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Relief in the Round: Terracotta Classicism and the Homeric Friezes of Ickworth House

Introduction

Much has been written about the British elite's engagement with classical and classically inspired sculpture in the long eighteenth century, focusing especially on the collection and display of free-standing works in semi-public and private houses and gardens.[1] This study comes at the subject from a different angle by examining relief sculpture's use on a building's exterior. Falling between the disciplines of art and architectural history, relief sculpture tends to be regarded as something of a secondary or ornamental mode.[2] Yet the form is productive to study for the different opportunities it affords artists and patrons, not least its abilities to portray a wider range of subjects than free-standing sculpture because of its economy of resources and to create narratives through the continuous frieze. Individual panels of relief in Georgian Britain have received attention in sculpture galleries and as chimney pieces — that is interior settings where the form's pictorial qualities permit it to function like a stone canvas. This study is equally interested in the ways relief's depth blurs distinctions between building and sculptural object.[3] Instead of dividing the study of sculpture into interior and exterior or house and garden, programmes of relief in series can enjoy an active, reciprocal relationship with buildings to which they are attached.

Rather than attempting a comprehensive survey of relief sculpture in Britain during this period, this study considers a single, if unique, case-study in greater detail. Ickworth, a country house in Suffolk which employs relief to an exceptional extent, provides a meaningful illustration of the form's capabilities and resonances (fig. 1). While the collecting

habits and architectural aspirations of Ickworth's lavish-spending patron, Frederick Augustus Hervey, fourth Earl of Bristol, have enjoyed excellent discussion in the work of Rebecca Campion, its remarkable programme of relief sculpture — largely made up of Homeric scenes based on John Flaxman's celebrated illustrations running round a central rotunda — has received little attention in its own right.[4] This oversight, shared by earlier accounts of the house, further justifies its centrality here and merits explanation.[5]

The 'Earl Bishop', as Hervey was known due to his two Irish episcopal sees which provided the source of his great wealth, has been labelled the 'ultimate' Grand Tourist: archetypal in his love of Italy, but trendsetting in his ambitious building programmes and 'authentic and archaeological' in his approaches to Neoclassical patronage.[6] Begun in 1795 after Hervey lost interest in Irish political causes he championed earlier in his career, Ickworth was the third country house he commissioned from scratch, succeeding two striking mansions in County Derry constructed in 1776 and 1787.[7] Building on scholarship that emphasizes Hervey's penchant for adapting European cultural forms for domestic projects, the first part of this study begins in Italy, where architectural precedents may be found for the use of relief at Ickworth.[8] Rome's villas and imperial monuments are crucial models but also the new palazzi of Milan, the workplace of the sibling sculptors Donato and Casimiro Carabelli whom Hervey shipped to Suffolk to adorn what he conceived as a pictorial *and* sculptural temple of the arts.

Beyond Italy, Ickworth's sculpture also deserves to be understood in the context of a shift in British taste from Roman to ancient Greek culture, both for its Homeric subject matter and its form as a pair of friezes — the upper series continuous, the lower broken up by pilasters. The second, central section situates the house's construction in Suffolk amid this transition in

relief's status. To this end, Hervey's correspondence helps to understand how his wildly ambitious plans were tempered and eventually realized at Ickworth, resulting in a sculptural display which pushed the boundaries of architectural relief's capabilities. By the time of Hervey's death in 1803, only the enormous, Pantheon-like *corps de logis* known as the rotunda had been built, and about a quarter of the programme of friezes running around it remained incomplete. For this reason, the reliefs at Ickworth comprise an unorthodox combination of figures moulded from coarse mortar, terracotta tile, and brick shards and coated in stucco which the Carabelli brothers produced between 1799 and 1804, and a minority of sections in Coade stone by unknown craftsmen, commissioned by Hervey's son, the first Marquess of Bristol, to complete the building in the 1820s.[9] Here I discuss the role of materiality in the reliefs' reception and explore the apparently unrealized suggestion by Antonio Canova that Ickworth's reliefs should be painted for the sake of visibility.

The third and final section turns to the synergy between the reliefs' subject matter and architectural setting. On one reading, they exhibit a twofold engagement with antique culture, mining ancient literature for their subject matter (a factor that nicely showcases relief's narrative potential), and drawing on ancient art for their iconography. Raising questions about the relationship between (Neo) Classical artistic genres in addition to literary texts, this section also explores relief's hybrid status between what later critics described as its painterly or pictorial qualities and its tectonic use as part of the architectural programme. Ickworth represents a step further than the conventional and well-studied models of aristocratic education, self-promotion, hospitality, and taste in the sculptural displays of library, gallery, and garden: here the house becomes a vessel that pictures and projects the patron's preoccupations into the garden.[10]

From Rome to Suffolk

By the latter half of the eighteenth century when Hervey ordered Ickworth's construction, collecting and commissioning classical or classicizing sculpture via an Italian 'Grand Tour' had become an essential feature in the competitive self-presentation of the British aristocracy.[11] Ickworth's patron was an extreme example of this Italian influence, enjoying no fewer than six Grand Tours between 1765 and his death in 1803.[12] Ancient relief was plentiful in Rome and other Italian sites excavated in the eighteenth century, and many British collectors followed Italian precedents of incorporating relief into sculpture galleries like those at Chatsworth, Wilton, Newby, and Woburn. Yet when it came to their properties' exteriors, few were as ambitious as Hervey, whose plans for Ickworth must also be situated within Italian architectural practice.

Designed in a magnificent Neoclassical style, Ickworth has conventionally been described as a 'dynastic' house, built to cement Hervey's heirs' influence closer to the political sphere of London.[13] In a different way to the 'marble halls' of earlier Palladian mansions such as Kedleston or Holkham, however, Ickworth also had an important didactic purpose comparable to a display like Charles Townley's proto-museum in London's Park Street.[14] Writing in 1796 to his friend John Symonds, a Professor of History at Cambridge who oversaw Ickworth's construction, Hervey explains his plans to arrange his enormous art collection in a series of galleries in the wings of the building 'showing the historical progress of the art of Painting in all the *five* different schools of Germany and Italy', not just for the decoration or to impress his peers, but as a source of instruction for British artists who did not have the means to travel in Europe.[15] Ultimately Hervey's plans for Ickworth were frustrated when he was captured by Napoleon's troops in Italy in 1798 and his enormous collection confiscated. Nonetheless, based on auction records of his collection from 1804, scholars have

praised Hervey's unrealized plans for Ickworth, comparing them to Luigi Lanzi's chronological and regional arrangement of artworks at the Uffizi.[16]

Ickworth's architectural form also gestures towards a cultural-didactic purpose as a 'Temple of the Arts', as the Suffolk antiquarian John Gage Rokewode described the property in 1838.[17] Besides its debts to Palladio's Villa Capra la Rotonda and St Peter's Basilica, the thirty-two-metre-high elliptical rotunda recalls the Roman Pantheon — a building known as a repository for the remains of famous painters by the turn of the nineteenth century.[18] Hervey had already adopted the Pantheon as model for his second Irish mansion at Ballyscullion, and was open in his admiration for John Plaw's imitation of the building at Belle Isle on Lake Windemere (1774).[19] He likely intended to populate the rotunda's interior with sculptures, as he did with casts at Ballyscullion, situating Ickworth in a tradition of round galleries epitomized by the Sala Pio Clementino in the Vatican.[20] Neither the Roman Pantheon, however, nor any architectural predecessor in Britain or Ireland serves as a model for Ickworth's most striking external architectural feature: the series of bas-reliefs running above the windows of the ground and second floors, giving the building its movement and saving it from being a dumpy cylinder.

Rokewode's designation of Ickworth as a 'Temple' was appropriate according to a theoretical authority such as Alberti, who suggested that figurative stucco reliefs were a suitable decoration for the outside of such buildings.[21] For the most part, however, early modern writers have little to say about relief. Alina Payne attributes this reticence to a long history of unease since the Renaissance about relief's hybrid status, blurring pictorial and sculptural modes, and because its illusionistic qualities disturbed the legibility of architectural façades.[22] Payne suggests this discomfort peaked in the late eighteenth century in accordance with

Johann Joachim Winckelmann's insistence on media specificity, yet Guilhem Scherf has shown that architectural relief had admirers as well as detractors in this period. Supporters of Neoclassical principles like Antoine Quatremère de Quincy accepted relief as long as it was subordinate to its architectural context with a limited number of planes. Artists who rejected such prescriptions, on the other hand, like Étienne Maurice Falconet were more prepared to embrace illusionistic depth in larger compositions.[23] The next section explores how Ickworth's reliefs negotiate these standards, but here it is worth noting the form's fittingness for a building intended to house Hervey's collection of painting *and* sculpture. Far from making them worry about spatial ambiguities, Ickworth's reliefs gave their viewers a proem to the *paragone* of artistic genres within.

