seeing double: reflections on an unrealised interior

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abstract

The subject of this essay is the author's unrealised proposal for a temporary interior installation commemorating the return of a historic archive to Croome Court — a neo-Palladian house in a landscape garden of international significance near Worcester, UK. The proposed Archive Rooms installation would transform a suite of uninhabited spaces on the first floor of the house into a stimulating setting for exhibitions of artefacts from the returning collection. The design project was originally undertaken as part of the author's practice-led doctoral inquiry exploring potential contemporary applications of picturesque concepts, techniques, and strategies in architectural design. The proposal was informed by the interior design techniques of one of Croome's principal designers, the architect Robert Adam (1728–1792), whose contribution to the development of the picturesque in the eighteenth century remains only partially articulated.

The essay reflects on the proposal through the lens of a series of perceived doublenesses in the project, delimiting latent spaces of potentiality for imagining new interiors between research and proposition, past and future, representation and reality, stasis and movement. Oscillating between historical-interpretative research into the work of Adam, descriptions of unrealised design proposals, and critical commentary on the design-led research methodology employed by the author, the essay elucidates often overlooked elements of Adam's interior design practice and situates them in the context of eighteenth-century discourse on the picturesque. It reveals esoteric and forgotten ways of designing and representing interiors that have potential utility in contemporary design. It also suggests foundational methodological strategies for future historically informed and propositionally oriented design-led research inquiries in the field.

keywords

Robert Adam; picturesque; interior architecture; design-led research; methodology

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introduction

The subject of this essay is the author's unrealised proposal for the National Trust's 'Croome Redefined: Archive Rooms' design competition. Designers were invited to make proposals for a temporary interior installation to commemorate the return of a historic archive to Croome Court — a neo-Palladian house in a landscape garden of international significance in Pershore, UK. Both the garden and the exterior of the house are the work of landscape architect Lancelot 'Capability' Brown (1716–1783). The architect Robert Adam (1728–1792) designed several key interiors, including the Long Gallery, Tapestry Room, and Library. The aim of the Archive Rooms project was to transform a suite of spaces on the first floor of the house into a stimulating setting for exhibitions of artefacts from the returning collection. The budget was modest and, due to the building's historical importance, any proposed intervention had to be fully reversible.

The design project was carried out as part of the author's practice-led doctoral research exploring potential contemporary applications of the picturesque in architecture.[1] Both of Croome's principal designers, Brown and Adam, are important figures in the history of the picturesque. While Brown's role is extensively discussed and debated in the existing literature, the significance of Adam's contribution is less well defined. The author's proposal for the Archive Rooms was informed by Adam's practice. In the context of the design competition, this fulfilled the National Trust's requirement for a contemporary installation that established a dialogue with the estate's past. In the context of the author's doctoral inquiry, it provided an opportunity to explore Adam's contribution to the picturesque through both historical research and the propositional activity of design.

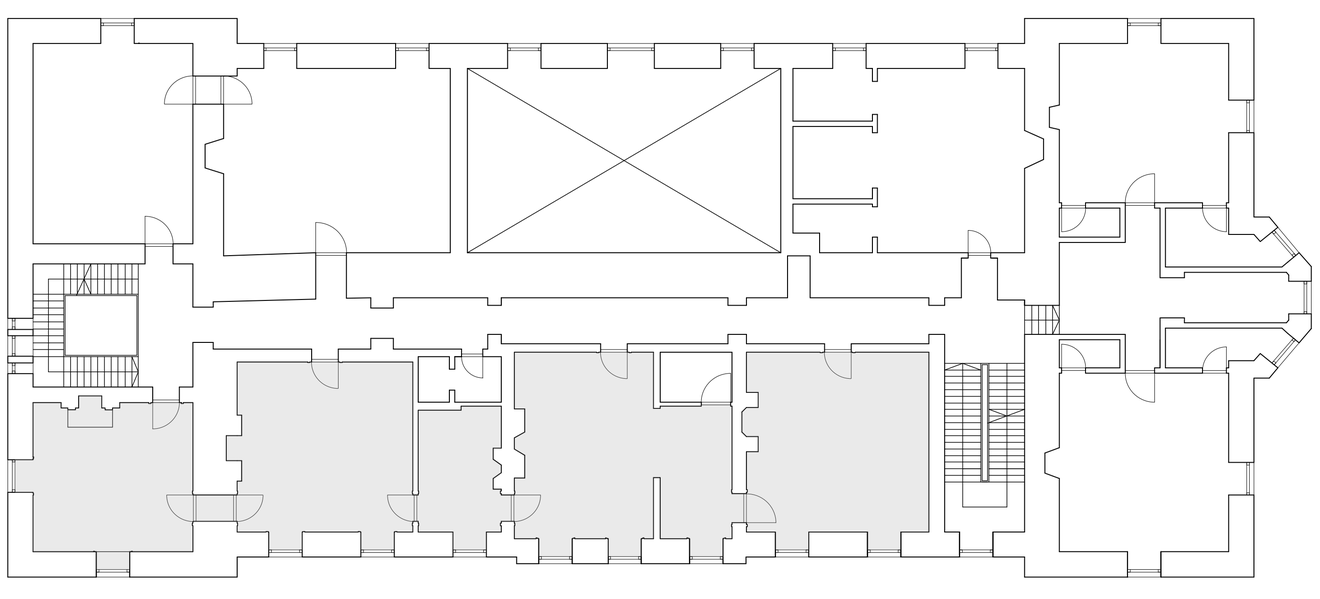


Figure 01.
Plan of the first floor at Croome Court as existing. The proposed location of the Archive Rooms shown in grey. Drawing by the author.

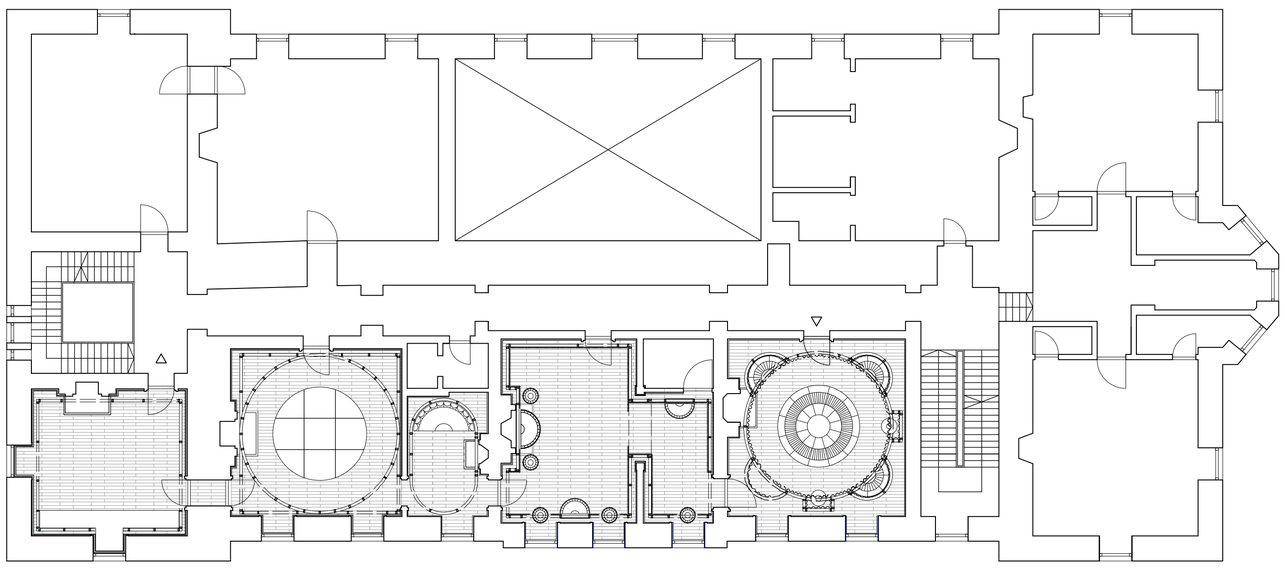


Figure 02.
Plan of the first floor at Croome Court as proposed. Drawing by the author.

