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### Robert Adam Interiors and Wakehurst's Yellow Drawing Room: Imported Period Rooms in the United States

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ROBERT ADAM INTERIORS AND WAKEHURST'S YELLOW DRAWING ROOM:  
IMPORTED PERIOD ROOMS IN THE UNITED STATES

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Submitted to the Department of Art and Art History

Noreen Stonor Drexel Cultural and Historic Preservation Program

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## **Introduction to Wakehurst**

During the late nineteenth century, the wealthy classes accumulated staggering fortunes while the working classes grew. There was an infatuation with the elite, the royal, the aristocratic, and the ability to become someone of such importance. American socialites, like James J. Van Alen, used their wealth to build mansions that rivaled the manor houses and palaces of Europe. The late nineteenth century also saw an increased number of historic houses being demolished in Europe, particularly in expanding cities like London. At the same time, newfound wealthy Americans of the Gilded Age wanted to construct the very palaces and mansions that were being deconstructed abroad. A status symbol, Newport mansions not only copied existing European buildings, but also contained entire imported rooms, including the Yellow Drawing Room at Wakehurst, which may have been the first interior by Robert Adam to be imported, and certainly the first for private use, making it one of the most significant interiors in Newport, and in the United States.

In 1881, the grieving widower, James J. Van Alen (1848-1923), was gifted property on Ochre Point in Newport, Rhode Island, by his father, General James Henry Van Alen (1819-1886), in hopes of distracting his son (Figs. 1 & 2). James J Van Alen, the former American tennis player, politician, and leader of New York society had recently lost his wife, Emily Astor (1854-1881), in childbirth on November 21, 1881, and was left alone with their three children (Fig. 3). Following his wife's death, Van Alen began spending more time in England, where he had the opportunity to visit numerous English estates. Van Alen, for some years, had leased a country estate in Rushton, Northamptonshire, England called Rushton Hall, which dated back to ca. 1438 (Fig. 4)

before purchasing it and renovating it later. His admiration for English homes was great and he had extensive knowledge of their history.<sup>1</sup> While Van Alen was in England, he was entertained by Lady Downshire at Wakehurst Place, a large Elizabethan house in Sussex dating to the sixteenth century (Figs. 5 & 6). Although Lady Downshire significantly renovated the house following the purchase of it in 1869, the house struck a chord with Van Alen's anglophile heart. It was during or after he visited Wakehurst Place that Van Alen came up with the idea to create his very own version in Newport, Rhode Island.

Van Alen instructed Charles Eamer Kempe, a well-known English architect and stained-glass designer, to draw up the façade and floor plans of Wakehurst Place so that he could take them back to Newport (Fig. 7). In 1884, the *Newport Mercury* reported that "J. J. Van Alen of New York is having built on LeRoy Avenue a stone and brick villa 60 by 111 feet. The plans are copies from a building in England built in the sixteenth century. C. E. Kempe of London and Dudley Newton of this city are the architects."<sup>2</sup> Van Alen hired the young Newport architect, Dudley Newton, to design the new Wakehurst based on Kempe's drawings with alterations to accommodate Van Alen's specific needs. In 1888, the *Newport Daily News* reported, "Careful and exact drawings were made by a well-known architect, Mr. C. E. Kempe, and put in the hands of young Newport architect, Mr. Dudley Newton, under whose care the interior was planned and executed."<sup>3</sup> Van

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<sup>1</sup> "Wakehurst" by William L. Van Alen May 16, 1973 from Early History, Wakehurst Collection, Folder 14, Salve Regina University Archives, Salve Regina University McKillop Library.

<sup>2</sup> "Newport Mercury, October 18, 1884" from Early History, Wakehurst Collection, Folder 14, Salve Regina University Archives, Salve Regina University McKillop Library.

<sup>3</sup> "Newport Daily News, September 22, 1888" from Early History, Wakehurst Collection, Folder 14, Salve Regina University Archives, Salve Regina University McKillop Library.

Alen selected period rooms to be imported and installed within his new home, for which Newton presumably designed the floorplans based on the dimensions of these rooms. (Fig. 8). The landscape surrounding Wakehurst was designed by American landscape architect Ernest Bowditch.

The house was built facing east towards the ocean, approximately 330 feet back from the property line on Ochre Point Avenue (Fig. 9). Originally, a seven-foot high stone wall surrounded the property, which was lowered in the 1970s. There is a decorative wrought iron gate facing north east which opens to a serpentine driveway. To the south of the house is a sunken Elizabethan garden. The east (front) elevation closely resembles the exterior of the original Wakehurst Place with its E-shape, two-and-a-half-story, seven-bays wide, three of which are projecting and topped by wall dormers adorned with finials. The exterior is clad in Indiana limestone and the roof is clad in Vermont slate. All of the windows are stone-mullioned and leaded, except for the stained-glass windows designed by Kempe which can be seen on the west facing side above a staircase and in the bays on the east elevation.<sup>4</sup>

One of the most interesting details at Wakehurst, that is often overlooked by current inhabitants, visitors, and scholars, are the rooms that were imported and reconstructed inside the house, rather than built newly at the time. These rooms include the Yellow Drawing Room or the library, the den, and the Flemish Dining Room (Figs. 10-16). In the south/left-wing off of the great hall, there are two rooms: the Yellow Drawing Room facing east and the Flemish Dining Room facing west. Both of these

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<sup>4</sup> Michael C. Kathrens, *Newport Villas: The Revival Styles, 1885-1935*, 1st ed (New York: W.W. Norton, 2009).

rooms were imported, with the dining room coming from an old Flemish house, and the drawing-room coming from a demolished townhouse in London, possibly from Northumberland House or Derby House. Robert Adam designed both of these houses and they were demolished in time for Van Alen to have purchased interiors, for which the contents were sold by auction. According to the sale catalog from Northumberland House's auction of building materials, fixtures and fittings in 1874, entire rooms were also being salvaged and sold. It describes the Ball Room lot with "The richly embellished and gilt ceiling with raised figures and medallions, the ditto cornice, scroll stringing under, and the gilt frames & decoration on Wall next Corridor, consisting of floral wreaths, groups of arms, &c." and "The gilt moulding, skirting, and dado at North end." For the Grey Drawing Room they advertise "A pair of folding (sliding) doors, with richly gilt moulded panels, architraves, linings, and facia, opening 10 feet by 5 feet... A pair of 18-light mahogany sashes... The gilt centre and cornice, and the lath and plaster of the ceiling."<sup>5</sup> It is entirely possible that Van Alen purchased a room or parts from a similar auction of one of Adam's old townhouses. A contemporary source notes that "...it equals that of the best London decorators, Battiscomb and Harris, who did that of the library. Much of it is old English or Flemish brought directly from abroad."<sup>6</sup> Potentially, the Yellow Drawing Room, as it would soon be known, was an incomplete Adam room, for which a firm like Battiscomb and Harris would combine the salvages with others. Van

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<sup>5</sup> *Northumberland House. A catalogue of the First Portion of the Valuable Building Materials, Fixtures and Fittings Which Will Be Sold by Auction On September 8<sup>th</sup>, 1874, and Two Following Days*, ed. British Library.

<sup>6</sup> "Newport Daily News, September 22, 1888" from Early History, Wakehurst Collection, Folder 14, Salve Regina University Archives, Salve Regina University McKillop Library.

Alen's grandson would go on to claim that the Yellow Drawing Room "at the time of the building of Wakehurst to be the first complete Adam room in the country."<sup>7</sup>

There is little known about the history of the Yellow Drawing Room, which is decorated in the neoclassical Adam style. An article in the *Newport Daily News* from 1888 described the room as follows:

The left wing, opening from the great hall, is divided into a library on the front, twenty-seven by twenty feet, decorated in the Adam style, with wainscot, marble, frieze and furniture all in light wood, from original designs by Adam himself. A blue and white Wedgewood plaque set in the mantel is one of the early and best of the large pieces of that famous potter's revivals of classic design. In the corners are quaint cupboards filled with a collection of pieces of old porcelain. A table is covered with rare miniatures, one a set by Cosway, of the famous beauties of his time, among them the celebrated Miss Gunning. The only mirror in the living rooms is a large, beveled glass over the mantelpiece in the library, reflecting the rich designs of the walls and ceiling.<sup>8</sup>

News sources reported on the famous house opening party that Van Alen hosted to show off his new residence. The house construction finished sometime in 1887 but the property was not complete until 1888. Van Alen's Wakehurst set a new precedent for extravagant mansions in Gilded Age Newport and was a successor to earlier estates like Vinland, completed in 1883. These earlier Newport homes marked a transition point from the quainter Civil War cottages to much grander mansions that would soon follow such as Marble House (1888-1892) or The Breakers (1893-1895). The opening party at Wakehurst in September 1888 was a great success. The contents of the room seemed to

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<sup>7</sup> "Wakehurst" by William L. Van Alen May 16, 1973 from Early History, Wakehurst Collection, Folder 14, Salve Regina University Archives, Salve Regina University McKillop Library.

<sup>8</sup> "Newport Daily News, September 22, 1888" from Early History, Wakehurst Collection, Folder 14, Salve Regina University Archives, Salve Regina University McKillop Library.

have as much importance as the origin, as noted by contemporary sources' enthusiasm for the decorative antiques and interiors collected by Van Alen.

The other two rooms selected for Wakehurst are also of significant origin. The dining room, with dark oak wainscoting, a Spanish leather frieze, a ceiling with crossed oaken beams and stucco in arabesques, is supposed to have come from an old Flemish house in Bruges. The leather panels were supposedly discovered by Van Alen himself when poking through several layers of wallpaper with an umbrella. The den was an imported dining room from a London townhouse that belonged to Lady Maria Fitz-Herbert, the mistress and secret wife of King George IV. The wood paneling was enlarged to fit the larger space, but the drop panel in the side wall remained intact so that food could be passed under when Lady Fitz-Herbert was dining alone with the King.<sup>9</sup> The upstairs bedrooms feature reproduction woodwork created in England and set up in Newport by local workmen. The woodwork in the rest of the house was made by Page and Littlefield of Boston.<sup>10</sup>

As a collector, Van Alen was known to move his extensive collection of English decorative arts and furniture between Rushton Hall and Wakehurst so that he always had his bedroom furniture with him wherever he was staying. He would continue to split his time between Wakehurst, Rushton Hall, and his villa in Cannes, France called Le Chateau Mont Joli (now demolished) where he spent his last years. Van Alen was planning to return to the United States on his way back to London, where his health

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<sup>9</sup> "Wakehurst" by William L. Van Alen May 16, 1973 from Early History, Wakehurst Collection, Folder 14, Salve Regina University Archives, Salve Regina University McKillop Library.

