then could draft detailed interior designs.⁴⁹

These patterns show that Chambers' Irish projects were often divided into two stages. The assembly of the building shell was quite feasible without extensive correspondence. The interiors, however, demanded a more intricate design process. Chambers' participation in both phases varied. For example, in the instance of his hunting lodge design, he merely warned Charlemont to pay attention to the orientation of its various rooms when 'planting the building'.⁵⁰ In the case of Trinity College, he was not even fully aware of how his designs were eventually executed.⁵¹ This suggests that local architects or artisans had a hand in both exterior and interior designs for Chambers' Irish commissions. As in the case of the Casino, the separate treatment of the exterior and the interior became useful for the Casino's twofold purpose, fulfilling Charlemont's supposedly primary intention of erecting an architectural monument by first realising its exterior.

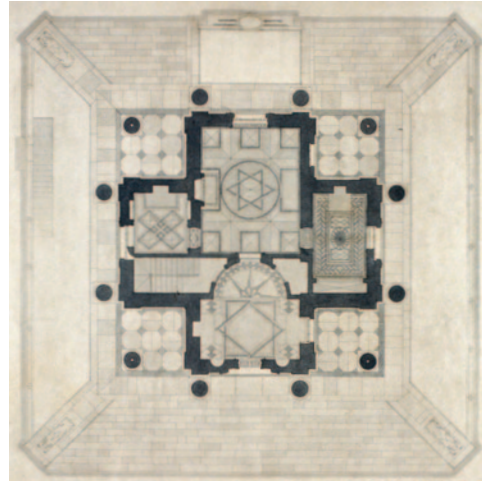
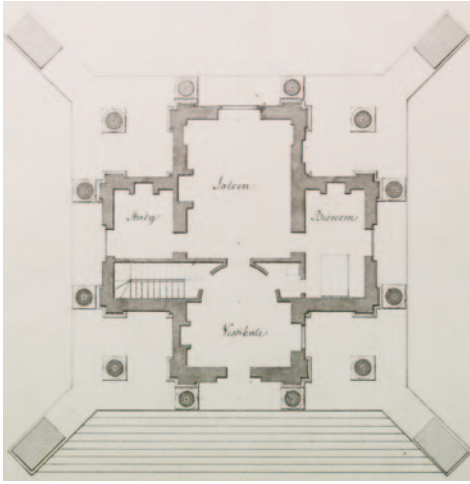


10 – The first depiction of the completed Casino – Thomas Roberts, *A LANDSCAPE WITH CASINO* 1773, oil on canvas, 62 x 96 cm (detail) (© Whitworth Gallery, University of Manchester)

The beginning of 1771 marked the end of significant works on the Casino, illustrated by a letter recording designs for the chimney vases.⁵² In 1773 Charlemont commissioned the Irish artist Thomas Roberts to depict the completed Casino in its surrounding landscape (Plates 1, 10). By then, the latest works were primarily concerned with painting the ground-floor interiors, although some of these appear to be alterations rather than first-time work. Smaller efforts and modifications continued well into the 1770s, confirmed by bills issued by Chambers, ongoing payments to Vierpyle, and comments from visitors. As late as 1789, the Dutch nobleman Johan Meerman mentioned unfinished interior works.⁵³ Visiting Marino became a steady fixture in travellers' schedules, and it attracted frequent commentary in contemporary travel guides. Many accounts only dedicate a few lines to the Casino, but generally refer to its outstanding architectural quality.⁵⁴

EVOKING MAGNIFICENCE – THE DESIGN PROCESS

DESPITE THE LONG-DRAWN-OUT CONSTRUCTION PROCESS, THE FINISHED Casino is remarkably close to the initial designs published in Chambers' *Treatise* (Plate 11). Small differences can be observed, such as the enlargement of the building by about two feet and how one bedroom in the west of the plan ultimately became a boudoir.⁵⁵ Unlike the original plan, a recess disrupts the even proportions of this room. The two dissimilar openings for the window respond to this difference. One of these openings is proportioned in accordance with the building's western façade, while the other opening is shrunk to maintain the symmetry of the internal design. The use of a similar dichotomous treatment for the window at the eastern façade allows for the illumination of both the staircase and the study. It is tempting to dismiss these dichotomies as resulting from on-site design decisions made by Charlemont and Vierpyle without Chambers' knowledge. But Chambers' receipt of measurements for the built boudoir suggests his



awareness of such discrepancies and indicates that they were conscious design decisions.⁵⁶ Thus, the Casino's peculiar dichotomy cannot be justified by on-site negligence.