While modest in scale and humble in its proposed method of construction, the proposal was, like an Adam interior, dense with ideas. It aimed to provide a rich, varied, and bespoke architectural setting with manifold curatorial possibilities to ensure an ever-changing visitor experience. The installation was to be located in a sequence of interconnected first-floor rooms with views across the landscape [Fig. 01]. At the time of the competition, the rooms were in a state of neglect, left largely untouched since the National Trust added the house to its portfolio in 2007. The author proposed a free-standing, light touch installation, which would have no invasive fixings back to the existing building. A series of self-supporting timber studwork frames would be installed to dramatically (albeit temporarily) alter the texture of the first-floor plan [Fig. 02]. Frames based on square, circular, oval, and rectangular plans would impose new, 'pure' geometrical overlays to change the shape and form of each individual room in the sequence. This would represent a reenactment of the relatively inexpensive 'boxing-out' strategies used by Adam to dramatically but economically reconfigure the form of country house interiors.[2] The design and composition of the studwork frames was informed by the features and underlying proportions of the existing rooms. This proposed new 'layer of construction' would be low-tech and low cost. Frames would be joined together using simple, robust mechanical fixings and painted with a layer of thinned white emulsion to rhyme with the existing joinery and mouldings. At strategic points in the sequence, sheets of aluminium would be installed to structurally reinforce the studwork and provide mirror-like vertical surfaces equivalent to the pier glasses used by Adam to create the illusion of spatial extension.

As in an Adam interior, each room was conceived as 'its own little empire of activity, allusions, and colour' [Fig. 03].[3] To enclose the frames, fabric wall linings of varying tone, thickness, and opacity would be fixed back to the studwork. Linings

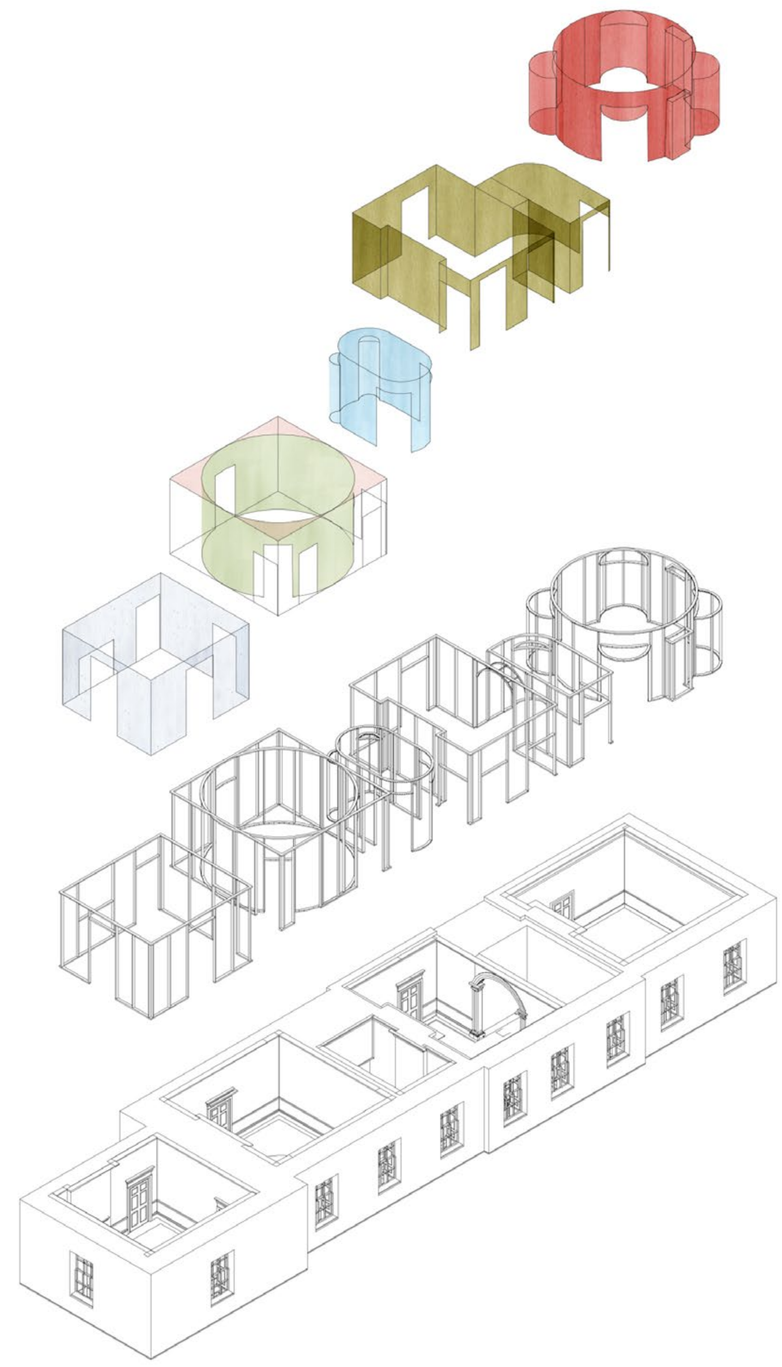


Figure 03.
Exploded isometric drawing describing the author's design strategy for the Archive Rooms installation. Drawing by the author.

would range from deep and three-dimensional ('architectonic') to flat and two-dimensional ('picturesque').[4] Fabric linings in the first room in the sequence were to be hung theatrically and gathered like curtains — a reference to the heavily modulated wall treatments typically used by Adam in entrance halls. The final room in the sequence was to have wall panel and ceiling designs by Adam printed and hand-drawn onto its surface, giving the interior the appearance and pictorial flatness of a drawing. In this sense, the proposed installation would make use of Adam's whole decorative scale, with linings becoming gradually more attenuated as the spatial sequence unfolded.[5] Much like in an Adam interior, furniture was considered an integral component in the overall decorative scheme. A series of bespoke but low-cost furniture pieces was designed for each room, providing a range of options for the display of artefacts.

The following discussion reflects on the author's Archive Rooms project. It elucidates often overlooked elements of Adam's interior design practice and situates them in the context of the eighteenth-century discourse on the picturesque. It reveals esoteric and forgotten ways of designing and representing interiors that have potential utility in contemporary design. It suggests foundational methodological strategies for future historically informed and propositionally oriented design-led research inquiries in the field, and, ultimately, delimits latent spaces of potentiality for imagining new interiors. The discussion is organised under the headings 'research and proposition', 'past and future', 'stasis and movement', and 'representation and reality', with each section exploring a perceived doubleness or productive dialectic in the project.

research and proposition

Adam's approach to design was underpinned by a propositional way of apprehending history and conducting historical research. In 1764, alongside fellow architect and artist Charles-Louis Clérisseau (1721–1820), Adam published *Ruins of the Palace of the Emperor Diocletian at Spalatro* (*The Ruins*) — a survey of Diocletian's Palace (293 AD) in Split.[6] The publication included a novel combination of detailed orthographic drawings of the palace, including studies of its bespoke architectural orders and perspective views of the serendipitous spatial conditions that had emerged over time as the building had fallen into ruin. Adam's survey combined the precision of earlier, similar works with the theatrical compositional quality and propositional intent characteristic of the work of his mentor in Rome, the archeologist, artist, and architect Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720–1778).[7] Piranesi's work demonstrated how surveying ruins in their found condition could inform the development of new architectural ideas.[8] Like Piranesi, when making perspective views of the ruins at Split, Adam did so with an 'artist's eye.'[9] The 'neutral reportage' of previous surveys was replaced by a more painterly, pictorial, and propositional mode of depiction focused on extracting ideas for use in future architectural commissions.[10] This propositional attitude to historical research informed Adam's subsequent approach to design, including his characteristically idiosyncratic, imaginative, and innovative treatment of architectural orders and his spatially ambitious and materially elaborate proposals for country house interiors.[11]

Underlying the author's approach to design research is a similarly propositional attitude to history and historical research. Here, the historical subject is not only explored as a curiosity from the past, but also as the source of ideas with potential applicative value in the present. Architectural history is not looked at with nostalgia or contempt, but rather as a source of concepts, techniques, and strategies with great contemporary value if sharpened against the exigencies of the present and critically re-appropriated.