Turning back to contemporary examples of exterior display of relief sculpture familiar to Hervey, important precedents abound in Rome, above all suburban villas like the Villa Medici, Villa Doria Pamphilj, and Villa Borghese.[24] The latter is particularly significant as a precedent for Ickworth, since the Suffolk building's initial design was produced by the architect Mario Asprucci the Younger. The Asprucci family had worked on a comprehensive redesign of the Villa Borghese in the 1790s when Mario and his father Antonio transformed the gardens into an English picturesque landscape and refitted the *casino*.[25] Hervey's enthusiasm for this property is vividly illustrated in a portrait by Hugh Douglas-Hamilton (*c.* 1790) which depicts the Earl in the Borghese Gardens with the Aspruccis' newly built Temple of Aesculapius in the background. Surveying the relief-clad Borghese Altar of the Twelve Gods, Hervey is accompanied by his granddaughter Lady Caroline Wharncliffe. Rokewode, who gave titles to all the scenes in a volume entitled *The History and Antiquities of Suffolk*, notes that most of Ickworth's reliefs were modelled by the Carabelli brothers 'after Flaxman's designs', which we must assume means that they were based on prints without the

celebrated sculptor's involvement.[26] A minority of their sculptures 'over the entrance', however, were based on a series of lost drawings purposefully created for the house by Lady Wharncliffe, whose relationship with the Earl is showcased by this painting.[27]

In 1807 the Villa Borghese's exterior sculpture was dismantled by Napoleon's troops, but before this date its façade was packed with a dense array of relief sculptures, ancient and modern, at the behest of Cardinal Scipione Borghese in the early seventeenth century (fig. 2). While resisting a comprehensive reading of the Borghese reliefs' complex arrangement, Kristina Fiore connects individual panels to panegyric poetry which praised Scipione for embodying historical *exempla* of ancient *virtus*. The façade was a means for competing with other aristocratic residences, stimulating learned literary and antiquarian dialogues, and a source of inspiration for artists. Not every relief relates to the patron's concerns, but the overarching impression confirms the Villa as a site of *urbanitas* and proclaims a theme of *Roma triumphans,* taking pride in the city's cultural influence through homage to its sculptural-artistic heritage.[28]

Returning to Ickworth's façade, in some ways it differs from the Borghese: its reliefs are all contemporary rather than ancient and were commissioned to form a coherent programme. Nonetheless, the Villa's importance is clinched by a letter of 1795 that Hervey wrote to Alexander Day, a British artist and dealer resident in Rome, asking him to conduct an 'experiment' taking casts of the Borghese's reliefs to decorate Ickworth.[29] The absence of any other mention of Day in Hervey's correspondence makes it difficult to determine whether the casts were created, though we must assume from the Carabelli brothers' designs that if they were, they were never used. Even so, the connection is revealing for the implicit parallel

between the 'Earl Bishop' and the renowned patron Cardinal Borghese, and for the idea of Ickworth as akin to a Roman villa, an object of artistic emulation and antiquarian discussion.

To find a precedent for Ickworth's terracotta and stucco sculptures, we must turn elsewhere in Italy. While most scholars writing about Ickworth note that the Carabelli brothers worked on Milan Cathedral,[30] none have dug any further into the pair's careers. Two commissions in Milan stand out in this respect: first, the Palazzo Serbelloni, where Donato worked with his uncle Francesco to produce three reliefs depicting the life of Duke Serbelloni's ancestor, Frederick Barbarossa. Separated between pilasters and depicting a procession of figures in flowing drapery, the compositions are strikingly similar to panels at Ickworth.[31] Second, the Habsburg minister Ludovico di Barbiano's Villa Belgiojoso boasts three reliefs on its façade opening onto the courtyard, and a further twenty-five facing the garden, featuring a miscellany of classical subjects, which Donato Carabelli produced with five other sculptors. Both buildings were completed between 1790 and 1796, making them important steppingstones in Donato's career before travelling to Britain.[32]

The purpose of the Villa Belgiojoso's sculptural programme is well documented. Here the reliefs' subjects were chosen through consultation with the neoclassical poet, Giuseppe Parini. Rather than proposing generic allegorical personifications, Parini recommended specific narrative moments from myth and ancient history. Creating what Christian Mangalone describes as a 'gallery of authoritative episodes', the Lombardian writer selected scenes which manifested ancient characters' moral qualities or illustrious actions.[33] Entering the Villa Belgiojoso courtyard, the viewer is confronted by three panels representing 'Ulysses in Circe's Home' (temperance), 'Baucis and Philomena Host Jupiter and Mercury' (hospitality) and 'Ulysses Slaying the Suitors' (simulated punishment). Not least because the

two Odyssean subjects are replicated, albeit in different designs, for Ickworth's upper frieze, the implications for the Suffolk house are plain: the Carabelli brothers used classical vignettes on the façades of palaces to project the *mores* of the patron residing within.

Although no such record for the commissioning process survives at Ickworth comparable to the Villa Belgiojoso, Hervey's reputation as an exacting patron and the partial remains of his correspondence both suggest that the reliefs' complex arrangement was deliberate and loaded.[34] In this respect Ickworth's design surpasses the use of sculpture on the exterior of most eighteenth-century Neoclassical buildings in Britain, which tended to deploy generic motifs like swags or crests in repetitive schemes — a fact we may link to Hervey's ambitious vision of the house as semi-public 'Temple' for the pictorial and sculptural arts of Italy in the Suffolk countryside.[35] However, the form and content of Ickworth's reliefs also differs significantly from Milanese and Roman precedents: firstly in the use of the continuous frieze rather than isolated panels on a flat façade; and secondly given that the viewer promenading around the rotunda may trace successive episodes in distinct narratives, rather than a miscellany of mythical quotations. To understand these innovations, it is worth considering Ickworth's protracted construction between 1795 and 1829. For it was during this period that the dissemination of Greek friezes catalyzed a major shift in British taste which saw relief sculpture as an exemplary form of classical art.

‘Blending Oeconomy with Magnificence’

Hervey’s capture by French troops in 1798 has ensured that his life’s last decade is relatively sparsely documented, but in his surviving letters Ickworth’s relief sculpture often plays a central role. In 1800 he bluntly wrote to his daughter Lady Mary Erne: ‘Bas reliefs. These interest me beyond all belief or Conception’, and elsewhere he mentions architectural issues such as the rotunda’s size in proportion to the wings, the suitability of stucco, the reliefs’ visibility, and the financial viability of the sculptural programme.[36] To explore this programme’s significance, this section draws on Hervey’s correspondence to consider the exigencies of the construction process, the reliefs’ materiality, and Ickworth’s place in the complex shift in British taste from Roman to Hellenic models.

After becoming the fourth Earl of Bristol in December 1779, Hervey spent 1781 to 1782 at his family estate at Ickworth and commissioned ‘Plans and elevations for an Intire New House’ from Capability Brown, which have not survived.[37] For ten years he quit Suffolk, immersing himself in Irish politics and travelling abroad. In 1792 Hervey returned, confirmed Brown’s proposed site, and left for the Continent again where he remained until his death in 1803. From Italy, he directed construction from afar. Plans from 1794 and 1795 by Mario Asprucci survive in the Cooper Hewitt Museum,[38] but the architect never left Italy, and Hervey dispatched to Suffolk two young Irish proteges, Francis and Joseph Sandys, who adapted Asprucci’s designs and executed the project. As well as corresponding with John Symonds, Hervey wrote to the Sandys brothers, the agriculturalist Arthur Young, and family members, who helped him keep track of Ickworth’s progress. An archival document entitled ‘Extracts from Ickworth Account Book 1796-1810’ notes that the Carabelli brothers received wages of £26 5s. per month from 1799 to 1804 to work on Ickworth’s reliefs.[39]

Hervey's letters can be difficult to draw firm conclusions from because his desires constantly changed, and even if his purpose was firm, his early death meant that many grandiloquent plans were never realized. Indeed, some of the longest mentions of bas-reliefs in Hervey's letters record an unfulfilled idea which would have radically changed the property's character. In May 1799 Hervey wrote to his daughter that he was set on 'Erecting [*sic*] a Column at Ickworth in imitation of Trajans & Antonine's at Rome', adorned with reliefs designed by Caroline Wharncliffe which commemorated 'dear W^{m}. Pitt's numerous victories in all Quarters of the World'.[40] By October 1799 Hervey sought to adorn not just a column but the house itself with bas-reliefs of the Siege of Seringapatam, each 'executed in a frame and then the frame affixed to the recess in the Wall with proper nails of *mixed metal* to prevent *Rust*.'[41] Later still in January 1801 he wanted an entire series of reliefs designed by Wharncliffe depicting further scenes of aggressive British imperial expansion across different continents to adorn 'the fronts of my Galleries' respectively with 'Pitt the father's [and] Pitt the Son's Victories and acquisitions'.[42] Nothing of this highly political series on the house's wings, which would have implicitly reflected the family's senior roles in the British imperial state and military, came close to being begun.[43] Had Hervey lived longer, the reputation of the relief programme at Ickworth could have been dominated by the aggrandisement of British imperial warfare via the model of the Roman triumph.

