

ORNAMENT AND CRAFTSMANSHIP IN THE ARCHITECTURE OF JAMES GIBBS

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A mong the chief criticisms levelled at the architecture of James Gibbs by contemporaries, and later commentators, is an over-reliance on the effects of ornament. Lady Luxborough considered ‘even his genteelest things’ disgraced ‘with some awkward ornament’ while James Dallaway bemoaned the ‘love of finery in architecture’ which ‘crowded every inch of surface with petty decorations’.¹ John Gwynn in *The art of architecture* (1742) committed this judgment to rhyme:

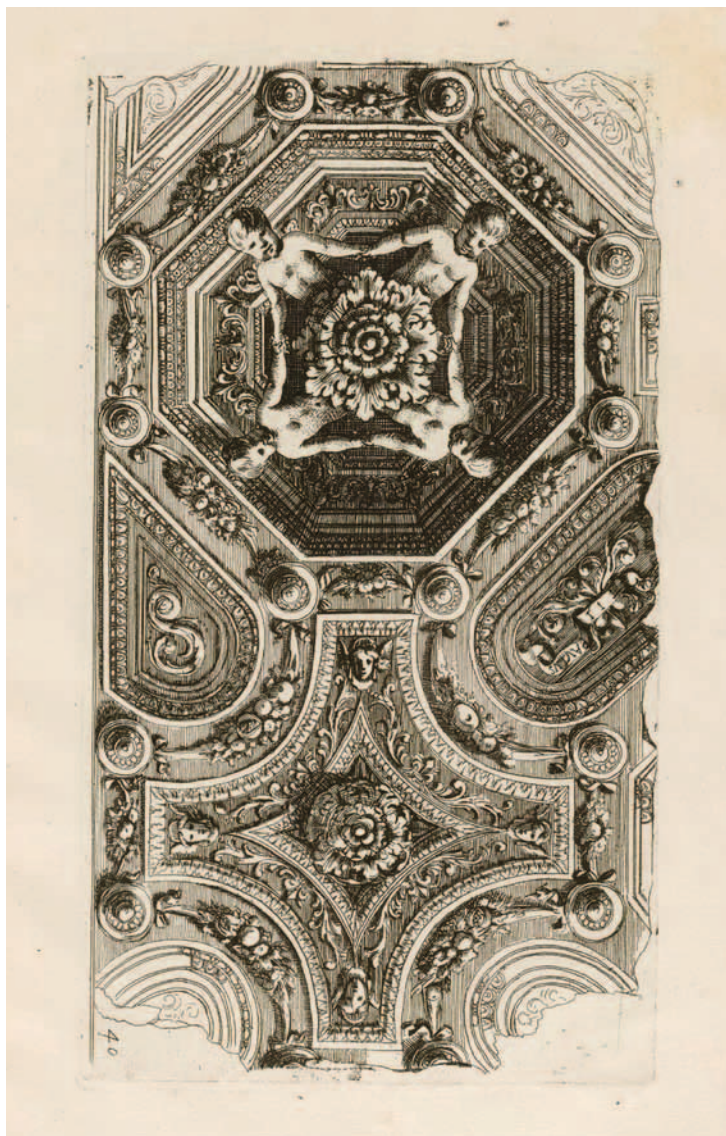
‘Gibbs may be said, most Times in Dress to please,
And few can decorate with greater Ease:
But Jones more justly knew the Eye to charm,
To please the Judgment, and the Fancy warm’.

The absence of ornament or ‘the eloquence of a plain surface’ as a defining feature of Palladianism was elaborated in the twentieth-century by Rudolf Wittkower, whose modernist and Neo-Platonic leanings also detached ornament from the history of Renaissance architecture.² Yet however much such readings have been deconstructed by recent scholarship, they continue to exert influence upon the perception of eighteenth-century architecture. Scholars of many periods have noted a similar demonization of decoration: ‘In the standard decline narratives it is ornament, specifically, that surfaces time and again as the ‘major culprit of aesthetic devolution.’³ A related problem in approaching the work of Gibbs is the catholic, and therefore unclassifiable nature of his output, ‘belonging to

none of the main schools while borrowing from all of them’.⁴ Impure, eclectic and decorative, Gibbs’s works, much admired for their response to site, robust material presence, and in particular the richness of their interiors, nevertheless remain the country cousins of buildings by the Burlington circle. This essay considers Gibbs’ approach to stucco decoration and his relationship with continental *stuccatori*. It argues, contrary to traditional perception, that Gibbs’ approach to ornament was more classicizing and controlled than has been acknowledged.