<sup>10</sup> "Newport Daily News, September 22, 1888" from Early History, Wakehurst Collection, Folder 14, Salve Regina University Archives, Salve Regina University McKillop Library.



suddenly deteriorated upon arrival in the UK. He was transferred to a private nursing home in England in 1923 where he died at the age of 75.<sup>11</sup>

The following chapters of this thesis will discuss the concept of the imported period room and how Wakehurst's Yellow Drawing Room fits into that context. Chapter 2 will introduce the concept of the period room in museum spaces. The history and motivations behind dismantling, importing, and reinstalling entire rooms will be examined, especially of early examples like the Yellow Drawing Room which were for private use during the late nineteenth-century. The majority of period rooms were imported during the 1920s and 30s and directly installed into museum exhibits. The uniqueness of this imported work by Adam will be put into context, as well as its significance in the foundation of this practice since it predates other known imported Adam interiors by decades. This chapter will also pay heed to the reasoning behind the decline of the popularity of these types of installations within museums in the twenty-first century.

Chapter 3 will provide a detailed description of the Yellow Drawing Room, how it appeared during Van Alen's lifetime, and how it might have looked in its original context. This chapter will also discuss the importance of Robert Adam's work and the defining features of the style. The architecture and design of the library will be examined to determine the authenticity of Adam's work. Questions of renovation and restoration, such as original paint research will also be covered in this section.

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<sup>11</sup> By Wireless to The New York Times, "Van Alen Burial Here: Memorial Service to BI, Held in Savoy Chapel, London, Tomorrow," *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Jul 15, 1923.

Chapter 4 will explore the history of other imported Adam rooms in the United States, including the well-known examples that reside at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. While the Yellow Drawing Room is a rare example of an imported Adam interior in private use, it is certainly not the only one in existence. The possibility of other Adam interiors in the United States will be discussed. The public perception of Adam's work and museum display or restoration decisions will also be considered in the context of Adam's legacy that lives on in the United States.

The final chapter will conclude with the significance of a room such as the Yellow Drawing Room and its importance as a resource, not only for the public but to Salve Regina University students. The public reuse of the room will be discussed, and suggestions for future use will also be given in order to honor Adam's architectural work and Van Alen's contributions to collecting. Of all the houses and rooms that exist in Newport or even the United States, very few have ones with such extraordinary provenances as the Yellow Drawing Room at Wakehurst, despite being virtually unknown.

## Chapter 1: Imported Interiors and ‘Museum Rooms’

The practice of importing historic interiors to the United States has had a long and fascinating history, especially when they were imported for public use. When walking through a major art institution, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, visitors will wander through the various galleries of a typical art museum, but upon entering an installed period room they are quickly transported back into another time. There are a significant number of period rooms at the Met which transport visitors back to eighteenth-century Vienna or to ancient Pompeii. Although it may seem self-explanatory, it still should be said: in a period room, the entire room becomes the exhibition, including the ceiling, the floors, the walls, the mirrors, the sconces, the furniture and other decorative elements. It is an odd feeling to know one is simply visiting an art museum, but suddenly feel as if they are at visiting a French chateau or an English townhouse, in New York City no less. The majority of visitors are completely used to this concept, however, since it has been a museum tradition in the United States for over a century and continues to prevail as some of the most popular museum exhibits.<sup>12</sup>

During the 1870s, at the beginning of the famous Gilded Age in the United States, newly well-to-do Americans were obsessed with collecting antiques and building mansions to house them in. In these early days, Americans were mostly focused on collecting valuable Renaissance or Old Master paintings but did not necessarily know what was worth collecting or why. By the end of the decade, interest in all periods and

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<sup>12</sup> Amelia Peck, and Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Period Rooms in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1996).

objects expanded, especially with the increasing prominence of art dealer expertise.<sup>13</sup> People were collecting “exotic” tokens such as antique weapons from Asian countries and French Rococo furniture; anything that could be collected and brought to America was. At this time, art dealers, such as the famous Duveen Brothers, took notice of the interest in architectural elements, so they began selling small pieces of architectural fragments including marble capitals, surface decoration, carved wood or gilt objects (Figs. 17 & 18). Americans would purchase pieces to install in their new homes or to display as a Grand Tour souvenir to portray their wealth and worldliness. Right around the time many manor houses and palaces were being demolished in Europe, particularly England due to an increase in property taxes and to make way for new development, there was an increasing demand for wholesale interiors of stately homes which began to be salvaged and sold.<sup>14</sup> In 1882, the British government enacted the Settled Land Act, which made it possible for aristocrats to sell their residences and their collections off, which was not allowed prior. Estates that were inherited through the law of primogeniture (to the eldest son or heir) were protected by settlements which did not allow inheritors to disassemble or redisperse their collection and properties. This was done so that future generations were secured, and property remained whole under a sole owner. The government was also concerned with the cultivation of land if it were to have no owner or tenants, which could affect the economy. However, this modern act reversed centuries long tradition, allowing owners of large estates to sell their homes, land, or collections,

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<sup>13</sup>Charlotte Vignon, Ian Wardropper, and Frick Collection, *Duveen Brothers and the Market for Decorative Arts, 1880-1940*, (New York: Frick Collection, 2019).

<sup>14</sup> Jan M. Ziolkowski, “Cloistering the USA: Everybody Must Get Stones,” in *The Juggler of Notre Dame and the Medievalizing of Modernity: Volume 4: Picture That: Making a Show of the Jongleur*, 259-98.

usually due to economic reasons. The increase in property taxes and the never-ending cost to run these crumbling stately homes made it impossible for some owners. If they did not find an alternative source for funding, such as marrying an American heiress, much of their priceless art and antiques would be sold at auction, including entire interiors.<sup>15</sup>

While simple fascination was a reason for this kind of salvage collecting, there was also an element of cultural rivalry at play. The United States had always been considered inferior to Europe in terms of its art and architecture, something that they would have been very conscious of in the nineteenth century. This was in part due to the fact that for centuries they had only copied what was popular in England instead of creating something completely distinctive. Of course, this is not an accurate statement that could be made today, but a certain air of superiority did exist in Europe. By the mid to late nineteenth century, some Americans were interested in developing the nation's own style, some were interested in the revival styles of the past, whereas others still wanted to emulate the grandeur of European aristocrats. When art dealers saw that historic houses were being demolished, Europeans and Americans alike knew that these interiors were to be saved, if not just for their inherent value in owning a room designed by Adam or a room with significant associations. That is why so many interiors went to auction and were reinstalled either in a museum or a private house.<sup>16</sup> Collectors like James J. Van Alen wanted these rooms for Wakehurst to stay consistent with “the antique

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<sup>15</sup> Charlotte Vignon, Ian Wardropper, and Frick Collection, *Duveen Brothers and the Market for Decorative Arts, 1880-1940*, (New York: Frick Collection, 2019).

<sup>16</sup> Ziolkowski, “Cloistering the USA: Everybody Must Get Stones,” 259-98.

taste,” but probably did not collect them as an act of self-conscious preservation.<sup>17</sup> If he did not purchase the interior, he knew someone else would, for which the outcome was not necessarily a factor in these decisions. However, these were the beginnings of historic preservation, although moving rooms and taking architectural elements would not be considered an act of conservation today.

Americans believed that they were justified in their actions due to historic precedent, such as when the Romans shipped obelisks across their empire or when Europeans created architectural pastiches out of medieval monasteries, it was something that had always been done. This tradition also harkens back to the princely collections of art and natural wonders that would incorporate everything from sculpture to painting to decorative arts to so-called unicorn tusks to Roman cameos. This early type of museum did not separate by medium but instead mixed them, forming a sort of early period room. As Jan Ziolkowski noted in his essay on the collecting of Church salvages, “Americans took so much that it had fair claim to be called the world’s ruin nation.”<sup>18</sup> In their quest to collect great artifacts from Europe, Americans sought to create their own princely collections, and sometimes even installed an entire antique room within their homes.

The exact details of how these period rooms were imported are not entirely clear. Some would say that their provenances are shrouded in mystery. The rooms were dissembled at their original sites, auctioned off or sold to an art dealer, transported in crates, and reinstalled in their new homes, as they are still done when selling interiors

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<sup>17</sup> “Wakehurst” by William L. Van Alen May 16, 1973 from Early History, Wakehurst Collection, Folder 14, Salve Regina University Archives, Salve Regina University McKillop Library.

<sup>18</sup> Ziolkowski, “Cloistering the USA: Everybody Must Get Stones,” 259-98.

today.<sup>19</sup> An example of an architect that purchased and installed interiors was Stanford White of McKim, Mead & White, who was known to be a proponent of incorporating period rooms into his designs. In one of his designs for 871 Fifth Avenue of New York circa 1898, he had planned to incorporate salvaged inlaid walnut paneling that dated back to circa 1547-48 from a chateau near Lyon, France. He intended to use it for the walls of a dining room but then decided to use them in a corridor. White wrote in a letter that the panels were being arranged by Allard & Sons, an art dealer which may have also sold the paneling to him as well. Jules Allard of Allard & Sons also helped to acquire a “Marie-Antoinette Room” for Mr. and Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt II at The Breakers in Newport, which was subsequently installed by Richard Morris Hunt in 1895. This was considered to be the first imported French interior in the United States.<sup>20</sup>

Sometimes, these imported rooms were not used in museums or dwellings, but rather for elaborate social functions. In 1896, James J. Van Alen had his architect, Dudley Newton, install a temporary outdoor French interior at Wakehurst to be used for his daughter’s debutante ball as described by the *Newport Mercury*,

... he entrusted his architect, Mr. Dudley Newton, the building of a temporary ball room which should have all the appearance of a permanent structure, and in this effort Mr. Newton was most successful... In dimension it was 30x30 feet and 18 feet high, the side walls and ceilings being of canvas decorated in the Louis XV style, with panels and arabesques that one sees in a French chateau of the period.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> John Harris, *Moving Rooms*, (New Haven: Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2007).

<sup>20</sup> Paul F. Miller, “‘Handelar’s Black Choir’ from Château to Mansion,” *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 44 (2009): 199-210.

<sup>21</sup> “The News - Newport, August 19, 1896” from Early History, Wakehurst Collection, Folder 14, Salve Regina University Archives, Salve Regina University McKillop Library.

An article in the *New York Times* mentioned that “The French ballroom which Mr. Van Allen had imported for this occasion was indeed the surprise of the evening. The structure was built directly over the sunken Italian garden...”<sup>22</sup> Meanwhile, another article stated that “The ball room was constructed in England and brought over to Wakehurst to be erected over the sunken garden.”<sup>23</sup> Whether this imported outdoor interior was English, or French is unknown, and where it went following this event is also unknown. This example is demonstrative of the extravagance and wealth required to import rooms, especially for single-use purposes, but also the ease with which it was possible to do so by the late nineteenth century.

Following the first period rooms imported for private use in the Gilded Age, the majority of them now in the United States would be imported during the 1920s (though some were installed in museums much later). This was because of a renewed interest in Colonial or Federal early American architectural styles where entire institutions were created and filled with period rooms. Famous examples include Colonial Williamsburg, Winterthur and of course the American Wing at the Met in New York. The rooms that were installed during these times were not always intact, meaning that repairs or alterations were made to make the rooms whole again. The authenticity of these types of rooms was questioned by scholars as time progressed. From the late 1960s onward, the historic preservation movement largely marked the end of period-room installations. It was preferable for a room to remain in its original location and demolition of historic

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<sup>22</sup> “New York Times, August, 19, 1896” from Early History, Wakehurst Collection, Folder 14, Salve Regina University Archives, Salve Regina University McKillop Library.