Perhaps because the Iliadic and Odyssean reliefs were based on designs by Flaxman rather than Wharncliffe, Hervey's extant letters pass over the Homeric subjects which were of lesser familial interest. Instead, Hervey emphasized Ickworth's debt to ancient art in more general terms, such as in a letter to Symonds where he provides a twist on Winckelmann's oft-quoted formulation of Greek art's 'noble simplicity and quiet grandeur': 'I wish to make it [Ickworth] quite classical, to unite magnificence with convenience and simplicity with

dignity.'[44] Magnificent convenience sits awkwardly with simple dignity, speaking to Hervey's bombast and ambition to make his money go far. All the same, his library's contents and correspondence make it clear that he was acquainted with Winckelmann's pioneering Hellenism.[45] By the mid-eighteenth century, Winckelmann's writings had catalyzed idealization of Greek art and infused it with contemporary relevance. Whereas the ancient remains of Italy had long formed the centrepiece of the Grand Tour for western European aristocrats, for much of the eighteenth century Ottoman rule made visiting Greek sites difficult. Yet, in a now familiar narrative, things began to change with expeditions like that of James Stuart and Nicholas Revett in 1751, funded by the Society of Dilettanti. Stuart and Revett's findings, published between 1762 and 1830 in the pathbreaking, five-volume work, *The Antiquities of Athens,* followed Winkelmann's linking of style to history by arguing that Athens's independence and power in the wake of the Persian Wars led to high cultural achievements. Greek art became part of a narrative of cultural supremacy, particularly for British patrons, who sought to distinguish themselves from Napoleonic France and its attachment to Roman art and architecture.[46]

The value of Stuart and Revett's work lay in providing some of the first accurate surveys of Greek architectural sculpture for British audiences. Volume One of *Antiquities* (1762) contains detailed engravings depicting the Tower of the Winds and the Monument of Lysicrates — two structures comparable to Ickworth for the friezes encircling their exteriors — while Volume Two (1787) is largely devoted to the celebrated Parthenon frieze and metopes.[47] Unlike sarcophagi panels or small reliefs found at Roman villas, discoveries in Greece reinforced how relief sculpture could be a truly monumental art form, serving as source-material for many artists and architects.[48] The friezes in Asprucci's original designs for Ickworth in the Cooper-Hewitt certainly show the Parthenon's influence, both in the

continuous upper frieze and in the manner that the lower frieze is recessed in the wall, visually behind the ground floor pilasters and columns of the entrance portico.[49]

While Flaxman never visited Greece, Stuart and Revett's influence is also perceptible in his designs which formed the basis of Ickworth's reliefs, as will be touched on below. Yet in an important sense, Ickworth's friezes were conceived before the most transformative moments in the ascendency of Greek relief in Britain. Amid the blossoming of interest in Hellenic culture, Lord Elgin travelled to Athens on the expedition which resulted, from 1801, in the infamous removal of much of the Parthenon's sculpture; from 1811 Charles Robert Cockerell embarked on a similar trip to remove the frieze from Bassai.[50] Following the exhibition of these friezes in London in the 1810s, relief came to command associations of supreme sculptural achievement, foreign exploration, and archaeological enterprise, and, after Waterloo, Britain's ascendency among the European powers.[51] Across the next couple of decades, cast reproductions of Greek relief took on new meanings not only in country houses, but in academies, clubs, and public institutions, such as London's Athenaeum and Travellers Clubs, on Decimus Burton's Ionic Screen at Hyde Park Corner, or at the Fitzwilliam and Ashmolean Museums.[52] Although Ickworth was completed in the 1820s just as this new architectural fashion was gathering momentum, there was a gap of two decades between Hervey's death in 1803 and the resumption of building, when all that stood at the site was the incomplete rotunda. Hervey's heir, Frederick William, the first Marquess of Bristol, found himself bound by his father's will to continue an architectural programme that arguably had already been superseded by casts of freshly canonical Greek friezes.[53] With the Carabelli brothers long gone, he opted to complete the remainder of the upper frieze in Coade stone, and plans for relief to run also along the wings were dropped.

Even if the dissemination of Greek casts was beginning to rival friezes like those at Ickworth by the 1820s, this by no means detracts from the sophisticated relationship between sculpture and architecture in play. Hervey's letter to Alexander Day is worth quoting at length to illustrate his investment in the utility of Roman casts and the legibility of his relief programme. Though written before he commissioned the Carabelli brothers, it demonstrates that Hervey entertained the possibility of adorning Ickworth with the ancient sculpture most readily available at the time, albeit authentically Roman rather than Greek:

> certainly a more beautifull, elegant, noble façade [Ickworth] never was seen [...] the only difficulty now is how to get the basso relievos executed. The upper ones must certainly be painted as Dear Canova suggests being beyond the read[ing] of the Eyes accuracy, but the lower ones must be bold & I suppose cast from all parts — & I should be thankfull to you if you would begin an experiment on the basso relievos of Villa Borghese**:** & then try The Casts with the composition of our *formatore* — or of the sculptor who lives next door to Canova whose name I forget; as the extent of our Basso relievos is immense we must blend Oeconomy with our Magnificence or we shall wreck the Vessel.[54]

In this characteristically colourful letter, Hervey's reference to conversation with Canova is unsurprising, given that he had tried and failed to commission the star sculptor.[55] What is striking is the endorsement of 'painted' sculpture, which points to sculptural practice quite distinct from Canova's usual association with unadorned marble surfaces. David Bindman has challenged popular wisdom by showing that Canova experimented with rouges, tinting, and various other surface treatments for sculpture in interior contexts which have often

deteriorated and disappeared.[56] Yet there is still little evidence for Canova's attitude towards the colouring of architectural sculpture. Bindman links Canova's openness to colour to his friendship with Quatremère de Quincy, who claimed to have first noticed ancient statues' colouring over thirty years before the publication of *Le Jupiter olympien* (1814) and corresponded with the Italian sculptor about the Parthenon Marbles' surface when they arrived in London.[57] But Ickworth's stucco-coated sculpture presented different challenges in a different medium. Recent conservation reports make no mention of traces of paint on the surface of Ickworth's reliefs.[58] This may be due to early restorations, but without pigment analysis any observations must remain speculative.

Even if Ickworth's reliefs were never painted, Hervey's openness to coloured Neoclassical relief contradicts assumptions about sparse whiteness epitomised by the famous print reproductions of Flaxman's Homeric drawings. As William Fitzgerald observes of Flaxman's designs, '[t]he same white that signifies the space inhabited by the figures invades the bodies themselves, depriving them of volume. Only the line serves as a marker of bodiliness, and, in the absence of any illusion of depth, figure and ground become equivalent.'[59] Most commentators stress Flaxman's Homeric designs' starkly empty 'outlines', but this emphasis on their flat contours is complicated by Flaxman's aspiration, recorded in a letter to William Hayley, to turn his designs into relief sculptures: 'my view does not terminate in giving a few outlines to the world; my intention is to shew how any story may be represented in a series of compositions on principles of the antients [...] in groups of basrelieves, suited to all the purposes of Sacred and Civil Architecture.'[60] Bindman, who quotes this passage, argues that Flaxman had faith in the 'transferability' of the 'idea' between different media.[61] Yet as Bindman notes more recently, although much has been written on Flaxman's sculpture and drawings, 'invariably they have been dealt with separately'.[62] The reliefs at Ickworth dramatically play out these

contradictions underpinning Neoclassical aesthetics, as the Carabelli brothers' sculptures bring colour — even if only the extant matt stucco surface — background, and illusionistic light and shadow of depth — all features coded as painterly by eighteenth-century theorists — to Flaxman's pictorial designs.[63]

Given that Flaxman expressed a desire to reproduce his Homeric designs in relief, it might seem odd that Hervey did not commission him to work at Ickworth. An obstacle to this was the bad blood that existed between the pair since the early 1790s after Hervey severely underpaid Flaxman for a huge free-standing marble sculpture entitled the *Fury of Athamas*, which now sits in Ickworth's entrance hall.[64] Even if their relationship had not soured, it is worth noting that Flaxman normally worked on individual relief compositions for interior contexts rather than exterior friezes. A notable exception, however, can be found in Robert Smirke's Theatre Royal. Although no longer extant, this early example of a Greek revival building constructed in 1809 not long after Flaxman first saw the Parthenon Marbles in London in 1807, provides an instructive comparison to Ickworth.[65] For this commission, Flaxman produced cast models of two friezes symbolizing ancient and modern drama, which John Felix Rossi then replicated in stone on the façade of the theatre's north and south wings. This technique of creating plaster casts as models had been gradually adopted by British sculptors towards the end of the eighteenth century, and was typical of Flaxman, who often delegated stone carving because of his fragile physical health.[66] Flaxman and Rossi's twin sets of continuous theatrical reliefs differ from the friezes of Ickworth composed as successive Homeric episodes, but the Suffolk house represents an important predecessor of Smirke's work as a 'temple of the arts' adorned with monumental relief.
Where the Carabelli brothers' reliefs differ significantly from the Theatre is their brick and stucco medium, which Flaxman would likely have viewed as unsuited to his skills, even at

one remove. Raised in a large family of *stuccatori* from Castel San Pietro in the canton of Ticino, the Carabelli brothers were well placed to complete the commission. Hervey's decision to hire them rather than a publicly known British artist like Flaxman was likely also a question of 'economy' and creative control. In his letters, he betrays his desire to strongarm the brothers when he complains to his sister of the 'backwardness of my Milanese artists'.[67] Elsewhere declaring 'what the artists urge as Impossible – is an Italian finesse', Hervey seems to have seen the brothers as malleable foreign stuccatore who should dutifully execute British artists' designs.[68]

For all that Hervey's letters show his condescending attitude towards the Italians, they also reveal his close investment in technique and material. We learn that he desired 'Basso relievos executed in Pozzolane Stucco' — a type of lime plaster mixed with siliceous and aluminous materials which made it more durably cement-like and weather-resistant.[69] We have already seen Hervey specify non-rusting nails for attaching reliefs to the house; rather than marble, his reliefs would be 'superior and more intelligible than any in Rome — and all this for a quarter of the expense by means of Brick & plaister.'[70] Ultimately, the Carabelli brothers fashioned Flaxman and Wharncliffe's designs from a core of brick, tile, and mortar, coated in a layer of horsehair and stucco, sometimes using metal armatures. Their versions of Wharncliffe's designs have subsequently deteriorated to the point that the National Trust has replaced them with identical casts.[71]

Recent art historical research has sought to challenge assumptions about the value materials and binaries between craft and art, leading to a renewed focus on terracotta and stucco.[72] Fired terracotta has been championed as crucial for the inception of the creative sculptural process, while stucco is increasingly recognized as a highly skilled art-form which ranged

from decorative to figurative forms.[73] Nonetheless, the techniques employed at Ickworth still receive little attention outside of conservation research. More work is needed on the status of the Carabelli's terracotta, mortar, and stucco technique, but here its adoption can clearly be linked to Hervey's dictum of 'blending Oeconomy with Magnificence.' As Maria Barberini has written, 'terracotta […] had the advantage — or the fundamental flaw — of costing little or nothing'.[74] It was also a practical option without a ready source of marble, as in provincial East Anglia. Stucco ensured a consistent finish, weatherproofing and unifying the relief programme, while equating the sculpture as a seamless extension of the stucco-coated rotunda.