Gibbs’s training in the studio of Carlo Fontana was of fundamental importance for his approach to ornament. Initially trained in the office of a widely respected measurer-architect, Fontana went on to work in the studios of the artist-architects Pietro da Cortona and Gian Lorenzo Bernini. From the latter he developed an acute understanding of the *bel composto*, ‘of molding (sic) all of the arts to a single expressive purpose’.⁵ The restraint of Fontana’s architecture, seen as ‘a bridge’ between the classicism of Palladio and Bernini and English Neo-Palladianism,⁶ was also of central importance for Gibbs, as was the methodological rigour instilled in Fontana’s studio. From his cumulative experience Fontana emerged as the most effective orchestrator of decorative projects in Rome at the turn of the eighteenth century. He provided the architectural framework and guidance for combined workshops of painters, sculptors and *stuccatori*, initially furnishing

Fig. 1. Adam Philippon, *Curieuses recherches de plusieurs beaux morceaux D'ornemens Antiques, et Modernes, tant dans la Ville de Rome, ques autres villes et lieux d'Italie*, Paris, 1645. (gallica.bnf.fr/Bibliothèque nationale de France)



designs for framework, figuration and ornament, though gradually his control was eroded by the burgeoning ascendancy of sculptural workshops. His direct knowledge of craftsmanship, careful attention to scenographic effect, close supervision of artists and craftsmen and effective teaching methods rendered his studio the most popular destination for foreign architects in Rome. For Hellmut Hager,

Fontana was 'a representative of artisanship within the architect's profession'.⁷

In Fontana's studio Nicodemus Tessin, Filippo Juvarra and James Gibbs learned the art of orchestrating complex, multi-media workshops. Like Gibbs, Tessin and Juvarra designed richly ornamented buildings in which decoration was integral to the articulation of function and volume.

Joining Fontana's studio in 1704, Gibbs was doubtless aware of the architect's involvement in the embellishment of the Basilica of Saint John Lateran initiated by Pope Clement XI in 1702, in which the architect was tasked with determining the proportions of the apostolic statues to fill Borromini's vast niches in the piers of the nave arcade.⁸ Likewise Gibbs would have known at first hand the orchestration of painting, sculpture and architecture in the Cybo Chapel at Santa Maria del Popolo (1680–7) and the Baptismal Chapel of Saint Peter's Basilica (1692–8) which are among Fontana's greatest decorative achievements. Fontana encouraged his students to draw the works of sixteenth and seventeenth-century masters. Two drawings of canonical coffered ceilings among the Gibbs collection at the V&A are perhaps reflective of his youthful copying; one a detail of the distinctive putti-framed cross and lozenge coffering of the Scala Regia in the Vatican Palace, the other an outline drawing of a detail from Domenichino's bold variant on the Sala Regia coffering in the nave of Santa Maria in Trastevere.⁹ The source for Gibbs's drawing of respective ceilings, and indeed for a number of other drawings in his collection, are plates from a suite of engravings entitled *Curieuses recherches de plusieurs beaux morceaux D'ornemens Antiques, et Modernes, tant dans la Ville de Rome, que autres villes et lieux d'Italie* published in 1645 by Adam Philippon (Fig. 1).¹⁰ Better known as the master of Jean Le Pautre (1618–82), Philippon (1606–52) was the royal cabinet maker to Louis XIII and spent years in Rome researching ancient and modern models for palace decoration. The suite has hitherto escaped notice as a source for Gibbs's decorative work, as it lacks a title page and was listed in his book catalogue with the vague spine designation 'diverses figures'.¹¹

Gibbs also acquired, at an unknown date and location, a manuscript volume of ink and watercolour designs for decoration by the French painter and decorator Jean Cotelte I (1607–76) which contains all manner ornament for walls, ceilings,

alcoves and decorative detail.¹² Whereas Philippon provided Gibbs with canonical classical detailing, Cotelte offered bold compartmented compositions with sumptuous classical borders and a wealth of classicizing figurative devices for the decoration of spandrels and cardinal points of ceilings (Fig. 2). The volume of Cotelte's designs for Parisian and regional projects of the 1640s also offered a model for office practice in terms of the form and execution of drawings of mural and ceiling ornament. Indeed, the half ceiling designs with bold preliminary room outlines executed in ink and infill ornament in graphite are echoed in the design procedures of Gibbs' office. Likewise the clear compartmented form of Cotelte's ceilings, like those of Jones and Webb, find resonance in the ordered grid-like soffits in the Gibbs's office drawings, though the sumptuous seventeenth-century ornament was significantly toned down.

Carlo Fontana's Ticinese origins resulted in a close working relationship with artists and builders from that region who dominated the building industry in Rome. Gibbs may well have

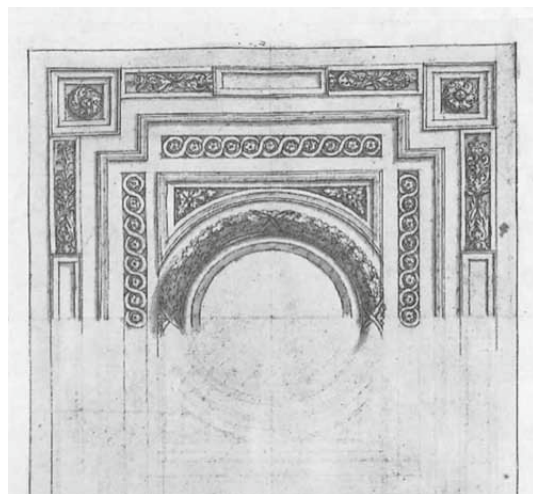


Fig. 2. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, Jean Cotelte I, Ceiling design (327) from an album formerly in the collection of James Gibbs.



