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THE INFLUENCES OVER STUCCODORE ROBERT WEST

BY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF PLATES:	P.3
INTRODUCTION:	P.5
CHAPTER1:	P.9
CHAPTER 2:	P.25
CHAPTER 3:	P. 35
CONCLUSION:	P.74
BIBLIOGRAPHY:	P.78

LIST OF PLATES

CHAPTER 1:

- Fig. 1.1: Detail of fifteenth century stuccowork. p.11.
Fig. 1.2: The grand salon of Carton, Co. Kildare. p.13.
Fig. 1.3: The long gallery, Castletown Co. Kildare. p.16.
Fig. 1.4: Leinster House. p.17.
Fig. 1.5: Tyrone House. p.19.
Fig. 1.6: No.85 St Stephen's Green. p.19.
Fig. 1.7: Staircase of No.20 Lower Dominic St. p.21.
Fig. 1.8: Remains of an eighteenth century house. p.24.

CHAPTER 2:

- Fig. 2.1: The grand salon of Carton. p.27.
Fig. 2.2: Design drawing by Jean Berain. p.28.
Fig. 2.3: The drawing room of No.9 Cavendish Row. p. 32.
Fig. 2.4:Detail of the stair-well, no. 20 Lower Dominic St. p.34.

CHAPTER 3:

- Fig. 3.1: No.85 St. Stephen's Green. p.36.
Fig. 3.2: Melpomene, Terpsichore, Erato and Clio. P. 39.
Fig. 3.3: Euterpe, Polyhymnia, Calliope and Urania. p.40.
Fig. 3.4: Apollo. p.41.
Fig.3.5: Apollo, Newman House. p.42.
Fig. 3.6: Two Putto playing with hares. p.43.
Fig. 3.7: The ceiling of Carton. p.46.
Fig. 3.8: The saloon ceiling of No.85 St Stephen's Green. p.47.
Fig. 3.9: Juno and Iris representing 'Good Government'. p. 48.
Fig. 3.10: Juno and Iris representing 'Air'. p. 48.
Fig. 3.11: Detail of Juno and peacocks. p. 49.
Fig. 3.12: Maritime Trade. p. 50.
Fig. 3.13: Ceres goddess of the fruitful harvest. p. 51.
Fig. 3.14: Detail of cornucopia held by Ceres. p. 52.
Fig. 3.15: Minerva and Proserpina. p. 52.
Fig. 3.16: Detail of scallop shell motif and oakleaf swags. p. 53.

LIST OF PLATES

CHAPTER 3:

- | | |
|---|--------|
| Fig. 3.17: Putto clutching acanthus swags. | p.54. |
| Fig. 3.18: Detail of stylized scrolls. | p. 55. |
| Fig. 3.19: Cove and ceiling decoration of the Saloon. | p.56. |
| Fig. 3.20: The hallway of No. 86 St. Stephen's Green. | p. 59. |
| Fig. 3.21: A section of the staircase wall. | p.60. |
| Fig. 3.22: Detail of a monkey head, staircase wall. | p. 61. |
| Fig. 3.23: Corner of coving, staircase wall. | p. 62. |
| Fig. 3.24: Ceiling and cove of staircase. | p. 63. |
| Fig. 3.25: Section of staircase wall. | p. 64. |
| Fig. 3.26: Detail of acanthus. | p. 65. |
| Fig. 3.27: The saloon of No. 86 St. Stephen's Green. | p. 68. |
| Fig. 3.28: Ceiling of the north dining room. | p. 69. |
| Fig. 3.29: Section of the north dining room. | p.70. |
| Fig. 3.30: Section of cove of the Bishop's room. | p. 71. |
| Fig. 3.31: Detail of acanthus and bird head. | p. 72. |
| Fig. 3.32: Map of Dublin. | p.73. |

INTRODUCTION

The Georgian period (1714-1830) in Dublin is generally regarded as a time of great architectural activity particularly with regard to the homes of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy, many of which contain much fine stuccowork. In this essay I aim to look at the varied influences on Irish stuccowork with particular emphasis on the period 1739 to 1765 and the work of Dublin-based stuccodore Robert West. This era is specifically worthy of study since it is during these years that the stuccowork of Newman house, no. 85 and 86 St Stephen's Green, was executed by the Francini brothers and by Robert West. This stuccowork is of note in that it exemplifies the characteristics of Georgian Dublin stucco. It is my belief that the influences pervading on stuccodores during this era and afterwards are the Francini brothers, as well as a unique socio-cultural environment. In order to examine these influences it will be necessary to examine the history of stuccowork from 1730 up to the late 1700s and the socio-cultural environment of that period.