Considering the Casino took twelve years to build, the permanence of Chambers' original layout appears remarkable and appears to indicate that the strong design ideas embodied in his drawings were not allowed to perish during the lengthy construction phase. This makes it important to study the genesis of the design drawings and to trace the duality of the Casino's interior and exterior. This duality goes back as far as the mid 1750s, when the architect and client must have had design discussions in Rome or London.⁵⁷

No evidence exists for determining when Charlemont and Chambers first met. Charlemont's subscription to Chambers' *Designs for Chinese Buildings* (1757), remains the earliest record of their acquaintance.⁵⁸ This early patronage suggests that Chambers and Charlemont had met beforehand, most likely when they both lived in Rome. During this time, many English and Anglo-Irish peers and artists frequented the Caffè degli Inglesi and established lasting relationships. Upon Chambers' return to England, he received a commission to design Harewood House for Edwin Lascelles (later Lord Harewood). Miscommunications during the project meant that the young architect did not provide a Palladian design suitable for mid-century English taste,⁵⁹ and he lost the commission in the summer of 1756. Transversely, this marks the *terminus post quem* for the design of the Casino,⁶⁰ as Chambers later unconvincingly attempts to link the Casino designs to his pavilions from the Harewood House project.⁶¹

After his parting from Lascelles, Chambers turned to the publication of his *Treatise* and advertised it in April 1757. He had already prepared sample illustrations for potential subscribers.⁶² The Casino's drawings were probably among them as they appear on the *Treatise*'s very first plate. Furthermore, a newly discovered small sketch of the Casino's elevation appears on the verso of a letter from August 1757 (Plate 13).⁶³ Although it depicts the iconic northern (or southern) elevation of the Casino, this sketch remains the only drawing in Chambers' hand to show the triangular pediments of the western and eastern elevations (in side view). Chambers omitted the depiction of these aediculae in his *Treatise*, probably for aesthetic purposes, as they make the Casino appear much wider

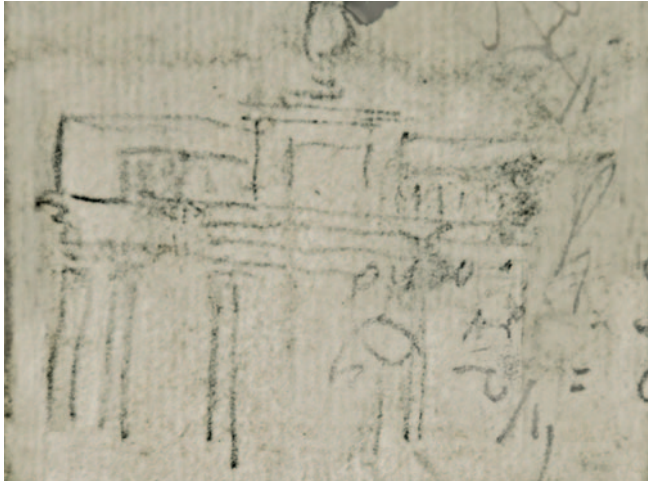
13 – A newly discovered sketch by Chambers' hand on the verso of a letter, August 1757 – the earliest document depicting the design of the Casino

(Royal Academy, Sir William Chambers correspondence, CHA/1/5; courtesy descendants of John Chambers)

opposite 11, 12 – Comparison of Chambers' design and the Casino as built

11 – William Chambers, 'Plan of the principal floor for Ld. Charlemont's Casine', 1757 (© V&A, London)

12 – drawn by Alfred E. Jones (photo: Gandon Archive, Kinsale)



than conceived in reality (Plate 11). The sketch is on the verso of a letter concerned with other matters, suggesting that Chambers was preoccupied with preparing comprehensive drawings for Charlemont in the late summer of 1757. He seemingly used random letters that lay on his desk to draw aspects of the Casino that had been left out of his *Treatise* designs. The sketch coincided with the making of a pearwood model of the Casino between August 1757 and February 1758. Charlemont owned a house in London's Hertford Street, and he and Chambers could have discussed the design of the Casino together between 1757 and 1758 without leaving any written record of their conversations. Eventually, two different sets of drawings must have existed: one handed over to Charlemont for the construction process, and another set intended for presentation and publication in Chambers' *Treatise*.⁶⁴

It is remarkable how the northern elevation played such a dominant role in the design process, despite its status as the only façade without windows. Their absence helped to conceal the project's residential function, and Chambers omitted many other signs of habitation.⁶⁵ As touched on previously, the monumental half-false door, the heavily rusticated walls, the free-standing Doric columns, the smoking urns on top of the festooned attic storey that looks like an altar or sarcophagus, and the diagonally placed guarding lions all evoke associations of monuments and mausoleums rather than pleasure pavilions (Plate 9). Chambers considered Doric columns unsuitable for a pleasure pavilion; nevertheless he included them at the Casino.⁶⁶

A closer look at the events, which predated Chambers' commission, will help to understand the idea of a monument inherent in the Casino's exterior. Adderley's offering of the Donnycarney estate in June 1754 probably inspired Charlemont's interest in villa-building. Before he left Rome in that same year, he had reportedly measured Palladio's Villa Rotonda at Vicenza.⁶⁷ However, no direct evidence exists of the young lord's intention to use the Rotonda as a direct model for his own project, while Anglo-Irish architectural traditions can easily explain the Casino's general dependence on Palladian design. In October of the same year, Charlemont and his agent John Parker subsequently requested designs for a *palazzetto abitabile* from Luigi Vanvitelli. It took the Italian architect