Fig. 3. Chapel of the Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple, Sacro Monte, Varese.
(Wikimedia Commons)

visited the Swiss Canton of Ticino, since his drawings collection includes a plan and elevation of a diminutive pilgrimage chapel by Giuseppe Bernascone on the Sacro Monte at Varese in Lombardy close to the border.¹³ The Chapel, dedicated to the Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple, is the fourth in a sequence of fourteen chapels (1604–1619) ingeniously sited and interspersed with triumphal arches and fountains

along the mountainside route. (Fig. 3) A domed rotunda encircled by four aedicular porticos and arcaded quadrants, the Presentation Chapel is arguably the most engaging of Bernascone's inventions. The Sacro Monte overlooks the southern territory of the Canton Ticino and lies a mere eleven miles south-west of the village of Rovio, the birthplace of Gibbs' stuccatore Giovanni Battista Bagutti who, together with his younger associate Giuseppe Artari, from the neighbouring village of Arogno, executed the stuccowork at Cannons, Ditchley and St Martin-in-the-Fields. In his brief published comments on the latter in *A Book of Architecture*, Gibbs considered 'Signori Artari and Bagutti, the best Fret-workers that ever came into England' (Fig. 4).¹⁴ Likewise they are singled out for the 'handsomely adorned' ceiling of Marylebone Chapel, the 'beautif'd' ceiling and walls of the new public building [Senate House] at Cambridge, and the 'richly adorn'd Octagon' at what is now known as Orleans House at Twickenham.¹⁵ Other than mention of the sculptors Michael Rysbrack and Francis Bird in relation to funerary monuments, these are the only references to authorship of crafted surfaces in Gibbs's buildings in *A Book of Architecture*.

While Bagutti appears to have returned to Ticino in the early 1730s Giovanni Battista Artari continued to work in England until the 1750s while also maintaining a presence at the court of the Archbishop-Elector of Cologne at Bonn.¹⁶ Gibbs employed Artari on several occasions, lastly it seems at Ragley Hall (Warwickshire) which was Gibbs's final project and Artari's last attributed commission in England. They undoubtedly had a good working relationship. At the Radcliffe Camera Artari found that the drawings provided by Gibbs's office were incorrectly annotated and that the ceilings of the galleries were lower than indicated. Artari duly altered his designs so that they would appear more 'gentile' or elegant, and when he sought payment from the Duke of Beaufort in 1743, explaining the compensatory pains taken, Gibbs fully supported



Fig. 4. St Martin-in-the Fields, detail of ceiling plasterwork. (Author)



Fig. 5. The Senate House, Cambridge, detail of coffering. (Author)

the claim, writing that Artari had finished everything at the library ‘in a very good manner some time ago, and has really done more than he agreed for’.¹⁷ Something also appears to have gone awry in the design process at the Cambridge Senate House. Gibbs’ original designs show a full framing border of guilloche to the vast coffered ceiling but in execution there was room for only part thereof which Artari effectively subsumed within the whole (Fig. 5).¹⁸

Gibbs was robust in his handling of such problems and doubtless valued Artari’s adaptability: ‘If any blunder is committed in it, few people see (s) it, and it may be those who see it are not proper judges whither it may be well or ill performed’ (*sic*).¹⁹ Yet despite Artari’s sustained role as Gibbs’s favoured stuccatore there are no signed drawings by him in the Gibbs collection. Indeed the only autograph designs by *stuccatori* in the collection are two



Fig. 6. Paolo Lafranchini, design for a ceiling.
(Ashmolean museum, Oxford. Department of Prints
and Drawings, WA1925.341.104B)

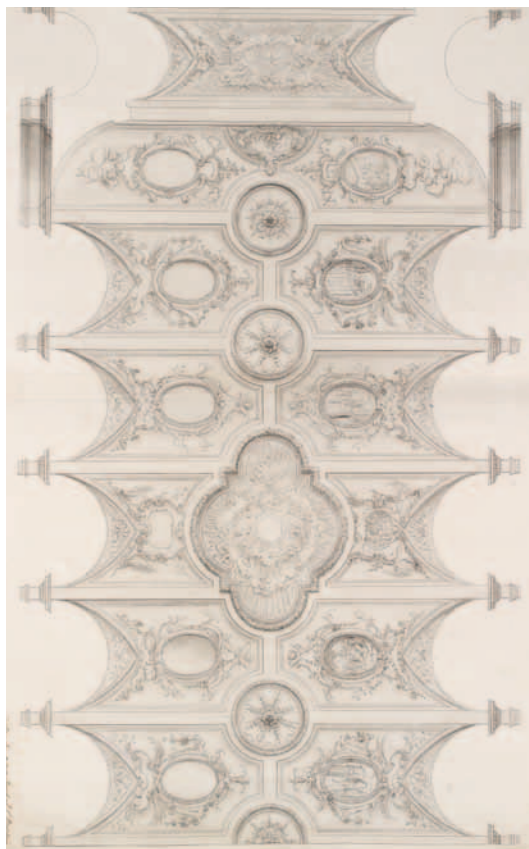


Fig. 7. Presentation drawing for St Martin-in-the-Fields.
(Ashmolean museum, Oxford. Department of Prints
and Drawings, WA1925.343.31A)

drawings for a relatively modest town house by Paolo Lafranchini whose surviving works were all executed in Ireland (Fig. 6).²⁰

