



# THE PALLADIAN STYLE

Development and Design in Ireland



*Leabharlann  
Náisiúnta  
na hÉireann*

National Library  
of Ireland

# LIBRARY

## Glossary

Elevation

A two-dimensional representation of one side of a building or space.

Plan

The overall design of a building; this could include notes, material specifications or measurements.

Infrastructure

Basic physical and organizational structures and facilities.

Proportion

The relative size and scale of various elements in a design; the relationship between objects or parts of a whole.

Perspective

The capacity to view things in their true relations or relative importance; perspective view is a two-dimensional representation of a three-dimensional space.

Forecourt

A courtyard at the front of a building.

Lintel

A type of beam that spans an opening such a door, window or fireplace. These can be structural or decorative.





# AL MOLTO M MIO SIGNOR OSSE IL SIGNOR CONTI ANGARA



**L**MERITI amplissimi della uostra infinita  
sono per li molti singularissimi benefici  
tanti anni m'hauete fatto continuamente  
di grandezza: che s'io non cercassi di  
mene sempre ricordeuole; son certissimo  
tenuto da tutti per discortese, e per ingrat  
mi son grandemente dilettrato delle cose di Architettura  
cofo studio di molt'anni i libri di coloro, che con abbon  
d'ecellentissimi precetti questa scientia nobilissima: ma  
ma, & in altri luoghi d'Italia, e fuori; doue con gli occhi  
misurato i fragmenti di molti edificij antichi: iquali send  
rauiglioso spettacolo di Barbara crudeltà; rendono anco  
lustre testimonio della virtù, & della grandezza Romana  
te esercitato, & infiammato ne gli ottimi studij di questa  
ranza messo in lei tutti i miei pensieri; mi posi anco all'in  
che si deuono offeruare da tutti i belli ingegni, che sono  
mente; & oltra di ciò di mostrar in disegno molte di quel  
luoghi ordinate; & tutti quelli antichi edificij, c'ho fin li  
de gli oblihi infiniti, c'ho contratto con la uostra gentil  
amato celebrato, & reputato degno d'ogni altissimo gra  
te con honorato testimonio delle fatiche mie alcun segno  
la grandezza del uostro ualore) ui faccio hora un dono d  
delle case priuate; ne' quali confesso hauer hauuto i Ciel  
te grandi mie occupationi, che quasi del continuo mi ten  
alcune mie non picciole infirmità, finalmenteridotti à qu  
hauendo approuato quel tanto, che in lor si contiene con

The Palladian style was a popular architectural style in the early to mid-18th century. The style was named for Andrea Palladio, the author of the western world's most famous architectural treatise *The Four Books of Architecture*. Palladio was a 16th century Italian architect—though he and his contemporaries took inspiration from classic Roman buildings and the writings of Vitruvius. The writings of Vitruvius, a Roman architect and engineer operating during the 1st century, had recently been rediscovered in the 15th century, and encouraged architectural enthusiasts to reimagine the Roman ruins and draw reconstructions based on his writings. From this inspiration came a focus on proportion—with architects following strict rules of symmetry and considerations of perspectives.

Palladianism really flourished in England through 1715 to 1760. Its first appearance in Britain was through a book by the Scottish architect Colen Campbell who published a book, *Vitruvius Britannicus, or The British Architect* (1715), which was a catalogue of contemporary British designs. It included his design for Wanstead House, which contained all the markers of the Palladian style.

Palladian designs used central fronts, mirror imagery of flanking wings, columns, and often blank and severe expanses of untextured wall.

Years passed before the mantle of Palladianism was taken up again. This time Richard Boyle, 3rd Earl of Burlington, promoted the style. Lord Burlington was an architect himself, and had sponsored the English translation of *The Four Books of Architecture*.

Palladian was seen to symbolise a “link between the virtues and power of ancient Rome and the culture of Italy, and the culture, political systems and power of the burgeoning British nation.”

The Palladian style arrived in Ireland around the 1720s. Castletown House in Celbridge, County Kildare was the first home to be designed in the Palladian style. The architect was Alessandro Galilei from Florence. Galilei is most famous for his design for the façade of the Basilica de San Giovanni in Rome.