At the start of the Archive Rooms project, the author carried out a literature review into Adam's practice. Focusing on his designs for country house interiors, the review revealed a significant amount of textual and visual information — primary and secondary sources dating back to the mid-eighteenth century. Due to limitations with the traditional text-based literature review and the propositionally oriented aims of the research, visual methods were adopted to represent the findings. Interiors by Adam were visually mapped in the form of a large-scale wall chart [Fig. 04]. Diverse visual sources (drawings and photographs) were brought together for the first time on a single continuous surface, systematically revealing Adam's interior design techniques and enabling hitherto unseen relationships between projects to emerge. Textual references were used in a supporting role, inverting the usual hierarchies of historical research in the field.

In the wall chart, information was structured in a way befitting the 'Adam style', which was characterised by 'the sub-division of parts and the sub-enrichment



Figure 04.
Wall chart mapping of Adam's projects for the renovation of country house interiors. Composite wall chart arranged by the author. Some images redacted due to copyright restrictions. Any photographs shown are the author's own.

of elements', with 'the whole' a careful composition of 'elements of singular grace and expression."[12] Projects were mapped chronologically in order to understand how Adam's conception of the interior had changed over time. Each project was allocated a column in the chart. Within the columns, a row was dedicated to every room in the house designed by Adam. Rows contained visual information and textual references organised under the headings 'walls', 'floors', 'ceilings', 'furnishing', and 'colour' to provide a description of the constituent parts of each space and outline the ways in which they were brought together by Adam to form a variegated compositional whole.

At Croome, the task was to design a sequence of rooms in succession. Alongside the visual mapping of information revealed by the initial literature review, drawn research was carried out into three of Adam's most complete and elaborate interiors. The wall chart was expanded to include isometric drawings of Syon House (1761–1767), Osterley Park (1761–1780), and Newby Hall (1767–1776), which explored Adam's strategies for designing individual rooms and sequences of rooms experienced in series [Fig. 05].

Subsequently, the wall chart was further expanded to incorporate the author's design sketches, which freely speculated on how techniques used by Adam (revealed by the visual mapping) could inform design proposals for the Archive Rooms installation at Croome [Fig. 06]. In methodological terms, this slight innovation dissolves the space between historical research and design. It articulates an important moment of translation from precedent analysis to proposition that usually remains tacit in the design process and serves to propositionally reorient initial historical research.

This systematic and expanded mapping of the findings of the literature review using visual and inscriptive methods revealed what might be described as a taxonomy of techniques used by Adam to design country house interiors. In research terms, the chart can be understood as a novel contribution to knowledge. It is a visual equivalent to existing text-based literature reviews on the work of Adam. It brings previously disparate visual and textual sources together on a single surface for the first time, facilitating cognitive acts by means of visual praxis, such as sensemaking and novel intertextual readings in ways that more traditional



Figure 05.
Expanded wall chart mapping incorporated isometric drawings of Adam's most complete and elaborate interiors: Syon House, Osterley Park, and Newby Hall. Composite wall chart and drawings by the author. Some images redacted due to copyright restrictions. Any photographs and drawings shown are the author's own.

approaches do not readily permit.[13] In this way, the wall chart reveals new areas for future historical research and, perhaps more importantly in the context of this design-led inquiry, brings information together in a way that is generative of new design ideas. For the author, the wall chart is not a benign academic representation of an overlooked aspect of Adam's practice, but a design framework — a repertoire of concepts, techniques, and strategies for imagining new interiors.

This closeness between research and proposition is reflected in the author's design proposals, which possess something of a temporal ambiguity. When looking at the final drawings, for instance, it is difficult to discern whether what is depicted is a reflection of the past or a projection of the future, and whether the interior that is represented is a proposal for the historical reconstruction of an existing room or a proposal for a new room inculcated with historical ideas.

past and future

Design proposals were developed through an iterative dialogue between sketching and layered drawings made using pencil and watercolour transparencies [Fig. 07]. As established in the previous section, sketches were used to extract historical techniques from Adam's repertoire and freely speculate on how they might be used to generate new interior conditions. These sketch proposals — energetic projections of the future

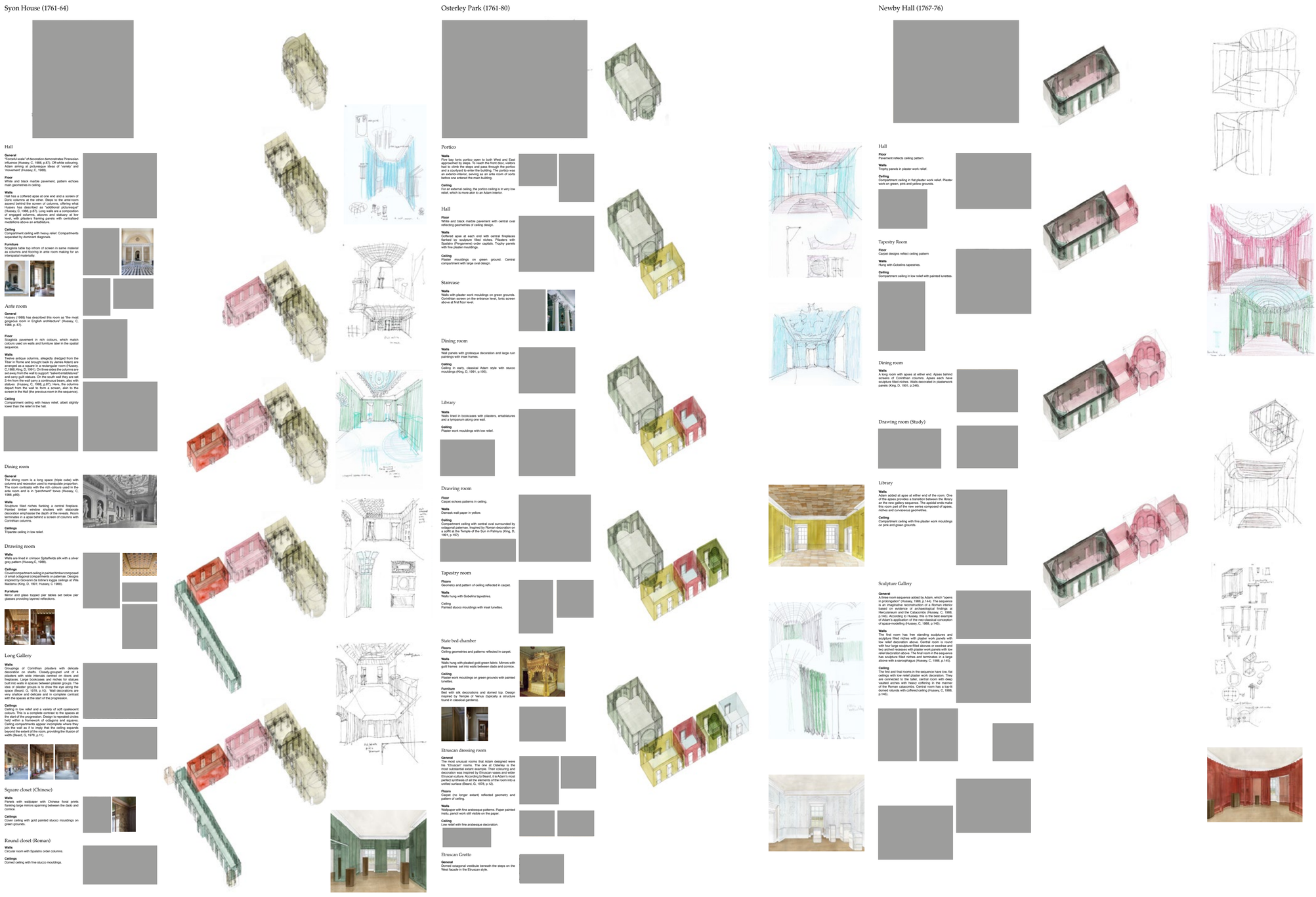


Figure 06.
Expanded wall chart mapping incorporating design development sketches. Composite wall chart and sketches by the author. Some images redacted due to copyright restrictions. Any photographs and drawings shown are the author's own.

made from found fragments of the past — were tested and developed further through large-scale measured perspective drawings comprising pencil and watercolour proposals laid over detailed drawings of the existing rooms. Here, ideas from the past were sharpened against the exigencies of the present to draw out and intensify the characteristics and latent qualities of the existing spaces.

