

# *An Explosion of Beauty*

## An Online Course on the Art, Architecture & Collections of British Country Houses



### **Session 5: February 14, 2023**

Neoclassical (1760—90)



Art & Architecture  
with Curt DiCamillo

# Curt DiCamillo

*Curator of Special Collections*



# PROGRAM

- **Presentation (60 mins.)**
  - Overview houses
  - Study houses
- **Q&A (30 mins.)**



Claude Lorrain  
*Veduta of Delphi with a  
Sacrificial Procession*  
Circa 1645

Neoclassicism was a style that emerged in Britain and France in the 1750s. Known to contemporaries as “the antique manner,” it was inspired by the art and design of classical Greece and Rome. A major source of inspiration came from archeological discoveries, such as those at Herculaneum and Pompeii, which brought the ancient world to life. Using the remains of the classical past, Neoclassical artists, architects, and designers sought to create a modern, and eternally valid, “true style” that could be expressed across all areas of the visual arts.

Vases, the ultimate symbol of the ancient world, were used by Neoclassical designers in great profusion, in addition to swags, anthemia, and bucrania. The cameo format was very popular, as were a wide range of real and imaginary animals such as dolphins, lions, sphinxes, griffins, and satyrs.

# NEOCLASSICAL



Home House  
London



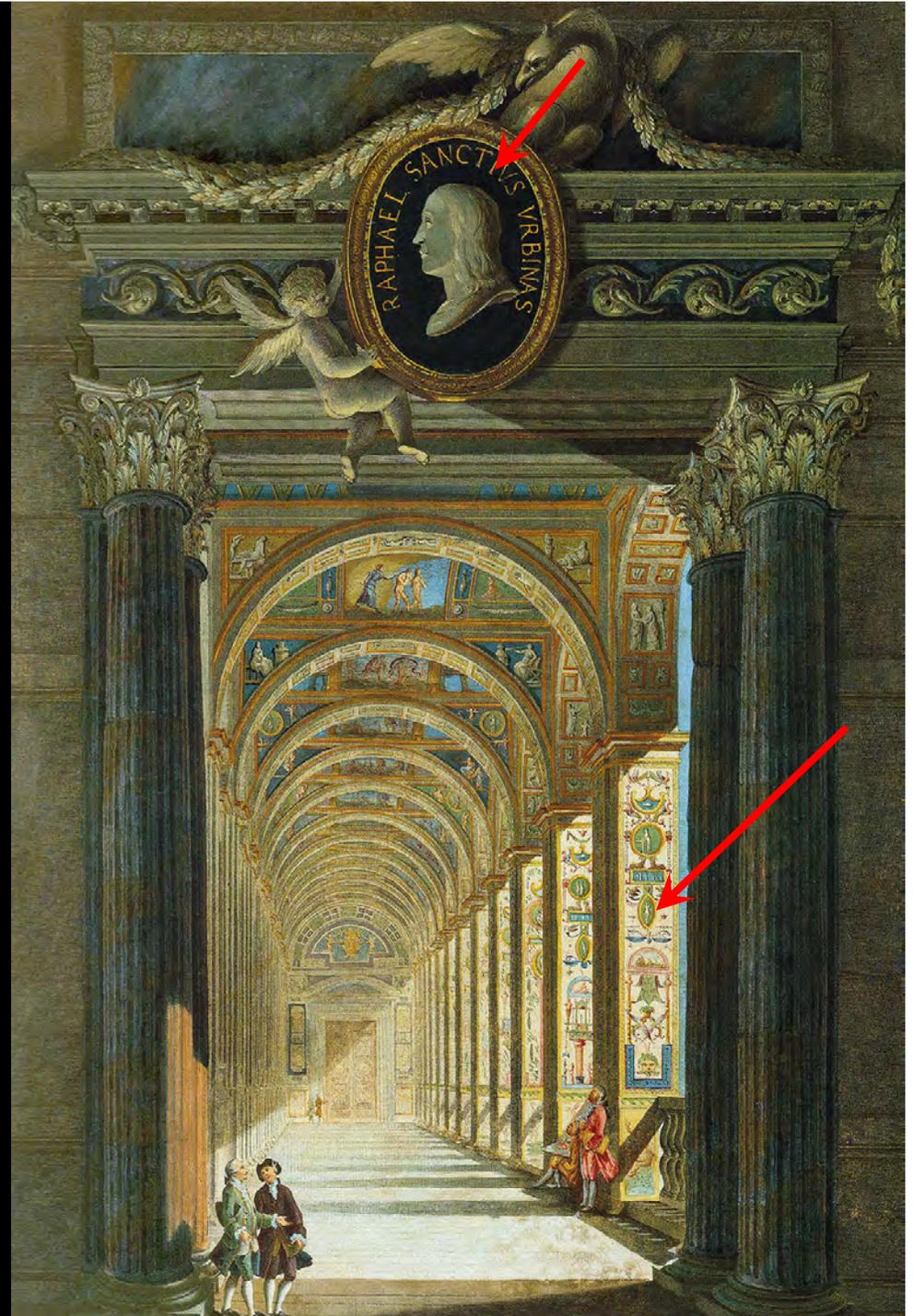
**Neoclassical**  
**Robert Adam Sideboard**  
1773  
*Kenwood House*



**Palladian**  
**Console Table in the  
Style of William Kent**  
Circa 1730  
*Private Collection*

Giovanni Volpato, *Engraver*  
Hand-Colored Title Page from  
*Loggie di Rafaele nel Vaticano*  
1772

Published between 1772 and 1777, the three volumes of *Loggie di Rafaele nel Vaticano* reproduced the pictorial decoration, architectural elements, and stucco reliefs of the private loggia in the Apostolic Palace designed in 1518 by Raphael for Pope Leo X.





**Curt's Card from**  
*Loggie di Rafaele nel Vaticano*



**Neoclassical Bucranium  
Cameo Jelly**

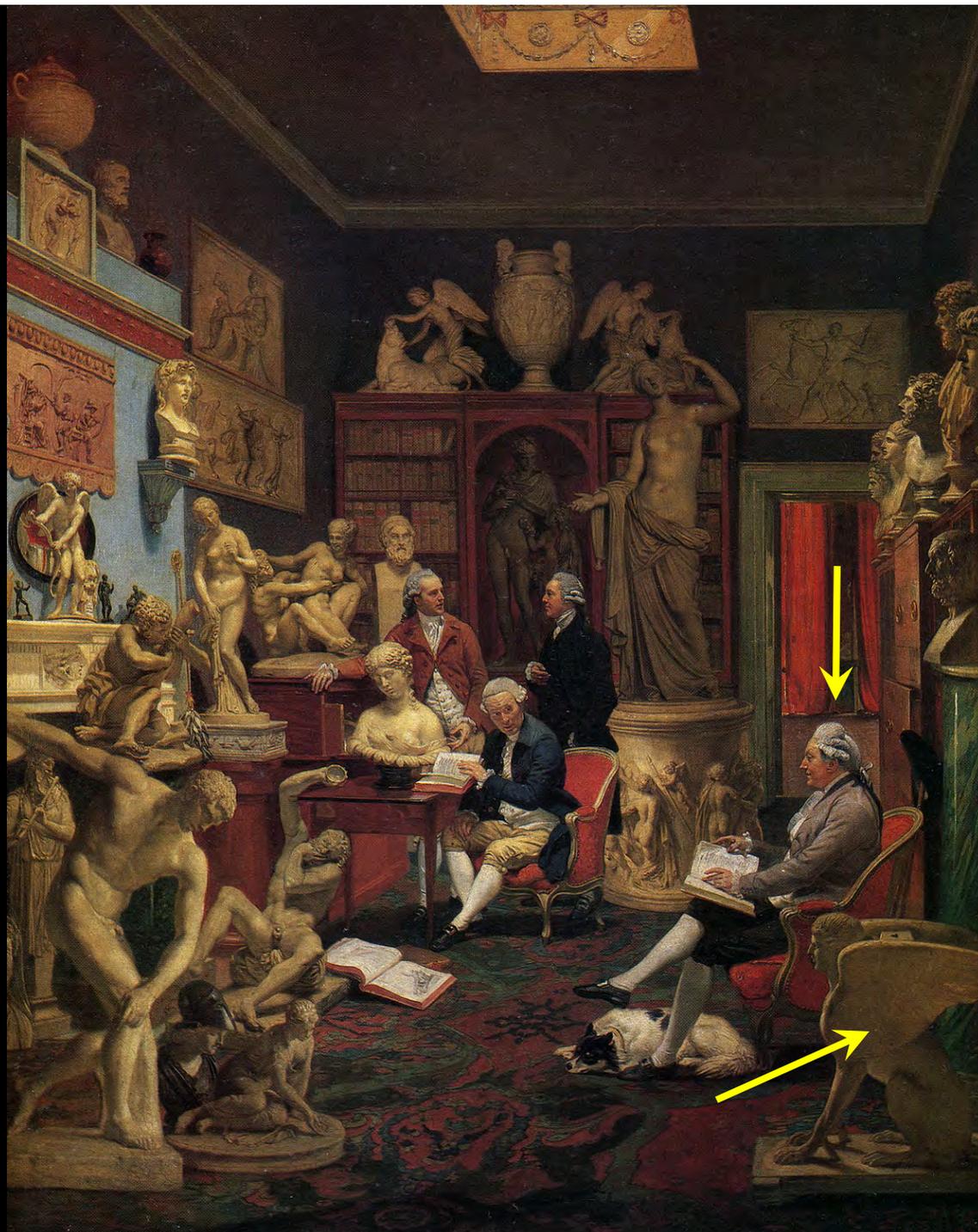
This scene is set in the library of Sir Lawrence's London townhouse at 19 Arlington Street, which was decorated by Robert Adam.



Johan Zoffany  
*Sir Lawrence Dundas and His Grandson*

1769—70  
*Aske Hall*

Johan Zoffany  
*Charles Townley  
in His Library*  
1781—83  
*Towneley Hall Art Gallery*



# *Overview Houses*

**Ince Blundell Hall, Lancashire, 1720**

**Heveningham Hall, Suffolk, 1778—84**

**Piercefield Park, Monmouthshire, 1785—97**

**Ickworth House, Suffolk, 1795—1830**

**Willey Park, Shropshire, 1813—20**



Henry Sephton  
**Ince Blundell Hall**  
Lancashire  
Circa 1720



Ince Blundell Hall  
**The Pantheon**  
1802—03

## Ince Blundell Hall **Interior of the Pantheon**

Henry Blundell's collection of ancient classical (Greek and Roman) sculpture, formed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, was one of the most important in Britain, second only to that formed by Charles Townley.

As Catholics in 18<sup>th</sup> century England, both Blundell and Townley were prohibited from attending universities, standing for parliament, or serving in the military, so they used their wealth to collect art on a grand scale.





The Ince Blundell Collection of Ancient Marbles  
today in the collection of the  
**Walker Art Gallery**  
Liverpool

It's extraordinary length—25 bays—ranks Heveningham as one of the most important country houses in Britain.



Robert Taylor & James Wyatt  
**Heveningham Hall**  
Suffolk  
1776—83



Heveningham Hall  
James Wyatt  
**The Etruscan Room**  
Circa 1781—84

“Wyatt’s surviving masterpiece as an interior designer and perhaps, after Adam’s Anti-room at Syon, the finest room produced by English neo-classicism.”

—*Christopher Hussey*

“The most beautiful room in England.”