Galilei had travelled to England in the company of John Molesworth, who was the British Envoy to the Tuscan Court and whose father, Robert, had estates in Ireland. In 1718, Galilei travelled to Ireland where he remained for around six months before returning to England, and finally to his native Florence in 1719.





8812



EB\_2166: Castletown House

While Galilei was in Ireland, he became acquainted with William Conolly, the speaker of the Irish House of Commons and one of the most important men in 18th century Ireland. Conolly bought the Celbridge Estate, upon which Castletown House was built from the Earl of Limerick. Though Conolly had fashionable quarters on Capel Street in Dublin, he wanted a new residence to showcase his power and serve a venue for political entertaining.

While Galilei completed the designs, he did not stay in Ireland to manage the building process. Building did not start until 1722 after Galilei had returned to Italy.

In Italy, Galilei met the Irish architect Edward Lovett Pearce, an Irish supporter of the Palladian style. Pearce had travelled to Italy to study architecture and, in Florence, and sketch villas designed by Palladio. In 1724, Pearce returned to Ireland and oversaw the build of Castletown House. Today the design for the façade is attributed to Galilei, while the wings, colonnades and interior are believed to be the work of Pearce. Castletown House was built between 1722 and 1729.

Pearce would come to be well-known for his designs in Ireland and for giving the Palladian style its “most distinctive Irish manifestation.”







Photograph courtesy of Anne Brady.

While Palladio provided a working framework for the exterior design, there were no examples of interior design. In the explosion of Palladian design across England and Ireland, originally, Palladian decorative elements were not very lavish. Castletown House features bold and geometric plasterwork. Pearce's later influence on the style would see this shift towards more extravagant designs, featuring more stucco and Rococo inspired plasterwork. The photo above is from plasterwork at Castletown today.

Conolly died before Castletown was completed and his widow Katherine managed the house. It eventually passed to Thomas Conolly, the great nephew, and his wife Lady Louisa. Lady Louisa spent over £25,000 on the renovations and improvements, with the aim of making the stately house designed for entertaining into a space fitted for permanent residence. She made changes to the layout—dividing rooms, adding doors, commissioning the grand staircase and lengthening the windows. Along the grand staircase, Filippo Lafranchini added Rococo plasterwork decoration. The Swiss Lafranchini brothers are credited with introducing the human figures into plasterwork, further inspiring Irish stuccodores.

Lady Louisa's brother-in-law was James Fitzgerald, the Earl of Kildare and he provided advice during the renovations alongside the architect Isaac Ware.

Castletown House was called an 'ornament to the country,' and soon the Palladian style spread into Dublin town as well.





Looking across Dublin, buildings of visual interest in a variety of different architectural styles are littered across the city. Some of the most notable ones are Palladian designs.

These include the Parliament House, some buildings on the Trinity College campus such as the Provost's House, Leinster House on Kildare Street, and the National Library of Ireland.

Pearce's most famous design was for Parliament House on College Green, which now houses the Bank of Ireland.



PD\_3181\_TX\_43: Parliament House





Just as Edward Lovett Pearce started his Palladian career working on the Castletown House from Galilei's designs, Pearce also passed the torch onto an architect who carried on the architectural style. The Parliament House was started in 1729; however, Pearce died in 1733 before its completion. During Pearce's work on the building, he hired Richard Castle (Richard Cassels) as a draughtsman and assistant. Castle had previously been responsible for the design of Carton House in 1739, commissioned by the Earl Fitzgerald of Kildare. In 1747, the Earl had married Lady Emily Lennox who was the sister and caretaker of Lady Louisa. As such Lady Louisa grew up at Carton House, which is close by to Castletown and the means by which she met her husband, Thomas Conolly.

Castle took over all ongoing works upon Pearce's death and went on to become known as the most "fashionable architect in Ireland."