This iterative testing process, carried out through drawing, resulted in an intense and variegated sequence of new rooms constructed from reconstituted and re-appropriated historical ideas drawn from Adam's practice.

The first room in the proposed Archive Rooms sequence is the Red Room [Fig. 08]. Its design draws inspiration from the central rotunda in the sculpture gallery at Newby Hall. A new circular enclosure is constructed within the almost-square, rectangular plan of the existing room, rationalising the base geometry. The walls are lined in curtains coloured to match the crimson red background of the Gobelins carpets once installed in the Adam-designed Tapestry Room on the ground floor at Croome.[14] In reference to the heavily articulated, 'architectonic' wall decoration characteristic of Adam's designs for halls and ante rooms at the start of a spatial sequence, the translucent fabric is hung to gather in deep folds. A drawing of the domed ceiling in the rotunda gallery at Newby Hall is printed onto white fabric and stretched across the top of the studwork frame to form a false ceiling. Even though the domed space is represented on a

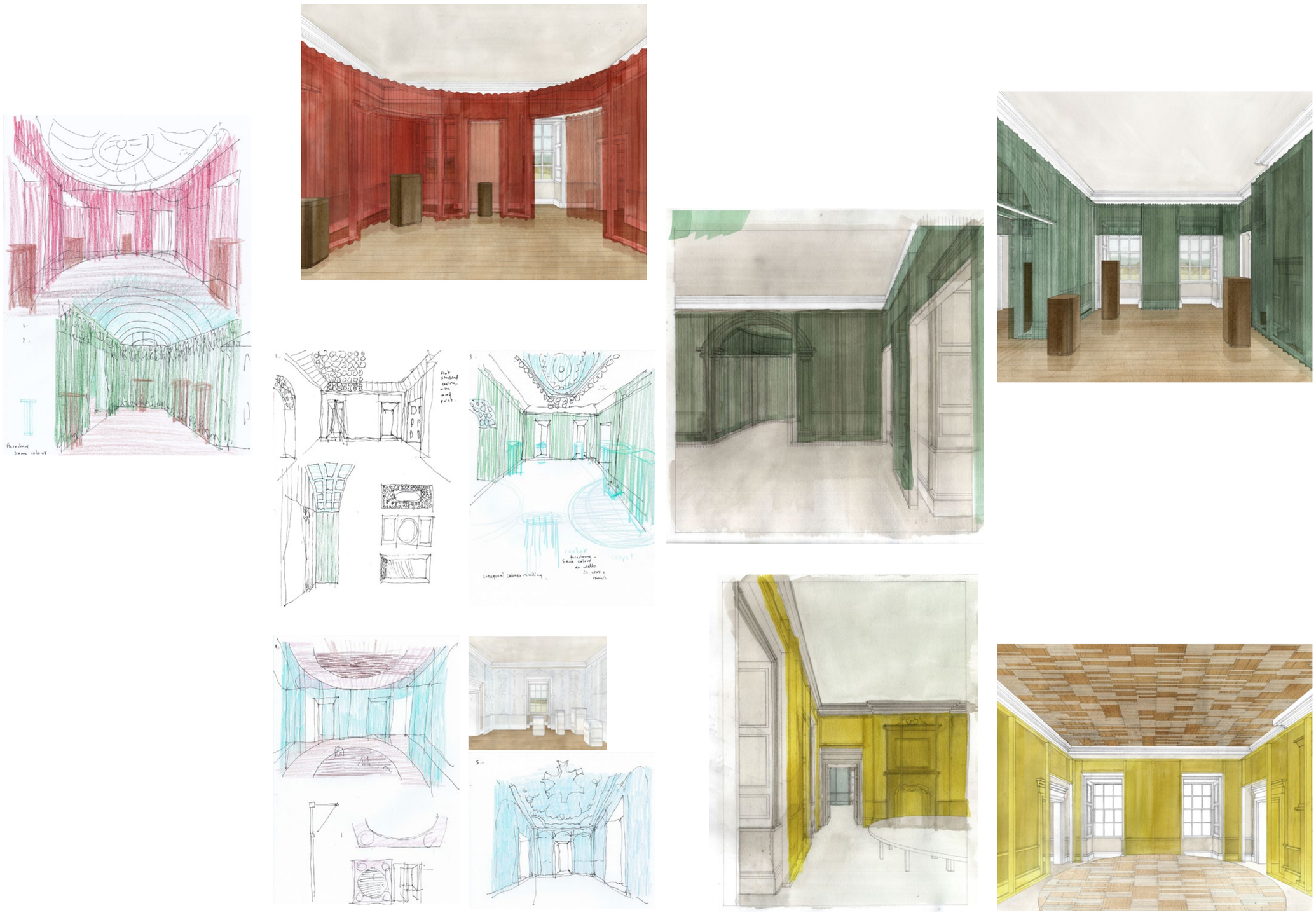


Figure 07.
Process sheet charting the iterative development of the proposed Archive Rooms interiors at Croome Court. Sketches and drawings by the author.

flat surface, the suggestion of concavity is enough to give the feeling of a rounding towards the centre of the room. This is a technique used by Adam in his ceiling design for the dining room at Moccas Park (1781), which has a raised central circular compartment to evoke a sense of the domed construction that he would have ideally realised in its place had the existing architecture and budget allowed. Around the perimeter of the room, walls are punctuated by semicircular niches and narrow rectangular recesses calling to mind the sculpture-filled niches in the Long Gallery on the ground floor at Croome, the dining room at Syon, and the hall at Harewood House (1765–1769). Rather than statuary, the plinths standing in the niches display archival material. Plywood plinth tops have a routed pattern — a continuation of the network of lines radiating from the centre of the circle in the ceiling design. In this sense, the furniture partakes in the geometric network of lines that bind the room together. On the floor is a low-lying timber console for the display of artefacts. A pattern composed of circular motifs is routed into the top of the console, which, as customary of Adam-designed carpets and pavements, reflects the design of the ceiling. The console is varnished in a shade similar to the existing floorboards to emphasise its belonging to the floor.

Passing through a red curtain and an existing white-painted timber-lined reveal, the visitor enters the next room in the sequence — the Green Bedroom [Fig. 09]. The room's name references Adam's original design for the space, which featured walls



Figure 08.
Perspective view of the proposed Red Room. Mixed media drawing by the author.



Figure 09.
Perspective view of the proposed Green Bedroom. Mixed media drawing by the author.

lined in green paper and a domed bed upholstered in green fabric.[15] The pleated, acid-green wall linings and pale green ceiling evoke both Adam's original decorative scheme for the room and the State Bed Chamber at Osterley Park. Wall linings are slightly more attenuated than those in the Red Room. Fabric is draped dramatically in a triangular tent-like form over window and door openings, significantly altering the character of the existing room and recalling the dramatic drapery of the bed, designed by Adam, which once stood in the space. A reflected ceiling plan of a tripartite design by Adam is printed onto the false ceiling. The space beneath is notionally divided into three sections, each housing a small ensemble of display furniture.

After moving through a rectangular ante room with two semicircular ends and wall linings in a blue fabric matching the topaz blue of the boudoir-vestibule to the Bed Chamber at Kedleston Hall (1760–1768) [Fig. 10], the visitor enters the penultimate space in the sequence — the Drawing Room [Fig. 11]. The overall plan-from is circle-in-square with a circular stud work frame standing within a larger square one. The room is entered via a small interstitial space between the two layers of framing, recalling the transitions between rooms in an Adam interior through exotically shaped *poche*. The walls are lined in a translucent pale green fabric that is stretched



Figure 10.
Perspective view of the proposed Ante Room. Mixed media drawing by the author.