<sup>23</sup> “Two Notable Functions, August, 22 1896” from Early History, Wakehurst Collection, Folder 14, Salve Regina University Archives, Salve Regina University McKillop Library.



buildings was no longer considered acceptable. Since then, period rooms have gone through a series of changes and interpretations.<sup>24</sup>

Some of the best known and earliest imported Robert Adam rooms reside at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Philadelphia Museum of Art (Figs. 21-23). At the Met, the famous Lansdowne Dining Room has been on display since its installation in 1954 (it was purchased in 1931). It was originally designed by Robert Adam in 1768 for the London house of Lord Shelburne, in Berkeley Square. The house was demolished in 1929 and the interiors were dismantled and some were acquired by the Met. The Philadelphia Museum of Art also acquired the Drawing Room, from the same house, by Adam in 1929 and it is still on display. In recent years, the Philadelphia Museum has even gone through paint analysis research to discover Adam's original paint colors. The Met is also home to the Tapestry Room from Croome Court by Adam circa 1771. The ninth Earl of Coventry sold it to a dealer in Paris in 1902 and it was acquired by the Met in 1958.<sup>25</sup> Besides these, there are no other known or recorded rooms by Adam in a United States museum. It is even more difficult to know how many Adam rooms were imported for private use, and there are almost no indications that they exist at all. The Yellow Drawing Room by Adam may very well be the first imported interior by Adam in the United States, seeing as it predates the Met and Philadelphia's rooms by decades. Even as late as the 1980s, Adam rooms were still being imported. Gerald Oppenheimer donated a room by Adam to UCLA that he had purchased at a London

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<sup>24</sup> Amelia Peck, and Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Period Rooms in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*.

<sup>25</sup> Amelia Peck, and Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Period Rooms in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*.

auction. Students still have access to study Adam's interiors right on campus, marking the continued purpose of period rooms.<sup>26</sup>

The concept of the period room in a museum has gone through many interpretations as have museum ideologies over the years. In its earliest intention, the period room in a museum served as a way to see how early people lived. They allowed museum visitors to see what their houses looked like, what the architectural styles were, what types of furniture were used, and how these rooms were arranged. While the intention was good, these earlier rooms were flawed. Their restoration often reflected the early twentieth-century's ideas about certain periods rather than being truly period accurate. Scholars would then go on to question what purpose period rooms serve and do they belong in an art museum. The interpretation of the history of a room was considered, as well as what objects belong in the room. Others have criticized their usefulness in the modern era since so many can easily afford to travel to Europe or elsewhere and see fully furnished palaces.<sup>27</sup> The debate on period rooms is an ongoing one amongst scholars, but there are obvious benefits to still preserve these rooms for the public to see. These rooms provide access for the general public to for instance see an eighteenth-century English room by Adam, allowing anyone who might not be able to travel to have the opportunity to study or research famous European architecture or a Frank Lloyd Wright room interior

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<sup>26</sup> John Harlow, "UCLA's Adam Room, a Place of Elegance and History," December 10, 2020. [https://newsroom.ucla.edu/magazine/adam-room-jules-stein-eye-institute?utm\\_source=facebook&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_campaign=magazine&utm\\_content=adamroom](https://newsroom.ucla.edu/magazine/adam-room-jules-stein-eye-institute?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=magazine&utm_content=adamroom)

<sup>27</sup> Amelia Peck, and Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Period Rooms in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*.

right at home in New York. That alone is enough to continue the display of period rooms in museums, not to mention that so many people delight in them when visiting.

## Chapter 2: Other Adam Interiors in the United States

In 1867, the first recorded English room was imported to the United States, which was an old English room bought by Mrs. Timothy Lawrence to go into the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (MFA), which would open July 1867 (Fig. 19).<sup>28</sup> It consisted of paneling from Flemish and English salvages, with portrait panels of Henry VI, Henry VIII, Elizabeth of York, Edward VI and Cardinal Wolsey. It was likely assembled in London by the Wardour Street brokers before Lawrence bought it.<sup>29</sup> This was a significant moment in the history of period rooms since it marked the first installation of an English room in a museum in the United States. The majority of period rooms were brought over in the 1920s and 30s as a result of increasing financial struggles in Europe following the World War I. Prior to the 1920s, the import of whole rooms was only occasional in comparison to the hundreds that would be imported during the mid-twentieth century. Following the so-called Lawrence Room, the second known English room, the famous Whistler Peacock Room, was imported from Mrs. Blanche Watney's house at 49 Prince's Gate in London in 1904 (Fig. 20).<sup>30</sup> Interestingly, Mrs. Watney's house incorporated architectural salvages from Northumberland House's demolition in 1874, which is a potential source for Wakehurst's Yellow Drawing Room. While Wakehurst's Yellow Drawing Room is not recorded, it very well may be the first (near-complete) Robert Adam interior to be installed in the US, at some point between 1884 and 1888, and also one of the first English rooms to be installed for private use. In terms

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<sup>28</sup> Enrico Meneghelli, *The Lawrence Room, Museum of the Fine Arts Boston*, 1879, oil on canvas.

<sup>29</sup> John Harris, *Moving Rooms*, (New Haven: Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2007), 151.

<sup>30</sup> James McNeill Whistler and Thomas Jekyll, *The Peacock Room*, 1877, room installation.

of Adam's work, there were almost certainly architectural salvages, like mantelpieces, of his work brought over during the nineteenth century considering the popularity of English architecture at the time. The interiors from the demolished Lansdowne House are largely considered the first complete Adam rooms to be imported, as they are well-documented acquisitions.<sup>31</sup>

When Lansdowne House at Berkeley Square was sold by the sixth Marquis of Lansdowne in 1929, some of the rooms were removed during a partial demolition to build a new street. The drawing room and the dining room, both designed by Robert Adam, were sold to the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, respectively. However, Philadelphia's room would not be installed and displayed until 1943 (Fig. 21).<sup>32</sup> This exquisite work by Adam is well known, even though it was never fully completed by Adam. When Philadelphia acquired it, the room had yellow silk wallpaper panels instead of the now researched and discovered bright aqua and pink walls.<sup>33</sup> The original walls in between the pilasters were not imported, only the yellow silk wall coverings were, leaving the museum in recent years to create new walls. The brand-new walls with fresh paint make the room appear like new construction or reproduction, especially with the candy colors used. Although many experts will note that it is not uncharacteristic of Adam to use such vibrant colors, however shocking it may be to the modern visitor.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> John Harris, *Moving Rooms*.

<sup>32</sup> Robert Adam, *Drawing Room from Lansdowne House*, 1766.

<sup>33</sup> John Harris, *Moving Rooms*.

<sup>34</sup> Eileen Harris, *The Genius of Robert Adam: His Interiors*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001.

The famous Lansdowne Dining Room at the Metropolitan was the second room saved from the 1929 demolition (Fig. 22).<sup>35</sup> The museum acquired it but did not install it until 1954. To fit it into the museum space, two of the long walls were reversed so that they were opposite in comparison to their original positioning at Lansdowne House. The dining room, which is designed to appear like a sculpture gallery, is a classic design from Adam with niches on one side of the room. The Earl of Shelburne's original antique sculptures of the gallery were dispersed in the 1930 auction, but in 1961, the museum was able to acquire one of the Roman sculptures, which represented the goddess Tyche. Contemporary sources labeled the wall color as 'pearl,' which through paint analysis was discovered to be a pale green color, meanwhile the accent color is 'dead white.'<sup>36</sup> While the wall colors may appear dim, during the eighteenth century the room would have been lit by candlelight for which the pearl and white stucco would have dazzled.<sup>37</sup>

Another imported Adam room is also housed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art: the Tapestry Room from Croome Court (Fig. 23).<sup>38</sup> The museum acquired the ceiling, chair rails, doors, mantelpiece and floors in 1958. The next year, the museum also acquired the original chair and sofa that furnished the room. The French Gobelins tapestries remain in such good condition because it was almost always protected from light, as it was the favorite room of the house by all who visited and it had to be preserved for state visits, particularly from King George III and Queen Victoria. The room was sold by the ninth Earl of Coventry in 1902. The ceiling was made from a 1763

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<sup>35</sup> Robert Adam, *Lansdowne Dining Room*, 1766.

<sup>36</sup> John Harris, *Moving Rooms*.

<sup>37</sup> Eileen Harris, *The Genius of Robert Adam: His Interiors*.

<sup>38</sup> Robert Adam, *Tapestry Room at Croome Court*, 1763.

design by Adam intended for the library, which is why it feels disproportionate in comparison to the size and decoration of the room.<sup>39</sup>

There have probably been numerous other Adam rooms or fragments imported to the United States in addition to these but they have gone unrecorded, seeing as the Yellow Drawing Room at Wakehurst is virtually unknown and has little to no documentation surrounding its origins. Following the completion of Wakehurst in 1888, James J. Van Alen went on to purchase Rushton Hall in England, which he would restore and renovate. Just like he did at Wakehurst, Van Alen wanted to purchase architectural salvages, once again by Adam, for Rushton Hall. In 1907, the *New York Times* reported in an article entitled *Troubles of J. J. Van Alen – Mantels He Wanted for Rushton Hall Snapped up by Art Dealer, Who Now Asks a Big Price*,

He has been experiencing some difficulty in completing the decorations of Rushton Hall, the magnificent seat he purchased a few years ago in Northamptonshire. In order to carry out his scheme of decoration it has been necessary to procure early English mantelpieces strictly in character with the ceilings of the same epoch. Recently it was ascertained that there existed in a dilapidated mansion at Battersea a pair of mantels which exactly suited. Mr. Van Alen heard of them, but was not so keen on the scent as a West End dealer, who purchased them for a few guineas and now asks the owner of Rushton Hall a price running into several hundred pounds.<sup>40</sup>

In 1908, another article stated,

...on which he expended great sums, paying, if report be correct, extraordinary and unnecessarily high prices for certain pieces of furniture and bits of decoration which he required to complete the artistic ensemble he had planned out. For instance, one art dealer was said to have made him pay £900 for an Adams fire-place which the same dealer...<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Amelia Peck, and Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Period Rooms in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1996).

<sup>40</sup> “New York Times, December 22, 1907.”

<sup>41</sup> “New York Times, March 28, 1908”

The interest in reusing Adam interiors was a concept not confined to Europe, but also practiced in the United States as exemplified by Van Alen.

An interesting example of a modern import is the Robert Adam Room at the University of California, Los Angeles (Fig. 24).<sup>42</sup> It was originally a withdrawing room at Upton House, built sometime in the 1780s by Adam for the Bonnell family. By 1960, the house went up for auction in London where it was purchased by Dr. Jules Stein, who installed the room in his New York apartment. This practice is certainly more unusual today considering the significant cost to purchase, ship, and install a room; however, interiors do come up for auction at Sotheby's or Christie's now and again. The dismantling, storing in crates, shipping, and reinstalling practice is largely the same today as it was back in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Gerald Oppenheimer later inherited the room from his parents and decided to donate it to UCLA in 1989, but it lacked a historic ceiling. It is unknown where the original ceiling is, nevertheless, Oppenheimer commissioned a reproduction ceiling for the university based on other Adam ceiling designs.<sup>43</sup> This example is not known very well, and indeed the integrity of the room has been lost through so many transfers, but it does speak volumes about how many unrecorded Adam rooms there could be in the U.S.