PD 3181 TX 127: Leinster House

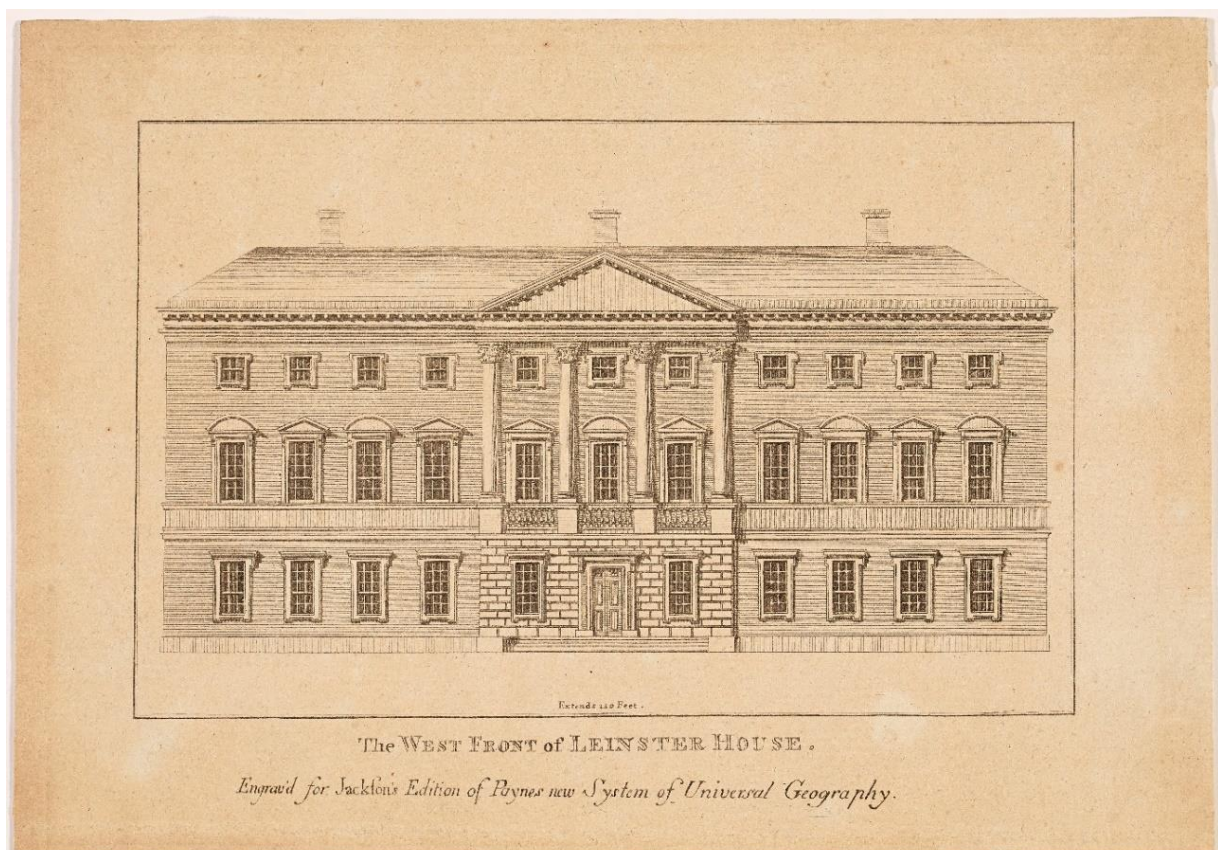
## Leinster House

Castle was asked to design Leinster House, which is quite a prominent building in Dublin, as today it is the Houses of the Oireachtas and neighbour to the National Library of Ireland. Its history is the key to the cluster of national institutions in the area and the architectural history that developed.

Over the years, Leinster House has had several functions. From 1745, when construction started, it was the home for the Fitzgerald family who were the Earls of Kildare, and later the Dukes of Leinster in 1766. At the time this was built, there was not much infrastructure surrounding it. The design by Castle has been called a “country house in town.” As Castle died in 1751, Isaac Ware also contributed designs for the house—drawings exist for example of his plans for Lady Kildare’s dressing room. Lafranchini also designed elaborate plasterwork for Leinster House.

The photograph of Leinster House is part of the Wiltshire Photographic Collection, which comprises black-and-white photographs by Elinor Vere O'Brien who owned a photography studio with her husband. This photo was taken in 1966. The print is an engraving by Zachariah Jackson from 1793. Look closely—can you find the difference between the engraving and the photograph?

WIL 30 [3] and ET A 256: Leinster House





In 1815, Leinster House was sold to the Dublin Society (known as the Royal Dublin Society or RDS) by the third Duke of Leinster. The RDS gave a 10,000-pound downpayment and agreed to a yearly rent of 600 pounds. Upon the sale of Leinster House, the Fitzgeralds moved back into Carton House.