Figure 11.
Perspective view of the proposed Drawing Room. Mixed media drawing by the author.

taut. The ceiling is in pink translucent fabric with a missing circular section in its centre to frame an exposed timber lathe ceiling above. Pale green and pink were colours commonly used by Adam to contrast the full-bodied tones of rooms elsewhere in a sequence.[16] A reflected ceiling plan of Adam's Music Room at Home House (1777) is printed onto the wall and ceiling linings. The design is carefully reconfigured to ensure the circular pattern joins seamlessly at the junction between wall and ceiling and continues uninterrupted around the whole surface of the interior, enveloping the visitor in an all-encompassing meshwork of circular motifs. In the centre of the room is a large circular table with a sheet aluminium top. The table conceals a jacuzzi bathtub installed by the property developer who owned the house in the 1990s.[17] By reflecting the exposed timber lathe work of the ceiling above, the table fulfils the role of a carpet in an Adam interior, albeit in a slightly subversive way.

Finally, the visitor arrives in the Etruscan Room [Fig. 12]. The walls and ceiling are in pale pastel blue translucent canvas-like fabric, which is stretched taut across the frames. The blue matches the tone of the grounds used by Adam in his decorative scheme for the walls in the Etruscan Room at Osterley Park (1773–1774). Unrealised sketch designs for panels in the Etruscan style by Adam are drawn back onto the wall surfaces in pencil, evoking the hand-drawn outlines that remain partly visible on the walls at Osterley. In this way, the room takes on the qualities of a drawing and a pictorial flatness — a stark contrast to the more 'architectonic' wall treatments at the start of the sequence. The only piece of furniture is a table running the entire length of one of the walls. Its design draws inspiration from an unrealised proposal for a continuous table around the room's perimeter by Adam. An existing black, grey, and white marble fireplace is framed by the new installation and becomes an integral part of the composition.



Figure 12.
Perspective view of the proposed Etruscan Room. Mixed media drawing by the author.

representation and reality

Much like an Adam interior, the author's Archive Rooms proposal has drawing-like qualities insofar as there is a closeness between what is represented and the mode of representation. Upon reflection, the proposed installation can be understood, conceptually, as a suite of 'Drawing Rooms.'

The act of drawing was central to Adam's practice. Rather than a means to an end, it was the principal method through which he theorised and developed

his idiosyncratic conception of architecture and the interior.[18] As we have already established, from early in his career there was a bifurcation in Adam's thinking. On the one hand, he was committed to developing an idiosyncratic, eclectic mode of classicism. On the other, he was drawn to the picturesque. While the productive tension between the two only gradually became apparent in his built work, it is clear from his prodigious drawn output that it had fuelled his architectural imagination from the earliest stages of his education.[19] Indeed, from the beginning, Adam developed both lines of inquiry through parallel drawing practices. He made studious two-dimensional orthographic projections of ancient and Renaissance architecture to develop a fundamental understanding of the classical idiom that would provide the bedrock of his style. In tandem he produced more fanciful and speculative perspectival drawings — ink and watercolour 'inventions' — exploring picturesque preoccupations, specifically, the relationship between architecture and landscape.[20] While these two strands of Adam's practice began to intermingle in the drawings published in *The Ruins*, it was in *The Works in Architecture* (*The Works*) that they overlapped most meaningfully.[21] The publication contains a visually stunning sequence of engravings — an admixture of orthographic projections (plans and elevations), dramatic perspectival views, and rendered section drawings incorporating perspective elements to demonstrate depth and offer glimpses into interior spaces subsequent to the room bisected by the section plane.[22] Presented in an unfolding sequence that serves to illustrate Adam's evolving architectural vision across scales, the plates take the viewer on a journey from exterior to interior, and from overview to detail, inculcating the publication with the kind of 'movement' he sought in the architectural works depicted. In this sense, *The Works* not only represented the realisation of a picturesque-inflected neoclassicist architectural sensibility, but also a distinctive technique for representing it that was 'both explanatory and evocative.'[23]

As the author's Archive Rooms proposal was never realised it remains an imagined interior, represented in its most complete and ideal form by drawings. The final composite drawing of the proposal [Fig. 13] was made using techniques like those developed by Adam (in *The Works*) and other eighteenth-century practitioners at a moment of uncertainly and innovation in the conception, design, and representation of interiors.[24] Two types of projection — plan and perspective — are rather abruptly brought together to form something of a hybrid mode of representation that seeks to explain the proposal in a holistic and evocative way. Single point perspective drawings of each room are framed by the outline of the floor plan, which doubles to serve as the section cut line from which the perspective view is taken. The different modes of projection collude in an attempt at something filmic and kinetic with the eye invited to trace a path through the varied and elaborate interior sequence in a way that is representative of a projected future reality.

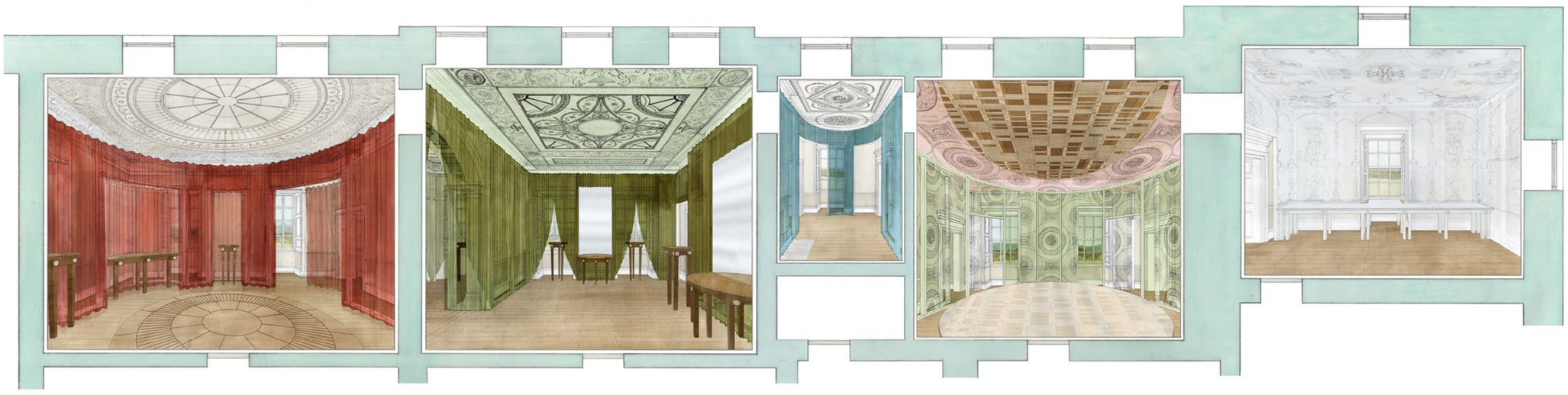


Figure 13.
Final composite drawing (plan and perspective) of the proposed Archive Rooms installation. Mixed media drawing by the author.

Modes of representation used by the author throughout the project were informed by historical research, which revealed a curious two-way relationship between representation and reality around the time of Adam's practice. Changes in the conception of space due to the emergence of the picturesque inspired eighteenth-century architects to find new ways of representing the interior and changes in the way the interior was drawn informed emerging conceptions of picturesque space.

When Adam returned from his Grand Tour in the early 1750s, the golden age of estate building in Great Britain had largely come to an end.[25] Although he still received commissions for new houses, most of his domestic work was for 'the completion of houses half-built by others or the transformation of old houses within their existing shells.'[26] Working within the physical constraints of the existing building to increasingly modest budgets, Adam's interiors were realised incrementally over extended periods, with rooms often designed and installed one at a time.[27] Accordingly, Adam modified his drawing practices, developing a mode of representation that allowed for 'targeted descriptions of individual rooms.'[28] This type of drawing typically showed all the internal elevations of a single room laid flat around a central plan, giving the drawing the appearance of a geometric net that could be folded up to make a paper-thin three-dimensional enclosure. For the architectural historian Robin Evans (1944–1993), this kind of two-dimensional projection, which he called a 'developed surface drawing', allowed Adam to isolate an individual room and luxuriate in its total design.[29] All four walls, the ceiling, the floor, and the furniture could be designed together as an all-encompassing network of geometrical shapes. When a series of interiors designed with this level of intensity were installed in succession, the result was a dazzling sequence of spaces of great intricacy and variety — what Evans calls 'a concatenation of rooms' of 'magnified individuality.'[30]

The developed surface drawing fundamentally altered Adam's conception of the interior. As Adam's two-dimensional depictions of architecture reduced in depth, his constructed interiors became progressively more attenuated. The two-dimensional detail remained, but the three-dimensional modulation of the surface topography of the interior diminished in contour, retreating towards the surface of the wall. In his Etruscan Room at Osterley Park, the surface of the walls and ceiling are almost completely flat. In places, detail is painted and pencil-drawn onto a wallpaper lining. Here, the distinction between representation and reality are blurred, with the constructed interior taking on the physical, material, and inscriptive qualities of a developed surface drawing.