14, 15 – Two funerary designs using the motif of statuary placed at the corners of the compositions

14 – Louis-Joseph Le Lorrain, 'Venus Genetrix, Prospettiva della prima Macchina', 1747 (courtesy Biblioteca Casanatense MIBAC Rome, ID: RML0197786);

15 – Nicolas-Henri Jardin, 'Elevation en perspective d'une chapelle sepulchrale', 1747

(PLANS, COUPES ET ÉLÉVATIONS DE L'ÉGLISE ROYALE DE FRÉDÉRIC V À COPENHAGUE, 1747)

(courtesy Danmarks Kunstbibliotek)

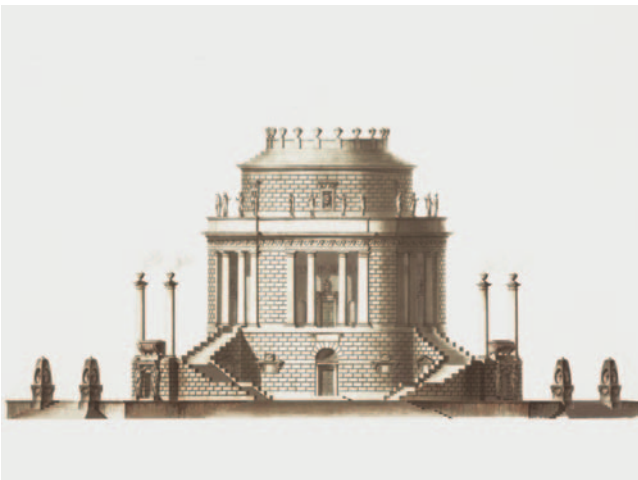


16 – On Prince Frederick's death in 1751, Chambers produced three different designs for a mausoleum.

This version is articulated in a similar manner to the Casino's northern elevation – statuary at the corners, smoking urns, heavy rustication, no windows and statues in front of a rising attica.

(Sir William Chambers, 'Elevation of the Mausoleum to the Prince of Wales', 1751-52) (© Victoria & Albert Museum, London)

opposite



17 – Charlemont visited many ancient monuments on his Levantine travels, including the Lantern of Demosthenes.

It is reported that he intended to copy it for his garden at Marino. This drawing, by his draughtsman Richard Dalton, is from his book, *MUSEUM GRAECUM ET ÆGYPTIACUM* (London, 1791) (courtesy Trustees of Sir John Soane's Museum, London)

half a year to reply, in July 1755, when he demanded an exorbitant sum.⁶⁸ In December, Parker pushed Charlemont to respond to Vanvitelli, and thereafter Parker submitted a design on his own.⁶⁹ Despite the unknown status of these drawings, Parker conveyed his proposal in writing, and some of its essential features matched the Casino as actually built. For instance, Parker's proposal featured a Doric order with little ornament, thus aiming for grandeur when seen from a distance. Parker also attempted to integrate an upper floor behind the Doric frieze, and to hide the roof line with a frontispiece. The principal floor was raised to allow for cellars and kitchens below, and the upper floor featured a bed chamber, a dressing room and servants' quarters. It remains impossible to judge the quality of Parker's design, but Charlemont seems to have disliked it, as Parker had to remind him to respond to his proposal, which he did in April 1756 when he simply avoided commenting on Parker's designs, who then recommended two students of Italian architect Nicola Salvi.⁷⁰

In 1756, due to his recurring illness, Charlemont probably reduced his efforts to design his *palazzetto abitabile* with the help of his agent in Rome. Notably, Charlemont considered those Italian architects who were held in low esteem by Chambers.⁷¹ This lack of regard was tied to the emergence of a French branch of neoclassical architecture at the time of Chambers' sojourn in Rome.⁷² Chambers had studied in Paris at Jacques-François Blondel's École des Arts in 1749;⁷³ thus he knew young French architects like Julien-David Le Roy, Marie-Joseph Peyre and Charles de Wailly, who also went to Rome. Influenced by Giovanni Battista Piranesi and Jean-Laurent Le Geay, they subscribed to a particular kind of architecture that began to develop in Rome in the later 1740s and that aimed to emulate the effects of antique public magnificence (Plates 14, 15).⁷⁴ The young architects did not look for the traditionally assumed harmonic proportions or for archaeological accuracy in Rome's buildings. Instead, by studying antique ruins and drafting visionary designs, they tried to mimic the effects those structures had on visitors' sentiments and to evoke the same exalted ideas and feelings they had experienced when standing in front of Rome's monuments.⁷⁵ Their designs attempted a Roman scale, but they found themselves becoming more inventive through their use of novel compositions and an abundance of evocative funerary ornaments like urns, fire vessels, sacrificial tripods, obelisks, and the like.⁷⁶

