PICTURING THE



COUNTRY HOUSE

21st Annual Historic Houses International Conference, Centre for the Study of Historic Irish Houses and Estates, History Department, Maynooth University 8-9 May 2023



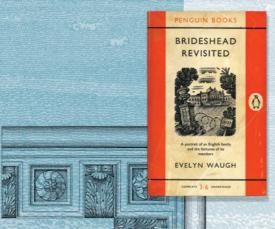
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rom the most rudimentary sketch to the finest painting the country house has always been a source of visual inspiration. Owners, architects, designers, artists, photographers, film-makers, conservationists, marketing departments, tourism boards, and visitors have all looked at the country house in multiple ways for different purposes.

Early visions for a new house might remain locked in an owner's head until unleashed by the draughtsmanship of an architect; the finished home and its interiors frequently captivated artists in watercolour, oil or other media. In the 19th century the birth of photography gave rise to more immediate forms of visual representation; cinema, moving pictures, and sound only augmented the impact of houses and their interiors, whether in drama or documentary; tour operators are continually looking to refresh the appeal of heritage; and nowadays the digital universe provides a plethora of possibilities for visual recording, enhancement, and even manipulation. While there is an enormous legacy of visual and written material, every generation looks at the country house with fresh eyes.

Realism and atmosphere often shape one's visual response, but country houses have not only stimulated

the eye they have also inspired the imagination especially through writers and film-makers who have celebrated or explored houses and their settings, whether factual or imaginative, from guidebooks to novels. There is endless debate as to whether words are more powerful in stimulating the mind's eye than the optical experience itself. Who is to say whether Pevsner is more revealing than Evelyn Waugh for example?



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How is it that the term 'country house' can conjure up such varied images and expectations for different audiences? By what means do houses present something beyond their architectural presence? How do they gesture towards an imagined history, or set of values, and do these significances bear any meaningful relationship to the physical circumstances of the building, the landscape, and its occupants?

What is the impact of virtual or augmented reality on opening up new ways of visualising the country house? Have the digital and immersive come to define our responses to these places? As the boundaries between the vicarious and the first-hand begin to dissolve is this an exciting development or cause for concern? What differentiates traditional forms of seeing from innovative ways of perceiving?

Picturing the Country House will examine how the country house has been represented pictorially and imaginatively across the centuries, through paint, pencil, engraving, decorative art, photography, film, sound, words, and other media, including the very latest technologies.

The conference is likely to be a mix of live and virtual proceedings. Papers on any of the above topics or other themes relating to visualising country houses in Ireland, the UK, Europe, or further afield will be considered.

Abstracts of no more than 400 words should be sent to Professor Terence Dooley and Professor Christopher Ridgway before 10 January 2023 at the following addresses: terence.a.dooley@mu.ie and cridgway@castlehoward.co.uk