The author's proposal occupies this ambiguous territory between representation and reality. The final drawings are projections of an interior that has the physical qualities of a drawing. The proposed installations appear as paper-lantern-like enclosures with blown-up line drawings of wall panels and ceilings designed by Adam printed onto their surface — room-scaled developed surface drawings folded-up to realise their latent three-dimensional potential. The transparency of the fabric linings would result in a real-world layering effect akin to that achieved in the author's drawings, where watercolour wash and pencil overlays were built up over the top of detailed drawings of the existing condition. In this sense, the constructed interior would carry a memory of the inscriptive and painterly processes through which it was brought into being.

The increasing two-dimensionality of Adam's work and the popularity and reproducibility of his drawing style meant that his designs proliferated in late-eighteenth-century pattern books.[31] It became possible to pick and choose panels designed by Adam and rearrange them to form a new composition that would fit the dimensions of any room. The author's proposal for the Archive Rooms was informed by an earlier project for a temporary pavilion for Graduate Fashion Week at Earl's Court, London, UK in 2011 [Fig. 14]. The project, the result of a collaboration between the author

and architects Will Pirkis and Jonas von Wartburg, can be considered something of a prototype of the proposed installation at Croome. A new developed surface drawing composed of pattern-book panel designs by Adam was screen printed onto large sheets of translucent white fabric and stretched across a studwork frame designed in accordance with the underlying proportional rules of the new room composition [Fig. 15 and Fig. 16].

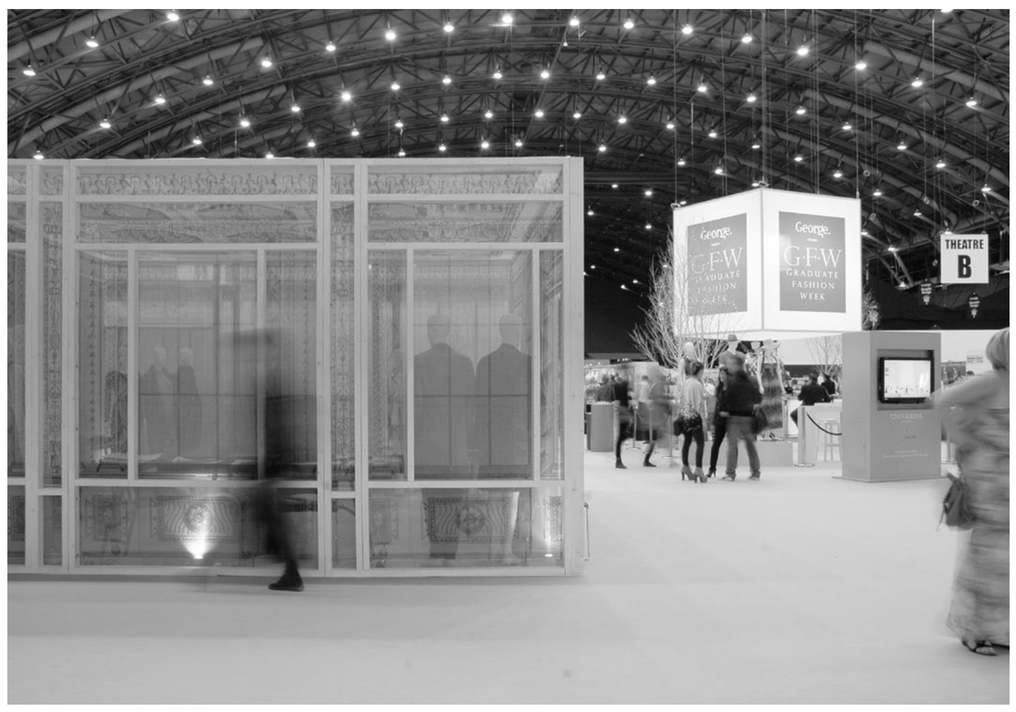


Figure 14.
Robert Adam Room, exterior view, Earl's Court, London, UK. Photograph by the author.

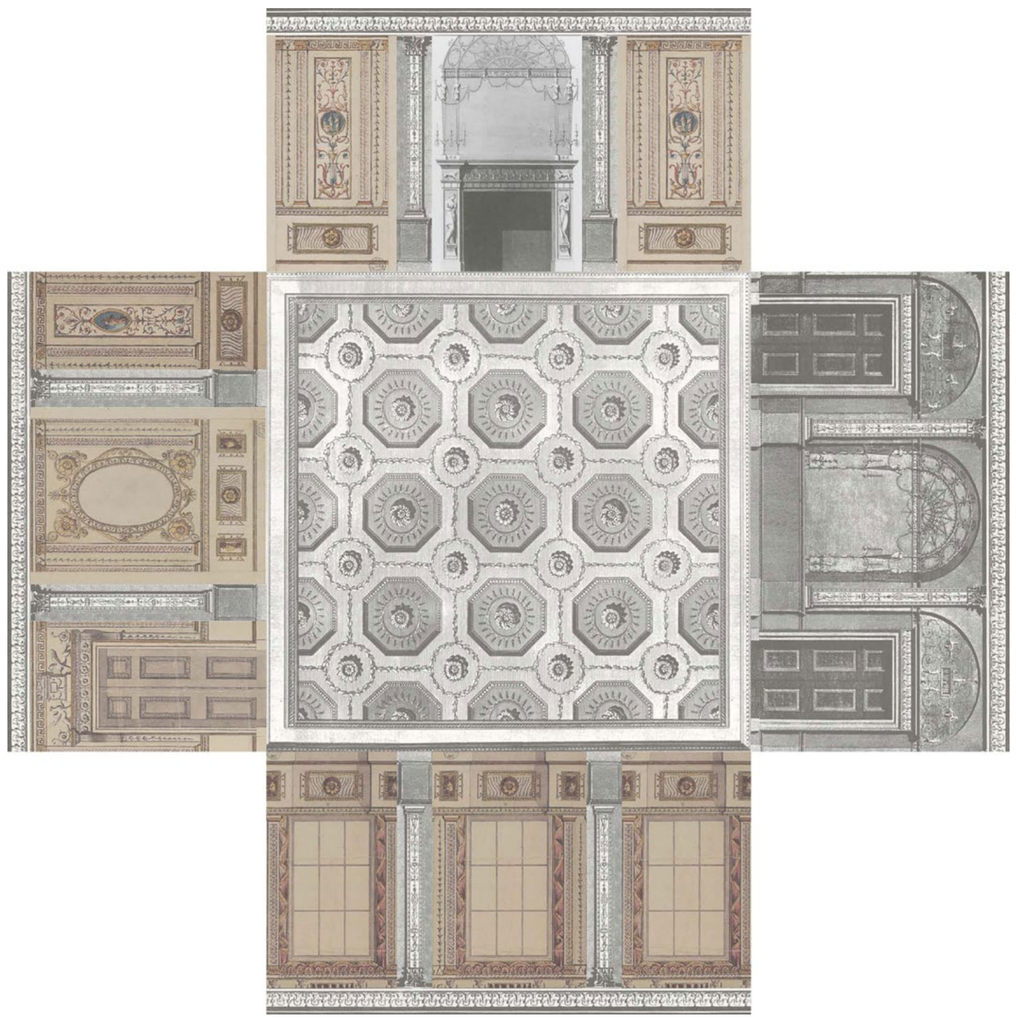


Figure 15.
Developed surface drawing for the *Robert Adam Room*. Montage by the author.



Figure 16.
Robert Adam Room, interior view, Earl's Court, London, UK. Photograph by the author.