—*Lionel Esher*



Heveningham Hall  
James Wyatt  
**The Vaulted Hall**  
Circa 1781—84



Heveningham Hall  
James Wyatt  
**The Orangery**  
Circa 1784

The house from an 1825 hand-colored engraving  
that appeared in *Ackermanns' Repository of Arts*



John Soane & Joseph Bonomi the Elder  
**Piercefield Park**  
Monmouthshire  
1785—97



Piercefield Park  
**The House from a Circa 1910 Photograph**



Piercefield Park

## **The Ruins of the House from a 2019 Photograph**



Piercefield Park  
George Brookshaw  
**Chimneypiece**  
Circa 1793—94  
*Philadelphia Museum of Art*



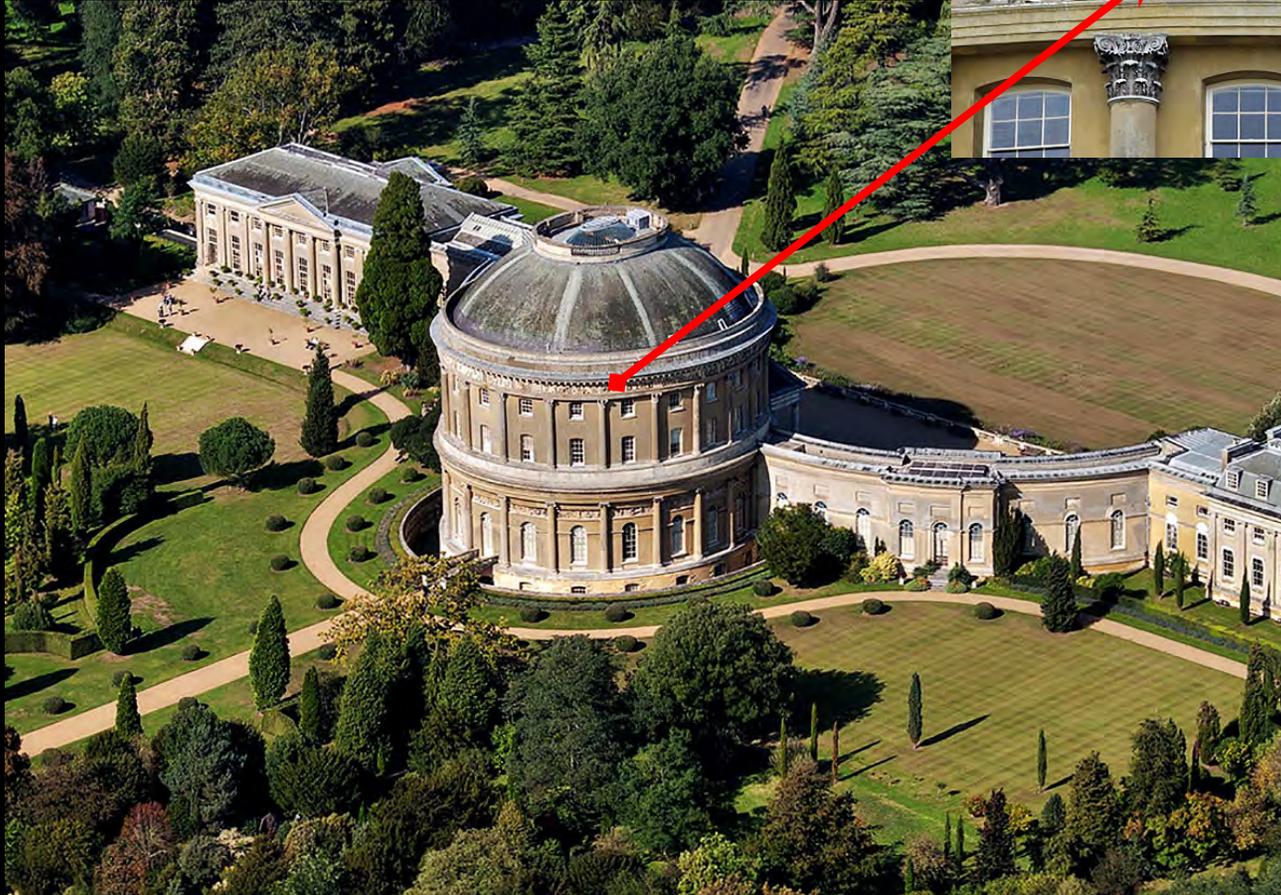
## Piercefield Park Details of Chimneypiece



The wood and plaster chimneypiece contains painted copper panels in the style of Angelica Kauffman



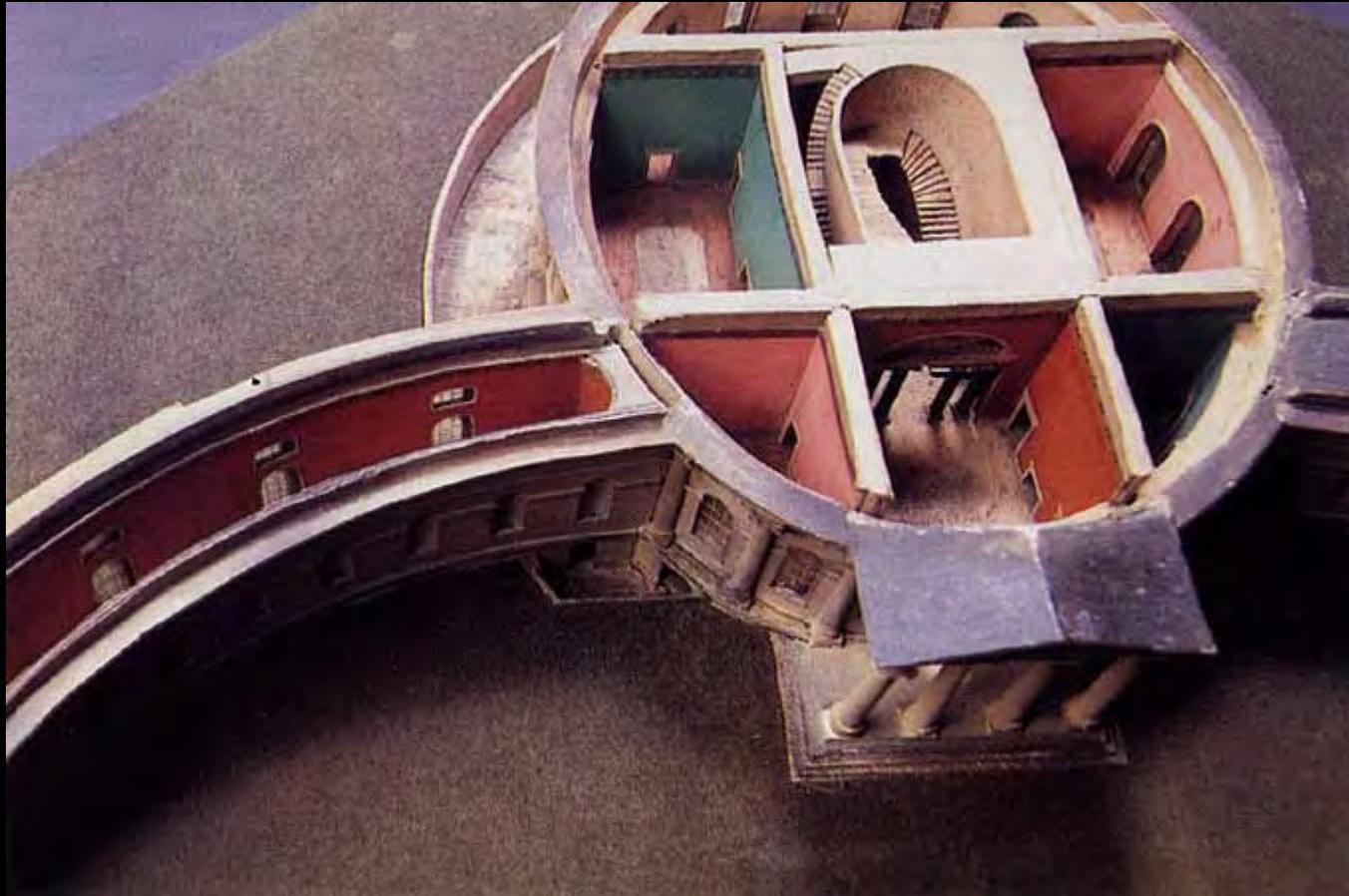
Terracotta frieze of scenes from  
*The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*



Mario Asprucci, Jr. & Francis Sandys  
**Ickworth House**  
Suffolk  
1795—1830

“...conceived...as a temple of rationally enlightened individualism to reclaim an evil world...Ickworth is  
...a monument to the folly of theory, in this case, Neoclassicism, unchecked by...common sense.”

—*Christopher Hussey*



Ickworth House  
**1790s Model of the House**

Filled with Old Masters, this is the most important room in the house for paintings, with works by Hogarth, Batoni, Gainsborough, Reynolds, and Angelica Kauffmann, among others.



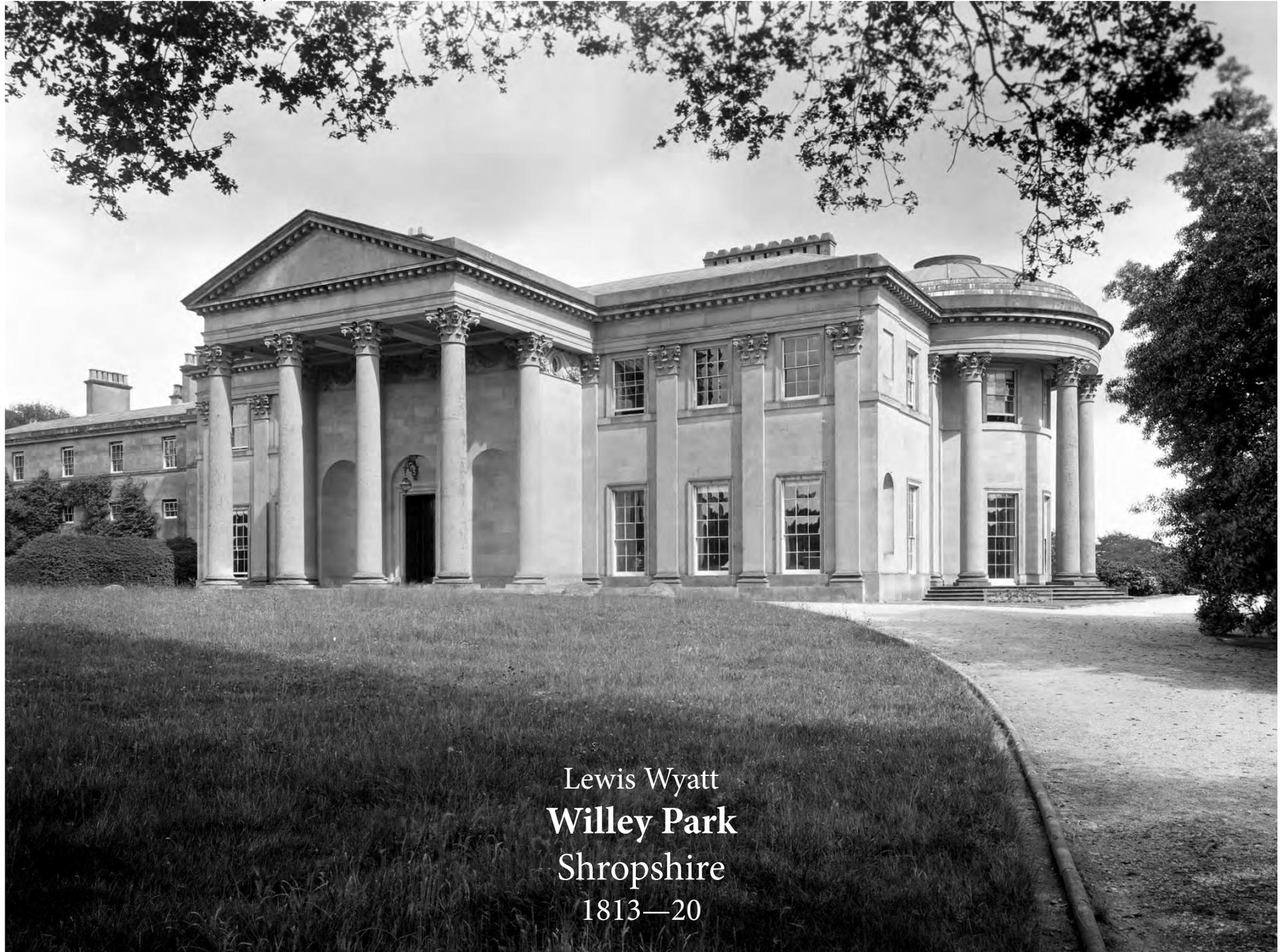
Ickworth House  
**The Library**



Ickworth House  
J.D. Crace  
**The Pompeiian Room**  
1879



## 19<sup>th</sup> Century Lithographs of Murals from Pompeii



Lewis Wyatt  
**Willey Park**  
Shropshire  
1813—20



Willey Park  
**The Library**



## Willey Park The Hall

Lined with 14-foot-high Corinthian columns of yellow Siena scagliola with white capitals, this galleried basilica, redolent of ancient Rome, is of enormous proportions: 40 feet long by 30 feet wide, with a ceiling that soars to 28 feet.