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<sup>42</sup> Robert Adam, Withdrawing Room from Upton House, circa 1780.

<sup>43</sup> John Harlow, "UCLA's Adam Room, a Place of Elegance and History," December 10, 2020.

<[https://newsroom.ucla.edu/magazine/adam-room-jules-stein-eye-institute?utm\\_source=facebook&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_campaign=magazine&utm\\_content=adamroom](https://newsroom.ucla.edu/magazine/adam-room-jules-stein-eye-institute?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=magazine&utm_content=adamroom)>



### Chapter 3: Robert Adam Style in The Yellow Drawing Room

On July 3, 1728, Robert Adam, the second of four sons to William Adam (1689-17480), was born at Kirkcaldy in Fife, Scotland (Fig. 25). William Adam was the premier architect of Scotland at the time, for which his son, Robert, grew up surrounded by the craft. In 1743, Robert Adam enrolled at Edinburgh University but left early in 1746 to help his father repair some of the highland castles which had been damaged during the unsuccessful Scottish uprising of 1745. Following the death of William Adam in 1748, Robert Adam and his younger brother, James Adam, set out on a Grand Tour of Europe, where they would travel to Paris study architecture. According to Robert Adam he was “‘metamorphosed’ into a fashionable figure; he ‘lay in a stock of good acquaintances that may be of use to me hereafter’, and saw ‘churches, paintings, palaces and curiosities’ everyday.”<sup>44</sup> In 1754, they traveled to Rome to study architecture and antiquity with master architects Giovanni Battista Piranesi and Charles-Louis Clerisseau. In 1758, after three years spent in Italy drawing and studying, Adam established a London office along with James Adam. It only took Adam four months in Rome to realize that his “‘genius’ he was nurturing there would be ‘thrown away upon Scotland’; he would do better to aim at an ‘English establishment.’”<sup>45</sup> Robert Adam’s legacy has long outlasted him, and his work has reached new continents with the sale and reinstallation of period rooms, such as the Yellow Drawing Room, which is a perfect example of his early work.

Adam took much of his inspiration from ancient Greece and Rome, which was beginning to become the height of fashion during the Enlightenment of the eighteenth

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<sup>44</sup> Eileen Harris, *The Country Houses of Robert Adam: from the archives of Country Life* (London: Aurum Press, 2007).

<sup>45</sup> Eileen Harris, *The Country Houses of Robert Adam: from the archives of Country Life*.

century. Adam would have been inspired by the renewed interest in antiquity and classical architectural styles. Adam's neoclassical designs offered a refreshing and classic style to his patrons who were tired of the frivolity of Rococo, the seriousness of Palladianism, or the dingy, dated Baroque or Elizabethan rooms of their manor houses. His rooms were light, airy and pleasant, combining the perfect balance of serenity, continuity, and tradition, which is why his designs became especially popular to clients wanting to update their interiors. It was common for rooms of manor houses to be updated and modified as time went on, for which Adam is responsible for many partial renovations. Adam also created decorative arts, including custom furniture, tapestries or carpets, also in the neoclassical style. His style was so distinctive and popular that it became synonymous with the 'Adam' style, whether designed by him or copied. His rivals including James Wyatt and William Chambers had very similar styles, so the average person could not tell whether it was an interior by Adam or not, hence the entire style is referred to as Adam or Adamesque. Modern scholars prefer the term Style of the Adam Brothers or Early Neoclassical. Many of his meticulous drawings and architectural elevations are now housed at the Sir John Soane's Museum in London.<sup>46</sup>

Adam was fortunate in that he had a wide circle of friends, connections and patrons. His interiors were generally more expensive than other architects due to all of the ornamentation, inset paintings, sometimes by famous artists, like Angelica Kauffman, elaborate ceilings, mirrors, gilt frames, carpeting, and furniture which went with his designs and thus increased the cost. Only the aristocratic or gentry classes could afford him. There was also a percentage of the fee that went to Adam's overseeing of these

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<sup>46</sup> Eileen Harris, *The Genius of Robert Adam: His Interiors* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

projects. Adam designed dozens of country houses in the United Kingdom, townhouses in English cities (mostly London), and the Pulteney Bridge in Bath.<sup>47</sup> His work can also be attributed to singular rooms or wings inside great homes, even if he was not the primary architect.

The Yellow Drawing Room could have come from Northumberland House, Derby House, or another similar townhouse in London that was demolished in the late nineteenth century, prior to Van Alen's construction of Wakehurst. The Yellow Drawing Room was likely designed and built during Adam's first fifteen years of his London practice, sometime between 1758 and 1773, due to the room's early Adam style and its supposed London origins. Adam was satisfied with his accomplishments by that time and thereon decided to devote more of his time redesigning or designing new country houses where he felt his creativity most flourished.

For a very long time, architects had looked to ancient Greece and Rome for inspiration, and in turn they built modern recreations all over Europe and America. These were imposing, serious structures that were meant to mimic the grandiosity of Roman temples and public buildings. Instead, Adam looked to the remains of the Romans' private and bathing apartments where "he found a lighter, more varied style of decoration, full of 'movement', 'delicacy, gaiety, grace and beauty' which was not only more appealing to his picturesque taste and more conducive to his inventive genius but was also much better suited to the refinements of modern life."<sup>48</sup> Adam had a keen sense for movement and functionality in his rooms, which was supported by ornate surface

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<sup>47</sup> Eileen Harris, *The Genius of Robert Adam: His Interiors*.

<sup>48</sup> Eileen Harris, *The Genius of Robert Adam: His Interiors*.

decorations. His ceilings often featured contiguous circles and incomplete octagons, embellished with floral motifs and classical imagery. The walls usually featured stucco, painted ornamentation or inset paintings, inset Wedgewood or jasperware, figurative subjects, grotesques, fluted columns, apses, or mirrors.<sup>49</sup>

At the time, the fashionable paint colors consisted of pinks and greens, with accents of blue, lilac, or straw, which Adam used to the best advantage to bring ornaments into relief and ““to remove the crudeness of the white’, and above all ‘to create a harmony between the ceiling and the side walls’” (Figs. 26-28).<sup>50</sup> However, Adam did not despise the use of white, and it can be seen in his designs at Croome Court (1763-1771), Osterley Park (1761-1765), and Syon House (1767-1775), where he described them as being in the “antique taste.”<sup>51</sup> Adam did dislike the excessive use of white in interiors and the jarring contrast it made between a frieze and a colored wall. Many of his watercolor drawings depict a bright range of colors, but they are not always the colors used in the actual rooms. The Victorians often painted over Adam’s original colors with duller shades or something different entirely, due to which Adam’s colors have been lost for centuries. They did this primarily to update their houses according to contemporary tastes, such as the Long Gallery at Syon House which was painted over with muted shades during the nineteenth century. Modern paint analysis techniques have allowed conservationists and scientists to uncover the original paint schemes of Adam’s rooms and have prompted some excellent restoration work in recent years. Museums that had

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<sup>49</sup> Eileen Harris, *The Genius of Robert Adam*.

<sup>50</sup> Eileen Harris, *The Genius of Robert Adam*.

<sup>51</sup> Eileen Harris, *The Genius of Robert Adam*.

chosen random colors in the past can now repaint the walls as Adam had originally intended.<sup>52</sup>

Another aspect of Adam's designs is that he had very specific ideas about how each type of room should function. It is unknown what function the Yellow Drawing Room originally had during Adam's life. The Yellow Drawing Room's overall design indicates that it was not a dining room. If it had been a dining room, it would have been treated like a sculpture gallery, perhaps with apses or a domed ceiling, as Adam often designed. They were also meant to be without silk wallpaper or tapestry hangings but with lots of stucco ornamentation, making them appear more solemn. It could have been a Georgian drawing room or an anteroom (a smaller reception room that precedes the grand drawing room) based on the size and relatively simple design. Adam treated his libraries in a similar manner to galleries or dining rooms and they were usually very elaborate and complicated. This room, based on the size, if it is too believed it was not heavily altered, makes it most likely to be an anteroom, a dressing room, or a bedroom, or some other intimate room, since it is without gilt and grandeur, and features a very typical squarish room shape. Due to Adam's pure originality and ability to constantly reimagine, every Adam room is unique, and no two are the same.

Upon walking into the Yellow Drawing Room in Adam's day, during the mid to late eighteenth-century in London, visitors would be delighted to enter such a delicate and bright room (Fig. 29). Mythological figures and floral wreaths dance about the frieze and ceiling, accentuated with a confection of pastel Adam colors. There might have been matching Adam-designed furniture about the room and an Adam-designed carpet on the

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<sup>52</sup> Eileen Harris, *The Country Houses of Robert Adam*.

floor, and probably with a bronze or crystal candle-lit chandelier hanging from the ceiling. The room would have been airy and inviting, refined, elegant, and relaxed, perfect for entertaining guests, enjoying an evening of cards and music played on the harp, or for getting dressed at one's toilette in the morning.

Above the baseboards are two rows of vertical rectangular wainscoted panels separated by a chair rail, which could have been painted a soft color with the molding painted white for contrast (Fig. 30). The walls would have featured framed paintings, possibly portraits of the inhabitants. The top quarter section of the walls has a running frieze panel that depicts mythological female figures with cherubs in oval roundels with garland arabesque scrolls and ribbon swags in-between Roman urns (Figs. 31-34). The direction of the goddesses or nymphs alternates every other medallion, and likely represents Bacchante. These roundels would probably have been focal points of the decoration and would have been painted a rich color, with the raised figure painted white, similar to the appearance of neoclassical jasperware or a cameo (Fig. 35). If they had been without carved ornamentation, then the medallions might have featured small paintings instead. These techniques were practiced on both Adam walls and ceilings (Figs. 36-50). Above that, there is another frieze, probably painted, depicting alternating urns and stylized acanthus leaves, which can be seen in Adam's pattern book as No. 6003 (Fig. 51). Above that frieze is a dentil crown molding with rosettes and acanthus detailing.

The three window openings in the room are flanked with ionic pilasters decorated with arabesque scrollwork versions of eagle-headed urns, vases, mythological dolphins, cherubs, birds, shells, winged figures, and an abundance of floral imagery (Fig. 52-55).

The dancing nymph frieze does not continue atop the windows but instead features a plain fluted frieze with urns. The door frames also feature fluting with a ribbon swag decorated cornice above the door, topped with dentilation and crown molding, as well as an oval painting or a jasperware plaque (Fig. 56). The fireplace mantle (Figs. 57-59) has decorative fluting, rosettes, acanthus leaves, and a jasperware plaque in the middle, and can be seen in one of Adam's drawings from a pattern book (Fig. 60). Above the mantle is the mirror, which is framed and flanked by fluted Corinthian columns (Figs. 61-63). Atop the mirror is a cornice frieze featuring a stylized acanthus leaf design with a carved mythological face at the center. Above is a row of dentil molding and topped by a Chippendale style pediment. Another jasperware plaque is placed above the mirror on the wall frieze, instead of another nymph roundel.