The Gibbs drawing collection at the Ashmolean Museum tells us much about the architect's approach to ornament and raises important questions about the organisation of his office. It contains eight drawings which can securely be attributed to *stuccatori* active in Britain and Ireland. Together with four anonymous designs, these include the two signed Lafranchini designs, a design for the gallery of the Radcliffe Camera which

can safely be attributed to Giuseppe Artari, and a large and spectacular proposal for the ceiling of St Martin-in-the Fields, most likely by Artari, who was celebrated by his peers for drawing as well as modelling skills (Fig. 7).²¹ A number of Gibbs office drawings can be linked to several of those by the *stuccatori*, and these cast light on the relationship of Gibbs to his craftsman and on his chosen method of decoration. The office drawings for mural and ceiling plasterwork ornament are much more numerous and homogenous in character. In contrast to the drawings of the *stuccatori*, which are delicately

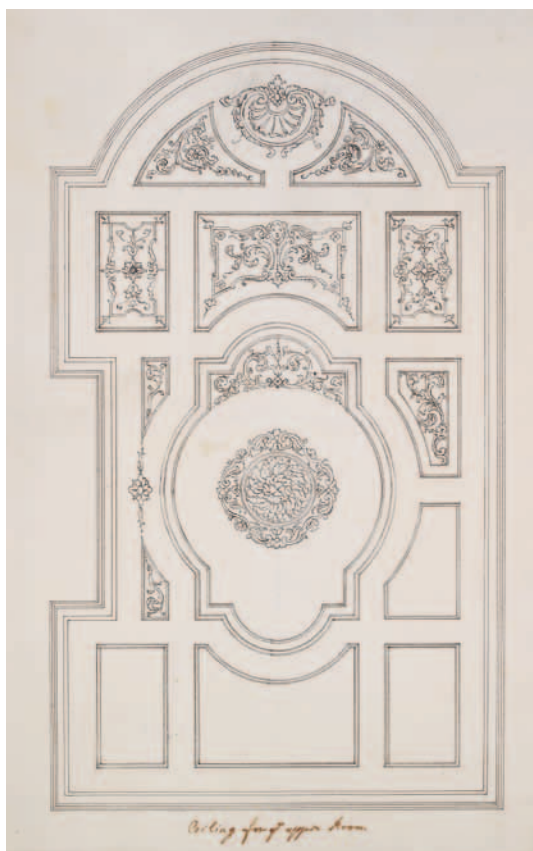


Fig. 8. Ceiling for an upper room of a town house.
(Ashmolean museum, Oxford. Department of Prints
and Drawings, WA1925.341.106-a)

executed in pencil or ink with lively gestural flourishes, the office drawings are for the most part carefully finished designs in ink and wash. Largely rectangular or square coved and flat compositions, they are for the most part clearly regimented into a system of ribs and panels with ornament strictly contained within the grid. By contrast, the *stuccatori* used foliate, abstract and figurative ornament to achieve illusionism and movement. Paolo Lafranchini's feathery pencil designs were formalised in two more regimented office drawings for ceilings of the ground and upper floor of an unidentified

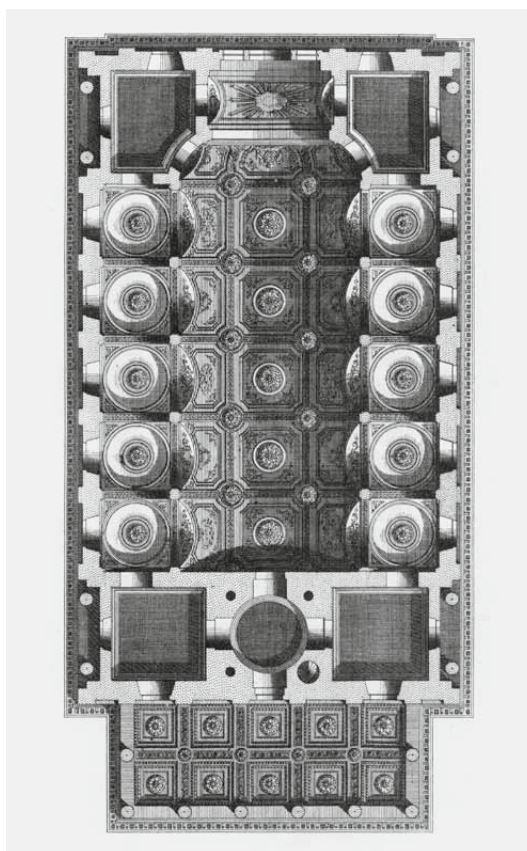


Fig. 9. St Martin-in-the-Fields, detail of ceiling
decoration, from James Gibbs,
A Book of Architecture (London, 1728).

town house with a bowed window (Fig. 8), while Artari and Bagutti's rich scheme for St Martin-in-the Fields with its multiple figurative ovals was rejected by Gibbs in favour of a more austere coffered vault with minimal figurative ornament (Fig. 9).