The formal interests and personal relationships of Chambers and his befriended French architects are well known.⁷⁷ However, the indicated motivations, implications and cultural influences of their designs, as well as the eighteenth-century understanding of 'magnificence', seem to be understudied, thus providing an interesting topic for future research.⁷⁸ In the 1750s, French architectural writers, as well as Chambers himself, supported Franco-Roman designs by developing the idea that 'the productions of Architecture are lasting monuments, command universal attraction, and record to latest posterity the greatness, wealth, dignity, virtues, and achievements of those they commemorate.'⁷⁹ As a result, when Charlemont instigated his Marino projects,





18, 19 – Designs by Edward Stevens which strongly resemble the Casino's plan and appearance. His 'Peripteros temple to painting, sculpture and architecture' (left) is often mistaken for a preliminary sketch of the Casino (from Edward Stevens, *ALBUM OF THEORETICAL DESIGNS*, 1760-66, © Royal Institute of British Architects)

it seems that he found Chambers' studies on such an architecture of magnificence more compelling than the work of contemporary Italian architects (Plate 16).⁸⁰

Sometime between late 1756 and early 1757 Charlemont must have given up on the idea of his Italian *palazzetto abitabile*. He reportedly had commissioned Chambers to design an imitation of the Lantern of Demosthenes for Marino, which he had seen in Athens in 1749 when his accompanying draughtsman Richard Dalton had drawn it (Plate 17).⁸¹ It is surprising that Chambers should have designed a Greek monument given his disavowal of its architecture.⁸² Nevertheless, in an undated note he praised the Athenian lantern, which in his eyes might have approached the ingenuity of Roman architecture because of its circular plan, its mannerist positioning of an inventive frieze between the capitals, and its original roof crowned by the acanthus flower.⁸³

In early 1757 Charlemont took a decisive step towards the conception of the built Casino. His tutor, Edmund Murphy, had advised him in 1756 to abandon the Lantern of Demosthenes in order to save money.⁸⁴ Thereafter Charlemont and Chambers seem to have amalgamated the intended *palazzetto abitabile* and the monument into one project. Such a dual origin explains the peculiar lack of cohesion between the Casino's interior and exterior. As discussed, this fully intentional dichotomy relieved the exterior from having to express the building's internal use. Thus, Chambers could have then drawn on his Franco-Roman studies when he and his fellow students attempted magnificence-evoking designs through complex, scenically composed spaces, making extensive use of free-standing columns. A building's depiction or representation was most often oblique, as in a *scena per angolo*, to allow views of multiple façades or spaces at the same time, thereby increasing the impression of these buildings' visual complexity and magnificence.⁸⁵ The Casino's exterior derives from these architectural experiments and its design falls somewhere between monument and architecture. The extensive use of free-standing columns and the diagonal placement of statues, similar to those of the Casino's lions, was common

in the eighteenth-century design of monuments, and French architects frequently used such motifs in their designs (Plates 14, 15). The Renaissance architect Sebastiano Serlio had already used corner obelisks to add magnificence to his reconstruction of the Greek house of a hundred columns.⁸⁶

Contemporaries clearly understood the monumental notion of the Casino's exterior. It was labelled as a 'magnificent villa ... well known to excel almost every house in Europe',⁸⁷ an 'ornamental object',⁸⁸ and a 'monument to his Lordship's refined taste'.⁸⁹ Likewise, a sketch of either a monument or temple, found in an album of Chambers' student Edward Stevens, strongly resembles the Casino's ground-floor disposition (Plate 18).⁹⁰ The plan shows a singular room with altars dedicated to painting, sculpture and architecture. This sketch has been interpreted as a preliminary design for the Casino itself and credited to either Chambers, his office, or even Charlemont.⁹¹ However, one can effectively date the document through a closer examination of a note in its verso, a note which refers to 'recollections of the year 1757'. Therefore, the sketch on the recto post-dates 1757, the year of the Casino's conception. The verso also shows a rough sketch of a section with a dome that depicted a temple for the arts and is quite dissimilar to the Casino. Furthermore, the style of the drawing and handwriting matches that of other designs in the album, which includes many signatures from Stevens, who joined Chambers' office in 1760 when the Casino was already under construction. Thus the sketch is not a preliminary design for the Casino. It has to be a later study by Stevens, who, indeed, exhibited a final version of it at the Royal Academy in 1773.⁹²