The ceiling consists of one main starburst-like octagon with rounded sides within a circle (Figs. 64-66). The center of the octagon has a fern leaf fan at the center, for which the chandelier hangs. The interior of the pentagon is decorated with surface arabesque scrollwork. It is bordered by an incomplete square without corners, which is then surrounded by a square with decorative fans in the corner. The lengthwise sides feature a simple scrollwork border, and the shorter sides feature a rectangular frieze, which at the center is another dancing nymph roundel flanked by two winged figures. All of the scrollwork and negative space on the ceiling could have been painted complementary Adam colors. This ceiling by Adam is similar to the one in the Tapestry Room from Croome Court (Fig. 67).

The Yellow Drawing Room was subject to changes over the centuries by its original owners, then it would have been further altered by the art dealers who sold it to

James J. Van Alen, and subsequently altered to accommodate installation at Wakehurst in the 1880s. By the time Van Alen installed the Adam, it was about a century old, and probably not in the best condition. It is unknown if any additions or alterations were made in order to fit the room to Wakehurst and allow for functionality. If there had ever been any paint colors on the walls or ceiling, it probably had been painted completely white by the time it was installed at Wakehurst. Van Alen decorated the room with yellow upholstered furniture, cabinets filled with books, and shelves displaying portrait miniatures, Staffordshire figurines, and mementos picked up on his travels (Figs.10-14). The Yellow Drawing Room got its name from the yellow silk drapery and upholstered furniture and functioned as both a quiet reception area and a summer library for the Van Alens. Unknown as to whether this was original to the room, Van Alen's Adam-room now featured rounded French doors out to the veranda, with subtle scrollwork on the frame. The room was filled with comfortable tufted seating and mahogany display cabinets, with tables ready for tea. The mantle was decorated with an antique clock and other decorative objects and now featured inset pink marble. While much of the furniture's whereabouts are unknown, the embroidered fireplace screens and chairs can be found on display in Newport at the Elms (Figs. 68-70). The walls featured minimal artwork, save for a few landscape paintings. The fireplace mirror was flanked by crystal scones, and an opulent crystal chandelier hung from the ceiling. However, these were still candlelit, as the Van Alens refused to embrace electricity. The floor was covered by a relatively simple carpet design. The appearance of the Yellow Drawing Room appeared much unchanged until nearly a whole century later, until 1970 when Wakehurst was acquired by Salve Regina College.



## Conclusion

Following the sale of Wakehurst, all furniture and decorative objects that had belonged to the last inhabitant, Mrs. Bruguere, were auctioned off and dispersed, leaving Salve Reina College with an empty shell of a house. All decorative embellishments were stripped from the Yellow Drawing Room. None of the furniture or decorative works remain at Wakehurst, including any of the jasperware plaques that are now missing from the Yellow Drawing Room. The present condition of the Yellow Drawing Room in the twenty-first century requires repair and restoration. There are visible spots above the door frames and the mirror where a plaque or painting was quite clearly taken, as well as missing parts of the scrollwork. Modern conveniences have allowed for needless drilling of holes into the walls for visible pipework, which damages the design integrity of the room. The repair work is careless, and instead of keeping the paint consistent, there is a mix of cream and beige painting on the ceiling. It is clear that layer after layer of paint had added up over time, so much so that it is difficult to define the details of Adam's work. While the university has helped to preserve the room, it should consider restoring it to its original glory. The paint should be stripped away and undergo a paint analysis to confirm the paint color at the time of Van Alen's life, as well as the original paint colors in the eighteenth-century. There is no more artwork on the walls, except for a few random photographic prints, and only some sparse university furniture furnishes the room. The appearance of the room now is changed from its former decoration, for which James J. Van Alen would hardly recognize it, and the original owners of the eighteenth century would surely not recognize their room at all.

The Yellow Drawing Room at Wakehurst is a remarkable example of the extent of Gilded Age wealth, the ability to purchase and install entire period rooms across continents, the intense fascination with previous centuries, and the salvaging of interiors during the late nineteenth century. James J. Van Alen and his construction of Wakehurst played an important role in the history of importing interiors for private use since the Yellow Drawing Room was among the first rooms to be brought to the United States, as well as one of the first English rooms, and possibly the first Robert Adam interior. The beginnings of this phenomenon were during Van Alen's life, where wealthy Americans purchased interiors for their homes or museums. It quickly became a common and popular practice, with hundreds of rooms imported between the 1870s through the 1960s. The Yellow Drawing Room is significant as one of the first Robert Adam interiors to be imported and installed inside a private building in the US, and potentially the only Adam interior in Newport, RI, where this practice was relatively frequent. The neoclassical room is quintessentially Adam, denoting the style of his early days in London during the mid-eighteenth century, with a graceful stucco ceiling and matching frieze. When compared to other London townhouses, where the Yellow Drawing Room originated, the similarities are clear. When Van Alen installed the room for his summer home in Newport, he used the Adam room as a library and drawing room. The furniture, which he had upholstered in yellow damask silk fabric, contributed to the naming of the room.

Today, the Yellow Drawing Room serves as an important resource for students and scholars, though it has largely remained neglected. There is little to no scholarship on the history of imported Robert Adam interiors, or the imported rooms at Wakehurst, for which this thesis hopefully encourages further research on those topics. The Yellow

Drawing Room is currently being used as part of a student center, however, the room could be used as a study center resource for students in preservation, architecture, art history, etc. Another suggestion would be to restore the room back to its original appearance during its period of significance, whether that be during Van Alen's day or Robert Adam's. The process of researching and restoring, including paint analysis and the study of Adam's work could be a project that involves students. Following the restoration, the room could double as a museum room, with informational displays, as well as a student study center. At the least, the Yellow Drawing Room deserves to be restored and preserved, for its significance is too important in the history of collecting and period rooms.

In conclusion, the Yellow Drawing Room at Wakehurst is a testament to Adam's lasting legacy and the history of collecting and importing period rooms in the United States with it being one of the very first Adam rooms to be imported for private use. While it may be impossible to discover the exact origin and history of each imported interior, this thesis has uncovered the story of the Yellow Drawing Room at Wakehurst, as well as other unrecorded private rooms in the United States. Hopefully this thesis inspires further research and consideration of the reuse of this significant Adam room as a resource for future generations.

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Figure 1: *Photo of James J. Van Alen.* Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.



Figure 2: *Photo of General James Henry Van Alen.* Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.



Figure 3: *Emily Astor Van Alen*. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.





Figure 4: Rushton Hall, Rushton, Northamptonshire, England, ca. 1438. Image courtesy of Rob Farrow under Creative Commons License.



Figure 5: Wakehurst Place, West Sussex, England, ca. 1590. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.





Figure 6: Wakehurst Place, West Sussex, England, ca. 1590. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.



Figure 7: *Photo of Charles Eamer Kempe, ca.1860.* Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

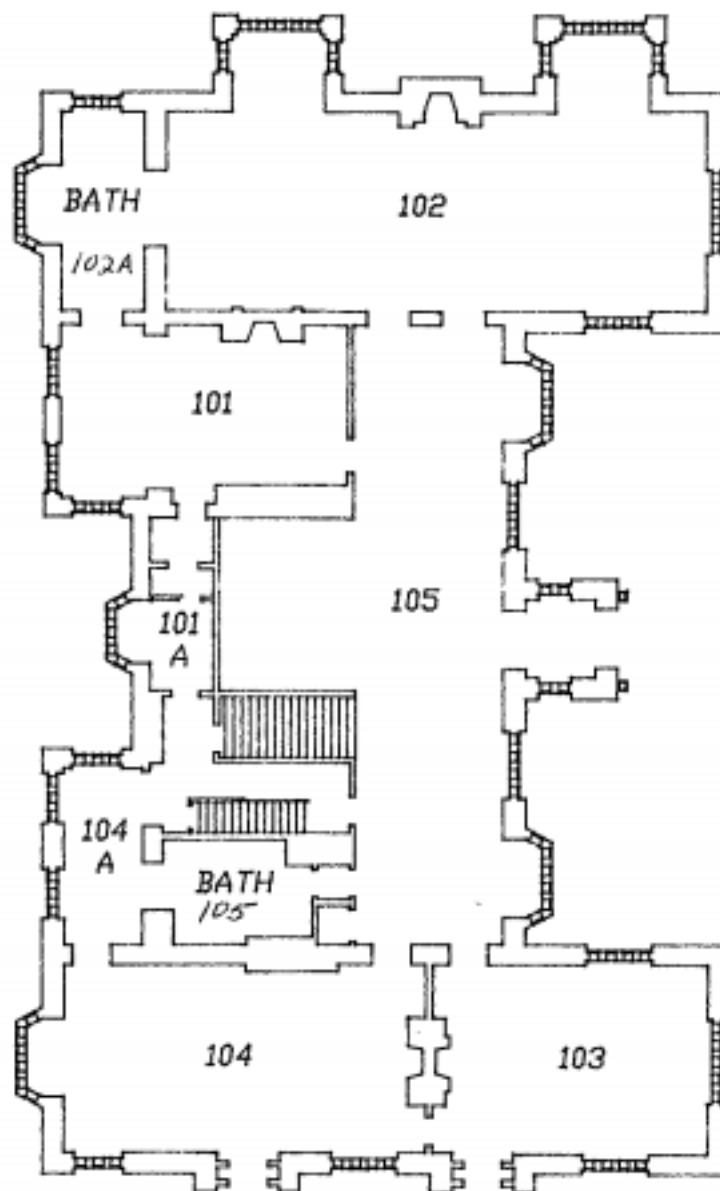


Figure 8: Floorplan of Wakehurst, Salve Regina University, Newport, Rhode, Island.



Figure 9: Wakehurst, Newport, Rhode, Island, ca. 1887. Image courtesy of Cornell University Library.



Figure 10: The Yellow Drawing Room, Wakehurst, Newport, Rhode Island. Image courtesy of the Library of Congress.



Figure 11: The Yellow Drawing Room, Wakehurst, Newport, Rhode Island. Image courtesy of the Library of Congress.





Figure 12: Gottscho-Schleisner, Inc, photographer. *Mrs. J.L. Van Alen Bruguire*, residence in Wakehurst, Newport, Rhode Island. *Library I*. Newport Newport. Rhode Island United States, 1945. Nov. 1. Photograph.



Figure 13: The Yellow Drawing Room, Wakehurst, Newport, Rhode Island. Image courtesy of the Library of Congress.



Figure: 14: Gottscho-Schleisner, Inc, photographer. *Mrs. J.L. Van Alen Bruguire, residence in Wakehurst, Newport, Rhode Island. Library I.* Newport Newport. Rhode Island United States, 1945. Nov. 1. Photograph.



Figure 15: The Den, Wakehurst, Newport, Rhode Island. Image courtesy of the Library of Congress.