Willey Park  
**The Hall**



Q & A



# *Study Houses*

**Wynnstay Hall, Wrexham & 20 St. James's Square, London, 18<sup>th</sup> century**

**Spencer House, London, 1756—66**

**Penicuik House, Midlothian, 1761—78**

**Basildon Park, Berkshire, 1776—83**

**Cairness House, Aberdeenshire, 1782—97**

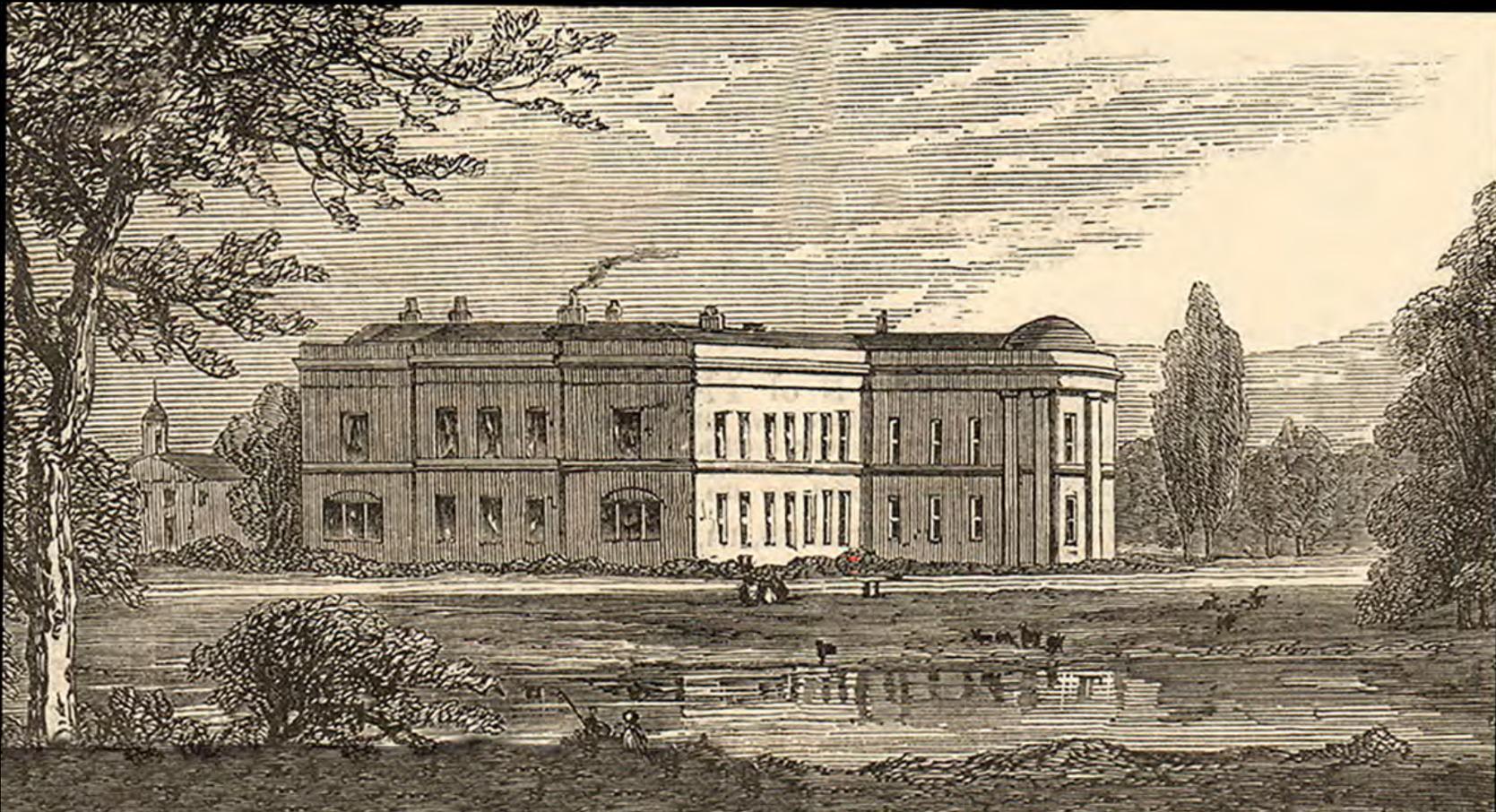
**Dodington Park, Gloucestershire, 1798—1813**

The house from a 1793 watercolor by John Ingleby  
*National Library of Wales*

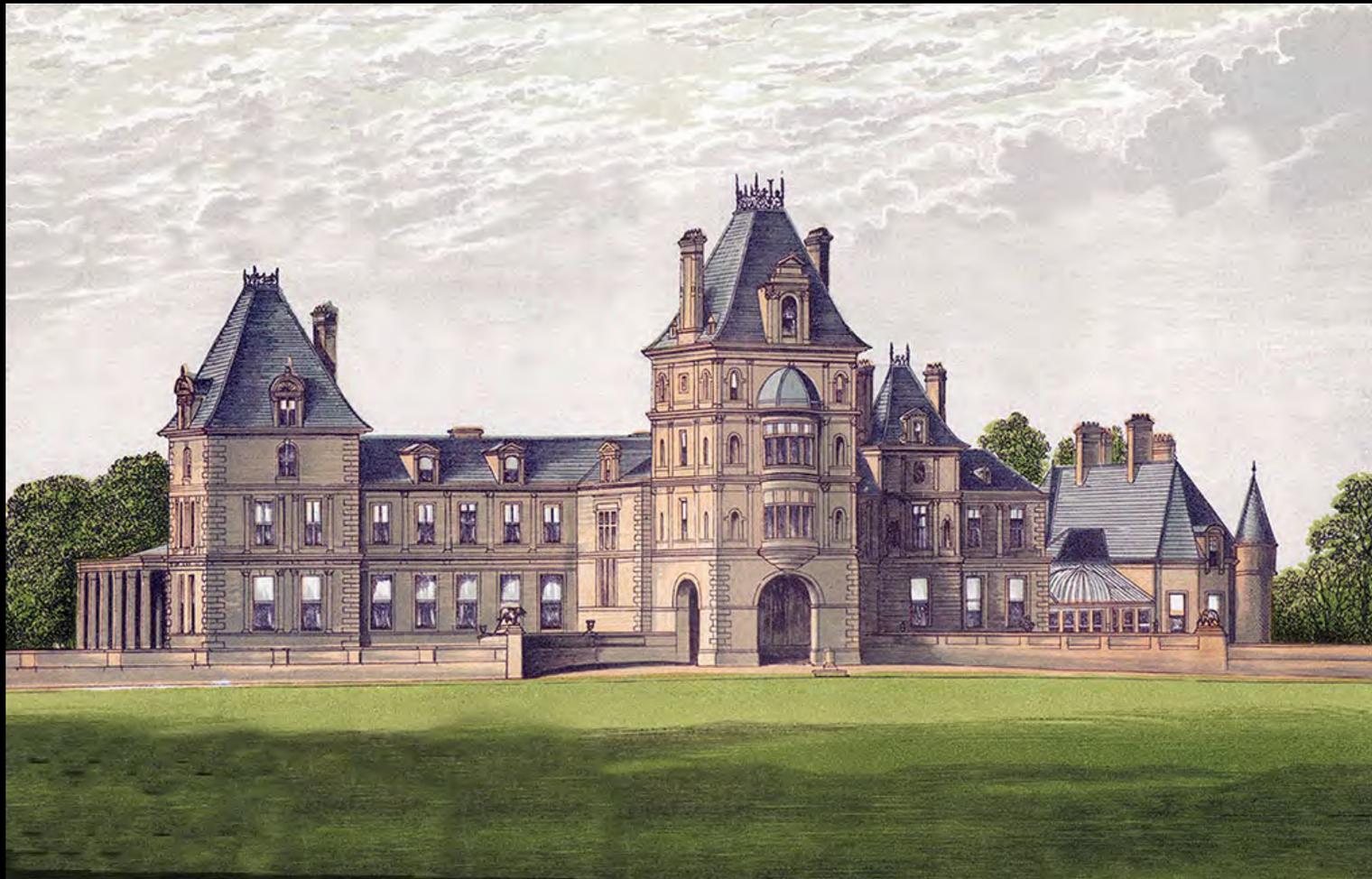


**Wynnstay Hall**  
Wrexham

1706 tower w/1736-38, 1770, early 19<sup>th</sup> century,  
1858-61 & 20<sup>th</sup> century alterations and additions



Wynnstay Hall  
**The House from an 1858 Issue  
of *The Illustrated London News***



Wynnstay Hall  
**An 1875 Lithograph of the House**  
*from Morris's Views of Seats*



## The Williams-Wynn Organ

Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn, 4th Bt., was a Welsh patriot (he was very involved in societies for the revival and promotion of Celtic traditions) and one of the most generous British patrons of art in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. He commissioned a Neoclassical style chamber organ for the Music Room of his London home, 20 St. James's Square. The organ, whose case was designed by Robert Adam and made by the London cabinetmaker Robert Ansell, was manufactured by John Snetzler in 1774. The organ's case features a central cameo medallion with a profile of Handel, Sir Watkin's favorite composer, surrounded by two draped female figures: on the left Terpsichore, the muse of dancing and song, who holds a lyre, and, on the right, Euterpe, the muse of music, who has a musical pipe, or horn, in her hand. The organ was reinstalled in 1863 at Wynnstay, where it remained until it was purchased in 1995 by the National Museum Cardiff. The museum restored the organ and installed it in one of their galleries, where it can be heard as part of a program of regular public concerts.