The contrast between the office and craftsmen's drawings raises a question about the organisation of Gibbs's office and the architect's role in the generation of project drawings. Given the scale of Gibbs's activity in architecture and in publishing, it is probable that many of the day-to-day duties were delegated. His principal assistant from the late 1720s

until his death in 1754 was John Borlach, ‘many years my draughtsman’, to whom he bequeathed the not inconsiderable sum of £400.²² Borlach appears to have been of Anglo-Jewish Dresden parentage and a brother of Johann Gottlieb Borlach, famed engineer of the Saxon salt mines whose brother ‘Johann’ was described by his biographer as a ‘Baumeister’ or building surveyor in Britain.²³ Following his employment by Gibbs in 1736, Paolo Lafranchini travelled to Ireland to take up a prestigious commission under the direction of the architect Richard Castle, also, remarkably, of Anglo-Jewish-German origin, whose father had been a prominent trade emissary for the Saxon salt mines.²⁴ How Richard Castle (whose real name was David von Richardi) and Johann Borlach found themselves in London in the mid-1720s is as yet unknown. However, the preparations for Gibbs’s *Book of Architecture* (1728) would certainly have attracted such highly skilled draughtsmen-surveyors. Castle had Scottish connections, albeit Whig rather than Tory: he was a close associate of Sir Gustavus Hume of Castle Hume in County Fermanagh who was a Groom of the Bedchamber to George I, a visitor to the Hanoverian court and the cousin and confidant of the Patrick Hume, Lord Polwarth and first Earl of Marchmont.²⁵ From an Irish perspective the evidence of the Borlach-Castle ancestry is compelling and demands further investigation, particularly as Richard Castle, like Gibbs, employed the Lafranchini brothers, and his robust ornamented buildings have frequently drawn comparisons to the works of Gibbs. Castle, a first-rate architectural draughtsman, settled in Ireland in 1728 just as Gibbs’s *Book of Architecture* had reached its conclusion. We clearly need to know a great deal more about the running of Gibbs’s office and about the authorship of the surviving drawings collections, for, as amply demonstrated by Andrew Saint, ‘architecture is more like a highly organised collaborative business than a fine art. The designer never stands alone’.²⁶

A comparison of the initial ceiling proposal for St Martin-in-the-Fields with Gibbs’s final design (Figs. 7, 9) points up the considerable control which Gibbs exerted over his craftsmen, and, most importantly, his editing of figuration in favour of the canonical ornament of Classical architecture, variations of acanthus ornament being the greatest concession to pictorial decoration. In the Artari-Bagutti proposal each bay of the nave above the vaulting spandrels has a richly framed oval medallion containing ambitious scenes from the life of Christ. At the centre of the bipartite vault is a grandiose quatrefoil panel containing a heavenly host of seraphim with a similarly figured rectangular panel centred upon the dove of the Holy Ghost above the chancel. The frames of the oval medallions varied in ornament with acanthus, palm and festoon alternating with cherubim and foliate pendants, echoed in alternating patterns in the spandrel ornament and the minor ceiling bosses in a feast of fluid, sensuous, pictorial ornament which would have had considerable impact on the restrained galleried interior. The considerable pains taken in the figurative ornament of this spectacular drawing went unrewarded. Gibbs produced an alternative coffered design dominated by guilloche-adorned ribs with acanthus bosses at the intersections. In his *Rules for drawing the several parts of architecture* (1738), Gibbs alluded to his ‘very good effect’ of his geometric design with ‘large squares, the angles taken off, with Roses in them’.²⁷ Nor was this an isolated instance of architectonic ornament. Gibbs’s office drawings translated Paolo Lafranchini’s feathery, overlapping cartouches, festoons and acanthus into discrete panels of contained and controlled ornament (Figs. 6, 8). In the vaults and ceilings of the Radcliffe Camera, St Mary-le-Strand, the Great Hall of Saint Bartholomew’s Hospital and the Senate House at Cambridge, Gibbs chose big bold coffered or compartmented designs. At Sudbrook Park, Petersham and Ragley Hall (Warwickshire) the architectural framework



Fig. 10. Paolo and Filippo Lafranchini, Ceiling of the Eating Parlour at Carton, County Kildare 1739. (*Stephen Farrell*)

dominates. Rarely in Gibbs's architecture do we find ceiling coves with high-relief figurative ornament or extensive provision for painted decoration.

It is worth considering the attitudes of Gibbs's contemporaries to interior ornament by way of contextualising his predominantly classicising approach. Giuseppe Artari also collaborated with Gibbs's rivals William Kent and Giacomo Leoni in the monumental stone halls at Houghton (Norfolk) and Clandon Park (Surrey), interiors which bear useful comparison to Gibbs's collaborative work with Artari at St Martin-in-the-Fields, the Senate House and Ragley. While Kent and Leoni undoubtedly exercised control over Artari's propensity to gestural and pictorial ornament, nevertheless the prominent role afforded to figuration stands in sharp contrast to Gibbs's preference for gridded compositions and standard classical mouldings. It is somewhat ironic that Artari's spectacular skills as a *figurista* found little room for expression in the buildings of his chief

employer in Britain for whom classical 'fretwork' was the norm. It was the painter-architect William Kent who drew from Artari his most vigorous work in Britain, the cove of the Stone Hall at Houghton, while Leoni, versed in Palladianism and German Baroque scenography, achieved with Artari a most remarkable decorative synthesis of architectural order and figurative illusionism in the Stone Hall at Clandon. The daunting problems of reinstating high-relief sculptural stuccowork which confront conservators at Clandon in the wake of the 2015 fire is a measure of the freedom afforded to Giuseppe Artari by Giacomo Leoni, and by extension of the control which James Gibbs exerted over his spectacular sculptural skills.