Chapter One aims to define stucco, the course of its history in Ireland and the socio-cultural factors which affected it.

Chapter Two defines the two pervading styles of the Georgian period: baroque and rococo. The stuccowork of the Francini brothers and Robert West are chosen to illustrate the differences between these two styles in Ireland.

Chapter Three focuses on the stucco of Newman House executed by the Francini brothers in the Apollo room and saloon of no. 85 St Stephen's Green and on the works of Robert West on the staircase, Bishop's room and first floor drawing room of no. 86 St Stephen's Green.

In the conclusion I will discuss the influence of the Francinis over the Irish stuccodore Robert West, by comparing and contrasting their work.

On researching this thesis, the major sources were a combination published material on Georgian Dublin and visits to both nos. 85 and 86 St Stephen's Green, no. 20 Lower Dominic St and Castletown, Co. Kildare where I was allowed to spend much time examining and becoming familiar with Irish stucco in it's original locations. I believe that this is the most important way to study stucco as the works have to be viewed and properly considered first-hand for their magnificence and detail to be truly appreciated and understood.

As regards published material, when dealing specifically with stuccowork I have found Dublin Decorative Plasterwork Of The Seventeenth And Eighteenth Century ,(1967) by C. P. Curran, and Irish Eighteenth-Century Stuccowork And Its European Sources (1991) by Joseph Mc Donnell to be the most informative on Irish stucco. The bulletins of the Irish Georgian Society provided informative and useful accounts on, art and architecture. On researching this thesis I discovered that many authors on stucco such as C.P. Curran ignored what I believe to be highly influential on stucco design, the basic structure of a room. On reading C.P. Curran's descriptions of Stuccoed ceilings one would suppose that the decoration of one room could be exchanged for that of another. While this may be true of ceilings of similar size and those intended for mass production, it should be pointed out that Francini and West designs were site specific, their unique stucco compositions work in symbiosis with the structure and dimensions of the space they inhabit. An example of this is the Francinis' dining room at Riverstown, Cork, while often compared to that of the Apollo room in no.85 St. Stephen's Green, they are very different both

catering to different room structures, Riverstown being Octagonal in shape and no.86 St. Stephen's Green being rectangular and of a lower ceiling. The effect of resituating site specific stucco can clearly be seen in Aras an Uachtarain, where copies of the Riverstown stucco have been placed along a narrow hallway, which impedes their clarity and destroys the structural coherency that their arrangement possesses at Riverstown.

When dealing with Georgian society itself, I found Constantia Maxwell's book Dublin Under the Georges (1936) to be the most concise account and an interview with Tracy Fahy, a reseacher at Newman House, to be most helpful on the history of the House, it's stucco and previous occupants. The bulletins of The Irish Georgian Society proved a valuable aid in understanding affluent eighteenth century, costoms, politics, education and contemporary life.

CHAPTER ONE

Many cultures have developed their own forms of disguising bare walls with decorative designs in plaster. The nature of plaster and its ingredients are as diverse as the countries it has been used in, as craftsmen employed local materials such as twigs, shells, hair and split laths to reinforce the plaster. (C. P. Curran 1967 p.1). Stucco created from lime and finely powdered marble was fireproof and of a highly durable nature. This form of plaster was popular in Rome and ancient Greece but ceased to be used during the Middle Ages until, it was revived in the early Renaissance in Italy and employed by Giovanni da Udine in the Vatican Loggie in Rome, where he worked beside Raphael. As with all crafts, that of the stuccodore had its own jealousy guarded trade secrets, fortunately recorded by ancient and Renaissance writers.(C.P.. Curran, 1967, p.91).

Evidence shows that in eighteenth Dublin stuccodores ground down marble pieces to a fine powder in a stone mortar which was carefully sifted into white lime made from either marble chips or travertine. Local stuccodores typically reinforced their plaster by using shells and twigs found within easy access of Dublin. Before the advent of the Francini brothers in Ireland in 1739 to Carton Co. Kildare, the country home of the Duke of Leinster, the general disposition was towards a rudimentary use of plaster which did not realise its full potential as a plastic medium until it came into the hands of the Francini and Robert West. Few examples of sixteenth and seventeenth century stuccowork have survived to the present day; fortunately enough written observations exist and more importantly several fine provincial sixteenth century houses remain, containing somewhat worn pieces of early stucco decoration. One fine example of medieval stuccowork which still exists was executed in 1556 at the request of Thomas the Black tenth Earl of Ormond, at his

residence Ormond Castle in Carrick-on-Suir, Co. Tipperary (Curran 1967 p.9).