20 St. James's Square  
**The Music Room**

Robert Adam and Brothers  
**20 St. James's Square**  
London  
1771—75





20 St. James's Square  
**Entrance Doorway**

20 St. James's Square  
**The Staircase Hall**





Vase

Swag

Anthemion

20 St. James's Square  
**Staircase Balustrade**

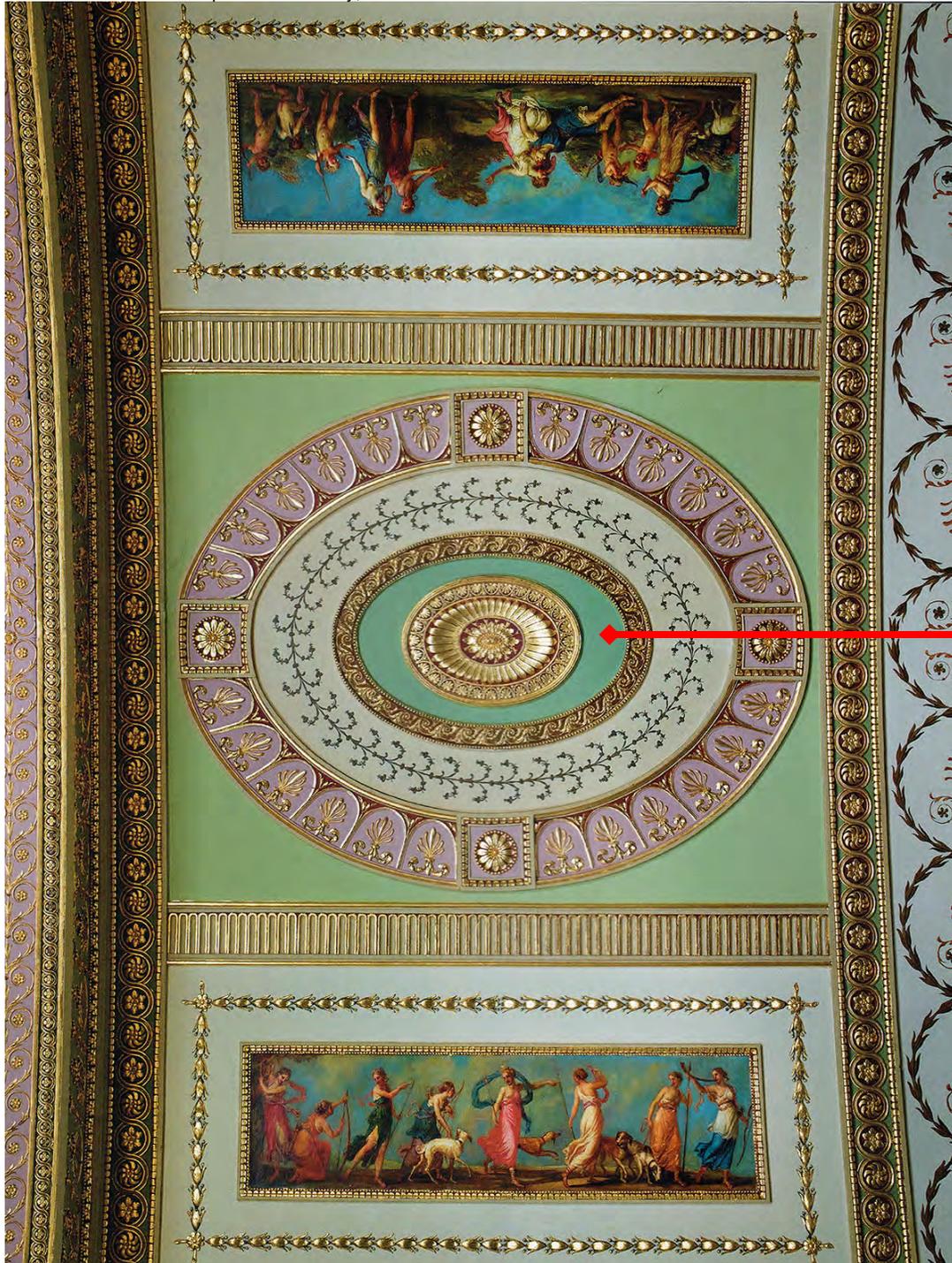


## 20 St. James's Square Great Room Door



Robert Adam's Drawing for  
Door Hardware for 20 St. James's





20 St. James's Square  
**Barrel-Vaulted Ceiling  
of the  
Second Drawing Room**



20 St. James's Square  
**Bucrania in the Eating Room**



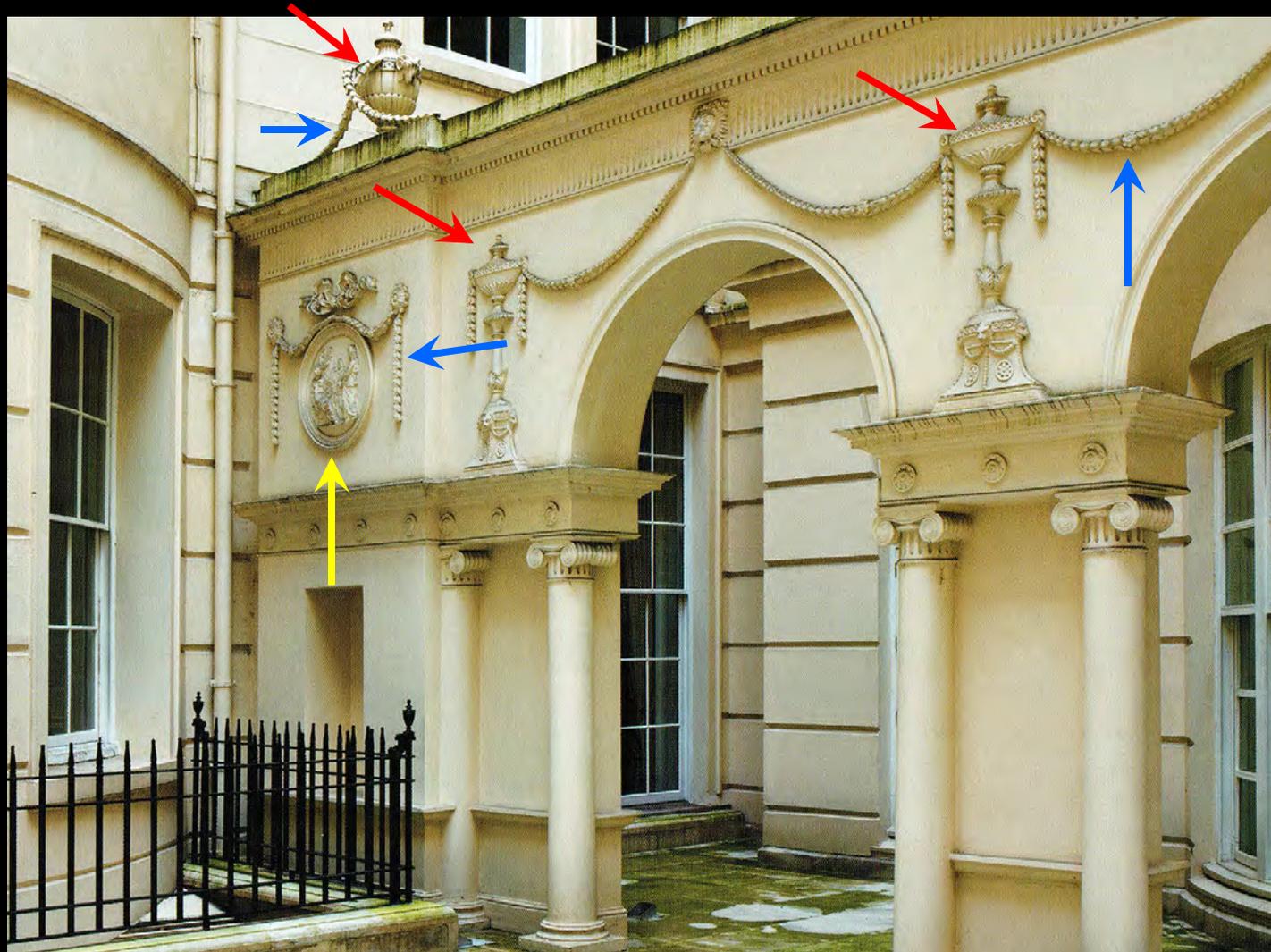
**Chimneypiece**



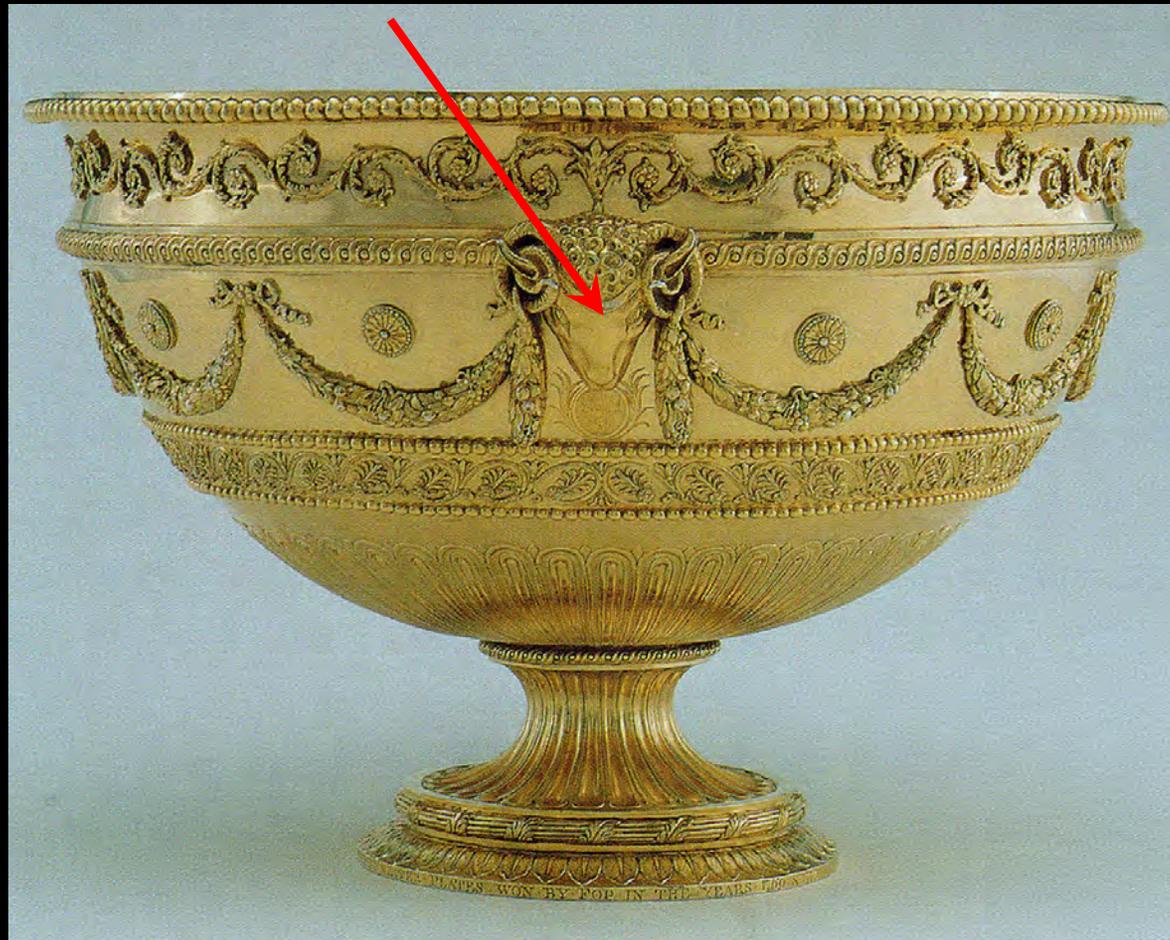
**Door Surround**

# 20 St. James's Square Lady Williams-Wynn's Dressing Room





20 St. James's Square  
**Decorative Garden Screen**



Robert Adam, *Designer*  
Thomas Heming, *Maker*  
**Vermeil Punch Bowl**

**Made for Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn**

1771—72



James “Athenian” Stuart & John Vardy, Sr.  
**Spencer House**  
London  
1756—66



Spencer House  
**The Entrance Hall**



Spencer House  
**The  
Staircase Hall**



Spencer House  
**The Dining Room**



Spencer House  
**The Great Room**

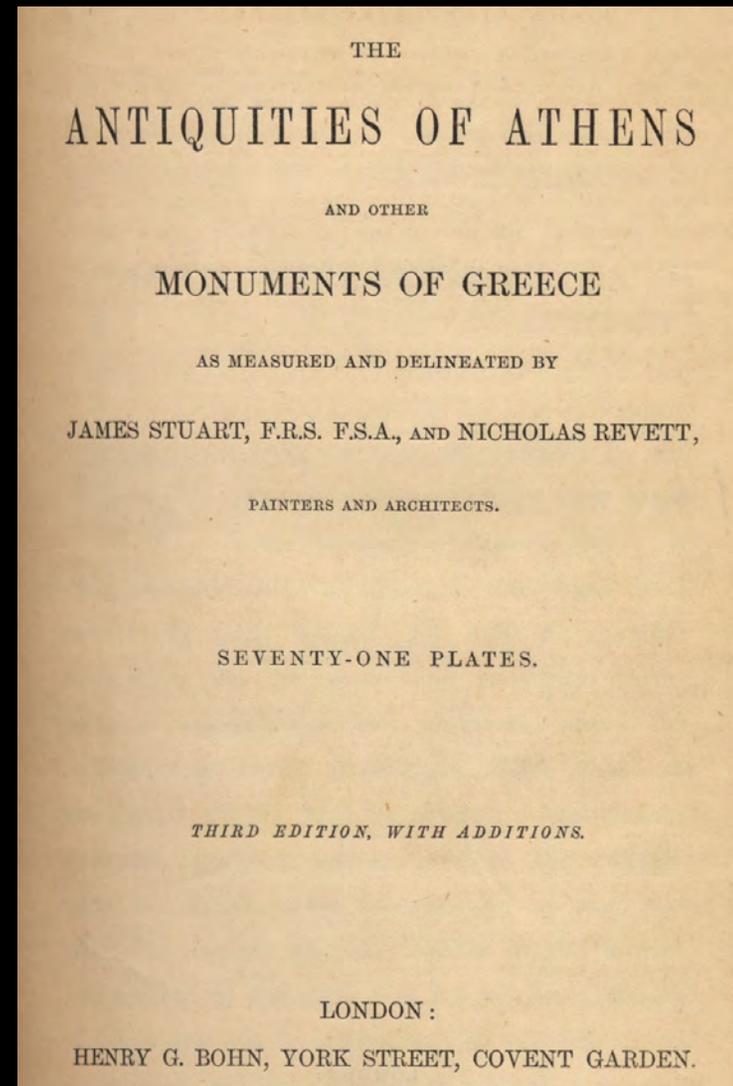


Spencer House  
**The Palm Room**

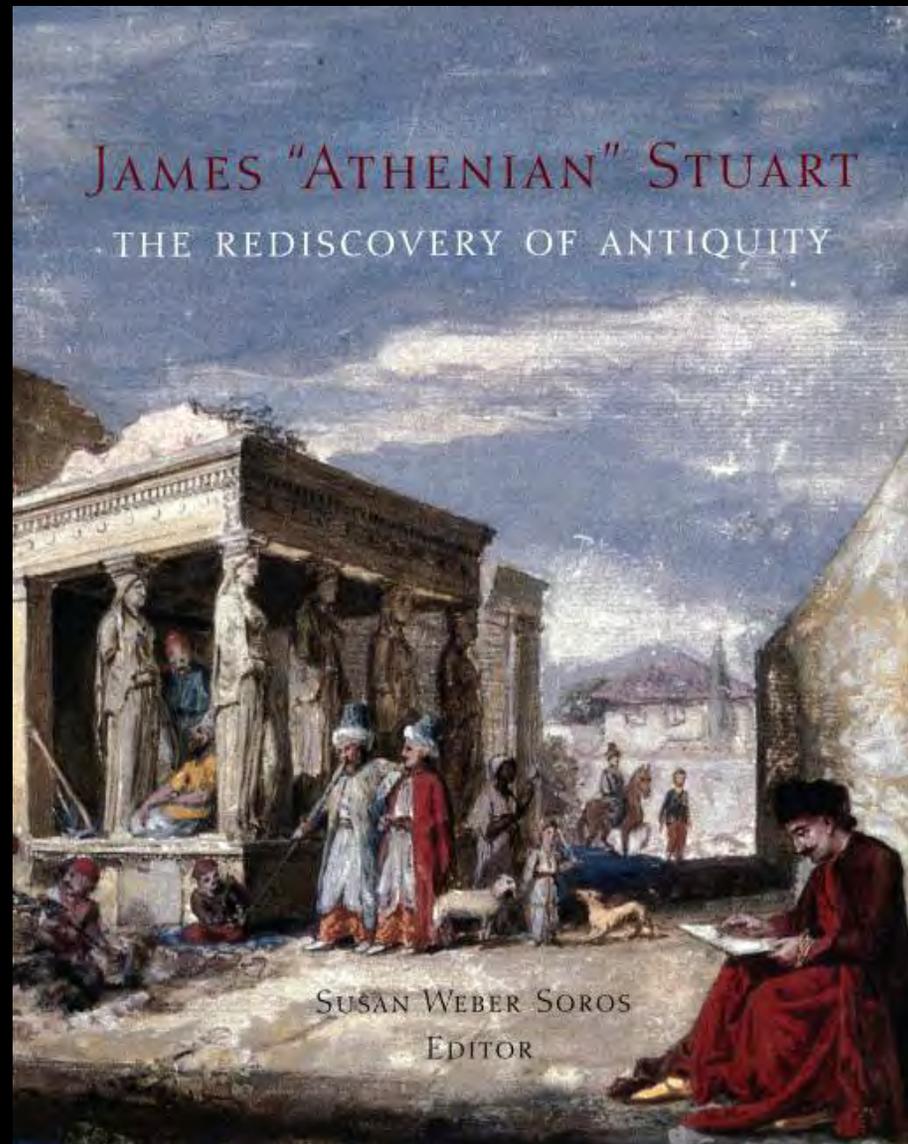