Founded in 1731, the RDS is a philanthropic organisation and members club, concerned with the cultural and economic growth of Ireland. The RDS housed their office, meeting hall, museum and library in Leinster House until 1924.

When the RDS moved to the site, a statue of Minerva was added to the entrance gate. This addition symbolised the change in function for Leinster House to the premises of a learned society.

Who is Minerva? Write what you know below.







The area near Kildare Street, or Coote Street as it was formerly known, was not very developed when the Fitzgeralds chose the site for their new townhouse, but the area developed more over the years after the RDS took up residence.

In 1857, the Natural History Museum opened on the left side of Leinster Lawn. Designed by Frederick Villier Clarendon, the building was meant to “harmonise with Leinster House.” Subsequently, the National Gallery was built opposite in 1859 and intended to match the Natural History Museum.

This was only the start. In the 1860s a report from the Science and Art Department in Ireland recommended that “certain institutions should be concentrated in a convenient locality, forming in groups a science and art museum, a public library, a museum of natural history, a museum of Irish antiques, and national gallery and a school of art.”

This aerial photograph is from 1954. Can you find Kildare Street and Leinster House from above?

The National Library of Ireland and the National Museum were founded by the Dublin Science and Art Museum Act in 1877. The RDS received 10,000 pounds in compensation for the library and collections that were to be placed in the new National Library and Museum. One collection of note is that of Dr Jaspar Robert Joly, which was donated to the RDS in 1863, under the proviso that whenever a library for public use was established in Dublin, his collection would then be transferred to it.

For the first 13 years of our existence, the NLI shared Leinster House with the RDS. Finally in 1881, the government had announced an architectural competition for the National Library and Museum buildings. When the results were released, there was public outcry as no Irish architects had been shortlisted. The commission was the largest of its time in Victorian Ireland. The competition was redone in 1883 with Thomas Deane and Son emerging as the successful architects.

T.N.Deane & Son, Arch<sup>ts</sup>.  
Dublin.



Deane did not like having to comply with a classical design, but it was determined that the winning design had to harmonise with the Palladian elevations of Richard Castle's Leinster House. Castle's forecourt, gateway and stable blocks were removed to accommodate the new Library and Museum Buildings. The Palladian design was considered a success and Thomas Deane was knighted by the Lord Lieutenant at the opening of the building on August 29, 1889.



In 1922, Leinster House became home to the Houses of the Oireachtas. This was a temporary solution at first, with Michael Collins leasing the space from the RDS for 8 months. It was considered highly suitable due to its location and lecture theatre. The government pushed for it to be permanent in 1924 and the RDS sold its rights for 68,000 pounds and relocated all activities to a site in Ballsbridge. In 1948, the Queen Victoria on the lawn, erected in 1908, was removed and brought to the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, and then shipped to Australia, as a gift from the Irish Nation for Australia's Bicentenary in 1987.



# Recap of Key Characters



Andrea Palladio | (1508-1580) was an Italian architect. Famously known for writing *The Four Books of Architecture*. His style was influenced Vitruvius, and classical architecture. Several of his buildings are UNESCO World Heritage Sites today.



Allesandro Galilei | (1691-1737) was an Italian architect and mathematician. He is well-known for his design of the façade of the Basilica of San Giovanni in Laterano in Rome. He may have also submitted a proposal or the entrance elevation of St. Anne's Church, Dawson Street, Dublin during his stay in Ireland, though this work is unsigned.



Edward Lovett Pearce | (c.1699 –1733) had his start with an army commission, before following his architectural interests. A follower of Palladianism, his annotated copy of Palladio's *Quattro Libri dell'Architettura* is in the Royal Institute of British Architects Library.



Richard Castle | (c.1690 -1751) Originally from Germany, Castle was working in London before he came to Ireland in 1728 to design a house for Sir Hume of County Fermanagh. He then established an architectural practice in Dublin.



William Conolly | (1662-1729) was an Irish politician and landowner. Conolly, from County Donegal, studied law in Dublin and qualified as an attorney. He built his wealth by acting as an agent in the sale of forfeited Jacobite estates after the Battle of the Boyne. He became a member of parliament and rose to speaker in 1715.