Figure 16: The Flemish Dining Room, Wakehurst, Newport, Rhode Island. Image courtesy of the Library of Congress.



Figure 17: *Photo of a storeroom of Maison Carlhian, ca. 1920-30. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.*



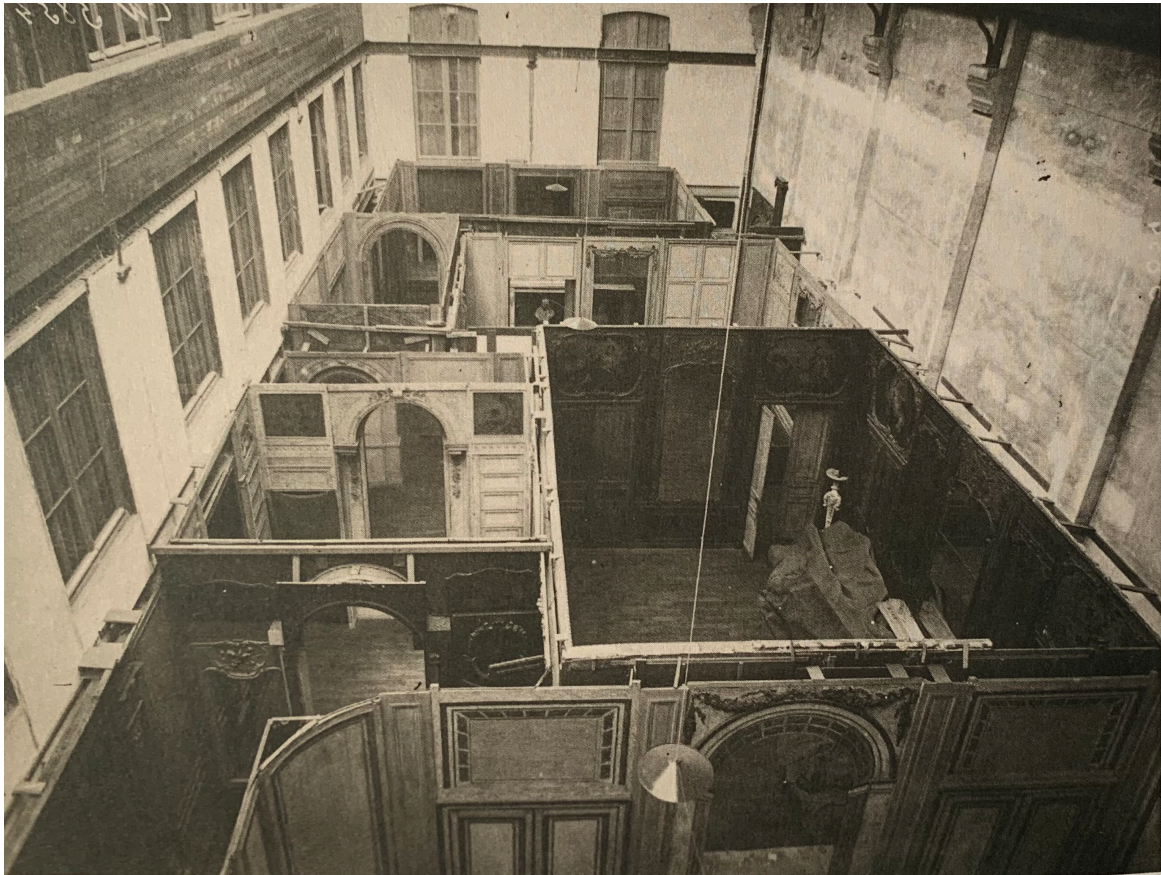


Figure 18: *Photo of showrooms (viewed from above) of Maison Carlhian, ca. 1920-30.*  
Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

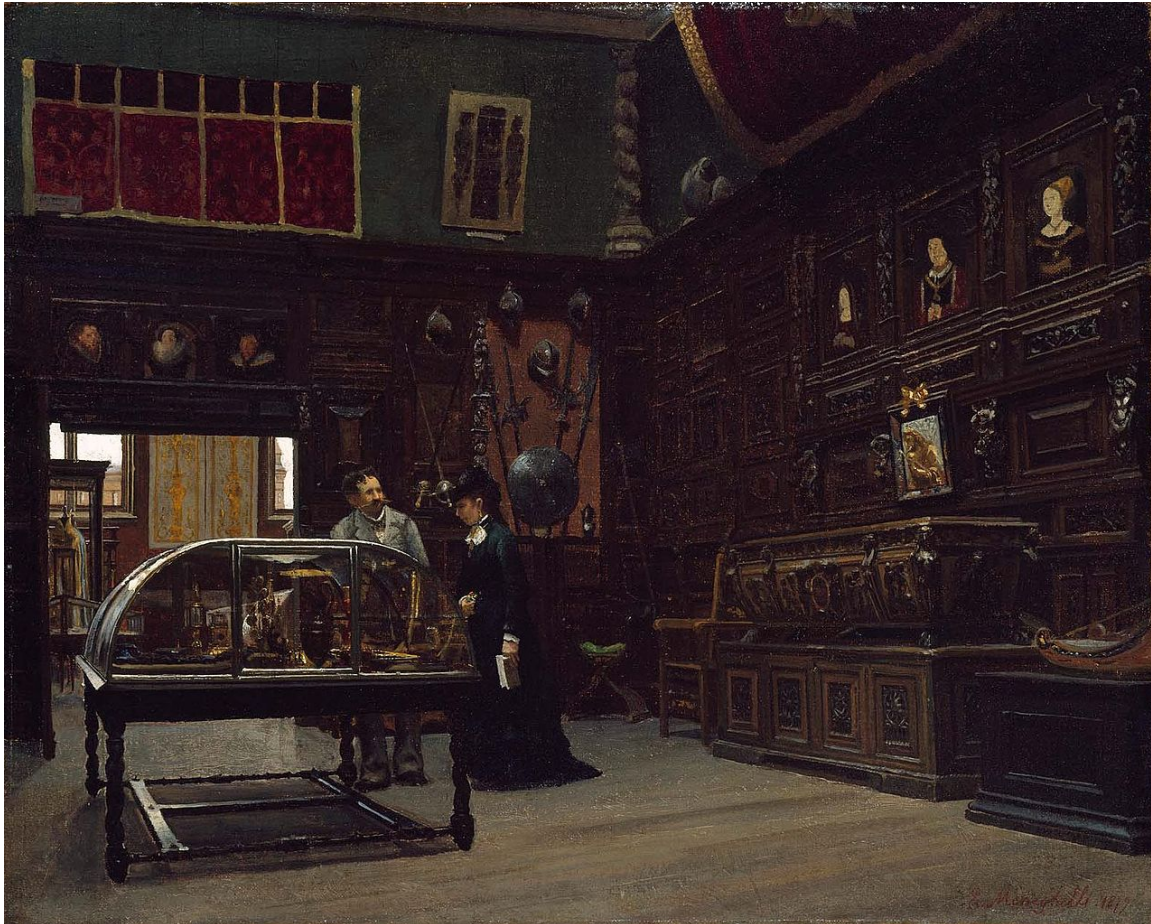


Figure 19: Enrico Meneghelli, *The Lawrence Room, Museum of the Fine Arts Boston*, oil on canvas, ca. 1879. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.





Figure 20: James McNeill Whistler and Thomas Jekyll, *The Peacock Room*, ca. 1877.  
Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.



Figure 21: Robert Adam, *Drawing Room from Lansdowne House*, ca. 1766. Image courtesy of the Philadelphia Museum of Art.



Figure 22: Robert Adam, *Lansdowne Dining Room*, ca. 1766. Image courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.





Figure 23: Robert Adam, Tapestry Room at Croome Court, ca. 1763. Image courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Figure 24: Robert Adam, Withdrawal Room from Upton House, ca. 1780. Image courtesy of Austin Hargrave and University of California, Los Angeles.





Figure 25: George Willison, *Robert Adam*, oil on canvas, ca. 1770-74. Image courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery.



Figure 26: Robert Adam, Library at Kenwood House, London, ca. 1771. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.





Figure 27: Robert Adam, Little Drawing Room at Audley End House, Saffron Walden, Essex, England, ca. 1761. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.





Figure 28: The Long Gallery at Syon House, Robert Adam, Brentford, London, ca. 1760s. Image courtesy of Syon House.



Figure 29: The Yellow Drawing Room, Wakehurst, Newport, Rhode Island. Image courtesy of the author.





Figure 30: The Yellow Drawing Room, Wakehurst, Newport, Rhode Island. Image courtesy of the author.



Figure 31: The Yellow Drawing Room, Wakehurst, Newport, Rhode Island. Image courtesy of the author.





Figure 32: The Yellow Drawing Room, Wakehurst, Newport, Rhode Island. Image courtesy of the author.



Figure 33: The Yellow Drawing Room, Wakehurst, Newport, Rhode Island. Image courtesy of the author.





Figure 34: The Yellow Drawing Room, Wakehurst, Newport, Rhode Island. Image courtesy of the author.



Figure 35: Josiah Wedgwood and Sons, Vase and Cover, Etruria, jasperware, ca. 1861.  
Image courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum.





Figure 36: Robert Adam, Circular Room at Newby Hall, North Yorkshire, England, ca. 1760s. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

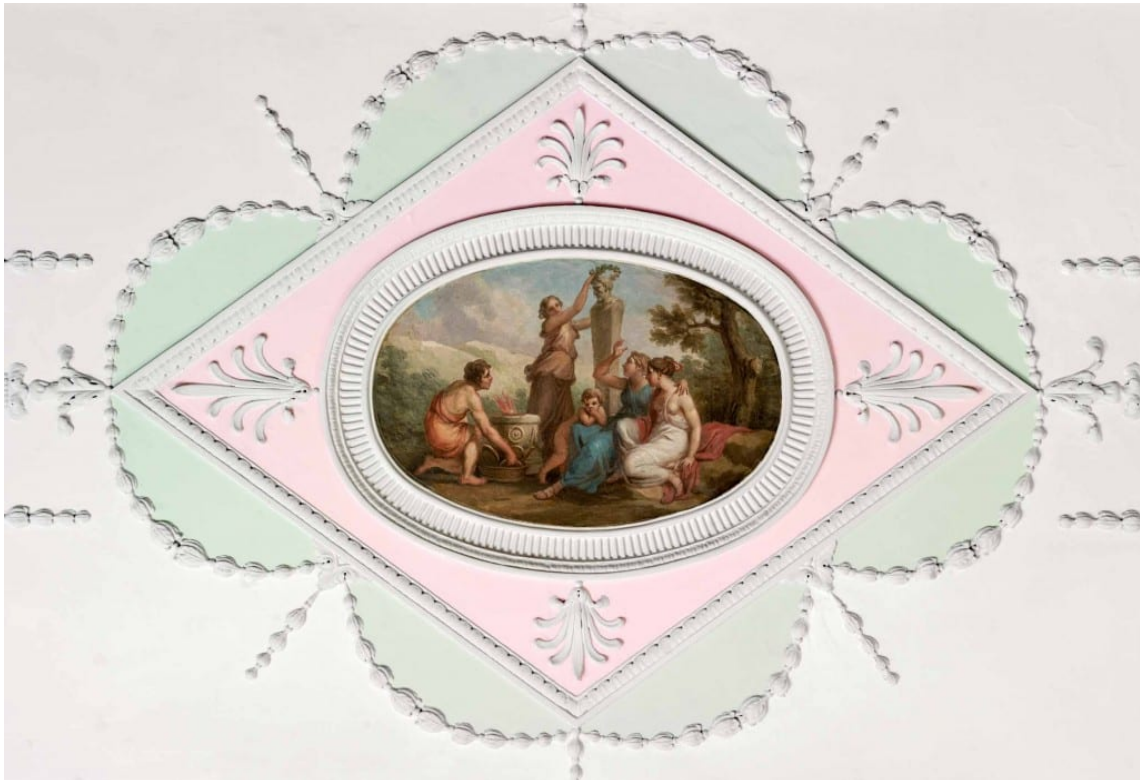


Figure 37: Robert Adam, detail from ceiling at Chandos House, London, ca. 1771. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.