**James “Athenian” Stuart** was a leading architect and designer who produced country houses, garden buildings, furniture, stage sets, funerary monuments, coins, medals, stained glass windows, and even picture frames.

He was also a noted archaeologist and author, a fellow of the Royal Society and the Society of Antiquaries, a student of Latin and Greek, geometry and anatomy, a traveler conversant in Italian, French, and modern Greek, an authority on the Venetian masters, and a figure of international standing whose work was known and discussed in every major city in Europe. Stuart’s achievements are all the more remarkable when one considers that he was born into poverty, received little education, and spent most of his adult life in a state of perpetual drunkenness.

The first accurate survey of ancient Greek architecture ever completed



1762



2006

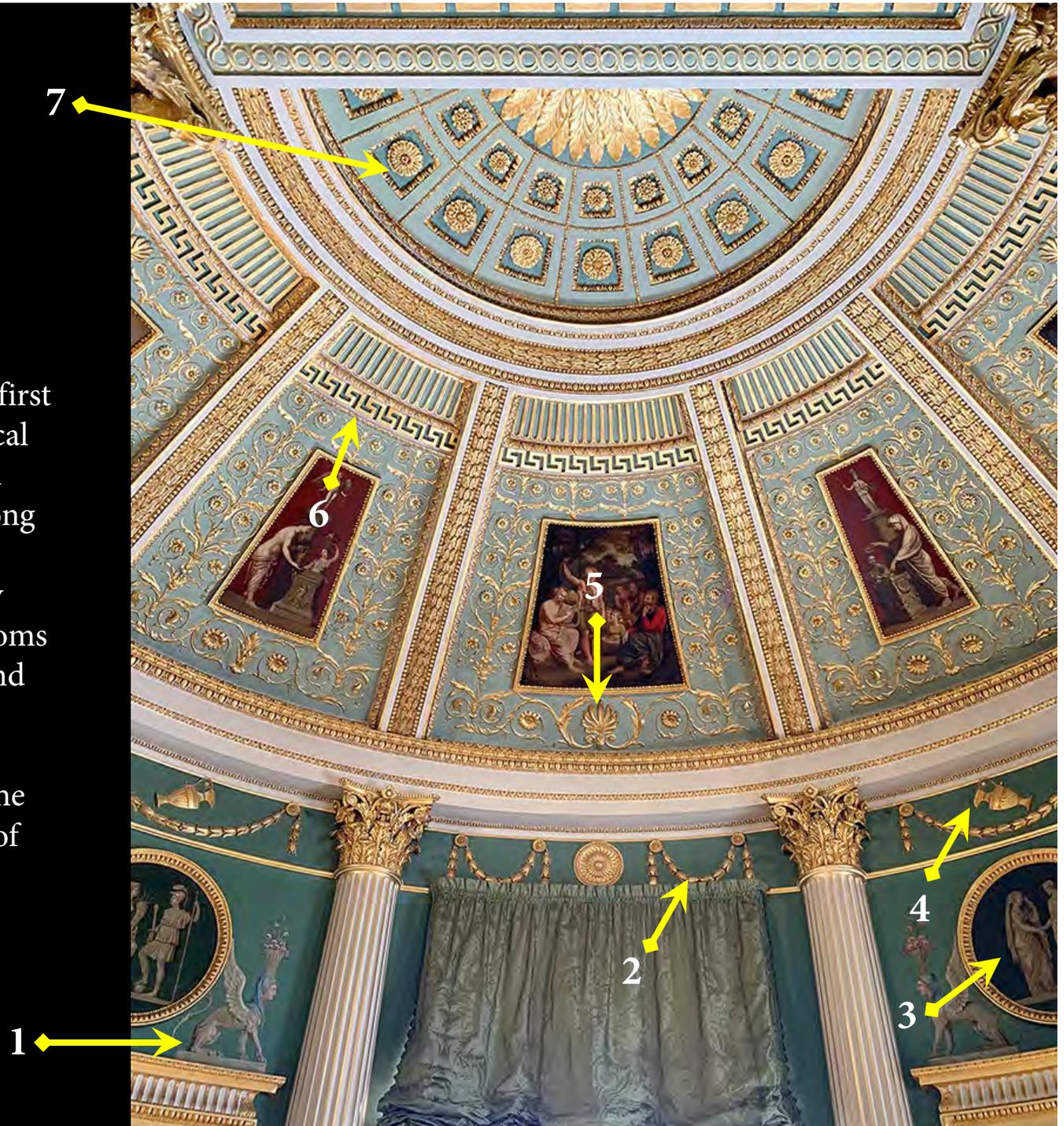


Spencer House  
**The Painted Room**

## Spencer House The Painted Room

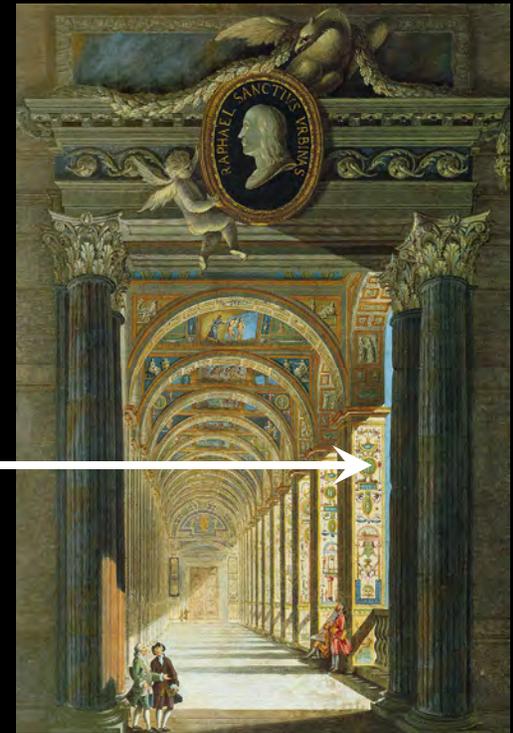
The Painted Room was the first fully integrated Neoclassical interior in England, and possibly in Europe. Its strong classical design was the predecessor of the many Etruscan and Pompeian rooms that followed in Britain and Europe.

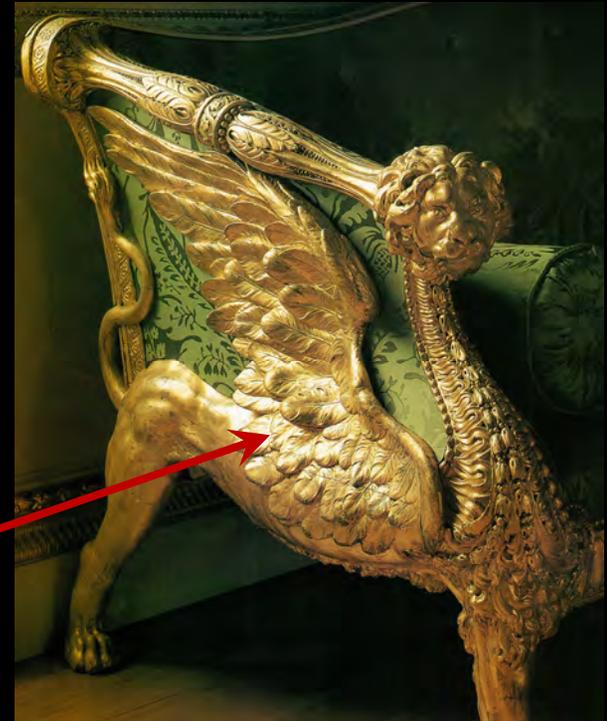
Spencer House was also the first example in London of accurate Greek detail in interior decoration.