Beneath the lights of Earl's Court, the pavilion called to mind an often-overlooked project by Adam depicted in *The Works* entitled *Illumination and Transparency* (1763) — an unrealised proposal for a temporary garden pavilion commissioned by Queen Charlotte (1744–1818) in the grounds of Buckingham House as a surprise to mark the twenty-fifth birthday of her husband King George III (1760–1820).[32] Adam proposed a lightweight timber structure with seventeen arched openings, each covered by a 'transparency' — a painting on a translucent material, which was lit from behind. The pavilion, with its screen-like theatricality, the pictorial flatness of its construction, its attenuated painterly decoration, and its presence as a building entwined in landscape, is arguably Adam's most picturesque project.

In the ephemerality of its construction and the spectral translucency of its appearance, Adam's project anticipates the picturesque practices employed by writer and garden designer René Louis de Girardin (1735–1808) in his creation of the first 'French landscape garden' at Ermenonville in France (1765–1776).[33] As part of the design process, Girardin used full-scale mock-ups to assess the visual impact of proposed future constructions in the landscape. These mock-ups, made from 'poles stretched with white cloth' simulated the 'masses of plants' and 'facades' of potential future interventions.[34] In their abstract, glowing whiteness and pictorial thinness, these temporary constructions, like the author's pavilion at Earl's court and proposal for the Archive Rooms at Croome, represent something of an intermediary between drawing and building, suspended in a state between before and after, simultaneously disappearing and coming into being.

stasis and movement

As we have seen in the previous section, the final composite drawing of the proposal aimed to communicate a sense of spatio-durational progression through a sequence of spaces [Fig. 13]. The author's ambition was, in other words, to communicate a sense of movement though a static mode of artistic expression, that is, the drawing. This reflects the author's ambition for the Archive Rooms installation should it have been realised. The idea that architecture (or the interior), also a static form of expression, could be inculcated with the quality of movement was central to Adam's practice and at the heart of his often-overlooked contribution to the picturesque in the eighteenth century.

While Adam's work is widely understood in the context of eighteenth-century neoclassicism, its relation to the emerging picturesque discourse during the period is less clearly defined.[35] This is perhaps because the picturesque was less conspicuous in Adam's work than in that of his contemporaries. While many sought picturesque effects through the adoption of asymmetrical planning and irregular form, Adam initiated an alternative line of thinking whereby buildings designed in accordance with well-established classical ideas of symmetrical planning and regular form could also be picturesque if they were inculcated with the illusive, painterly quality of 'movement.'[36]

The influence of architect Thomas Sandby (1721–1798) and his brother, landscape painter Paul Sandby (1731–1809) during Adam's early education instilled a 'painterly concern' and an interest in expressing the newly fashionable idea that 'the role of architecture', much like a landscape or a landscape painting, 'was to raise feelings and excite the imagination.'[37] According to Adam, 'movement' in architecture, an inherently static form of artistic expression, could be achieved through a certain mimesis of qualities found in landscape (and landscape painting), namely 'diversity of contour', 'convexity and concavity', 'advancing and receding', and 'variety' of light, shade, and colour.[38] For Adam, architecture possessive of these qualities, such as buildings of the Italian baroque and the English baroque works of architect John Vanbrugh (1664–1726), stimulated in the viewer a 'movement' of 'the eyes, the mind, and the feet.'[39] Through heavily modulated surfaces and exaggerated chiaroscuro effects, baroque buildings stimulated an intense 'movement' of the eyes and inspired the mind to various imaginings, associations, and feelings upon perception. The rhythmic organisation of components and the sense of progression towards a spatial apotheosis stimulated bodily locomotion. As well as providing visual stimulation, the gradual progression through rooms of varying proportion, surface treatment, and levels of intimacy towards a central climatic space caused fluctuations in heart rate and an increased expansion and contraction of the lungs.[40] This complex and often-overlooked aspect of the picturesque, developed through Adam's practice, has largely been forgotten.

While Adam attempted to enliven the exterior architectural surface with the quality of 'movement',

it was through his interiorisation of the concept that it achieved its most meaningful expression. In the eighteenth century, it was Adam who extended the provenance of the architect to include the interior and it was 'in the planning and adornment of the most lavish interiors of his time that he fulfilled himself.'[41] His agenda for the interior was most emphatically delineated in *The Works*, which he and his brother and practice partner, the architect James Adam (1732–1794), published in a series of volumes between 1773 and 1778.[42] Through a combination of engravings (perspectival views and orthographic projections) and prefacing texts, Adam sought to outline a 'truly modern architectural style' that 'expressed to perfection, the sophistication, gaiety and elegance' of the day.[43] While his earlier publication *The Ruins* (1764) had marked the rise of the Adam style as a 'striking form of eclectic classicism', *The Works* 'managed a subtle change of emphasis', unveiling the picturesque as the future design direction of the office.[44]

Adam saw the completed interiors presented in *The Works* as a remedy to the 'dull succession of similar apartments' characteristic of the fashionable Burlingtonian neo-Palladian architecture of the early eighteenth century, which took the static repose of Renaissance architecture as its source code.[45] In contrast, Adam aspired to the interior condition that he had encountered at Diocletian's Palace and depicted in *The Ruins*. For him, this interior, in both its ruinous state and its imagined unspoiled halcyon grandeur, possessed the kind of 'movement' he had observed in landscape and the various species of baroque architecture he had come to admire on account of its 'remarkable diversity of form' and 'variety.'[46]

One of the featured projects in *The Works* is the interior at Syon House.[47] Drawing inspiration from Diocletian's Palace, Adam employed a variety of visual and spatial effects to inculcate a sequence of reception rooms with the quality of 'movement.' At Syon, the eye busily traces the varied contour of the interior, adjusting in each room to a new set of formal, material, and decorative conditions. The mind is stimulated by a multitude of allusions to different architectural epochs and styles. Bodily movement through space is prompted by framed glimpses into subsequent spaces and through the manipulation of floor levels, which together imbue the spatial sequence with a topographic aspect akin to landscape.[48]

In all its diversity, the sequence at Syon, designed and installed incrementally between 1761 and 1767, is representative of Adam's rapidly changing conception of the interior during the period. The overtly constructional high relief treatments in the rooms at the start of the sequence (designed in 1761) stand in sharp contrast to the illusory, illogical, and purely decorative two-dimensional effects in the spaces at the end of the sequence (designed by 1763 and completed in 1767). In this sense, the interior represents something of a progression through time and changing tastes. Demonstrating the shift from 'architectonic' to 'picturesque', it can be read as a journey through Adam's thinking during the period — an episodic and evolving account of the Adam style. It can also be understood as a physical manifestation of the zeitgeist, representative of the shift in architectural taste from Burlingtonianism to Adamism signalled by the growing tendency to design in two dimensions rather than in three, in line rather than mass, and in the 'lightened elegance' of 'the pretty' rather than in 'the sublime.'[49] On a more fundamental level, it is as an interior sequence that communicates ideas about the evolution of architectural style over a much longer *durée*, from the heavily articulated, massiveness evocative of the architecture of the ancient world that Adam had surveyed on his Grand Tour, to the thinness and delicacy of the contemporary picturesque-inflected neoclassicism, which, for Adam, most adequately represented the sophistication and lightness of the day.

On a modest scale and budget, the author attempted to inculcate the interior at Croome with the kind of picturesque 'movement' Adam coveted. Elements incorporated from the Adamesque interior — varied

room forms, shapely niches, decorative treatments of differing character, colouring and connotation, and spatial and material layering — would conspire to result in a heterogeneous interior condition. The proposal also borrowed techniques used by Adam to stimulate bodily locomotion through space. The 'convexity and concavity' of the wall surfaces and the folded fabric linings; the expansion and contraction or 'rise and fall' of the ceiling level; and the interplay between light, shadow, and reflection would provide a sense of 'movement' in both the horizontal and vertical planes, lending the interior some of the drama of moving through a landscape.[50]

The proposed installation was designed to be engaged with on multiple levels. On the one hand, it could be enjoyed superficially as an atmospherically diverse set of spaces for the display of archival material. On the other, it could be apprehended on an intellectual level as an archaising artefact, emitting ideas about the evolution of Adam's conception of interior space and surface over time. An interior capable of being 'read' in this way invokes esoteric eighteenth-century ways of designing gardens from which the picturesque conception of architecture and the interior emerged. According to the landscape historian John Dixon Hunt (1936–) the period was characterised by a shift from one picturesque mode of garden design to another: from a literary and intellectual picturesque mode prevalent in the early eighteenth century, where gardens were inscribed with allegorical, political, and cultural meaning, and could be 'read' like a poem or a painting by those sensitive to their messaging; to a late eighteenth century phenomenological and sensual mode where gardens and buildings were designed to intensify the existing physical qualities of a site and provide a sensorially stimulating experience for the visitor.[51] Like Adam's interiors, which developed in the transitionary period between one picturesque design sensibility and the other, the author's proposal for Croome was designed to appeal on both intellectual and sensorial levels.

conclusion

Through a series of reflections on the author's unrealised proposal for the Archive Rooms installation at Croome Court, this essay has explored latent spaces of potentiality for imagining interiors between historical research and design proposition, past and future, representation and reality, stasis and movement.