Figure 38: Robert Adam, 20 Portman Square, Home House, London. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.



Figure 39: Robert Adam, Etruscan Room at Osterley Park, Isleworth, London, ca. 1761-5. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.



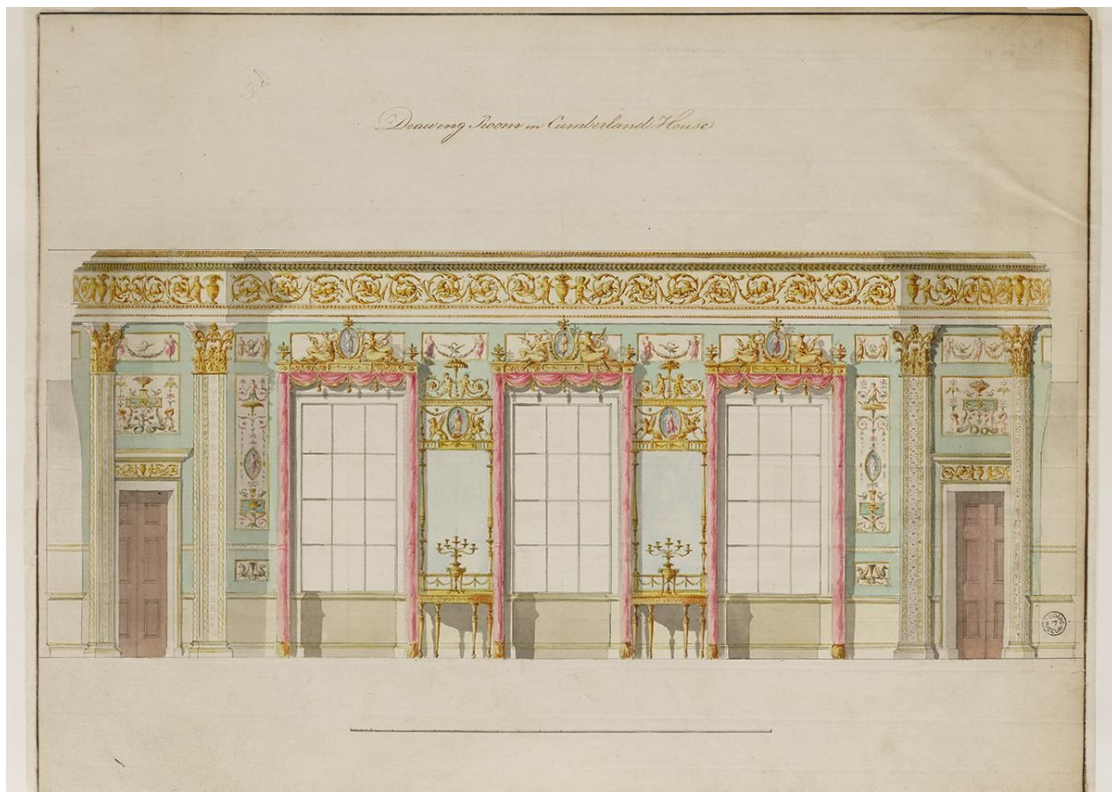


Figure 40: Robert Adam, design for Cumberland House, London, ca. 1770s. Image courtesy of Sir John Soane's Museum.



Figure 41: Robert Adam, design for ceiling at Chandos House, London, ca. 1771. Image courtesy of Sir John Soane's Museum.

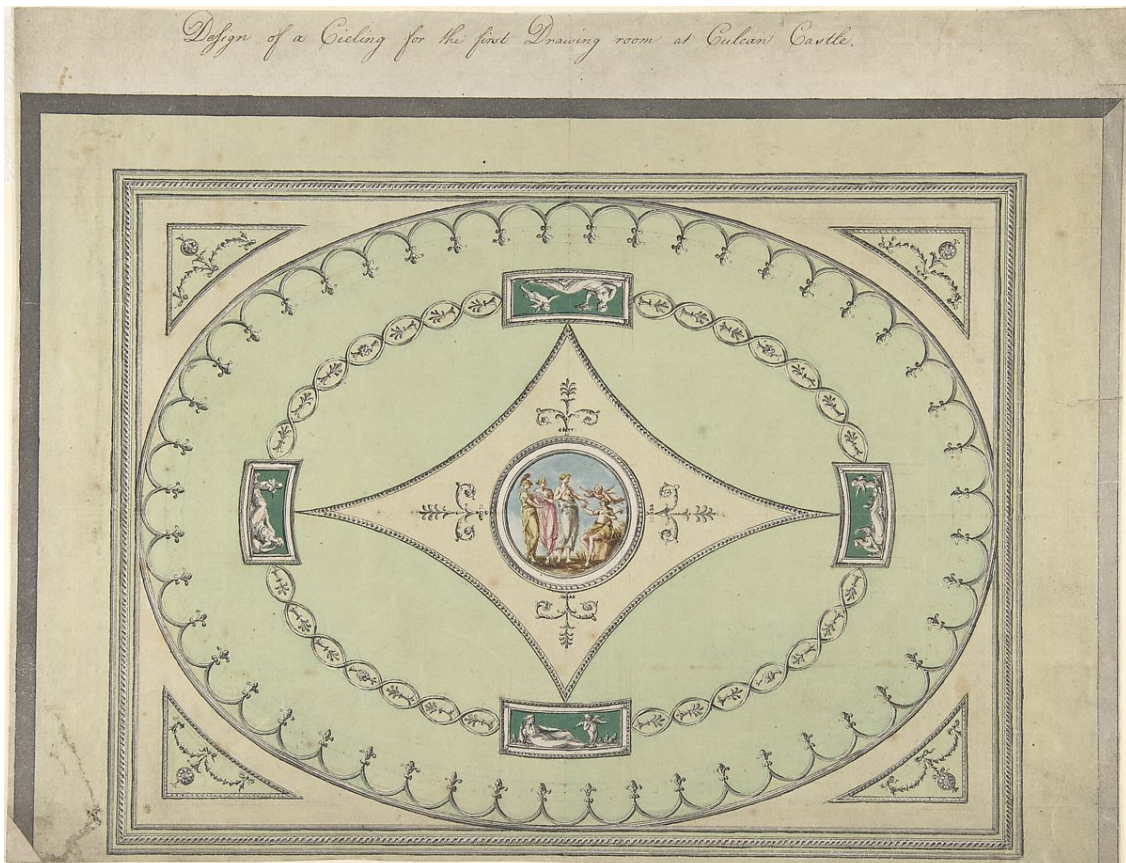


Figure 42: Robert Adam, design for ceiling in First Drawing Room at Culzean Castle, Ayrshire, Scotland, ca. 1779-82. Image courtesy of Sir John Soane's Museum.



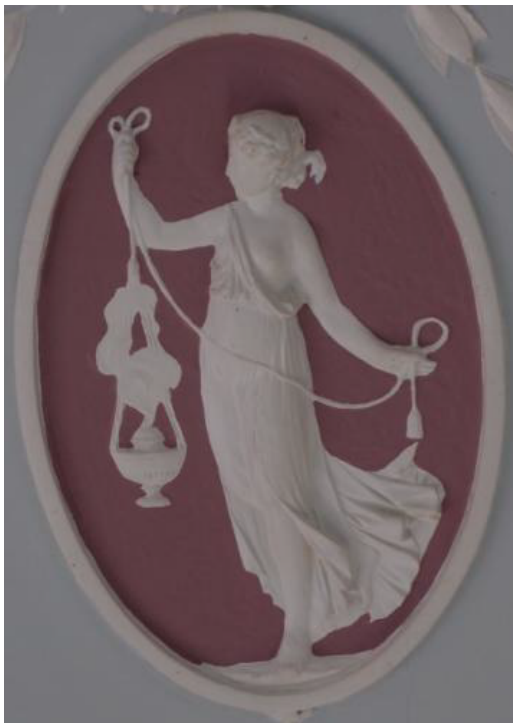


Figure 43: Robert Adam, design for ceiling at 23 Grosvenor Square, London, ca. 1773-5.  
Image courtesy of Sir John Soane's Museum.





Figure 44: Adam style neoclassical ceiling at Beckenham Place, London, ca. 1773. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.



Figures 45-48: Details of Adam style neoclassical ceiling at Beckenham Place, London, ca. 1773. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.





Figure 49: Robert Adam, Drawing Room ceiling from the Adelphi, London, ca. 1771.  
Image courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

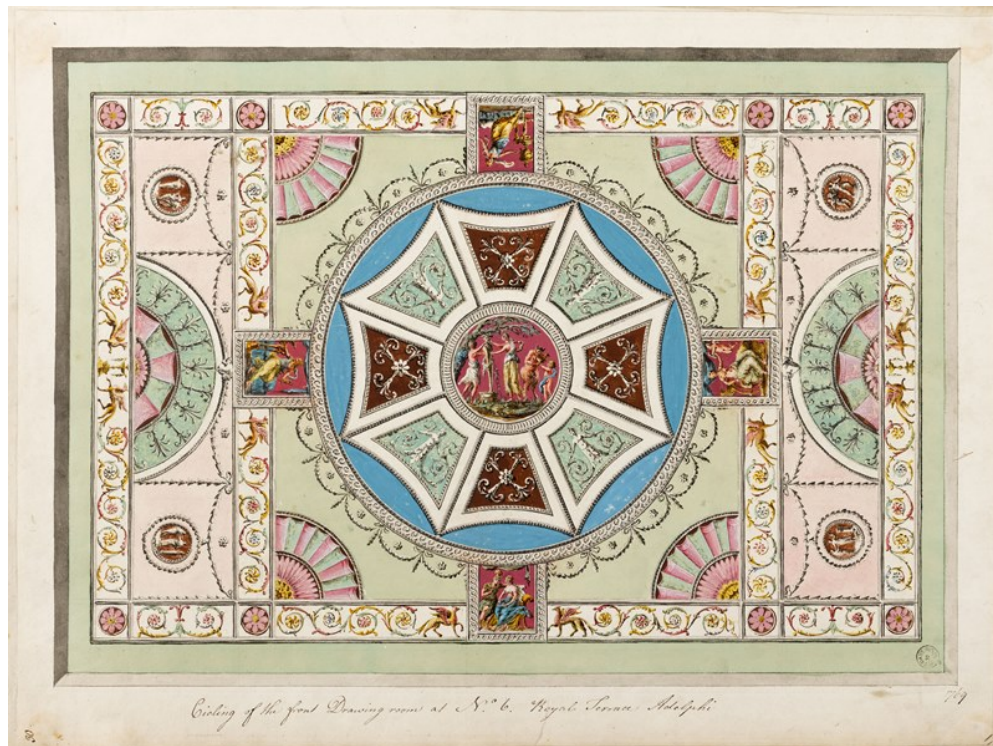


Figure 50: Robert Adam, Design for Drawing Room ceiling at the Adelphi, London, ca. 1771.