## Spencer House The Painted Room





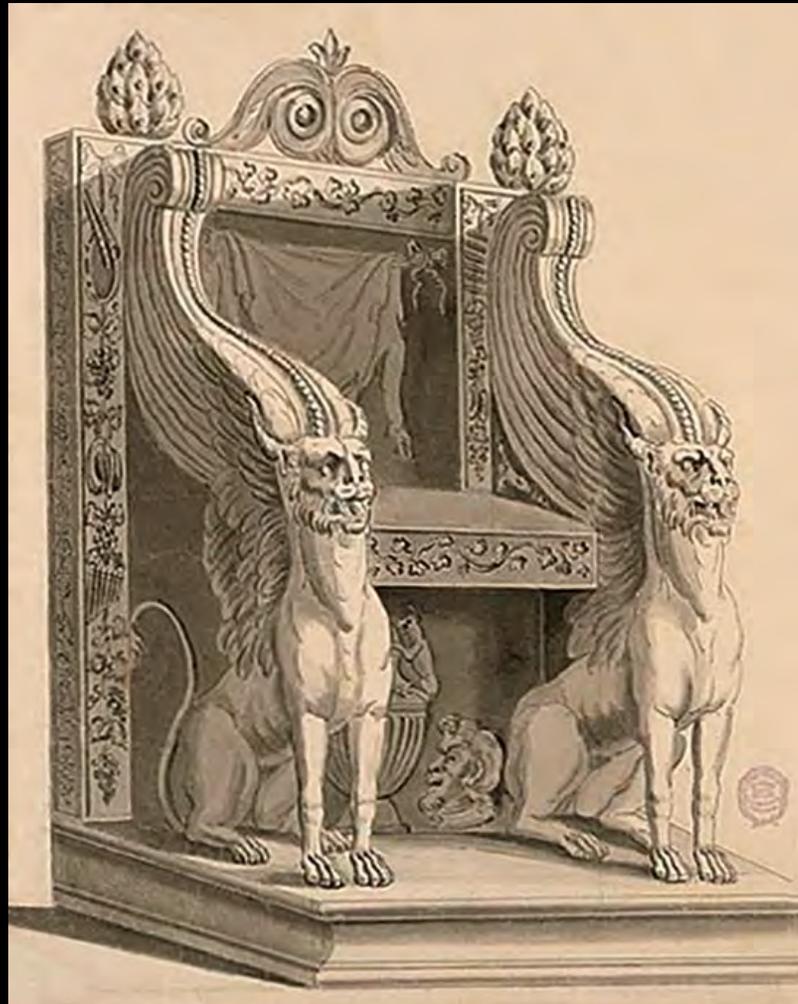
Spencer House  
**The Painted Room**



## Throne of a Priest of Bacchus

18<sup>th</sup> century recreation incorporating ancient elements

*The Louvre*



Artist Unknown

## Drawing of the Throne of a Priest of Bacchus

Circa 1800

*Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum*



## The White House Washington



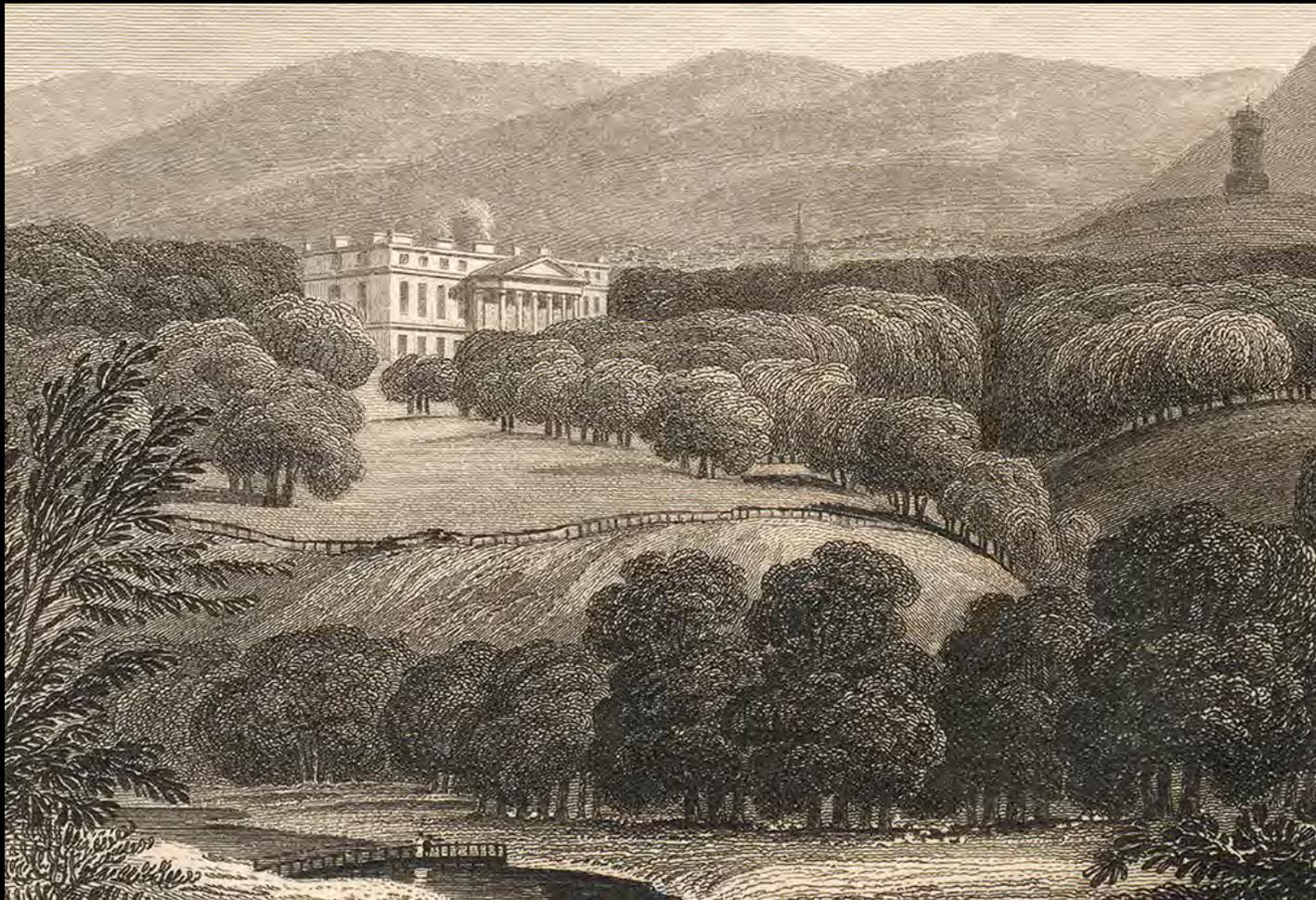
## Girl on a Neoclassical Swing

1812

Hand-colored French engraving

“Penicuik represents the ideal of a Scots Palladian house in a romantic, yet classically inspired, landscape.”

—*Colin McWilliam*



Sir James Clerk  
**Penicuik House**  
Midlothian  
1761—78



Penicuik House  
**Ossian Hall**  
19<sup>th</sup> century watercolor

The star of the interior was Ossian Hall, which had a ceiling, rather surprisingly, decorated with themes from ancient Celtic culture, rather than the more traditional scenes of ancient Greece and Rome. The ceiling was painted by the important Scottish artist Alexander Runciman, who was inspired by the recently published *The Poems of Ossian* (1765) by the Scottish poet James Macpherson, one of the leaders of the Gaelic revival movement.

A great fire gutted the house in June of 1899. Though the slow-burning flames enabled most of the contents to be saved, the interiors were all lost (some fireplaces and door frames were pried out and refitted into the new house that was created in the stableblock).



Penicuik House  
**The Ruins of the House in 2000**



Penicuik House  
**The House Under Conservation in 2007**



Penicuik House  
**The Ruins Conserved, 2015**



## Penicuik House Detail of the Entrance Facade

The niches flanking the  
main doors contain statues  
of druids carved  
by Willie Jeans in 1776



## Penicuik House The Entrance Facade



The front portico is prostyle  
Ionic hexastyle—a virtual copy of  
Palladio's porticos of Villa Rotonda.

## In antis

Also called distyle in antis, this style features side walls that extend to the front of the porch.



**Basildon Park**  
Berkshire

## Prostyle

The most common style, prostyle buildings feature a porch that projects and stands free and detached from the front wall of the building behind.



**Penicuik House**  
Midlothian

## Peristyle

A style that features a colonnade (round, square, or rectangular) surrounding a building or courtyard.



**The Jefferson Memorial**  
Washington

## Porticoes

**Tristyle** – 3 columns

**Tetrastyle** – 4 columns

**Pentastyle** – 5 columns

**Hexastyle** – 6 columns

**Heptastyle** – 7 columns

**Octastyle** – 8 columns

**Enneastyle** – 9 columns

**Decastyle** – 10 columns

**Dodecastyle** – 12 columns



**Dodington Park with its  
Hexastyle Portico**



Penicuik House  
**The Stables**  
(the house since the 1899 fire)

The stableblock is notable for its front of 11 arcaded bays topped with a steeple in the style of James Gibbs.



**Church of  
St. Martin-in-the-Fields**  
London



Penicuik House  
**Stable Courtyard with  
Dooct in the Shape of  
Arthur's Oven**

The town of Stenhouse in Stirlingshire contained a building, destroyed in 1743, called Arthur's Oven. Most likely a Roman victory monument or shrine, this building originally stood near the Antonine Wall. The Antonine Wall in Scotland was the northernmost frontier of the Roman Empire and was named after the emperor who built it: Antoninus Pius. The wall ran for 39 miles—exactly half the distance of Hadrian's defensive works further south—and consisted of a line of auxiliary forts connected by a continuous rampart wall and ditch. These entrenchments ran from near Edinburgh to the outskirts of Glasgow.

Q & A



The Tower of the Winds was one of the most frequently copied ancient buildings during the Neoclassical period.



**The Entrance Lodges**  
**Basildon Park**  
Berkshire  
1842



**The Tower of the Winds**  
Athens  
2<sup>nd</sup> century BC



Andrea Palladio  
**Villa Emo, Veneto**  
1558—61



John Carr  
**Basildon Park**  
Berkshire  
1776—83



Basildon Park  
**The Dining Room**



**The Basildon Room**  
**Waldorf Astoria**  
New York



Basildon Park  
**The Octagon Drawing Room**



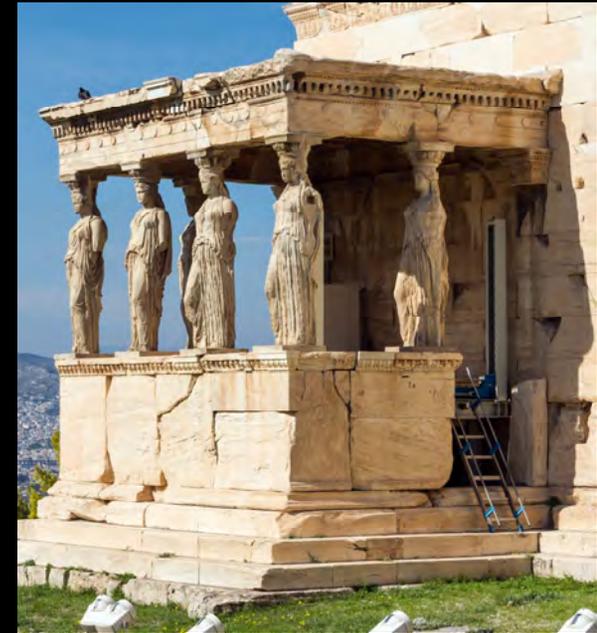
Pompeo Batoni  
*St. Paul*

This is one of a set of eight pictures by Batoni at Basildon depicting seven of the apostles and God the Father. Batoni is chiefly remembered in Britain for his paintings of Englishmen on the Grand Tour, but he produced fine religious and historical paintings, as evidenced by this set, which comprise the finest collection of such works by the artist in Britain.

This table is probably the earliest known English work of art to reproduce the caryatid figures from the portico of the Erechtheum.