As Paolo Lafranchini furnished designs for James Gibbs and for Richard Castle in Ireland, his collaboration with Castle is also instructive in pointing up the character of Gibbs's decorative concerns. Lafranchini's great debut in Ireland was

the Eating Parlour of 1738 in Castle's remodelling of Carton House in County Kildare for the nineteenth Earl of Kildare, Ireland's foremost peer. The scheme, which set a new standard for the representative interior in Ireland, was widely acclaimed and aptly described as 'one of the most extravagant displays of baroque plasterwork in the British Isles' (Fig. 10).²⁸ In contrast to the foliate ornament in his relatively restrained designs for James Gibbs, Lafranchini's ceiling at Carton is a full-blown historiated or figurative cove which builds upon Artari's frieze of festoon-bound putti in the cove at Houghton to give a high relief representation of the Loves of the Gods ultimately derived from Giovanni Lanfranco's

Council of the Gods in the Saloon of the Villa Borghese in Rome.²⁹ While Castle and his clients gave full rein to Lafranchini's superlative figurative and ornamental skills, there is a clear order and control evident in the composition which is defined by six figurative cartouches which are linked by the festoon-bearing putti. Similar negotiation between architect and stuccatore is evident in other collaborative projects while a comparison of surviving designs by the Lafranchini brothers with executed projects demonstrates the editing hand of the architect who cut infilling ornament to achieve greater clarity of composition (Fig. 11). Yet for all Castle's control of his craftsmen, it is the richly



Fig. 11. Paolo and Filippo Lafranchini, Ceiling of the Saloon at No. 85 St Stephen's Green. (*Stephen Farrell*)

figurative character of his interiors which is most in evidence in contrast to the essentially architectural ornament of Gibbs' interior schemes.

Gibbs's writings show that while he clearly enjoyed sculptural ornament in the interior, he did not admire profusion. In his 'Remarks on some of the finest Antient and Modern Buildings in Rome, and other parts of Italy' he repeatedly describes the magnificence of Italian decorative interiors but drew the line in Naples and Milan where he found the interiors 'overcharged with too many ornaments and encrusted with variety of marbles without judgment, they deviate from that fine taste the Roman architects have in ornamenting their churches'.³⁰

In the introduction to *A Book of Architecture* he criticized 'wrong-judged profuseness' and argued that architecture was not about the 'gaudiness of the finishing ... but the proportion of the parts to one another and to the whole, whether entirely plain or enriched with a few ornaments properly disposed'.³¹

Likewise Gibbs clearly distinguished between the 'common workman' and the architect. In remonstrating with the clients about proceeding in building the Radcliffe Camera without his direction, Gibbs argued that building by contractors 'according to their own fancy without a head' would result in mistakes and reflect badly upon them and 'upon the architect so long as ye building laste'.³² Why



Fig. 12. Saloon, Ditchley, Oxfordshire.
(Haddon Davies Contemporary Photography)



Fig. 13. Velvet Drawing room, Ditchley Park. (*Haddon Davies Contemporary Photography*)

then was Gibbs perceived as a purveyor of ‘petty decorations’?³³ This may partially be explained by the degree of agency afforded to craftsmen in some of the projects associated with him. Ditchley in Oxfordshire is a case in point. Its puzzling array of interiors range from the cool eloquence of a plain wall in the grandiose entrance hall to an all-singing-all-dancing stuccowork scheme in the adjoining Saloon executed by a team of *stuccatori* which included Artari, Francesco Serena and the young Francesco Antonio Vassalli. (Fig. 12) Here Lady Luxborough’s charge of ‘awkward ornament’ is fully merited, though it appears that the culprit was not Gibbs but rather the *stuccatori* who appear to have been given totally free rein.³⁴ The unfettered agency of skilled craftsmen must surely occupy part of that elusive space between design

and making in eighteenth-century architecture in which the dressing of the interior surfaces was often not subject to sustained architectural control. A design from Gibbs’s office for one of the minor ceilings at Ditchley Park (Fig. 13) is a model of rectitude by comparison to the decoration of the Saloon, and might easily have been transposed from one of several square, Greek cross designs in Gibbs’s Cotellet album by editing out the latter’s rich ornament.³⁵

The agency of the client, as well as that of the craftsman, was particularly focused on the finishing of the interior. This is illustrated in correspondence of 1724 between Gibbs’s joiner, Charles Griffith, and the Earl of Strafford regarding the completion of the gallery at Wentworth Castle in Yorkshire. Despite a detailed account of the manner ‘Desired

by Mr Gibbs', Griffith felt moved to advise Strafford that the pilasters would 'loock better each side ye dores in ye pavilions then in the corners of ye room' and likewise waited on his Lordship's 'will whether I must flute them or not'.³⁶ Yet, Gibbs's reputation for fussy decoration cannot simply be laid at the feet of over-enthusiastic patrons or craftsmen. At the Radcliffe Camera, a building certainly overseen by him, the choice of stucco decoration in the gallery ceilings is puzzling. In contrast to the canonical coffering of the principal dome and 'circular concave dishes' of the vestibule vaults, Artari delivered a delicate foliate scheme in the emerging *rocaille* taste, utterly at odds with the robust classicism of the building as a whole, and not shown in the engraved images of the interior published by Gibbs in *Bibliotheca Radcliviana*. Despite this puzzling employment of *rocaille* elements in an otherwise classical building (perhaps related to the miscalculated ceiling levels), Gibbs on the whole appears to have had little sympathy with *Régence* or *rocaille* ornament. Though he owned prints by Jean Berain and Paul Decker which exhibited the European taste for grotesques and delicate bandwork, they had little or no impact on his approach to ornament. Unsurprisingly therefore, his library did not contain suites of Rococo prints nor the first vehicle of the new Picturesque manner to be published in London, Gaetano Brunetti's *Sixty different sorts of ornament ... Very useful to painters, sculptors, stone-carvers, wood carvers, silversmiths etc* of 1736.