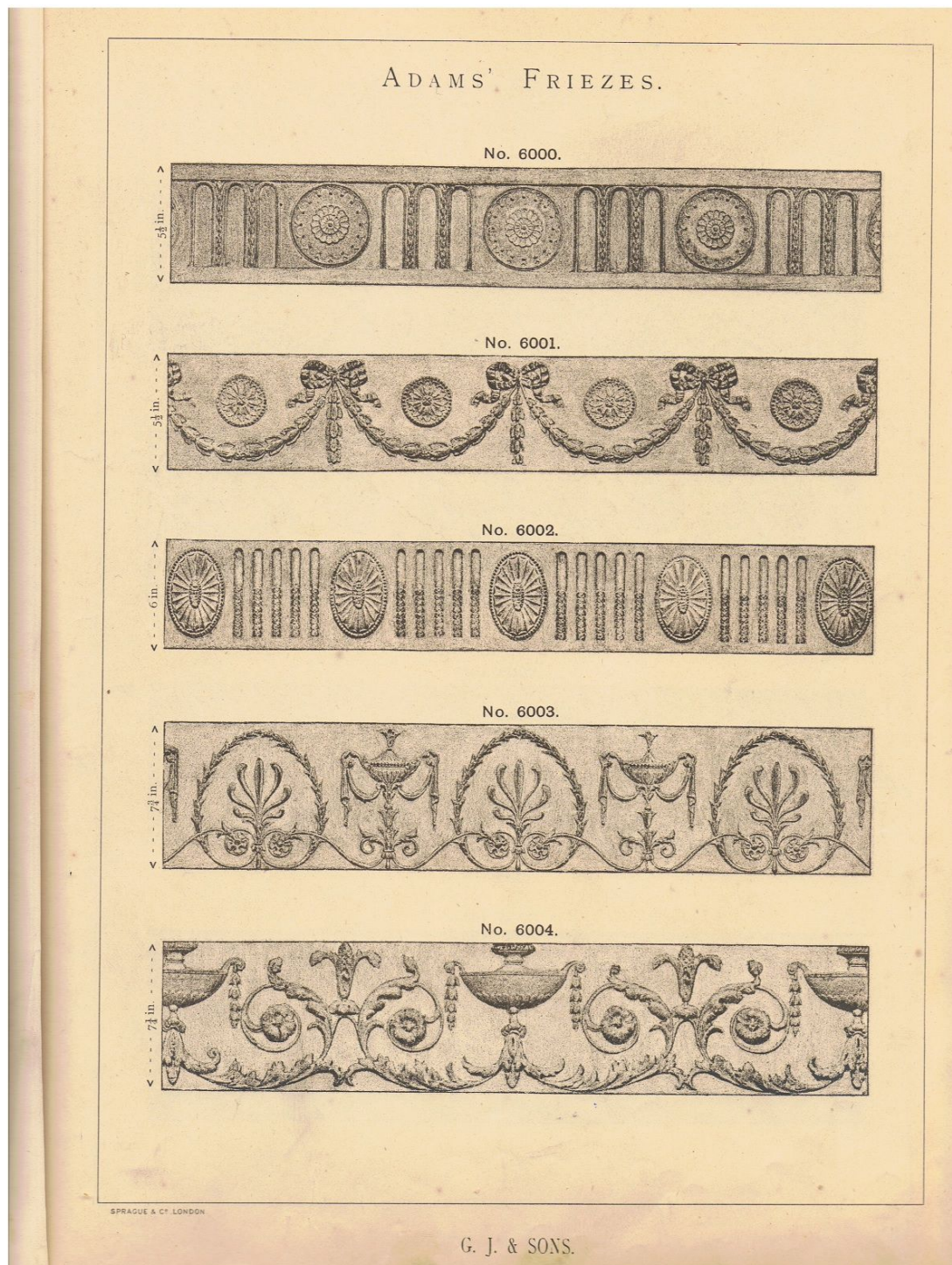


Figure 51: Robert Adam cornice frieze panels in the Jackson's of London catalogue, ca. 1902. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.





Figure 52: The Yellow Drawing Room, Wakehurst, Newport, Rhode Island. Image courtesy of the author.



Figure 53: The Yellow Drawing Room, Wakehurst, Newport, Rhode Island. Image courtesy of the author.





Figure 54: The Yellow Drawing Room, Wakehurst, Newport, Rhode Island. Image courtesy of the author.



Figure 55: The Yellow Drawing Room, Wakehurst, Newport, Rhode Island. Image courtesy of the author.





Figure 56: The Yellow Drawing Room, Wakehurst, Newport, Rhode Island. Image courtesy of the author.



Figure 57: The Yellow Drawing Room, Wakehurst, Newport, Rhode Island. Image courtesy of the author.





Figure 58: The Yellow Drawing Room, Wakehurst, Newport, Rhode Island. Image courtesy of the author.



Figure 59: The Yellow Drawing Room, Wakehurst, Newport, Rhode Island. Image courtesy of the author.



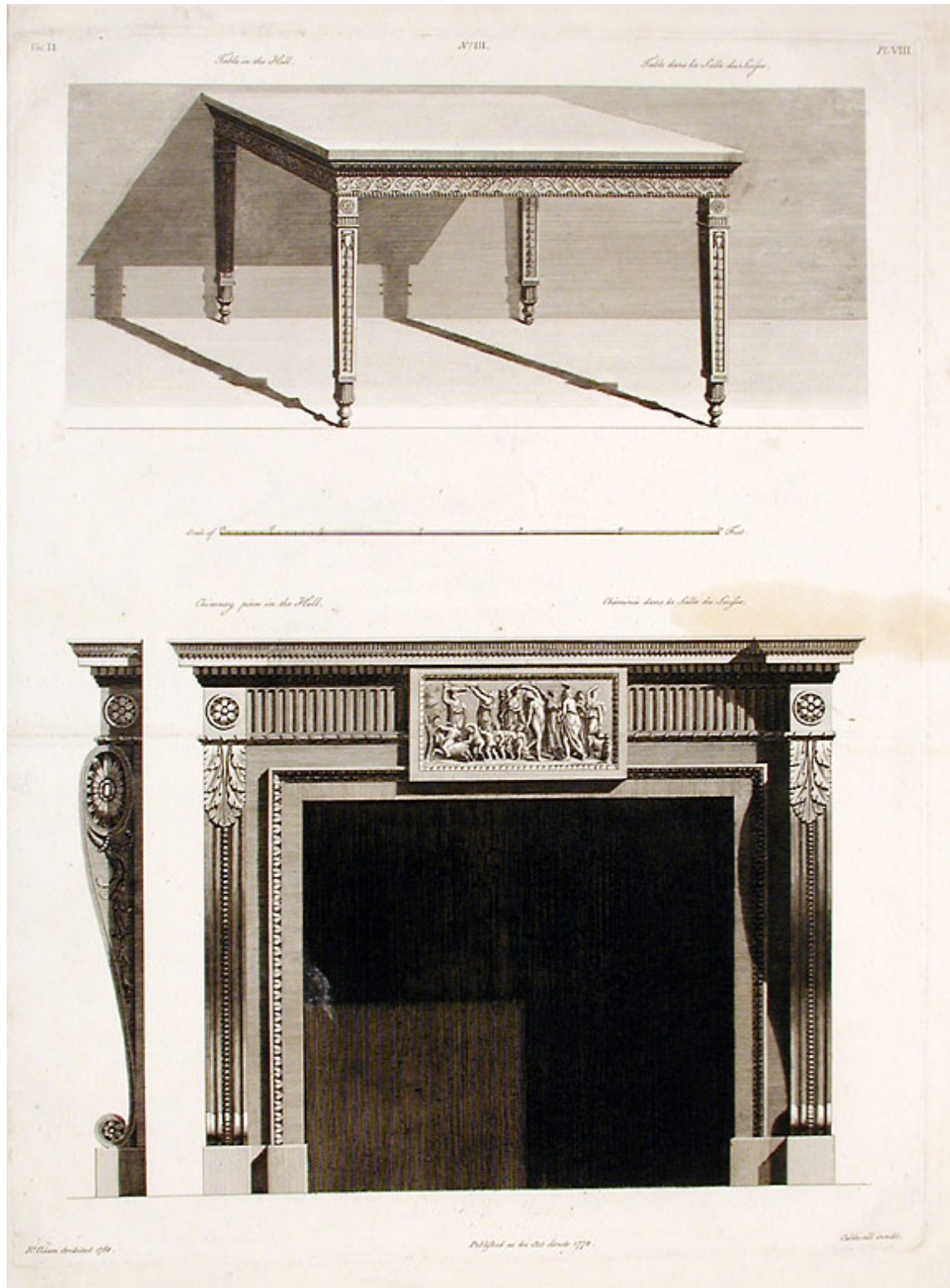


Figure 60: Robert Adam, Chimney-piece and table in the hall of Shelbourne House at Berkeley Square, London, ca. 1778-1812. Image courtesy of the New York Public Library.



Figure 61: The Yellow Drawing Room, Wakehurst, Newport, Rhode Island. Image courtesy of the author.





Figure 62: The Yellow Drawing Room, Wakehurst, Newport, Rhode Island. Image courtesy of the author.



Figure 63: The Yellow Drawing Room, Wakehurst, Newport, Rhode Island. Image courtesy of the author.





Figure 64: The Yellow Drawing Room, Wakehurst, Newport, Rhode Island. Image courtesy of the author.



Figure 65: The Yellow Drawing Room, Wakehurst, Newport, Rhode Island. Image courtesy of the author.





Figure 66: The Yellow Drawing Room, Wakehurst, Newport, Rhode Island. Image courtesy of the author.



Figure 67: Robert Adam, Woodwork and ceiling in the Tapestry Room from Croome Court, Croome D'Abitot, ca. 1760-69. Image courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Figures 68-69: A pair of Sheraton style late George III style Pole Screens, English, ca. 1890. Images courtesy of the Preservation Society of Newport County.



Figure 70: A Set of Four George III Style Side Chairs, English, ca. late eighteenth-century. Image courtesy of the Preservation Society of Newport County.