English, Maker Unknown  
**Octagon Drawing Room Pier Table**  
Circa 1773



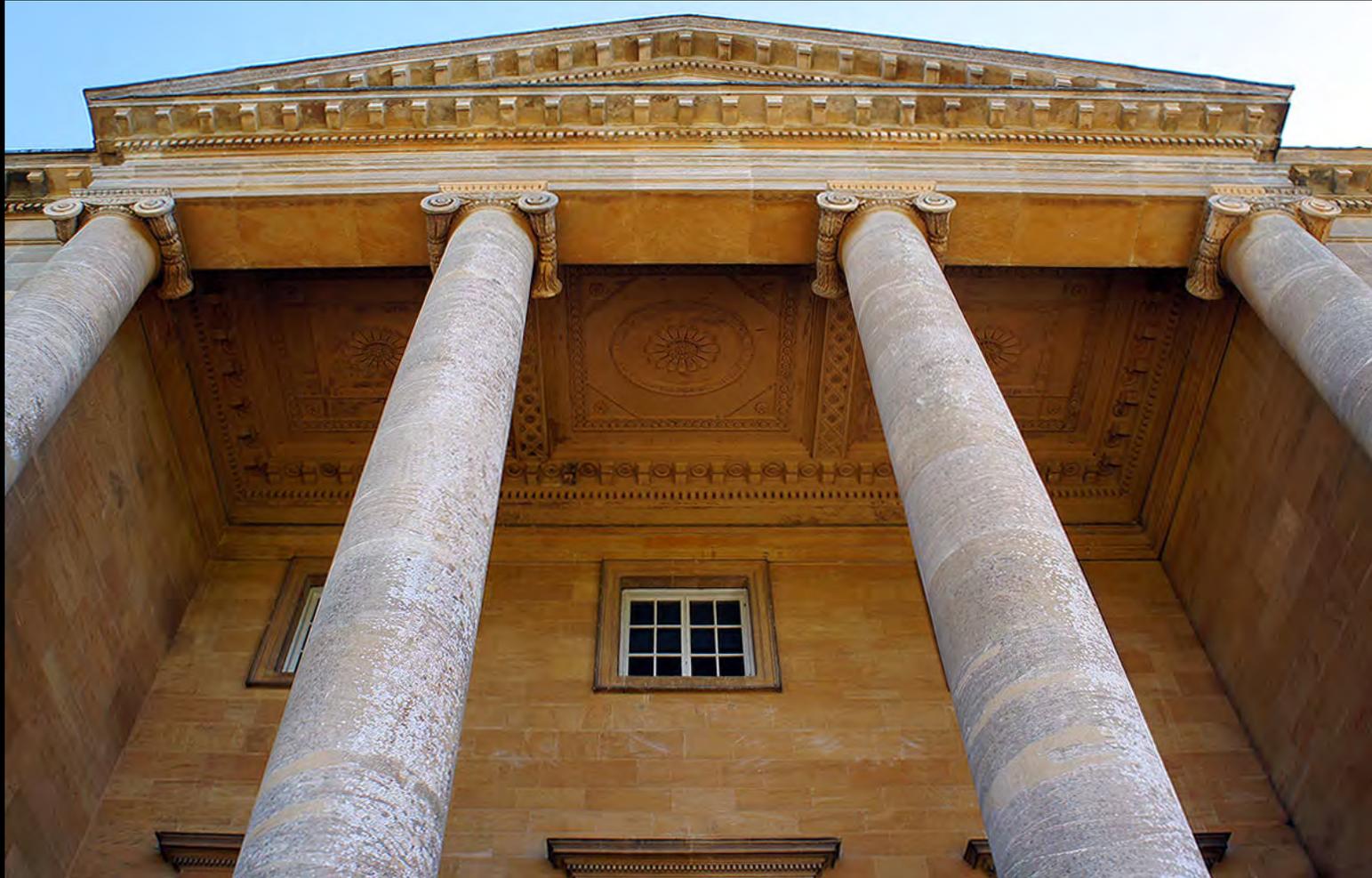
**The Erechtheum**  
**The Acropolis, Athens**  
421—405 BC



2005

The cast of P&P on the porch of Netherfield, aka Basildon Park.





Basildon Park  
**The Portico (Balcony)**



**Cy and Curt on the Basildon Balcony**  
2018



James Playfair the Elder & Robert Burn  
**Cairness House**  
Aberdeenshire  
1782—97



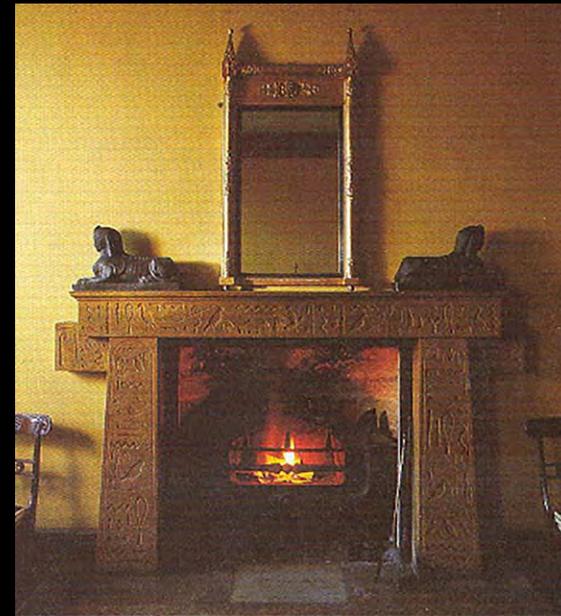
Cairness House  
**The Service Court**



Cairness House  
**From the Air**



Cairness House  
**The Entrance Hall**



Cairness House  
**The Egyptian Room**

## Cairness House



**The Library**



**The Dining Room**



Cairness House  
**The Saloon**



Cairness House  
**The Old Kitchen**



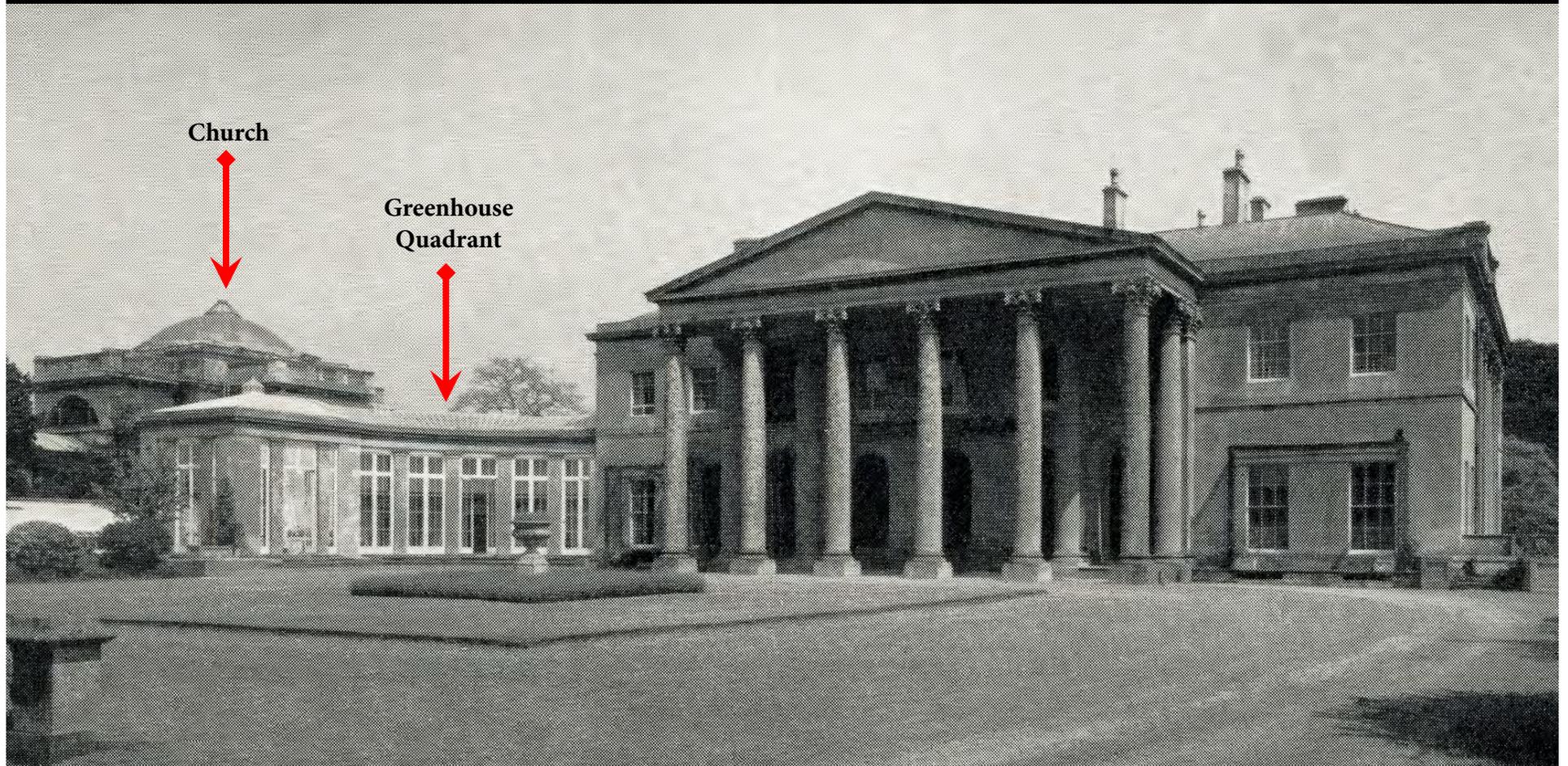
DODINGTON  
*The Seat of Sir Christopher  
To whom this Plate is*



PARK,  
*Bethell Codrington, Bart<sup>o</sup>  
gratefully inscribed by  
J. & H. S. Storer.*

*London, Published Feb<sup>y</sup> 1, 1825, by Sherwood, Jones & C<sup>o</sup> Paternoster Row.*