Propositionally oriented research has opened up new possibilities for appreciating the picturesque aspects of Adam's practice and brought to light often overlooked and esoteric historical ways of designing, drawing, and making interiors. Concepts, techniques, and strategies from Adam's practice, revealed by the expanded wall chart mapping, have been explicated through application in the design proposal, demonstrating their potential contemporary utility and suggesting possible new agendas for practice.

By reflecting on the methodological approach to the project, the essay reveals a potential foundational strategy for future historically informed design-led research enquires of this nature that bring together historical-interpretive research, visual methods, and inscriptive methods synonymous with architectural design practice, including sketching and orthographic drawing.

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notes

1 There are several documentary studies of the picturesque. For a detailed overview of the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century period with which it is most often associated, see Christopher Hussey, *The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View*, 2nd edn (Cass, 1967). For a detailed exploration of key aspects of the picturesque and the ways that it has informed more recent developments in art and architecture, see John Macarthur, *The Picturesque: Architecture, Disgust and Other Irregularities* (Routledge, 2007).

2 David King, *The Complete Works of Robert and James Adam* (Butterworth, 1991).

3 Robin Evans, *Translations from Drawing to Building and Other Essays* (Architectural Association, 1997), p. 207.

4 Damie Stillman, *Decorative Work of Robert Adam* (St Martin's Press, 1973), pp. 19–2. The terms 'architectonic' and 'picturesque' used to describe Adam's changing sensibility are borrowed from A. A. Tait, see Alan Andrew Tait, *Robert Adam: Drawing and Imagination* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 5–15.

5 Evans, *Translations from Drawing to Building*, pp. 195–231.

6 Robert Adam, *Ruins of the Palace of the Emperor Diocletian at Spalatro in Dalmatia* (printed for the author, 1764).

7 John Fleming, *Robert Adam and His Circle: In Edinburgh and Rome* (Murray, 1978), pp. 164–68.

8 Yves Alain Bois, 'A Picturesque Stroll around "Clara-Clara"', *October*, 29 (1984), pp. 43–46.

9 Nicholas Savage, 'Shadow, Shading and Outline in Architectural Engraving from Fréart to Letarouilly', in *Dealing with the Visual: Art History, Aesthetics and Visual Culture*, ed. by Caroline van Eck and Edward Winters (Ashgate, 2005), pp. 242–83 (p. 251).

10 Savage, 'Shadow, Shading and Outline', p. 251.

11 King, *The Complete Works of Robert and James Adam*, pp. 2–7 (p. 2). Also see Stillman, *Decorative Work of Robert Adam*; James Lees Milne, *The Age of Adam* (Batsford, 1947); Doreen Yarwood, *Robert Adam* (Dent, 1970).

12 John Summerson, *Architecture in Britain, 1530 to 1830*, 9th edn (Yale University Press, 1993), p. 251; Percy Fitzgerald, *Robert Adam, Artist and Architect: His Works and His System* (Fisher Unwin, 1904), p. 21.

13 Jon Kolko, 'Abductive Thinking and Sensemaking: The Drivers of Design Synthesis', *Design Issues*, 26.1 (2010), pp. 15–28; *Interpretive Research Design: Concepts and Processes*, ed. by Peregrine Schwartz-Shea and Dvora Yanow (Routledge, 2012).

14 For more on the Tapestry Room at Croome, see John Goldsmith Phillips, 'The Tapestry Room from Croome Court', *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, 18 November 1959.

15 Sarah Hay, *Croome Redefined: National Trust Conservation Management and Maintenance Plan*, June 2012, pp. 268–271.

16 Stillman, *Decorative Work of Robert Adam*, p. 28. Also see Ian Bristow 'The Room in the Context of Robert Adam's Work', *Philadelphia Museum of Art Bulletin*, 82.351/352 (1986), pp. 13–19.

17 Hay, *Croome Redefined*, p. 271.

18 Tait, *Robert Adam*, p. 5.

19 Tait, *Robert Adam*, pp. 5–15.

20 Tait, *Robert Adam*, pp. 5–15.

21 Adam, *Ruins of the Palace of the Emperor Diocletian at Spalatro in Dalmatia*; and Robert Adam and James Adam, *The Works in Architecture*, intro. by Henry Hope Reed (Printed for the authors, 1778; facsimile repr. Dover Publications, 2006).

22 The publication contains many engravings. Some specific examples that are pertinent to the themes explored in this essay and include Plate 5, *Plan of the Principal Story of Sion House*; Plate 6, Section of one *End of the Hall, next to the private Apartments*; and Plate 82, *View of the Library at Sion House*.

23 Tait, *Robert Adam*, p. 5.

24 Evans, *Translations from Drawing to Building*, pp. 195–231.

25 Howard Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600–1840* (John Murray, 1978), p. 48.

26 Summerson, *Architecture in Britain*, p. 262.

27 Evans, *Translations from Drawing to Building*, p. 201.

28 Evans, *Translations from Drawing to Building*, p. 201.

29 Evans, *Translations from Drawing to Building*, pp. 202–03.

30 Evans, *Translations from Drawing to Building*, pp. 207.

31 Richard Hill, *Designs and their Consequences: Architecture and Aesthetics* (Yale University Press, 1999), pp. 15–19.

32 Tait, *Robert Adam*, pp. 127–29.

33 For Girardin's picturesque-inflected approach to garden design, see José Menudo and Nicolas Rieucau, 'The Rural Economics of René de Girardin: Landscapes at the Service of L'Idéologie Nobiliaire', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 81.3 (2022), pp. 429–49.

34 Bois, 'A Picturesque Stroll around "Clara-Clara"', p. 38.

35 For Adam and the neoclassical, see Arthur Thomas Bolton, *Architecture of Robert and James Adam* (Country Life, 1922); Summerson, *Architecture in Britain*; and Milne, *The Age of Adam*.

36 For the concept of 'movement' in Adam's work, see Ariyuki K*ondo, Robert and James Adam, Architects of the Age of Enlightenment* (Routledge, 2012), pp. 85–127.

37 Macarthur, *The Picturesque*, p. 235.

38 Adam and Adam, *The Works in Architecture*, p. 1.

39 Miranda Jane Routh Hausberg, 'Robert Adam's Revolution in Architecture' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Penn State University, 2019), p. 345.

40 For discussion on the picturesque conception of 'movement' in relation to the works of the baroque, see Macarthur, *The Picturesque*, pp. 234–42.

41 Summerson, *Architecture in Britain*, p. 427.

42 Adam and Adam, *The Works in Architecture*.

43 Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House: A Social and Architectural History* (Yale University Press, 1978), p. 179.

44 Tait, *Robert Adam*, p. 111.

45 Adam, *Ruins of the Palace of the Emperor Diocletian at Spalatro in Dalmatia*, p. 9.

46 Adam, *Ruins of the Palace of the Emperor Diocletian at Spalatro in Dalmatia*, p. 9.

47 Adam and Adam, *The Works in Architecture*, pp. 1–3.

48 Adam and Adam, *The Works in Architecture*, pp. 1–3.

49 Milne, *The Age of Adam*, p. 8.

50 Adam and Adam, *The Works in Architecture*, p. 1.

51 John Dixon Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque: Studies in the History of Landscape Architecture* (MIT Press, 1997), pp. 105–36.