Rather than seeing the 'Oeconomy' of Ickworth's reliefs as a deficiency in accordance with traditional hierarchies of materials, it is worth taking seriously the affordances of the Carabelli brothers' technique as a vehicle for 'Magnificence.' Creating a programme of such scale and narrative complexity in stone would have been prohibitively expensive. Instead of repeating ornamental stucco motifs, the Carabellis' panels are all distinct, original compositions. Unlike marble, malleable materials allowed the brothers to experiment quickly with a mixture of high and low relief — as we have seen, a topic of debate among eighteenth-century critics that was seen as measure of whether sculptors were encroaching on the territory proper to painters.[75] In his letters, Hervey repeatedly insisted that scenes be executed in 'frames' before being attached to the house. This allowed the Carabelli brothers to 'work all winter by a fireside'.[76] But beyond this, the 'frame' implicitly compared the reliefs to paintings, as the Carebellis worked to transform Flaxman and Wharncliffe's 'outlines' into three-dimensional designs which could be 'transported into the nitch' on the façade.[77] The high relief protrusion of the resulting panels might have offended stricter advocates of Neoclassicism because it detracted from the building's solidity. Joshua Reynolds, to quote a

contemporary British critic, devotes a significant part of his tenth *Discourse* to relief, where he dismisses 'detaching drapery from the figure, in order to give the appearance of flying in the air', using too many conflicting planes, including near flat profiles in the background, and attempting to represent perspectival effects, particularly in representations of architecture rather than human forms.[78] These are all 'pictorial' sins in which the reliefs at Ickworth indulge. For a broad-minded and pragmatic patron like Hervey, however, depth allowed the drama of the Carabelli brothers' reliefs, appropriately recessed into panels, to be discerned from a distance.

Turning to the upper frieze, it is tempting to view the Coade reliefs as a stopgap by Hervey's son to complete the rotunda on a budget. Yet taking a closer looking at the process of their manufacture, the final form is not so distinct from the Carabelli brothers' reliefs. The architect David Laing summarized Coade Stone's composition in 1818 when he wrote it was 'a species of terracotta.'[79] Composed of about 50–60% clay, the result is essentially a form of reinforced terracotta mimicking the resilience of natural stone. As Catherine Stanford argues, the Coade company was never considered a cheap option for purchasing 'mass produced' sculpture, but a workshop of independent renown that employed sought-after sculptors like John Rossi, Thomas Banks, Joseph Panzetta, and, pertinently for Ickworth, Flaxman.[80] Items were created via a highly skilled and labour-intensive process which underwent strict quality control. No Coade record books survive for the period in the 1820s when Hervey's son purchased the reliefs to complete Ickworth's frieze, by which time the business was winding down in the hands of Eleanor Coade's successor William Croggan.[81] In the Suffolk Archives, bills survive for 'Raising and fixing the artificial stone figures to the Corinthian Frieze including modelling work to ditto' in 1824 by John and Benjamin de Carle, masons of Bury St Edmunds, but the only extant receipt from the Coade firm refers to scagliola columns for

the rotunda's interior.[82] Despite the fact that their source and creator(s) remain unknown, the absence of any extant comparable subjects suggest that the Coade reliefs were commissioned specifically for the building. Even if past its heyday, the material was still sought after for its capacity to support the production of a large and highly durable range of sculptural subjects.

For all the versatility and skill that went into the creation of Ickworth's reliefs, the comparatively low status of stucco and Coade likely play a part in ensuring the house is not better known today. The interruption of the construction process by Hervey's death, the gradual decline in political prominence of his descendants, and the increasingly 'provincial' reputation of Suffolk in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, equally, have much to answer for. The sensational arrival of marble friezes from Greece and the sale of ancient artworks from Hervey's collection likely further reduced the antiquarian appeal of the property. Nonetheless, scholarly neglect of techniques like that employed in Ickworth's reliefs reveals a major blind spot for what were innovative modes of sculptural production at the time. As the third part of this study will demonstrate, the reliefs were meaningful in their subject matter's engagement with antiquity and cutting edge in their integration into the socio-cultural project of the house as a whole.

The Homeric Programme

In the final section it remains to analyse the reliefs' meaning as part of a programme choreographed to frame the house's contents. To this end, their subject matter may be divided into three distinct sets: *Odyssean, Iliadic* and athletic. This arrangement can best be seen in the illustrated plan (fig. 3) labelled with Rokewode's titles, the plate numbers from the 1795 edition of Flaxman's designs, and the relevant Homeric book numbers. The 'upper' reliefs running in a continuous frieze above the second-floor windows depict scenes from the *Odyssey*. Those facing north onto the driveway and executed by the Carabelli brothers are largely based on illustrations of the epic drawn by Flaxman, while the supplementary Coade designs facing south onto the garden are of unknown origin.[83] The 'lower' reliefs that run above the ground-floor windows, all created by the Carabellis, are not continuous, but divided into panels between Ionic pilasters, and interrupted by quadrant wings extending from the rotunda's east and west sides. Those facing north onto the driveway present athletic scenes and one 'historical' tableau, and are based on now lost designs created specifically for the property by Caroline Wharncliffe.[84] Those facing south depict scenes from the *Iliad,* again working from Flaxman's illustrations.

Beginning with Wharncliffe's designs, seven athletic scenes speak to eighteenth-century interest in ancient sport as emblematic of virtue and patriotic valour.[85] Given pride of place on the ground floor surrounding the rotunda's entrance, the reliefs are characterized by Greco-Roman iconography, featuring figures in togas, sandals, chariots, and crested helmets. The presence of horses in five out of seven may be an allusion to the family's involvement in horse breeding. Unlike their Homeric equivalents, the simpler compositions include no death, gods, landscape, and, with one exception, no known characters. The single non-generic scene sits above the entrance hall door, known from Rokewode's description as 'Alexander

presenting his horse Bucephalus to his father Philip'.[86] The meeting of father and son — paralleled by an upper panel directly above depicting Odysseus and Telemachus (fig. 4) — has pertinence for Hervey, who worried about his sons' ability to take up his mantle and inherit the estate.[87] These designs set the Hellenic scene, advertising a personal, familial rewriting of the ancient world.

The remainder of this study is devoted to the Carabelli brothers' Homeric designs. Whereas none of Wharncliffe's drawings for the athletic scenes survive, the relief versions of Flaxman's 'outlines' better showcase relief's ability to communicate narrative and the relationship between pictorial and sculptural form. By elevating these Homeric tales, Hervey projected a sample of his library's contents onto his home's exterior. Greek epic poetry was undergoing a resurgence in popularity in Britain at the turn of the nineteenth century, as Romantic criticism began to dismiss Virgil as an imitator of Homer's original genius.[88] The library at Ickworth contains a comprehensive array of classical titles, including older editions of Homer from the beginning of the eighteenth century.[89] The Carabellis' compositions depend on the viewer having varying levels of knowledge of the epics to see each relief as a visual performance of an important narrative moment. Walking round the rotunda gave members of the elite an opportunity to test their pedagogical credentials, employing knowledge of classical literature inculcated in their schooling.[90]

Flaxman's illustrations of the epics, from which the Carabelli brothers worked, generally emphasize gentler moments that lead to virtuous action.[91] Heroes are restrained and gracious, as in a scene on the rotunda's south-eastern side where a dignified Achilles moves to embrace the leader of the embassy (fig. 5). The scene's tempestuous tension in the poem is elided as the figures approach each other in stately order. Their horizontal arrangement, with minimal

overlap between their bodies in profile, is strongly reminiscent of the Parthenon frieze's Panathenaic procession (fig. 6). Beyond the embassy, many examples among Flaxman's drawings replicate compositions from ancient relief. Flaxman was thoroughly familiar with Stuart and Revett's works, and later gave a complete series of tracings of *Antiquities of Athens* to his friend William Hayley which he had made earlier in his career when unable to afford these expensive volumes.[92] A good example of this influence on the *Iliadic* designs at Ickworth are the figures of Hypnos and Iris (fig. 7), who closely resemble engravings of figures from the Tower of the Winds (fig. 8). David Irwin has noted that Flaxman also drew upon Roman relief, which he avidly sketched during his stay in Italy (1787–94); numerous examples of this phenomenon can be found in the edition of his Italian journals and sketchbooks published by the Walpole Society.[93]Among Flaxman's sketches, for instance, is a rough outline of a sarcophagus panel from the Villa Mattei, on which he based an *Odyssean* composition replicated at Ickworth showing Leucothea coming to Odysseus's rescue. Ancient relief sculpture from both Greece and Rome thus has a direct iconographical and stylistic import for some of the reliefs at Ickworth.