Stevens' sketch, together with his other designs that bear a resemblance to the Casino (Plate 19), show that he adopted Charlemont's building as a model for his exercises in continuing Chambers' pursuit of an architecture of magnificence, leaving his master to address his clients' general preference for Palladian buildings. In earlier eighteenth-century France and England, architectural advancement generally occurred in comparatively private surroundings. The regency in France saw aristocrats retiring from the court to advance the rococo style in their *hôtel* interiors.⁹³ At the same time, Whigs and Tories alike withdrew from London to their country seats. There they could oppose Robert Walpole's politics in their artistic pursuits, most memorably in the iconography of such landscape gardens as Stowe. These introverted tendencies resulted in a lack of architectural advancement in cities, and the following generation, as a consequence, tended to revere such buildings as Charles Perrault's Louvre Colonnade (1665-80), François Blondel's Porte de St Denis (1672), Sir Christopher Wren's St Paul's (1666-1708), and the Monument for the Great Fire (1671-77).⁹⁴ Many felt that the construction of such architectures of magnificence in London and Paris (or Dublin) was overdue.⁹⁵ This longing was somewhat eased in the 1750s by the construction of Robert Mylne's Blackfriars Bridge (1760-69) and the new Place de Louis XV (1755-72). These early efforts paired well with the private undertakings of aristocrats like Charlemont who pursued the embellishment of city and nation by erecting a building to impress visitors, contemporaries and posterity alike.

With the Casino's distinctive duality, Charlemont not only constructed a villa for himself, but also a monument that embellished the city of Dublin.⁹⁶ Its design and position allowed for striking perspectives, as contemporaries could enjoy an unobstructed view of the Casino when entering Dublin Bay.⁹⁷ Its construction on an artificially elevated

mound also allowed Dubliners to view the Casino from the city's north-eastern end.⁹⁸ Such prospects are reminiscent of church designs, achieved most memorably in the London of Christopher Wren and Nicholas Hawksmoor, where the church spires stand as small independent pieces of monumental and magnificent architecture, hovering above the city's rooftops. Unlike Hawksmoor's steeples, destined to remind east London's citizens of royal presence and their own piety,⁹⁹ the Casino attempted both to impress visitors by making manifest the cultured nature of Dublin society and to inspire the beholder to emulate this civilised prosperity and virtue.¹⁰⁰

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ENDNOTES

The following abbreviations are used:

Charlemont *The manuscripts and correspondence of James, First Earl of Charlemont*, 2 vols (London, 1891)
HMC Historical Manuscripts Commission
RIA Royal Irish Academy, Dublin

¹ The term 'architecture of magnificence' was introduced by Jacques-François Blondel, *Cours d'Architecture Civile* (Paris, 1771). See also Johannes Erichsen, *Antique und Grec: Studien zur Funktion der Antike in Architektur und Kunsttheorie des Frühklassizismus* (Cologne, 1980). This is by far the most detailed study on the French students in Rome. However, Erichsen hardly refers to Chambers, and the Casino is not mentioned at all.

² This paper derives from my ongoing research into how precisely Enlightenment thought and culture became manifest in the Casino, and conversely how intimate acquaintance with the building allows for a better understanding of eighteenth-century architecture and culture.

³ Accounts on the Casino's chronology can be found in many publications. The most significant ones are Maurice Craig, *The Volunteer Earl: being the life and times of James Caulfeild, first Earl of Charlemont* (London, 1948); John Harris, *Sir William Chambers, Knight of the Polar Star* (London, 1970); Edward Malins, *Lost Demesnes: Irish landscape gardening, 1660-1845* (London, 1976) 139; John Redmill and Ian C. Bristow, 'The Casino at Marino, Dublin', *Transactions of the Association for Studies in the Conservation*

of Historic Buildings, IX, 1984, 29-44; John Harris, 'A Franco-Roman Triumph: The Casino at Marino', in: John Harris and Michael Snodin (eds), *Sir William Chambers: Architect to George III* (New Haven, 1996) 35-39; Cynthia O'Connor, *The Pleasing Hours: James Caulfeild, First Earl of Charlemont 1728-99, traveller, connoisseur, and patron of the arts in Ireland* (Cork, 1999); Christine Casey, 'Newly discovered building accounts for Charlemont House and the Casino at Marino', *Apollo*, 448, 1999, 42-50.

⁴ The Casino's construction process will be discussed before its design chronology. This unusual order allows for a better reasoning in explaining the dichotomy of the Casino's interior and exterior.

⁵ The designation of rooms in the attic storey is based on a reading of their functionality. The small room next to the bedroom may have been intended as a dressing room due to its accessibility from the bedroom and staircase. The plain interiors of the other rooms qualify them as spaces for a butler or other servants. However, a thorough typological analysis for all the rooms of the Casino is open to further research.

⁶ For example, Chambers' designs for Lord Bruce's and the Countess of Pembroke's Casino feature windows; William Chambers, *A Treatise on Civil Architecture* (London, 1759) pls 3, 4.