James Fitzgerald, Earl of Kildare and Duke of Leinster | (1722-1773) Bought the site at Leinster House to create a town house reflecting wealth and status. When a friend remarked that the site was remote and unfashionable James responded, "They will follow me wherever I go."

# Summary Timeline

1570

Andrea Palladio publishes *I quattro libri dell'Architettura* (The Four Books of Architecture) in Italian with woodcuts illustrating the author's own drawings.

The architect Allesandro Galilei travels to England.

1714

1715

Colen Campbell publishes his book *Vitruvius Britannicus*, which included his design for Wanstead House with all the Palladian markers.

Galilei visits Ireland where he meets William Conolly.

1718

Galilei returns to Florence.

1719

1722

Building started at Castletown House, Celbridge, Co. Kildare.

Edward Lovett Pearce travelled to Italy, where he met Galilei.

1723

Pearce returns to Ireland and oversees the build of Castletown House.

1724

1729

William Conolly dies and the main construction at Castletown House was completed.

Pearce starts work on Parliament House in Dublin, with Richard Castle hired as draftsman and assistant.

The Royal Dublin Society is founded.

1731

Pearce dies, and all his building works pass to Richard Castle.

1733

1739

Richard Castle designs Carton House.

1745

Construction starts on Leinster House, designed by Richard castle for the Fitzgeralds, Earls of Kildare.

James Fitzgerlad, the Earl of Kildare, marries Lady Emily Lennox.

1747

Richard Castle dies.

1751

Castletown House is now in the care of Connolly's great nephew Thomas and his wife Lady Louisa. Lady Louisa undertakes a series of massive renovations to the house and gardens.

1759

James Fitzgerald, the Earl of Kildare, becomes Duke of Leinster.

1766

Leinster House is sold to the Royal Dublin Society and the Fitzgeralds move back into Carton House.

1815

The National History Museum opens on one side of Leinster Lawn.

1857

The National Gallery opens opposite.

1859

Dr Jaspar Joly donates his library collection to the RDS.

1863

The National Library and National Museum are founded under the Dublin Museum and Science Act.

1877

Thomas Deane & Son win the architectural competition for the commission of the new National

1883

The National Library building opens.

1889

Leinster House becomes home to the Houses of the Oireachtas when Michael Collins leases the spaces from the RDS for eight months.

1922

The RDS sells Leinster House to the government for £68,000.

1924



## Applied Knowledge

This resource covers a range of topics in your curriculum. Discussions of Palladianism relate to art history and architectural styles. The development of the area around Leinster House and Kildare Street demonstrates the transformation of Dublin into the city we recognise today. The shifting functions and uses of the various buildings on one city block points to the growth of national institutions and collections. We can apply new methods of architectural and communication graphics such as CAD, or computer-aided design, to portray these structures and streets.

Explore the following activities to explore what you have learned so far!



# 1

## Writing Architectural History

Castletown House, Leinster House and Russborough House are three of Ireland's most well-known Palladian style buildings. Search our catalogue at [nli.ie](http://nli.ie) for digitised resources on these three—photos, drawings or architectural drawings.

Compose a brief short-answer essay on the following: describe the key markers of the style; examine how these are represented in each building; note differences and similarities in each design; and discuss the development of the Palladian architectural style. Click the links below and read the resources on each house to help you prepare your answer.



[Palladian Style – Dublin Civic Trust](#)

[Castletown House – the OPW](#)

[Russborough House](#)

[Leinster House—National Built Heritage](#)

[Leinster House: A House with Three Lives](#)