While the muddled ornament at the Radcliffe Camera speaks of Gibbs's 'compromising' tendencies, the relentless emphasis on ornament in critiques of his work seems to stem as much from the binary tropes of classicist and modernist critique, as it does from the reality of Gibbs's buildings.³⁷ Like Wren, Gibbs, for the most part, did not exploit the expressive effects of unmodulated surfaces; for him eloquence lay in the articulation of the wall rather than in its abstract, planar properties. Like



Fig. 14. James Gibbs, St Mary-le-Strand, London. (Author)

Wren, he was committed to the apparatus of the classical orders and its decorative implications. James Dallaway's withering comments on his 'love of finery' and 'petty decorations' were directed at the superimposed exterior orders of St Mary-le-Strand (Fig. 14). St Paul's Cathedral was likewise criticised for its division into two orders by Dallaway, who wished that Wren 'had been more sparing of



Fig. 15. Sir Christopher Wren, St Paul's Cathedral, London. (Author)

festoons which crowd the surface, already broken into minute rustic, to the very summit' (Fig. 15).³⁸ Vanbrugh's Castle Howard likewise exhibited 'an infinite littleness of parts perpetually interrupting the intended effect of the whole', while at the Adam brothers' Adelphi in London 'petty ornaments multiplied to exuberance'.³⁹ Northern Gothic, Mudejar and English Perpendicular all fell foul of Dallaway's purist sensibility in contrast to Norman, Early English Gothic, Palladian and Neoclassical architecture, a lineage conflated with confessional persuasion: 'The coincidence of the purity of the protestant worship with the chasteness which pervades its temples ... is a certain criterion of national good sense'.⁴⁰

Henrietta Knight, Lady Luxborough, who considered 'even his genteel things' disgraced 'with some awkward ornament', was born two years after Gibbs's death, and was a self-confessed

admirer of a plain style. Her comments to William Shenstone were made when he loaned her a copy of *A book of Architecture* as inspiration for the choice of ornamental urns: 'upon the whole, I would have it very plain ... masks or lyres, or any handles, spoil the look, and the proportions in my opinion ... I return Gibbs'.⁴¹ John Gwynn's poetic juxtaposition of easy pleasure in Gibbs's decorative architecture ('in Dress to please'), versus Inigo Jones's appeal to judgment, built on a long tradition in binary opposition of design and decoration, in which ornament was the whipping boy of purity, lucidity, masculinity and rationality.⁴² Notwithstanding assessments of quality and originality in Gibbs's architecture, its dismissal on grounds of ornamental excess is more a matter of taste and rhetoric than reasoned judgment.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Terry Friedman, *James Gibbs* (New Haven and London, 1984) pp. 18, 20 (for 'pretty' read 'petty').
- 2 Alina Payne, 'Rudolf Wittkower and architectural principles in the age of modernism', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 53 (1994) pp. 322–42.
- 3 Chancal Dadlani, 'Innovation, appropriation and representation: Mughal architectural ornament in the eighteenth century' in Alina Payne and Gülru Necipoğlu, *Histories of Ornament: from global to local* (Oxford and Princeton, 2016) pp. 178–189, at p. 178. For similar trends in the historiography of late Gothic architecture see Ethan Matt Kavaler, *Renaissance Gothic: architecture and the arts in northern Europe, 1470–1540* (London and New Haven, 2013) pp. 23–24.
- 4 Neil Burton, review of Terry Friedman, *James Gibbs*, in *AA files*, no. 9 (Summer 1985) pp. 104–5.
- 5 John Pinto, 'The legacy of Carlo Fontana: Nicola Michetti and the Pallavicini Rospigliosi Chapel in San Francesco a Ripa' in Giuseppe Bonaccorso e Francesco Moschini eds., *Carlo Fontana 1638–1714 Celebrato Architetto* (Accademia Nazionale di San Luca, Rome, 2017), pp. 376–80, 378.
- 6 F. Borsi, *Bernini architetto* (Milan, 1980), p. 273 cited by Rosa Maria Giusto 'Carlo Fontana, la formazione dell'architetto e il "senso pratico del mestiere"', in Giuseppe Bonaccorso e Francesco Moschini eds., *Carlo Fontana*, pp. 359–366 at p. 361.
- 7 Hellmut Hager, 'Carlo Fontana: pupil, partner, principal, preceptor', *Studies in the History of Art*, 38 (1993), pp. 123–55, at p. 142.
- 8 M. Conforti, 'Planning the Lateran apostles', *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome*, 35 (1980), pp. 243–260; Alicia Adamczak, 'Il ruolo dell'architetti nei cantieri di scultura del tardo barocco romano' in Giuseppe Bonaccorso e Francesco Moschini (eds.), *Carlo Fontana 1638–1714 Celebrato Architetto*, pp. 329–334.
- 9 V&A, Department of Prints and Drawings, James Gibbs E3656–1915, E3656–1913.
- 10 Plates 38 and 39 are the sources for Gibbs' drawings.
- 11 I am grateful to Jo Maddocks of the Bodleian Library Rare Books Department for clarifying the provenance of the Philippon volume.
- 12 Ashmolean Museum (Jon Whiteley), *Catalogue of the collection of drawings*, vol.7, French School (Oxford, 2000), pp. 94–117; Jacqueline de Lacroix-Vaubois, 'Jean I Cotelie, dessinateur et décorateur' in Emmanuel Coquery, *Rinceaux e figures, l'ornement en France au XVIIe siècle* (Paris, 2005), pp. 45–60.
- 13 Terry Friedman, *Gibbs*, p. 6, fig. 2.
- 14 James Gibbs, *A book of architecture* (London, 1728), p. v.
- 15 *Ibid*, pp. vii, ix, xix.
- 16 Christine Casey, *Making magnificence: architects, stuccatori and the eighteenth-century interior* (New Haven and London, 2017), pp. 217–224.
- 17 Badminton Archives, FmJ 4/1/1, copy agreements, estimates, bills and building accounts relating to the Radcliffe Camera and including two letters from Giuseppe Artari to the Duke of Beaufort dated 2 January 1745 and 21 November 1745. Cited by permission of the Duke of Beaufort.
- 18 Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, Gibbs Collection, vol.2, no.63/64.
- 19 Badminton Archives, Fm J 4/1/1.
- 20 Ashmolean Museum, WA1925.341.104a-b.
- 21 Ashmolean Museum, WA1925.341.104a-b, two unsigned pencil designs for square ceilings; WA1925.341.104a-b, two pencil designs by Paolo Lafranchini ceiling designs for a bowed room; WA1925.343.40a, presentation drawing for the ceiling of 'Mr Sambrooks at Gubbins'; WA1925.341.61a, elongated octagonal ceiling design with illusionistic arcade, ink over pencil; WA1925.343.31A, presentation drawing for St Martin-in-the-Fields.
- 22 Friedman, *Gibbs*, p. 18.
- 23 Johann Andreas Bischof, 'Geschichtlich, technologische Mittheilungen über das königlich Preussische, im herzogthum Sachsen gelegene, Salzwerk zu Dürrenberg', *Archiv fuer Bergbau und Huettenwesen*, 20 (Berlin, 1831)1, p. 5n. A footnote in a biographical account of the distinguished Saxon mining engineer Johann Gottfried Borlach refers to his brother Johann Gottlieb 'in der Folge Oberlandbaumeister in England'. An engraving of Kinross House 'drawn by J. G. Borlack' was later published by William Adam: Friedman, *Gibbs*, p. 25; National Records of Scotland RHP8787.
- 24 Loreto Calderón and Konrad Dechant, 'New