Where the Greek dominates is of course the reliefs' literary source; here, two strategies are employed in the arrangement of the upper and lower Homeric series. In the upper *Odyssean* frieze, the Carabelli brothers created a linear narrative of the poem's action, inviting the viewer to walk round as they might, for example, the walls of Troy. As far as can be understood from the half completed before Hervey's death, they followed Flaxman's designs plate by plate, depicting scenes from books 1–5 and 19–24 on the rotunda's north side and leaving a gap filled by Coade reliefs which would most likely have continued this order with scenes from the intervening books. When it came to the lower frieze, on the other hand, the house's wings, Ionic pilasters, and the seven spaces allotted to Wharncliffe's designs, made it

impossible to depict the *Iliad* continuously. Here, the Carabellis had to be selective, fitting twenty-one of the thirty-four *Iliadic* designs Flaxman had produced by 1793 into thirteen of the twenty spaces between the ground-floor pilasters (Wharncliffe's designs comprised the remaining seven).[94] Five spaces contain one scene a piece, while the remaining eight compress the other sixteen *Iliadic* scenes, two per framing space.

Besides taking inspiration from ancient relief, Flaxman's Homeric designs drew from Classical vase painting, detaching compositions from curved surfaces and projecting them onto a flat page.[95] The Carabellis reverse this process at Ickworth so that the viewer circles the house to get the full story. Hervey perhaps alludes to the conceit of a connoisseur rotating a vase when he describes Ickworth's rotunda as a 'Vessel' in his letter to Day. In every scene, moreover, the brothers revised Flaxman's drawings to a varying degree to fit the horizontally elongated and vertically shorter frame and accommodate the new three-dimensional medium. For the lower *Iliadic* scenes, they do this in three important ways: adding or removing details, modifying figural composition and depth, and changing the order of the scenes.

Thirteen of the twenty-one *Iliadic* designs appear largely in the order of Flaxman's published edition of the engravings, covering the events of books 3 to 16 around the rotunda's southeastern quarter.[96] But on the southwestern quarter of the rotunda, the Carabelli brothers eschew narrative chronology and Flaxman's ordering, choosing scenes from books 24, 22, 17, 1, 15 and 3. Several reasons for this may be suggested. Firstly, they omitted scenes which were too visually similar.[97] Secondly, some scenes were presumably not visually iconic enough to be easily recognisable.[98] Thirdly — and most interestingly — disorder enables an emphasis on famous narrative moments celebrated by contemporary critics of the poem.[99] The Carabellis took the opportunity to juxtapose panels in ways which prompt intriguing

comparison with the poem's text and Flaxman's original designs. For instance, they place three scenes focusing on a body side by side: Hector's body on the pyre; Hector's body dragged while Andromache faints (fig. 9) (a frame combining two of Flaxman's designs); the fight over Patroclus' body. The scenes alternate between city, the plain viewed from the city, and plain once more.

On occasion the Carabelli brothers modify Flaxman's composition for the sake of narrative juxtapositions. In another frame which combines two scenes treated separately by Flaxman, Achilles looks across to his mother Thetis summoning the giant Briareus to save Zeus in Olympus on the left, just as his concubine Briseis is led away from the Greek camp to the right (fig. 10). Whereas in Flaxman's version of the latter scene, Achilles looks ruefully over his shoulder to the right to meet the loving gaze of Briseis (fig. 11), the Carabellis have him angrily looking towards his mother in a separate narrative moment. Dora Wiebenson has noted that 'the departure of Briseis' was one of the most popular scenes from the *Iliad* for Neoclassical artists. Indeed, the scene was recommended as a subject for painters in the Comte de Caylus's *Tableaux tirés de l'Iliade, de l'Odyssée d'Homère* for Achilles' transition from anger to 'the most tender sorrow' ('la douleur la plus tendre'); Canova (1790), Thorvaldsen (1803) and Rude (1823) all produced competing versions in relief, differing over whether they depicted Achilles as looking away, stoically wrathful, or towards Briseis, romantically sentimental.[100] A viewer familiar with Homer's epics and the latest Neoclassical artistic trends could play the game of interpreting the new perspectives on this celebrated epic moment suggested by the Carabellis' own rearrangement.

Unlike individual history paintings or reliefs drawing on Caylus's *Tableaux tirés* discussed by Wiebenson, the Carabelli brothers' reliefs' fixed viewing context in series on a building

demand a very different sort of engagement with texts. Generally, movement in the reliefs is towards the right (the direction of narrative progress in the *Odyssean* panels above too), even if this meant reversing some of Flaxman's designs. By having Juno and Minerva's chariot sweep right rather than left like in Flaxman's print version, the Carabellis escalate the momentum of Diomedes charging against Ares in his chariot in the previous scene. Similarly, by flipping Flaxman's depiction of Sleep and Death flying off with Sarpedon's corpse, the Carabellis present these two gods being chased rightwards by the urgent flight of Discord in the preceding panel. Yet some scenes query this movement round the rotunda in ways which interacts with the architecture. For example, in the relief depicting 'The Council of Gods' (fig. 12), an assertively frontal Pheidian Zeus sits centrally on his throne, above the 'Genius of Olympus' (a bearded personification of the kingdom of the gods contrived by Flaxman), surrounded by every member of the Olympian pantheon. In an almost pedimental, triangular composition, attention is focused upwards towards Zeus, while five gods flank him on either side. Instead of the small figure poking through the clouds in Flaxman's design, the 'Genius of Olympus' becomes a giant lying at the centre of the composition; Zeus' throne seems to perch on his head. Importantly, this scene is positioned at the centre of Ickworth's south-facing façade, in the seventh of its thirteen frames. Zeus looks straight ahead down the main path which dissects the symmetrical Italianate gardens, *out* towards a panoramic vista over the estate. The Genius rests his forearms directly above the door leading out into the garden, meeting the gaze of any guests who return via the central path to enter the library on the ground floor of the house. The relief thus naturalizes the rotunda's tribute to ancient Greece by having the ruler of the gods survey Hervey's estate, situating his claims to cultural capital in a British landscape.

A different kind of self-conscious modification of Flaxman's designs which similarly anchors the frieze to Ickworth's position in the landscape can be found in the upper *Odyssean* frieze. In a scene otherwise relatively faithful to the engraving of 'Nestor Sacrificing to Athena', the Carabelli brothers include a Pantheon-like rotunda building in the background (fig. 13). The recursive effect momentarily breaks the viewer's engagement with the narrative, causing them to zoom out and look at the whole rotunda. The scene is positioned on the west side, so that one must stand with the rotunda aligned in the same direction to see it; in the miniature echo of the building's profile, the portico similarly extends out to the left. The visual pun was obviously noticed by the Coade craftsmen, who included a more basic version of the building on the diametrically opposed face of the rotunda (fig. 14). Though it is difficult to say whether the idea for the earlier intervention in Flaxman's composition originated from Hervey or the Carabellis, this and other such self-referential nods to the architectural context enhance the frieze's dominant rhetoric, animating celebrated *exempla* from ancient epic to play out to the tune of the property as a whole.

Another strategy the Carabelli brothers employ to embed Homeric scenes within their architectural context is to play with ideas of interiority and exteriority. Several reliefs depict personal, domestic moments, framed by curtains, pillars, and furniture. Whereas Flaxman eschewed 'items of furniture or background', as he declared in a lecture at the Royal Academy, 'as they are utterly separated from the pathos of sublime composition', the Carabellis draw attention to décor. The viewer is invited to look in and through the relief to Achilles' tent, Paris's bedroom, Penelope's chamber, Calypso's palace. Added in relief to Flaxman's design, they structure the frieze and separate individual scenes within larger panels (e.g., fig. 9). The effect helps narrative clarity, but arguably evokes the aristocratic affairs of the rotunda's actual interior in a *trompe l'oeil* fashion. Elsewhere, the sculptors use

the depiction of columns in their scenes to divide the panels like framing pilasters, or curtains to evoke real curtains hanging in the windows below. These paraphernalia contradict the strictures of Neoclassical critics who disdained the illusionistic perspectival effects in relief sculpture as inappropriately painterly. Like the background depictions of the rotunda, we find the opposite of a 'gestural stripping away of the inessentials', as Deanna Petherbridge describes Flaxman's outlines.[101] In their crowded compositions, alternating between high and low relief, the Carabellis strive to draw viewers' attention from within the niches of the façade.