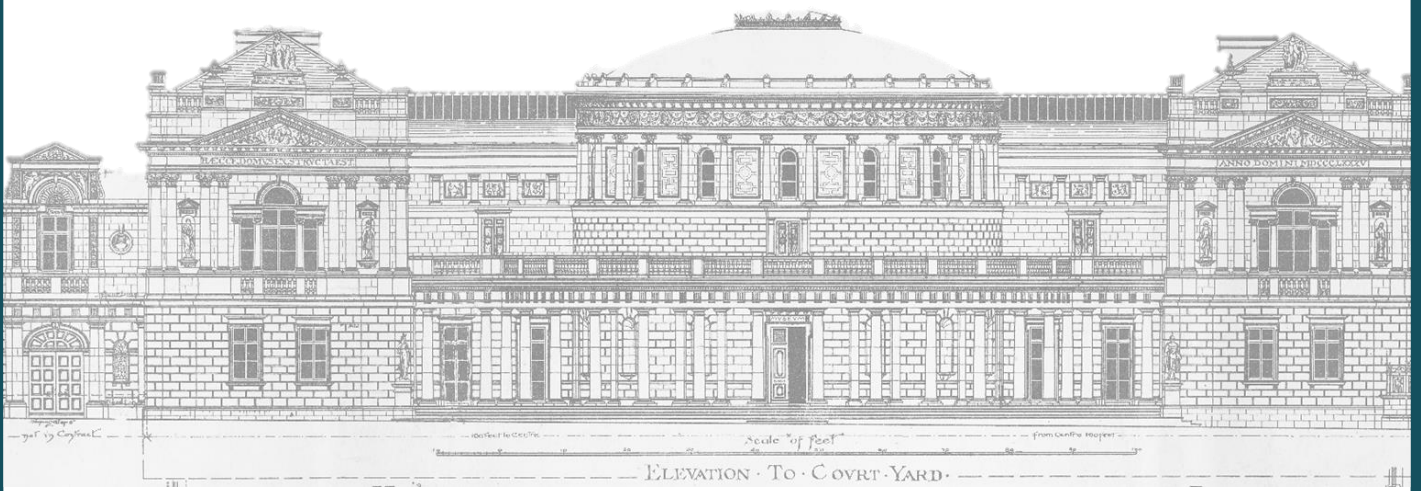
## 2

### Freehand Drawing Exercise

The lithographic architectural floor plans for the National Library of Ireland are digitised and available using our online catalogue at [nli.ie](https://nli.ie) which you can explore using the link below.

NLI Design Plans

Pick a building—perhaps a civic building or other community space. Complete a freehand drawing of the elevation of the building. Hone your observation skills to consider how the various shapes relate to each other and elements of detail on the building.





# 3

## Designing using CAD software

Freehand drawing is one way to portray architectural designs; however, you can also use computer animated design software to digitally create models and plans. Refer again to the original Library design plans digitised below.



Why not create a model by applying your knowledge of CAD software?

## Additional Resources

### Books

Casey, Christine and Patrick N. Wyse Jackson, eds. *The Museum Building of Trinity College Dublin: A Model of Victorian Craftsmanship*. Four Courts Press, 2019.

NLI Call Number: BB8227

Griffin, David J. and Caroline Pegum. *Leinster House: 1744-2000 An Architectural History*. Office of Public Works, Irish Architectural Archive, 2000.

NLI Call Number: OPIE W / 122/1 & B3518

O'Dwyer, Frederick. *The Architecture of Deane and Woodward*. Cork University Press, 1997.

NLI Call Number: BB424

### Manuscripts

Notes by the architect Thomas Newenham Deane on the building of the National Library of Ireland, by Thomas Newenham Deane, 1884.

NLI Call Number: MS 10,475

National Library of Ireland architect's drawing's, by Thomas Newenham Deane, 1884.

NLI Call Number: PD AD 3577\_LBR 7279 (digitised)

Note on designs for Houses of Parliament, Dublin, by E. L. Pearce, March 7, 1728.

NLI Call Number: D. 20, 209





## Webpages

Castletown.ie. “Architectural History: Ireland’s First and Largest Palladian Style House.”

[Architectural History | Castletown](#)

Dublin Civic Trust. “Palladian Style (1720-1770).”  
[Architectural Styles + Periods « Dublin Civic Trust](#)

National Built Heritage Service. “Leinster House, Kildare Street.” [Leinster House, Kildare Street, Dublin 2, DUBLIN - Buildings of Ireland](#)

RDS Library and Archives: Digital Archive. “Leinster House: A House with Three Lives.” [Introduction · Leinster House: A House with Three Lives · RDS](#)

Russborough.ie. “Architecture.” [Russborough House](#)

★ Find the books and manuscripts above by typing the NLI call number into the catalogue search bar on our website [nli.ie](#).

If you want to look at material in the Library, you can do so by applying for a Reader’s Ticket. These are free and you can apply online at our website. Once you have your ticket you can order material into our Reading Rooms or visit for study.





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