- light on Hugh Montgomerie, Richard Castle and Number 85 Saint Stephen's Green', in *The eighteenth-century Dublin town house; Form, function and finance*, ed. Christine Casey (Dublin, 2010), pp. 174–196.
- 25 Melanie Hayes, 'Anglo-Irish architectural exchange: patrons, practitioners and pieds-à-terre' (PhD thesis, University of Dublin, 2015), *passim*.
- 26 Andrew Saint, 'The conundrum of by' in Malcolm Airs and William Whyte (eds.), *Architectural history after Colvin* (Donington, 2013), pp. 58–70 at p.
- 27 James Gibbs, *Rules for drawing the several parts of architecture* (London, 1737), p. 37.
- 28 John Cornforth, *Early Georgian interiors* (New Haven and London, 2004), p. 47.
- 29 Joseph McDonnell, *Irish eighteenth-century stuccowork and its European sources* (Dublin, 1989), pp. 4–5.
- 30 Sir John Soane's Museum, 'A few short Cursory Remarks on some of the finest Antient and Modern Buildings in Rome, and other parts of Italy, by Mr Gibbs,' typescript by A. Bolton FSA, p. 40.
- 31 Gibbs, *Book of Architecture*, pp. ii–iii.
- 32 Badminton Archives, FmJ 4/1/1.
- 33 Rev. James Dallaway, *Observations on English architecture, military, ecclesiastical, and civil, compared with similar buildings on the continent* (London, 1806), p. 157.
- 34 *Letters written by the late Right Honourable Lady Luxborough to William Shenstone, Esq.* (London, 1775), p. 139.
- 35 Ashmolean Museum, WA1925.341.96a.
- 36 British Library, Wentworth papers, Add.Ms 22239, nos. 128, 159.
- 37 Sir John Summerson, *Architecture in Britain 1530–1830* (Harmondsworth, 1991), p. 326.
- 38 Dallaway, *Observations on English architecture*, pp. 157, 205.
- 39 *Ibid.*, pp. 209, 216.
- 40 *Ibid.*, p. 70.
- 41 *Letters written by the late Right Honourable Lady Luxborough to William Shenstone, Esq.* (London, 1775) p. 167.
- 42 'The overt rejection of decoration and of the pleasures of visual display are always philosophically grounded in some form of ontological dualism which, in the European world, derives ultimately from the Platonic tradition': David Brett, *Rethinking decoration* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 34; Christy Anderson, 'Masculine and unaffected: Inigo Jones and the classical ideal', *Art Journal*, 56/2; *How men look: on the masculine ideal and the body beautiful* (Summer 1997), pp. 48–54.