⁷ Marino's garden was likely inspired by the most seminal English garden of the 1750s, William Shenstone's The Leasowes, widely admired at that time. Charlemont was in possession of Shenstone's famous *Unconnected Thoughts on Gardening* from 1759. Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge, *Catalogue of the most important and*

- valuable Library of a Nobleman of great literary & artistic Taste* (London, 1865) 137.
- ⁸ For further information on Marino's landscape, see Ruth Musielak, 'Water Sources: improvement in the Irish and English designed landscape, 1660-1800, unpublished PhD thesis (University College Dublin, 2012); Ruth Musielak, *Charlemont's Marino: portrait of a landscape* (Dublin, 2014)..
- ⁹ HMC, *Charlemont*, I, 196.
- ¹⁰ *ibid.*, 217. Charlemont was reported to have been in London by 17th May 1755 and to have returned to Ireland by 12th July 1755. John Rocque's survey from 1754-56 (see endnote 12) demonstrates that the southern part of Charlemont's estate was called Donnycarney, while the northern part was called Marino. It is not known where this name derives from, but it is commonly ascribed to Charlemont.
- ¹¹ *ibid.*, 197. As Donnycarney House still existed in 1756, Charlemont, who was in possession of the estate by that time, must have had it demolished. Adderley built Marino House further south.
- ¹² John Rocque, *A Survey of the City, Harbour, Bay and Environs of Dublin on the same Scale as those of London, Paris & Rome* (London, 1757). John Rocque surveyed Dublin and its environs from August 1754 to September 1756 as reported by George Faulkner, *The Dublin Journal*, 17th-20th August 1754 and 18th-21st September 1756.
- ¹³ I am grateful to Pauline Kennedy, Office of Public Works, who kindly shared unpublished archaeological reports with me.
- ¹⁴ Chambers, *Treatise*, pl. 1.
- ¹⁵ Thomas Milton, *A Collection of Select Views from the different Seats of the Nobility and Gentry in the Kingdom of Ireland* (London, 1783).
- ¹⁶ Chambers' designs for the Casino are in the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, Prints & Drawings Study Room, Museum nos. 12957:13 and 3342-3346.
- ¹⁷ 'Old Dublin Mansion-Houses', *The Irish Builder*, 1st March 1894, 50-51: 51. 'Here may be seen long vaulted galleries of brickwork extending on all sides around the Temple [the Casino], and radiating from it, to give it a proper elevation, which had to be built.' So far, no documents or physical remains have been found to provide evidence for the long-standing and commonly held assumption that one of the tunnels served as an underground passage between Marino House and the Casino.
- ¹⁸ Royal Academy, London, Sir William Chambers Papers, CHA/4/17, note by Chambers from the time between 1757 and 1760. 'In gardening care must be taken to move as little Earth as possible for it is alwais [*sic*] attended with great expence the which when done hath no show excepting an absolute flats[.] it is seldom or ever necessary in our present manner of Gardening & when it is done to raise mounts [*sic*] they may be made hollow as I have somewhere observed & the earth may be taken Immediately at their foot by which means you will sink a Valley & raise a mount at the same time[.] even chalkpits & other rugged ground may be productive of the most romantic fine Scenes at Green hive Lord Bessborough Seat & at Goodwood.'
- ¹⁹ Cynthia O'Connor briefly suggests that underground works might have caused the difference between Milton's and Chambers' accounts on the date of commencement. See O'Connor, *The Pleasing Hours*, 191. However, the artificial nature of the Casino's surrounding earthwork and the purpose of the tunnels to reduce the effort and stabilise the mound have been entirely overlooked so far.
- ²⁰ Arthur Gibney, *The Building Site in Eighteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin, 2017) 136.
- ²¹ Registry of Deeds, Dublin, Memorial 2634. See O'Connor, *The Pleasing Hours*, 189.
- ²² The existence of a model was reported in *The Irish Times* on 16th September 1886. See Seán O'Reilly, *The Casino at Marino* (Dublin, 1991) 14.
- ²³ For Duddingstone House, Chambers advised his client to avoid laying foundations in winter. Baronscourt, county Tyrone, Duddingstone Correspondence, letter from 19th October 1762.
- ²⁴ Horace Walpole, *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence: Walpole's correspondence with George Montagu*, 48 vols (New Haven, 1961) IX.
- ²⁵ *ibid.*, 400.
- ²⁶ *ibid.*
- ²⁷ *ibid.*
- ²⁸ Alnwick Castle, Lady Northumberland's Manuscript Diary, 1752-63; Malins, *Lost Demesnes*, 139.
- ²⁹ HMC, *Charlemont*, I, 22.
- ³⁰ Charlemont's role as a patron and paragon is highlighted by three poems which are dedicated to him: William Dunkin, *An Epistle to the Righth*

