

Cross-currents in domestic development...

Abstract:

Dublin's eighteenth-century domestic architecture has, hitherto, largely been seen in a vacuum. Surviving examples show a clear debt to contemporary British models. Yet, the exact nature of these exemplars, the means by which they were transmitted and the extent to which they were adopted, remains unclear. This dissertation undertakes a detailed exploration into the genesis of the eighteenth-century Dublin town house, viewed within the cross-current of domestic architecture in Britain and Ireland (1720-1755).



No. 30 Old Burlington Street, London.



No. 9 Henrietta Street, Dublin.

Focusing on two pioneering residential schemes in Dublin's north city, Henrietta Street (1720s-1750s) and Sackville Street Upper (1750s), their development is set against the wider British context, specifically the domestic urban architecture of London's West End. The role of the people behind the building process, the developers, designers, producers and users takes centre stage, exploring the social and cultural networks in which these individuals operated on both sides of the Irish Sea, the built environment they experienced and the aesthetic ideals they encountered. Drawing on a broad range of sources, including previously unpublished archival material and anecdotal evidence, combined with physical examinations of the buildings themselves, serves to create a fuller picture of the cross-cultural context in which these town houses were planned, built and functioned.

Key Research Questions:

Architectural exchange...

What, Which, How, and Who?

- **What** was the nature of these British models? And by **which** means were they transmitted to Ireland?

- **How** influential were such imported models, and to **what** extent were they adopted?

- **Was** the British model altered in the process? And if so **what** negotiation took place at the point of intersection?



- **Who** were the major protagonists in this process? **What** was their cross-channel experience and cultural connections? And **how** did this broader social context impact on the resulting buildings?



Approach and Methodology:

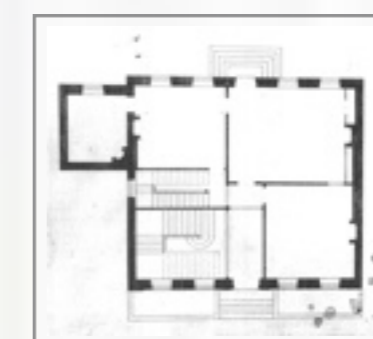
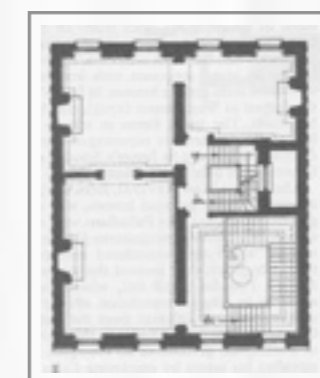
This study will be the first in its field to negotiate **an inter-cultural context** for the development of Dublin's domestic architecture, while the **revisionist and inter-disciplinary approach** taken seeks to add a richer, more three-dimensional element to our view of the early eighteenth-century Dublin town house. This approach aims to marry the traditional tools of architectural historiography, **formalism and connoisseurship**, with concerns of **social history and material culture**.



Previously **under-explored aspects** such as the **financial model** adopted, and **modes of planning and decorating** these houses will be explored. The **people** behind the development process will be brought to the fore, seeking to assess the impact of their **cross-cultural experience**, and the socio-political networks in which they operated, on the resulting built structures.



Setting this study of the Dublin town house within **the inter-cultural framework** in which the protagonists operated, serves to place these Irish examples on the **broader European stage**, and to determine what was **distinctive** about this important building type.



Findings and Conclusions:

- In terms of **planning, design, and use** the eighteenth-century Dublin town house shows a clear **debt to British models**. Yet, a significant **reliance on local practice** persisted, and imported ideas were tempered by uniquely Irish conditions, resulting in what are the **distinctly Irish characteristics** of this international building type.



- A vast body of **Irish individuals**, peers and patrons of architecture, developers and designers of domestic buildings, can be found **living and working in Britain** during this period.

- While the **architectural practitioners** involved appear to be the primary **transmitters of British models** and **empirically** learned practice, the **patrons and users** of such buildings also played a crucial **role in the dissemination** of new architectural taste and ideas.

- Their **British experience**, the built environment and **aesthetic ideals** they encountered, and the **cultural connections** they made, had a direct **impact** on domestic development in Dublin.

- The genesis of the Dublin town house can be seen as a **collaborative effort**, an amalgamation of principles and practice from Britain and Ireland, and a concord between **developer, designer, producer and user**.



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