This early work is characterised by a rigid use of geometric patterns and moulded rectilinear panels framing rudimentary modelling. Ceilings during this period remained flat and uncovered, unlike those of the eighteenth century and were covered by low relief repeated stucco panels surmounted at the intersections by ornamental bosses shaped into flowers; within the panels appear portrait medallions and armorial badges. John O'Donovan in 1853 documented the stuccowork of the Ormond castle's great hall: '...the great hall or gallery (it measures 63ft by 15ft) still presents an example of a ceiling so artistically stuccoed.' (C.P. Curran 1967 p.9)

It is divided by richly moulded ribs into compartments alternately filled by the arms of England, the Tudor emblems and the letters E.R. and T.O. for Elizabeth Regina and Thomas Ormond. The ornaments of a chimneypiece extend to the ceiling and comprise figures of Justice and Mercy and a fine medallion portrait of the Queen"(C P Curran 1967 p.9).
(figure 1.1)



Figure 1.1: Detail of medallion depicting the head of Queen Elizabeth I.

As Irish craftsmen became more proficient at stuccowork they began to experiment with different forms, rigid panels giving way to curving scrolls and stylized floral ornament; in one case the Montgomery chapel (1632) in Newtownards Co Down is embellished with wreaths, foliage and figures angels (C.P.Curran 1967 p.11). Successive wars and pillaging during these troubled times led to the destruction of many fine examples of fifteenth and sixteenth century stucco in abandoned homes and churches which deteriorated over time, eventually leaving the plaster decoration exposed to the elements of Irish weather. Unlike the hot dry climate of Italy and Greece, Irish weather is not conducive to the preservation of uncovered plaster.

It was not until the late 1730s that the more open Baroque style replaced the compartmented style of earlier generations. This was as a result of the coming of the Francini brothers to Ireland in 1739 and the first work they undertook on the grand salon of Carton Co. Kildare, the country residence of the Duke of Leinster at Riverstown Co. Cork for Dr Jemmett Browne, Bishop of Cork and their first commission in Dublin at no.85 St. Stephen's Green for Captain Hugh Montgomery. Local craftsmen imitated their techniques and began referring to the rococo designs of curling acanthus and interlacing strapwork of Berain, Oppenort, and Watteau which were circulating Europe in the form of design reference books. This late baroque style introduced by the Francini had originated at the court of Louis the fourteenth at Versailles near Paris, was the precursor to Rococo which reached its height in the 1760s (T.W.Moody 1986 p.512).

The Francinis' stuccowork is characterised by high relief figurative work of classical allegories such as in the saloon at Carton where Jove reigns resplendent from his position high in the coved ceiling surrounded by playful putti and flamboyant acanthus scrolls.(figure 1.2)



figure 1.2: Central section of the grand salon of Carton, Co. Kildare.

Although Rococo became more popular during the 1750s, the Francini remained true to late Baroque assimilating only certain aspects of Berain's Rococo innovations such as the use of curling acanthus and rocaille motifs (T. W. Moody 1986 p.512). The Rococo style which peaked around 1765 in Ireland was lighter than the Baroque involving the use of rocaille and bird motifs in graceful asymmetrical designs.

Robert West one of the most talented Irish stuccodores of the 1760s had a three dimensional style which reached its highest point in no. 20 lower Dominick St (1760) and in no. 86 St Stephen's Green(1765-1767). These houses are well known for their stuccowork which incorporates bird motifs, which became one of West's trademarks. Also incorporated into West's designs are cornucopias, fruit, flowers, vegetable scrolls, herm figures and musical instruments.