From an 1825 Engraving



James Wyatt  
**Dodington Park**  
Gloucestershire  
1798—1813

Dodington Park  
**The Greenhouse  
Quadrant**





Dodington Park  
**St. Mary's  
Church**

Dodington Park  
**The  
Entrance Hall**

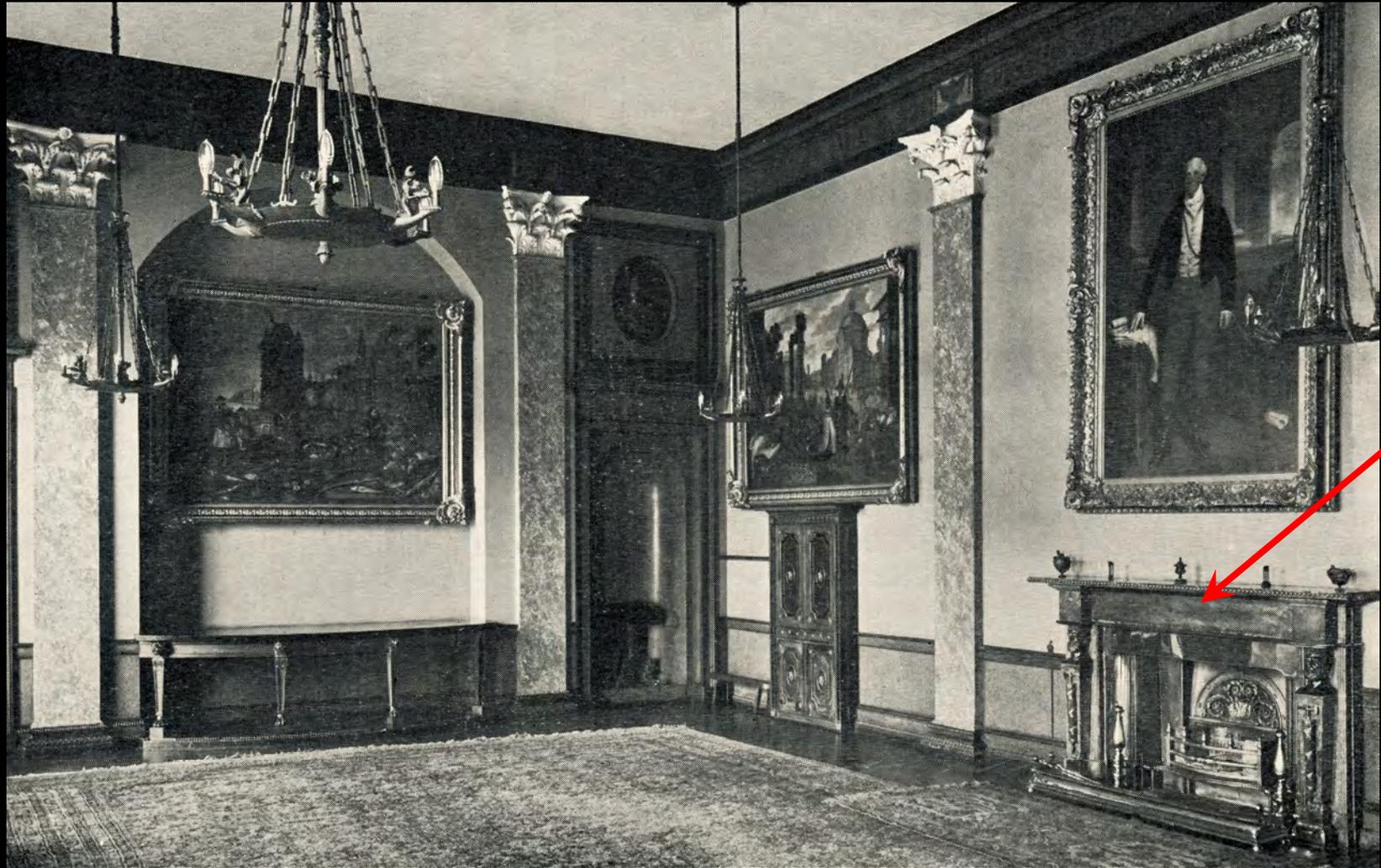




Dodington Park  
**The  
Staircase Hall**



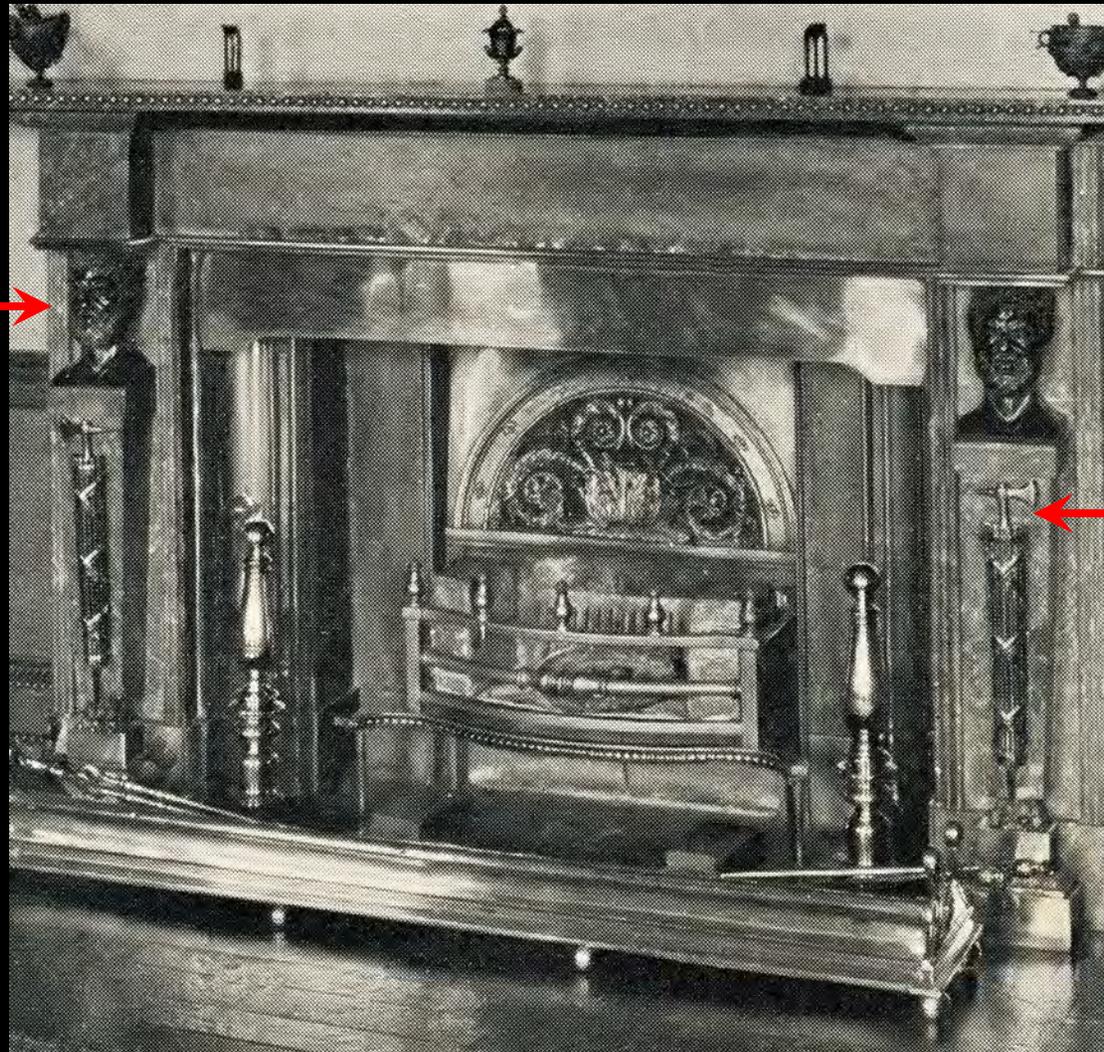
Dodington Park  
**The Library**



Dodington Park  
**The Dining Room**



Red marble head designed by Piranesi  
*Burghley House*



Fasces in the US House of Representatives

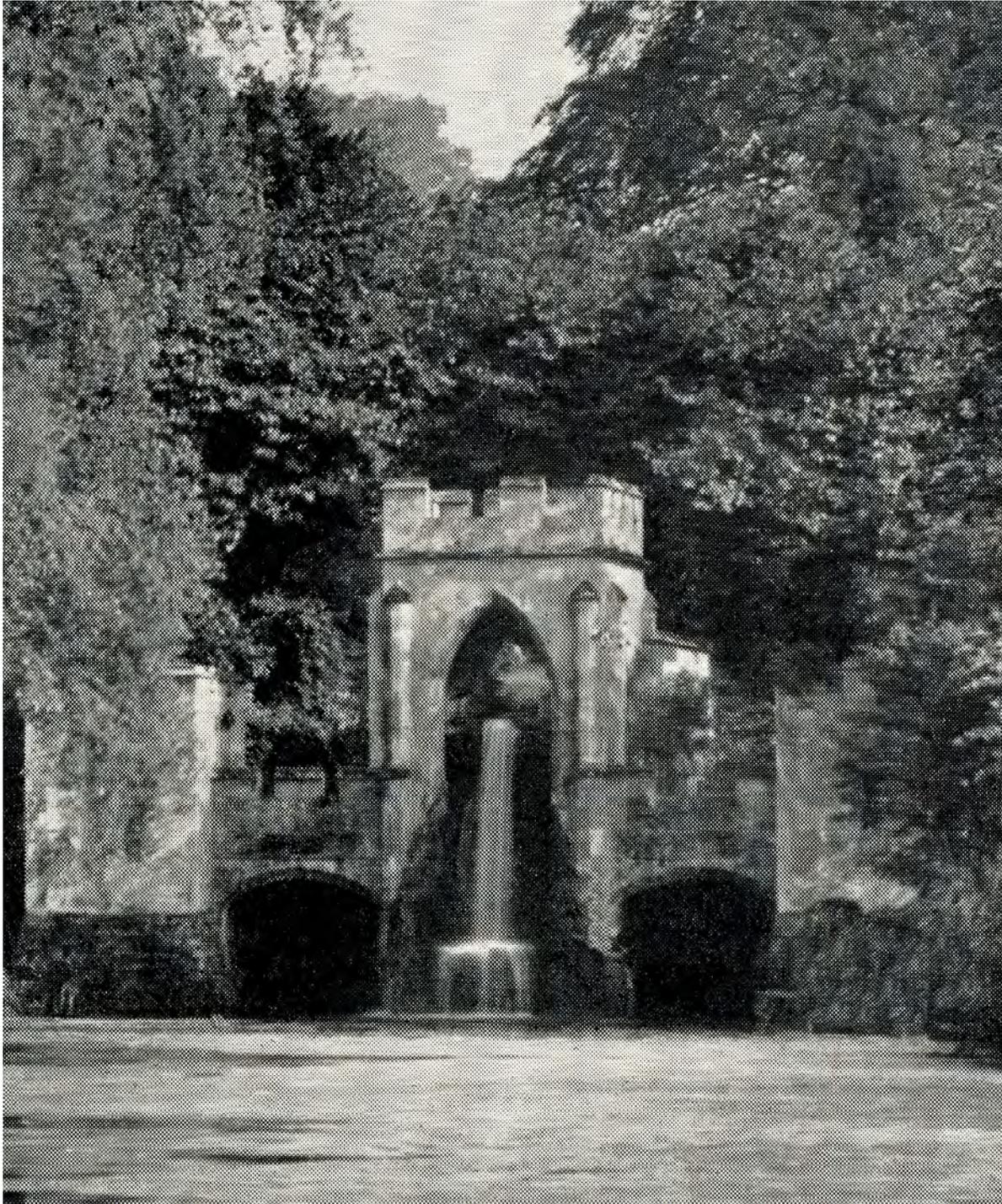
Dodington Park  
**Dining Room Fireplace**



Dodington Park  
**The Dairy**



Dodington Park  
**The Stables**



Dodington Park  
**Capability Brown's  
Cascade in the Park**



Dodington Park  
**Entrance Lodge and Gate**



**James Dyson**

Q & A





**Art & Architecture**  
with Curt DiCamillo

*Next Session:*

**An Explosion of Beauty, Session 6**

*Medieval Revival (1780—1830)*

*Chinese & Indian (1800—30)*

*Other Revivals (1850s—1980s)*

**February 21, 2023**

4:00 - 5:30 PM EDT

**[www.AmericanAncestors.org/events](http://www.AmericanAncestors.org/events)**

More information about the houses discussed today can be found on Curt's website:

**[www.TheDiCamillo.com](http://www.TheDiCamillo.com)**

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# An Explosion of Beauty, Part II, 2023

Thank you for registering for the online course, **An Explosion of Beauty: The Art, Architecture, and Collections of British Country Houses, Part II!**

*Nowhere in the world are there so many country houses as in England, matchless for the astonishing variety of their styles and the richness of their collections and furniture.*

This quote from the English architectural historian John Harris sums up what many scholars believe is Britain's greatest and most lasting contribution to world culture: the country house. For centuries the country house held a unique position in English life. Before World War I, the families in these power houses ruled Britain. Not only were their houses the center of productive agricultural estates, their breathtaking interiors were the repositories of jaw-dropping collections of art.

In this three-session online course, Curator of Special Collections and celebrated architectural historian Curt DiCamillo, FRSA will guide you through these stately homes, their interiors, and their world-class art collections. This seminar will span nearly two and a half centuries worth of British decorative arts and style, discussing **Palladian, Rococo, Chinoiserie, Neoclassical, Medieval Revival, Chinese and Indian**, and more.

This course includes three 90-minute classes, access to the slides, and a bibliography. You do not need to attend the live sessions to participate in the course. Each class will be recorded and made available to participants until the end of May 2023.

## INSTRUCTIONS ON JOINING

To join the live sessions, click here: <https://zoom.us/j/94841070212>

# AmericanAncestors.org/explosion-beauty-part-ii-2023



Art & Architecture  
with Curt DiCamillo

*Thank you!*





NEW ENGLAND HISTORIC  
GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

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