Once the viewer's attention has been captured by self-referential gestures so that they look into the reliefs just as they might gaze through the windows of the house, they are encouraged not only to think about the collection but the patron's implied role as benevolent and cultivated landowner. Above the entrance portico sits the only Homeric scene that does not correspond with any of Flaxman's designs, perhaps expressly requested of the Carabellis by Hervey (fig. 4). In the crowded group of many-layered bodies facing in different directions — a complex scene which once more departs from the low-relief simplicity of neoclassical sculptural convention — Odysseus sits raised on a chair, young Telemachus by his side. Zeus watches to the left, sitting on his throne with his eagle. Labelled 'Ulysses concludes a peace with his subjects' by Rokewode,[102] the scene is one of ordered management and social hierarchies, with the nobleman bringing divinely endorsed justice. Perhaps a parallel was meant to be drawn with Hervey and his son, running the estate's affairs. Hervey never spent enough time at Ickworth to have much interaction with the tenants, but evidence from his Irish estates suggests he wished to be remembered as a philanthropic landowner.[103] Although Hervey gained a positive reputation in some quarters for his public works and support for Catholic emancipation, his motivations for being identified with 'improvement' were

complex.[104] Here it suffices to say that the Homeric aristocracy's behaviour was plausibly meant to suggest a British *noblesse oblige.*

Looking at the friezes across the rotunda, the theme of aristocratic patronage and good governance is complemented by scenes of politeness and stately hospitality. Many scenes portray confrontations and meetings: seven *Iliadic* and eleven *Odyssean* scenes show embassies, messengers, or arrivals of heroes into domestic contexts. The prominence of sentimental moments like the poem's depiction of Briseis, Andromache, and Helen also sets the scene for courtship and marriage. Besides the smattering of battles, there is a recurring motif of hospitality, as Achilles welcomes Ajax, Odysseus, and Phoinix (fig. 5), Nestor receives Telemachus and Mentor, and Penelope entertains the suitors. Indeed, the dining suitors are given far more prominence than in Flaxman's designs: one panel brings a background profile of them drinking to the fore and multiplies the number of banqueteers, so the focus of the scene is shifted to the guests. Given that the rotunda was used as the reception space with a large hall, dining room, and state rooms, it is fitting that rituals of hosting and conviviality be given distinction.

For all that Ickworth's construction was directed from afar and interrupted by Hervey's death, the Carabelli brothers adeptly fashioned a reciprocal relationship between the House and its elaborate reliefs. Sculpted scenes self-consciously reflect the building to which they are attached, play on ideas of interiority and exteriority, and highlight the building's function as a location for aristocratic self-promotion and hospitality. The viewer who inspects them closely is rewarded with an interpretive challenge; the opportunity to explicate visual translations of ancient literature in an iconographic language which draws on ancient and contemporary art. Given Ickworth's intended purpose as a place to view the most celebrated artworks that could

be acquired at the time, it is fitting that the structure meant to house that art is itself so pictorial and sculptural. Form is made to be a bearer of architectural meaning, and that meaning fluently expresses a message about the patron's identity. In the context of British elite display at the turn of the nineteenth century, it is no accident that the vehicle for this is no longer Roman *virtus* but is Homeric, Hellenic *arete.*

Conclusions

Ickworth was not unique in Britain at the time of its conception: classical and classically inspired relief sculpture was integrated into the architecture of elite properties before it. Nor was its intended purpose as a gallery-cum-home without parallel: it was not the only aristocratic residence built for entertainment, and for the kinds of artistic and scholarly activities that prefigure the public museum. Yet it employs privately commissioned relief on an unprecedented scale that begs detailed knowledge of ancient art and literature. It differs from aristocratic sculpture galleries in its deployment of relief on the building's exterior, where it speaks to the conception of the property as a whole. This owed much to Italian practices but was also part of a growing British visual consciousness of relief sculptures' monumental and public potential. As the developments examined in the first two sections show, the friezes at Ickworth were created at a moment of particularly charged transition — from the Palladian halls of the earlier eighteenth century to an increasing association with the civic and institutional that came with Greek sculpture in the nineteenth century. Untroubled by contemporary critical anxieties about relief's hybrid status, the Carabelli brothers embrace the contradictions of a form singularly relevant to the combined display of sculpture and painting within Hervey's 'Temple of the Arts.'

Beyond Ickworth, new examples of relief relating to the antique in complicated ways continued to be commissioned by British patrons, while, more broadly, relief sculpture in classical and non-classical styles would proliferate, notably in Victorian cemeteries, churches, and public monuments. The fact that Ickworth's stucco and Coade reliefs, which projected a series of vignettes as a kind of equal to Grand Manner history painting, would fall out of fashion in favour of archaeological cast reproductions, does not detract from the achievement of its patron and executing artists. The decision to reproduce two canonical texts

on the canvas of a thirty-two-metre-high building and to make the medium that is external sculpture so personal remains striking to this day. Experiments with form and content, using relief to negotiate between the pictorial and the sculptural, the visual and textual, were of the moment, and, for a brief while yet, the resources for these experiments still to be found in the Greco-Roman. What was meant by the Greco-Roman, however, was also in transition. Arguably, for both art and literature, 'classical' now meant 'Hellenic'

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[1] E.g., V. Coltman, *Classical Sculpture and the Culture of Collecting in Britain since 1760*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009; R. Guilding, *Owning the Past: Why the English Collected Antique Sculpture, 1640–1840*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2014. As Malcom Baker observes, modes of elite sculptural display in Georgian Britain resist categorisation into a public-private binary; M. Baker, 'Public Images for Private Spaces? The Place of Sculpture in the Georgian Domestic Interior', *Journal of Design History*, 20, 4, 2007, pp. 309–23.

[2] Alina Payne has written extensively about the 'interstitial' capacity of Renaissance and Baroque relief to blur media distinctions, which she suggests prompted German art historians to embrace it as a 'diagnostic site for shifts in style' in the late nineteenth century. See 'Architecture, Ornament and Pictorialism: Notes on the History of an Idea from Wölfflin to Le Corbusier', in K. Koehler (ed.) *Architecture and Painting*, London, Ashgate Press, 2001, pp. 54–72; 'On Sculptural Relief: *Malerisch*, the Autonomy of Artistic Media and the Beginnings of Baroque Studies', in H. Hills (ed.), *Rethinking the Baroque*, London, Ashgate Press, 2011, pp. 39–64, at p. 57; 'Living Stones, Crying Walls: The Dangers of Enlivenment in Architecture from Renaissance putti to Warburg's Nachleben', in C. van Eck (ed.), *Art and Agency. The Secret Lives of Artworks*, Leiden, Leiden University Press, 2013, pp. 301–32, at pp. 327–32. The form's affordances are also discussed in D. Cooper & M. Leino, *Depth of field: Relief sculpture in Renaissance Italy*, Oxford, Peter Lang, 2007, but with the notable exception of the work of Max Bryant (notably, 'C.R. Cockerell and the Development of Architectural Sculpture in Britain 1800–1860', PhD Thesis, University of Cambridge, 2016), similar analysis is lacking for the period covered by this paper.

[3] R. Guilding, *Marble Mania: Sculpture Galleries in England 1640–1840*, London, Sir John Soane's Museum, 2001; A. Yarrington, 'Marble, memory and theatre: portraiture and the Sculpture Gallery at Chatsworth', in G. Perry *et al.* (eds), *Placing Faces: The Portrait and the English Country House in the Long Eighteenth Century*, Manchester, Manchester University Press. pp. 96–114; A. Laing, 'The Eighteenth-Century English Chimney-Piece', in G. Jackson-Stops et al. (eds), *The Fashioning and Functioning of the British Country House*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1989, pp. 241–54.

[4] R. Campion, 'Reconstructing an Ascendancy world: the material culture of Frederick Hervey, the Earl Bishop of Derry (1730–1803), PhD thesis, University of Maynooth, 2012.

[5] E.g., N. Pevsner, *Suffolk*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1974, pp. 285–86; B. Fothergill, *The Mitred Earl*, London, Faber and Faber, 1974; S. Price, *The Earl Bishop*, Portstewart, Great Sea, 2011.

[6] R. Campion, '"Antiquity mad": the influence of continental travel on the Irish houses of Frederick Hervey, the Earl Bishop, 1730–1803', in J. Stobart (ed.), *Travel and the British Country House*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2017, pp. 19–41, at pp. 19, 26.

[7] For the Irish houses at Downhill and Ballyscullion, see Campion, ibid., passim, and P. Rankin, *Irish Building Ventures of the Earl Bishop of Derry*, Belfast, Ulster Architectural Heritage Society, 1972.

[8] B. Ford, 'The Earl Bishop, an Eccentric and Capricious Patron of the Arts', *Apollo*, 99, 1974, pp. 426–34; P. Andrew, 'Jacob More and the Earl Bishop of Derry', *Apollo*, 124, 1986, pp. 88–94; I. Bignamini and C. Hornsby, *Digging and Dealing in Eighteenth-Century Rome*, Yale, Yale University Press, 2010, vol. 1, pp. 282–84; Campion, as at notes 4 and 6.

[9] A. Walker and F. Cseh, 'Ickworth Treatment: Stone and Plaster, 5 Panels', unpublished object treatment report, 2021. My thanks to Cliveden Conservation and the House and Collections Team at Ickworth, National Trust, for sharing this report and further information. While precise dimensions for the reliefs are not available, a few terracotta and stucco figures removed from the frieze and now in Ickworth's stores measure between 76 and 93cm tall, suggesting that the panels are a little over 1 metre high (see the sculptures with National Trust inventory numbers NT 852336, NT 852337, and NT 852338).

[10] See Coltman, as at note 1; M. Baker, 'The Portrait Sculpture', in D. McKitterick (ed.), *The Making of the Wren Library*', Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 110–37; T. Richardson, *The Arcadian Friends: Inventing the English Landscape Garden*, London, Bantam, 2007.