However, by the late 1770s rococo naturalism was overtaken by Adamesque academicism, previously handsculpted motifs were replaced by pre-cast classical ornament which were attached to ceilings and walls in an orderly geometrical fashion. This change in taste can be seen in the ceilings of Powerscourt House, where the stucco on the staircase wall and ceiling executed by James Mc Cullagh in 1773 is of the rococo period while that on the first floor by Michael Stapleton is Adamesque in style (Curran 1967 p.75).. This change in fashion from rococo to the classical Adamesque style was prompted by the revival of antique art which was stimulated by the recent discovery and subsequent excavations at Pompeii and Herculaneum. "The Grand Tour" played a popular role in the education of young gentlemen and many of these excavated sites were eagerly visited. Books filled with engravings of Roman artifacts and architecture were circulated throughout Europe. Soon the 'Pompeian manner became the new fashion to be slavishly copied by the rich trying to emulate the revived styles of ancient Rome.

The explosive developments in Irish stucco were mirrored by a similar development in domestic and public architecture. During the 1700s 'no capital in Europe grew so furiously or splendidly , or displayed a more brilliant social climate than Dublin.'(Kevin Corrigan Kearns 1983 p.20) These phenomenal developments were funded by the rental fees extracted from the provincial estates of landowners who poured their money into buying or building ostentatious residences at exclusive addresses in Dublin. The nobility, gentry, wealthy merchants, and prosperous professionals fiercely rivalled one another in the creation of grand domiciles. As historian Seamus Scully avers, these "lordy houses would be the dazzling homes of an aristocracy whose extravagance would amount to a species of madness."(Kevin Corrigan Kearns 1983 p.20)

The Georgian house was more than a residence, it was an indispensable status symbol of one's position in society. Economic stature and taste could be ascertained by how tastefully the interior was decorated by stucco, how lavishly guests were entertained and at what address the home was situated. Wealthy Georgians were proud of their homes and spent much time and money adorning their interiors to suit their tastes. Lady Louisa Conolly the wife of Thomas Conolly, reportedly the richest man in Ireland of that time went into great detail when decorating Castletown in Co. Kildare. She personally chose the colour schemes ordering specially commissioned coloured chandeliers from Venice to match the decoration of the long gallery (**figure 1.3**) , while her brother-in-law the Duke of Leinster, paid £501 to the Francini brothers for stucco executed on the ceiling and cove of Carton in 1739 (Keller1979 p.9). (**figure 1.2**)



Figure 1.3: The long gallery; the set of Venetian chandeliers was imported by lady louisa Conolly especially for this room.



In the early seventeenth century the north side of Dublin city was the most fashionable, but by the 1760s the elite of Dublin society had begun to cross the Liffey to its south side, to Merrion Square, St Stephen's Green and Fitzwilliam Square. The reason for this territorial shift was in part due to the Duke of Leinster, who in 1745 commissioned the popular architect Cassels to build him a mansion on spacious grounds along Kildare St (Glin 1964 p.32). (figure 1.4)

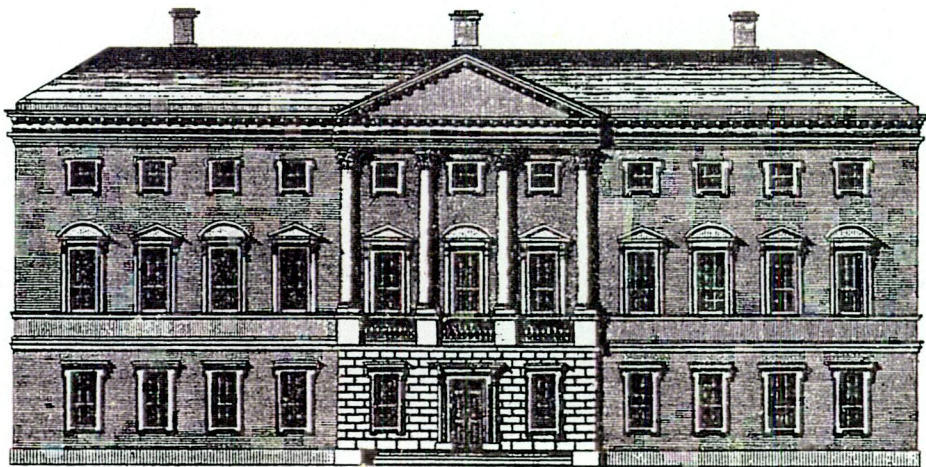


Figure 1.4: Leinster House, town residence of the Duke of Leinster.

As the Duke of Leinster, a leading member of society had moved south many of Dublin's fashion conscious followed suit, transforming the newly laid out Merrion Square into one of the most sought after addresses in Georgian Dublin.