- Honourable James Lord Visct. Charlemont with a Translation of the Sixth Satire of the Second Book of Horace* (Dublin, 1744); Anonymous, *An Epistle to the Right Honourable James, Lord Viscount, Charlemont, on Return from his Travels, into the East* (Dublin, 1755); William Preston, *An Elegiac Poem, sacred to the Memory of the Right Honourable James Earl of Charlemont, later President of the Royal Irish Academy* (Dublin, 1799).
- ³¹ Registry of Deeds, Dublin, 217/473/14586. See Seán O'Reilly, 'Charlemont House: A critical history' in Elizabeth Mayes and Paula Murphy (eds), *Images and Insights* (Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery of Modern Art, 1993).
- ³² RIA, Charlemont Correspondence, 12 R 12, letter 39, Chambers to Charlemont, London, 12th March 1763.
- ³³ Casey, 'Newly discovered building accounts', 45.
- ³⁴ *ibid.*
- ³⁵ This conjectural yet convincing argument is based on John Redmill's assumption that Charlemont erected a new house for his married life. See Redmill and Bristow, 'The Casino at Marino', 30.
- ³⁶ RIA, Charlemont Correspondence, 12 R 9-21.
- ³⁷ John O'Keffe, *Recollections of the life of John O'Keffe: written by himself* (London, 1826) 257.
- ³⁸ Courtesy of John Redmill, who kindly provided me with his photographs from the restoration of 1978-84.
- ³⁹ HMC, *Charlemont*, I, 286.
- ⁴⁰ RIA, Charlemont Correspondence, 12 R 9-21.
- ⁴¹ A bill sent by Chambers mentions paintwork at the Casino as late as May 1773, *ibid.*, 338. See also Casey, 'Newly discovered building accounts', 45-46.
- ⁴² Casey, 'Newly discovered building accounts', 45.
- ⁴³ Even if Chambers is not the author of the upper storey's interior he certainly planned the principal layout of the upper floor, as he mentions it in *Treatise*, 85.
- ⁴⁴ HMC, *Charlemont*, I, 298. In a letter to Charlemont from February 1770, Chambers frankly dismisses Greek architecture depicted in Richard Chandler's and Nicholas Revett's *Ionian Antiquities*, published in 1769.
- ⁴⁵ HMC, *Charlemont*, I, 305.
- ⁴⁶ *ibid.*, I, 236 and 349.
- ⁴⁷ There is no evidence of Chambers having travelled to Ireland. It is generally assumed that he did not, especially as John Harris claims this in his seminal biography, *Sir William Chambers, Knight of the Polar Star*, op. cit., 63.
- ⁴⁸ HMC, *Charlemont*, I, 349.
- ⁴⁹ *ibid.*, 291.
- ⁵⁰ *ibid.*, 286.
- ⁵¹ *ibid.*, 350.
- ⁵² *ibid.*, 305.
- ⁵³ Johan Meerman, *Nachrichten von Großbritannien und Irland* (Nürnberg and Altdorf, 1789) 454.
- ⁵⁴ For example, Arthur Young, *Arthur Young's Tour in Ireland (1776-1779)*, 2 vols (Dublin, 1780) I, 19.
- ⁵⁵ Redmill and Bristow, 'The Casino at Marino', 33-34. This room was damaged by a fire in 1849. 'Fire at Marino', *The Dublin Evening Packet and Correspondence*, 27th December 1849.
- ⁵⁶ HMC, *Charlemont*, I, 291.
- ⁵⁷ Charlemont was in Rome from early 1750 to January 1755; Francis Hardy, *Memoirs of the Political and Private Life of James Caulfield, Earl of Charlemont*, 2 vols (Dublin, 1810) I, 51 and 83. Chambers stayed in Rome from winter 1750 to spring 1755; John Harris, 'Sir William Chambers, Friend of Charlemont', *Quarterly Bulletin of the Irish Georgian Society*, VIII, 3, 1965, 67-100: 68). When Chambers returned, Charlemont was still present in London before he left for Ireland.
- ⁵⁸ William Chambers, *Designs for Chinese Buildings* (London, 1757); see list of subscribers.
- ⁵⁹ Harris, *Sir William Chambers, Knight of the Polar Star*, 8.
- ⁶⁰ As pointed out by Harris, *ibid.*
- ⁶¹ William Chambers, *A Treatise on the Decorative Part of Civil Architecture* (London, 1791) 136.
- ⁶² Harris, *Sir William Chambers, Knight of the Polar Star*, 128-29.
- ⁶³ The Royal Academy catalogue refers to the doodle as 'rough sketches for architectural projects'. Only recently the author was able to identify the sketch as a depiction of the Casino. RA, London, Sir William Chambers Papers, CHA/1/5.
- ⁶⁴ V&A, Prints and Drawings Collections, 3342-46.
- ⁶⁵ See endnote 6.
- ⁶⁶ Chambers recommends the employment of the Doric order for military buildings, mausoleums, and the like; Chambers, *Treatise*, 22.
- ⁶⁷ O'Connor, *The Pleasing Hours*, 180.