[11] R. Sweet, *Cities and the Grand Tour: The British in Italy, c.1690–1820*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012.

[12] Campion, as at note 6, p. 19.

[13] Campion, as note 4, pp. 40–45.

[14] See M. Bryant, *The Museum by the Park*, London, Paul Hoberton Publishing, 2017.

[15] Hervey to John Symonds, 16 July 1796, Suffolk Archives, Hervey papers, 941/51/4, reproduced in P. Fox, 'Building and collecting: the correspondence on art and architecture of Frederick Hervey, Bishop of Derry and 4th Earl of Bristol', *Walpole Society,* 85, 2023, no. 222.

[16] For Ickworth's museological significance, see N. Figgis, 'The Roman Property of Frederick Augustus Hervey, 4th Earl of Bristol and Bishop of Derry (1730–1803)', *The Volume of the Walpole Society* 55, 1993, pp. 77–103.

[17] J. G. Rokewode, *The History and Antiquities of Suffolk: Thingoe Hundred*, London, 1838, p. 304.

[18] R. Wrigley and M., Craske, *Pantheons: Transformations of a Monumental Idea*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2004.

[19] Rankin, as at note 7, p. 54. Ickworth was built shortly before the notable Pantheon also adorned with exterior relief sculpture at Ince Blundell.

[20] Though notable, Hervey's sculptural collection was limited alongside Townley's. When it came to relief, the sale catalogue for Hervey's collection mentions three casts from the Arch of Marcus Aurelius now in the Capitoline Museum, 'Rumour with Castor and Pollux' by Domenico Cardelli, and twelve neoclassical *cammini* (chimney pieces) (see Figgis, as at note 16).

[21] Quoted in E. Marchand, 'Reproducing Relief: The Use and Status of Plaster Casts in the Italian Renaissance', in Cooper & Leino 2007, as at note 2, pp. 191–224, at p. 217.

[22] Payne 2011, as at note 2.

[23] G. Scherf, ‘De la Malignité d’un microbe: L’antique et le bas-relief moderne, de Falconet à David d’Angers’, *Revue de l’art* 105, 1994, pp. 19–32.

[24] For the Borghese’s history, see C. Paul, *The Borghese Collections and the Display of Art in the Age of the Grand Tour*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2008.

[25] P. Tudor-Craig, ‘The evolution of Ickworth’, *Country Life*, 153, 1973, pp. 1362–65. See also: S. Pasquali, *Mario Asprucci: Neoclassical Architecture in Villa Borghese 1786–1796*, Rome, Alessandra Di Castro, 2018.

[26] Rokewode, as at note 17, pp. 304-6. The Carabellis would have worked either from the 1793 or 1795 editions entitled *The Iliad of Homer* and *The Odyssey of Homer* engraved by Tomasso Piroli. For a bibliographic overview of the editions of Flaxman’s drawings, see G. Bentley Jr., *The Early Engravings of Flaxman’s Classical Designs*, New York, New York Public Library, 1964.

[27] Rokewode, as at note 17, p. 304. Wharncliffe’s involvement with the commissioning process is discussed in the second section of this article. An album of unrelated drawings and watercolours by Wharncliffe survives in Tate Britain’s collections (see A. Foster, *Tate Women Artists,* London, Tate, 2004, pp. 28–33). For a reproduction of Douglas-Hamilton’s painting now in the National Gallery of Ireland, see A. Wilton and I. Bignamini, *Grand Tour: The Lure of Italy in the Eighteenth Century*, London, Tate Gallery, 1990, p. 59.

[28] K. Fiore, ‘The outdoor exhibition of sculpture on the Villa Borghese façades in the time of Cardinal Scipione Borghese’, in N. Penny and E. Schmidt (eds), *Collecting Sculpture in Early Modern Europe,* Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art, 2008, pp. 219–46.

[29] Hervey to Alexander Day, 8 Sept. 1795, Suffolk Archives, Hervey papers, 941/30/1 (Fox no. 210)

[30] For their work on the cathedral, see G. Mele, *Maestri del Duomo: Appunti per un catalogo*. Milan, Stucchi, p. 134.

[31] A. Lanza, *Milano e i suoi palazzi*, Milano, Libreria Meravigli Editrice, 1992, p. 32.

[32] Less information exists about Casimiro’s work save for his contribution to Milan cathedral (see Mele, as at note 30).

[33] Parini moves 'dalla presentazione delle qualità morali alla celebrazione dell'esempio illustre, attraverso una galleria di episodi autorevoli'; C. Mangalone, 'Parini soggettista: Da Palazzo Greppi a Villa Belgioioso', *Arte Lombarda* 122, 1, 1998, pp. 107–13, at p. 110. For reproductions see G. Buccellati and A. Marchi (eds) *Parini e le arti nella Milano neoclassica*, Università degli Studi di Milano, Milano, 2000, pp. 127–52.

[34] For Hervey's notorious interventions in the work of artists he commissioned, see Ford, as at note 8.

[35] John Bacon's carvings for Oxford's Radcliffe Observatory (1792–94) which draw on the 'Tower of the Winds' are an exceptional precursor to Ickworth. Occasionally Coade reliefs of more ambitious subjects were produced, like the putti from the 1790s representing agriculture and the arts on Emo Court's pavilions in County Laois, Ireland.

[36] Hervey to Lady Mary Erne, 10 Mar. 1800, Sheffield Archives, Wh M/552b/11 (Fox no. 257).

[37] Quoted in Campion, as at note 4, who summarises Hervey's movements at p. 42.

[38] See Tudor-Craig, as at note 25.

[39] Suffolk Archives, Hervey papers, 941/30/134.

[40] Hervey to Lady Mary Erne, 14 May 1799, Sheffield Archives, Wh M/552b/8 (Fox no. 251).

[41] Hervey to Lady Mary Erne, 27 Oct. 1799, Sheffield Archives, Wh M/552b/10 (Fox no. 254).

[42] Hervey to Lady Mary Erne, 20 Jan. 1801, Sheffield Archives, Wh M/552b/12 (Fox no. 264).

[43] Hervey's wealth in his lifetime came principally from episcopal rents in Ireland, but he also inherited from his two older brothers. George William, the second Earl of Bristol, had served as an ambassador and the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland; Augustus John, the third Earl, was a senior naval commander during the Anglo-French struggles for overseas territory in the Seven Years War. Hervey's cousin Caroline and his granddaughter Elizabeth had respectively married slaveholders with Jamaican estates, Peeke Fuller and Charles Rose Ellis ('Gazetteer of National Trust Properties', in S. - A. Huxtable, C. Fowler, C. Kefalas, E. Slocombe (eds), *Interim Report on the Connections between Colonialism and Properties now in the Care of the National Trust, Including Links with Historic Slavery*, Swindon, National Trust, 2020, pp. 65–66).

[44] Hervey to John Symonds, as at note 15.

[45] For Winckelmann's influence on Hervey's didactic gallery plans, see Figgis, as a note 16, p. 87, fn. 6.

[46] On the publication and its authors, see K. Bristol, 'James "Athenian" Stuart and *The Antiquities of Athens*', *Antiquarian Book Monthly*, 25, 8, 1998, pp. 23–36 and S. Weber (ed.), *James "Athenian" Stuart, 1713–1788: The Rediscovery of Antiquity*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2006. On the influence of Greece on British architecture see J. M. Crook, *The Greek Revival: Neo-classical Attitudes in British Architecture 1760-1870*, London, John Murray, 1995.

[47] See J. Stuart and N. Revett, *The Antiquities of Athens Measured and Delineated by James Stuart F.R.S. and F.S.A. and Nicholas Revett, Painters and Architects. Volume the First*, London, Printed by John Haberkorn, 1762, pp. 13–36; and *Volume the Second*, edited by William Newton, 1787, pp. 1–14.

[48] For Stuart and Revett's influence on British sculptors including Flaxman, see G. Sullivan, 'Athenian Stuart and the changing relationship between architects and sculptors in eighteenth-century Britain', in Weber, as at note 47, pp. 385–411.

[49] *Crosscurrents: French and Italian Neoclassical Drawings and Prints from the Cooper Hewitt Museum*, exhib. catalogue, ed. C. Bernard, Washington DC, Smithsonian Institution Press, 1978, pp. 22–23.

[50] See W. St. Clair, *Lord Elgin and the Marbles*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998, and S. Pearce & T. Ormrod, *Charles Robert Cockerell in the Mediterranean: Letters and Travels, 1810–1817*; Martlesham, Boydell, 2017.

[51] For more on the reliefs' arrival in London and reception, see I. Jenkins, *Archaeologists and Aesthetes in the Sculpture Galleries of the British Museum, 1800–1939*. London, British Museum Press, 1992, pp. 13–106.

[52] Max Bryant has reviewed examples of architectural cast reproductions of the Bassai Marbles; Bryant, as a note 2, pp. 82–126. On casts of the Parthenon Marbles produced by Decimus Burton and John Henning, see J. Wall, *"That Most Ingenious Modeller". The Life and Work of John Henning, Sculptor. 1771–1851*, Ely, Melrose Books, 2008, and E. Payne, *Casting the Parthenon Sculptures from the Eighteenth Century to the Digital Age*, London, Bloomsbury, 2021.

