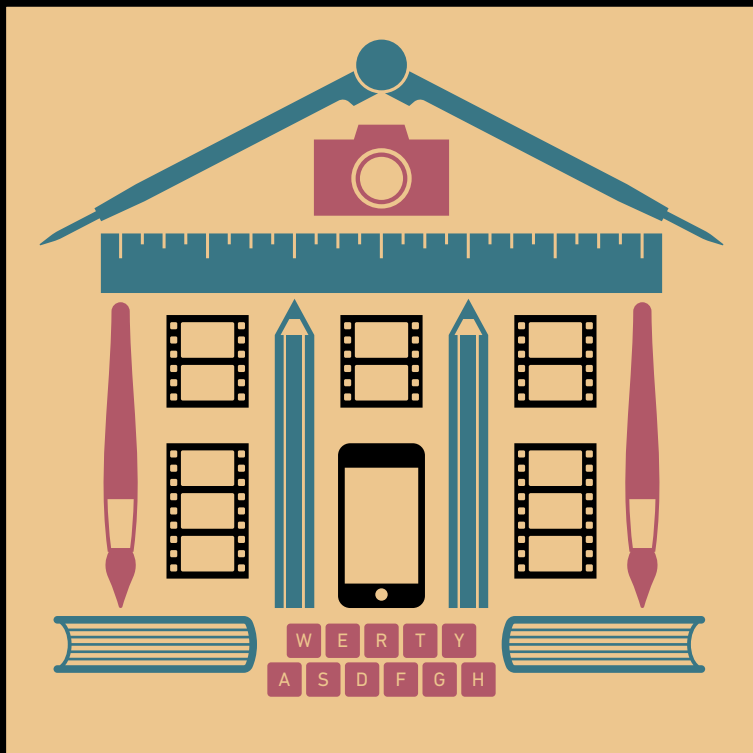


# PICTURING THE



# 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**

## PICTURING THE COUNTRY HOUSE



From 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?