- ⁶⁸ RIA, Charlemont Correspondence, 12 R 9, letter 35.
- ⁶⁹ HMC, *Charlemont*, 221.
- ⁷⁰ *ibid.*, 227.
- ⁷¹ Chambers' opinions on contemporary Italian architects are conveyed in a letter to his student Edward Stevens. The letter is now held in the archive of the Soane's Museum. Harris, *Sir William Chambers, Knight of the Polar Star*, 21.
- ⁷² Harris, 'A Franco-Roman Triumph', 35-39.
- ⁷³ Harris, *Sir William Chambers, Knight of the Polar Star*, 5.
- ⁷⁴ The most concise work on the French students at Rome is Erichsen, *Antique und Grec*, op. cit. See also Janine Barrier, *Les Architectes Européens à Rome 1740-1765: la naissance du goût à la grecque* (Paris, 2005).
- ⁷⁵ Erichsen, *Antique und Grec*, 29.
- ⁷⁶ *ibid.*, 234-43. The emulation of the effects of Roman structures on their visitor's sentiments was demanded by contemporary French architectural theory. See Chambers' teacher Charles-Louis Clérissieu, *Antiquités de la France, première partie: Monuments de Nîmes* (Paris, 1778).
- ⁷⁷ Janine Barrier, *William Chambers: une architecture empreinte de culture française* (Paris, 2010).
- ⁷⁸ Despite John Harris's examination of the historical link between the Casino and Chambers' education in France and Rome, he hardly considers the subsequent implications. This paper merely attempts to draw the attention to the Casino's 'architecture of magnificence', whereas a comprehensive study of this aspect plays an important role in the author's current research. While drawing on philosophical, theoretical and literary sources, the architectural forms and cultural context of this architectural ideal will be examined in future publications.
- ⁷⁹ Chambers, *Treatise*, preface, i.
- ⁸⁰ For example Chambers' famous designs for a Mausoleum for Fredrick, Prince of Wales from 1750-1752; V&A, Prints and Drawings Collections, 3339 and 3340; Sir John Soane's Museum, 17/7/11.
- ⁸¹ The drawing was only published in Richard Dalton, *Museum Graecum Et Aegyptiacum, or Antiquities of Greece and Egypt* (London, 1791).
- ⁸² HMC, *Charlemont*, I, 350.
- ⁸³ Dalton, *Antiquities of Greece and Egypt*; see sheet with a detail of the lantern cupola.
- ⁸⁴ Murphy to Charlemont from 1756. The letter is lost, but *The Irish Times* cites it on 16th September 1886.
- ⁸⁵ See endnote 78.
- ⁸⁶ When reconstructing his Greek house of a hundred columns, Serlio admittedly added obelisks at the corners to increase its magnificence. Sebastiano Serlio, *Cinque Libri d'Architettura*, 5 vols (Venezia, 1584) III, 96-97.
- ⁸⁷ 'The Man-Milliner, No. V', *European Magazine and London Review*, August 1782, 14-16: 16.
- ⁸⁸ 'The Man-Milliner, No. VI', *The European Magazine and London Review*, August 1782, 86-91: 87.
- ⁸⁹ Charles T. Bowden, *Tour through Ireland* (Dublin, 1791) 79.
- ⁹⁰ Royal Institute of British Architects, Album of theoretical Designs, Edward Stevens, RIBA 96443.
- ⁹¹ In 1965 John Harris first published the sketch and interpreted it as a preliminary design for the Casino. Harris, 'Sir William Chambers, Friend of Charlemont', 84-85. Various scholars go along with this tempting assumption in the following years. In this way it almost became a fixed idea that Edward Stevens' sketch is a 1757 design for the Casino.
- ⁹² Edward Stevens, 'Peripteros temple to painting, sculpture and architecture, designed for the Marchioness Grey' in *Exhibition of the Royal Academy, MDCCLXXIII, the Fifth* (London, 1773) 25.
- ⁹³ Erichsen, *Antique und Grec*, 13.
- ⁹⁴ *ibid.*, 36.
- ⁹⁵ For instance, see John Gwynn, *London and Westminster improved* (1766).
- ⁹⁶ 'The Man-Milliner, No. VI', 87.
- ⁹⁷ This was an important aspect of the Casino's design, as Parker emphasised it in his proposal; HMC, *Charlemont*, 221.
- ⁹⁸ The Casino can still be seen from North Strand Road and the view was far less obstructed in the eighteenth century. The English journalist Francis Blagden even remarks that the Casino makes a 'conspicuous appearance' when entering Dublin Bay; Francis W. Blagden, *A Collection of Modern and Contemporary Voyages and Travels* (London, 1804) 6.
- ⁹⁹ Vaughan Hart, Nicholas Hawksmoor, *Rebuilding Ancient Wonders* (New Haven, 2008) 131-62.
- ¹⁰⁰ According to Chambers, this is a main purpose of architecture; Royal Academy, Sir William Chambers Notes, CHA/2/7.