[53] Campion, as at note 4, p. 42, relates how 'Hervey deliberately separated his Irish and English lands in his will of 1791 and codicil of 1794, leaving to his cousin and loyal agent, the Revd Henry Hervey Bruce, all his

Irish land, two Irish houses and his art collection in Italy. His son Frederick only inherited the entailed land and title.'

[54] Hervey to Alexander Day, as at note 29.

[55] Ford, as at note 8, p. 431.

[56] D. Bindman, 'Lost Surfaces: Canova and Colour', *Oxford Art Journal*, 39, 2, 2016, pp. 229–41.

[57] Bindman, as at note 56, p. 238. For Quatremère de Quincy's account of when he first noticed ancient polychromy, see, *Le Jupiter olympien*, Paris, de Bure frères, 1814, p. i.

[58] Walker & Cseh, as at note 9. See also J. Maddison, *Ickworth Conservation Plan*, National Trust, 2003.

[59] W. Fitzgerald, *The Living Death of Antiquity: Neoclassical Aesthetics*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2022, p. 84.

[60] John Flaxman to William Hayley, 26 Oct 1793, quoted in D. Bindman, *John Flaxman*, London, Thames & Hudson, 1979, p. 86.

[61] On transferability, see ibid., p. 26.

[62] D. Bindman, *John Flaxman: Line into Contour*, Birmingham, Ikon Gallery, 2013, p. 9.

[63] Payne 2013, as at note 2.

[64] Ford, as at note 8, pp. 430–31.

[65] Even after Smirke's Theatre burnt down in 1856, Flaxman's designs were salvaged and the two friezes combined in the portico of Edward Middleton Barry's Royal Opera House. For the history of these two buildings, see F. H. W. Sheppard, *Survey of London. Vol. 35, The Theatre Royal, Drury Lane and the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden*, London, Athlone Press, 1970, pp. 86–108.

[66] On Flaxman's use of casts, see E. Marchand, 'The Flaxman Gallery at University College London and its history', in D. Bindman (ed.), *John Flaxman 1755–1826: Master of the Purest Line*, London, Sir John Soane's Museum, 2003, pp. 37–43 and E. Marchand, 'The Flaxman Gallery and the Rôle of Plaster Casts in the Workshop of John Flaxman 1755–1826' in M. Guderzo and T. Lochmann (eds), *Il Valore del Gesso: Modello, Calco, Copia per la Realizzazione della Scultura*, Possagno, Fondazione Canova, 2017, pp. 309–20.

[67] Hervey to Lady Mary Erne, as at note 41.

[68] Hervey to Lady Mary Erne, as at note 36.

[69] Hervey to Lady Mary Erne as at note 40.

[70] Hervey to Lady Mary Erne, as at note 41.

[71] Maddison, as at note 58, p. 24.

[72] See S. Lukic-Scott and C. Davis, 'Introduction: Valuing sculpture: art, craft and industry, 1660–1860', *Sculpture Journal* 32, 4, 2023, pp. 409–16.

[73] On terracotta, see B. Boucher and P. Motture (eds), *Earth and Fire: Italian Terracotta Sculpture from Donatello to Canova*, New Haven, Yale University Press, and J. Draper and G. Scherf (eds) *Playing with Fire: European Terracotta Models, 1740–1840*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2004. On interior stucco, see G. Beard, *Decorative Plasterwork in England*, London, Routledge, 2015, and C. Casey, *Making Magnificence: Architects, Stuccatori and the Eighteenth-Century Interior,* New Haven, Yale University Press, 2017.

[74] M. Barberini, 'Base or Noble Material? Clay Sculpture in Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century Italy', in Boucher & Motture, as at note 74, pp. 43-59, at p. 43.

[75] See Payne 2011, as a note 2 and Scherf, as at note 23.

[76] Hervey to Lady Mary Erne, as at note 41.

[77] Hervey to Lady Mary Erne, as at note 36.

[78] J. Reynolds 'Discourse X'. in E. Malone (ed.), *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014 [1797], p. 210–11.

[79] Quoted in A. Kelly, *Mrs Coade's Stone*, Upton-Upon-Severn, Self-Publishing Association in conjunction with the Georgian Group, 1990, p. 64, fn.2.

[80] C. Stanford, 'Revisiting the origins of Coade Stone', *The Georgian Group Journal*, 24, 2016, pp. 105–8.

[81] Kelly as at note 79, pp. 175–76. On Croggan, see also C. Stanford, 'Peculiarly fit for statues': the contribution of Coade's fired artificial stone to sculpture in the eighteenth century', *Sculpture Journal*, 32, 4, 2023, pp. 433–50, at p. 434.

[82] For references to the de Carle firm attaching 'artificial stone' to the 'Corinthian Frieze' (i.e. sitting above Corinthian pilasters), see Suffolk Archives, Hervey Papers, 941/30/11 and 941/30/12. For the receipted bill

from William Croggan for the installation of interior scagliola columns between 1820 and 1822, see ibid. 941/3/1/4. An earlier bill to an unknown John Lake, perhaps an employee of de Carle, records 'taking mould off a basso-relievo on the frieze', applying 'plaster' and 'moulding figures' between August and October 1823 (ibid. 941/30/10). The same individual was paid for 'fixing artificial stone' from October to November 1824 (ibid. 941/30/15).

[83] On the dating of Flaxman's illustrations, see note 26.

[84] On Wharncliffe's involvement, see note 27.

[85] M. Zebrowski, 'Gilbert West's Dissertation on the Olympick Games (1749): "Established upon great Political Views"', *Journal for Eighteenth-century Studies*, 35, 2, pp. 239–47.

[86] Rokewode, as at note 17, p. 305.

[87] Fothergill, as at note 5, pp. 143–44.

[88] K. Simonsuuri, *Homer's Original Genius: Eighteenth-Century Notions of Early Greek Epic (1688–1798)*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1979.

[89] Besides varioustexts and translations of Homer, the library contains multiple print compilations of Flaxman's compositions and volumes of his RA Lectures. See M. Purcell & J. Fishwick, 'The Library at Ickworth', *The Book Collector*, 63, 3, 2012, pp. 367–90.

[90] Coltman, as at note 1.

[91] R. Essick and J. La Belle, *Flaxman's Illustrations to Homer*, London, Constable, 1977, p. xix.

[92] Ibid., p. ix.

[93] See D. Irwin, *John Flaxman 1755–1826: Sculptor, Illustrator, Designer*, London, 1979, p. 80, and the more detailed discussion in E. Marchand, 'John Flaxman's Drawings After Italian Antique, Medieval and Renaissance Sculpture', in H. Brigstocke, E. Marchand and A. E. Wright, *John Flaxman and William Young Ottley in Italy*, Walpole Society 72, 2010, pp. 25–45. In this Walpole Society edition, most examples of Flaxman's drawings after ancient relief can be found in his Fitzwilliam Museum Journal (832.5), Yale Centre for British Art, Sketchbook (B1975.3.468), and V&A Sketchbook (2970), pp. 89–339.

[94] In 1804 new editions of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were published. Flaxman added eleven scenes included in all subsequent editions (Essick and La Belle, as at note 90, p. vii).

[95] D. Irwin, *English Neoclassical Art: Studies in Inspiration and Taste*, London, Faber, 1966, p. 61.

[96] The exception is a single framing space where scenes from books 7 and 8 switch order.

[97] E.g., ‘Poseidon seated in a quadriga’ and ‘Zeus sitting on his throne sending a dream’ are omitted, presumably because they repeat the frontal pose of Zeus sitting in the ‘Council of the Gods’ (fig. 13).

[98] E.g., ‘Polydamus advising Hector to Retire’, the one scene omitted from the sequence covering books 3–16, simply looks like two warriors regarding one another from chariots.

[99] Assorted moments of pathos and high drama include the funeral of Hector (*Iliad* 24.776–804, Flaxman pl. 34), Andromache swooning at the dragging of Hector’s body (*Iliad* 22.405–515, Flaxman pl. 30), the fight over the body of Patroclus (*Iliad* 17.262–318, Flaxman pl. 22), and Briseis being led away from Achilles (*Iliad* 1.318–356, Flaxman pl. 1).

[100] D. Wiebenson, ‘Subjects from Homer's Iliad in Neoclassical Art’, *The Art Bulletin*, 46, 1, Mar. 1964, pp. 23–37.

[101] For the quote from Flaxman’s lectures, see D. Peatherbridge, ‘Constructing the Language of Line’, in *Master of the Purest Line*, as at note 67, p. 7.

[102] Rokewode, as at note 17, p. 306.

[103] When writing about those employed at Ballyscullion, for instance, he talks proudly of ‘all the most Valuable and industrious part of the community — judge of the wealth & comfort I disseminate among such virtue’ (Hervey to Lady Mary Erne, 25 Aug. 1794, Sheffield Archives, Wh M/522b/1, (Fox no. 201)). Though as much an absentee landlord in Ireland as Suffolk, Lindsay Proudfoot alleges that Hervey was remembered favourably by tenants in Derry, who raised a monument in his memory (‘After the earl bishop: the management of Downhill in the nineteenth century’, in G. O’Brien (ed.), *Derry and Londonderry: History and Society: Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of an Irish County*, Dublin, Geography Publications, 1999, pp 415–48, at p. 444).

[104] See Campion, as at note 4, pp. 20–34, 50–64, who draws on the work of T. Barnard*, Improving Ireland? Projectors, Prophets and Profiteers, 1641–1786*, Dublin, Four Courts Press, 2008.