Cassels had been invited to Ireland by Sir Gustavus Hume in 1728 to rebuild his burned country residence, Castle Hume, in Co. Fermanagh (Constantia Maxwell 1936 p.61) (Irish Georgian Society vol. 7 p.32). It is possible that this is how Capt. Hugh Montgomery, who was Member of Parliament for Fermanagh, came to know of Cassel's work.

In 1738 Montgomery had Cassels design one of the first Palladian style, Granite faced mansions in Dublin when built it resembled a free-standing pavilion in a central position on the south side of St Stephen's Green.

C. P. Curran has noted in his book Dublin Decorative Plasterwork (1967) that Cassels was not one of those architects who designed and imposed their own ornament throughout the building, and accordingly we do not find a hard and fast adherence to one single type of decoration in his houses. The interiors of many of Cassel's Palladian houses were embellished with stuccowork by the Francini Brothers, Paolo and Filippo, whose Italian late Baroque style complemented his architecture. Guests to no.85 St Stephen's Green would have been impressed by the Baroque stucco panels depicting Apollo and the Muses; this would have reflected upon Montgomery as a man of taste and wealth.

During the early years of the eighteenth century Dublin houses 'were of the gabled variety with simple doorways and high slender windows.' (Constantia Maxwell 1936 p.67) The interiors were characterised by plain narrow entrance passages, leading to rooms decorated with wooden wainscotting. By the mid 1740s the great houses of Dublin designed by Cassels such as Tyrone House,(**figure 1.5**) for Viscount Tyrone,(1740) Leinster House, for the Duke of Leinster(1745)(**figure 1.4**) and no. 85 St Stephen's Green,(**figure 1.6**) for Captain Hugh Montgomery, (1738) had set the classical style of architecture in fashion.

The terraced eighteenth century houses built along the exclusive squares of Dublin Merrion Sq, Rutland Sq, Mountjoy Sq, Fitzwilliam Sq and St Stephen's green were characterised by their plain appearance and highly individual doorways.

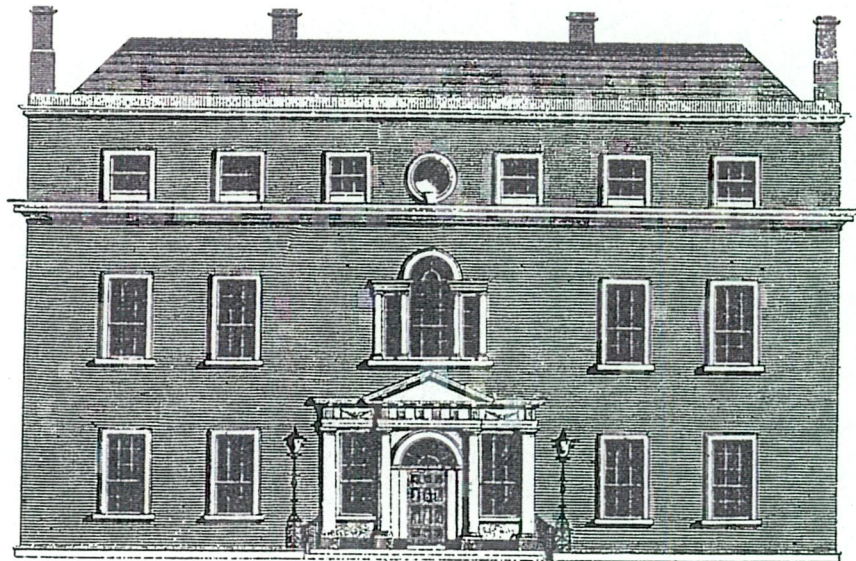


Figure 1.5: Tyrone House; Marlborough St. town house of Viscount Tyrone.



Figure1.6: No. 85 St. Stephen's Green,(left) town house of Captain Hugh Montgomery. No.86 (right) was built by Richard Chapel Whaley.

They depended on '...their classical proportions and the cliff-like massing of the street as a whole' to impress visitors (Desmond Guinness 1964 p.3). Guide-lines were enforced by the Wide Streets Commission to guarantee this complete uniformity in street and square, however the interiors of these mid eighteenth century houses were celebrated for the diversity and artistic merit of the stuccowork within, no longer were visitors greeted by a narrow dingy entrance passage or simple staircases, but by an impressive entrance hall framed by an open staircase.

One of the finest example of this change in proportions is found at no.20 Lower Dominick St erected by Robert West around 1758, on land purchased from Ussher St George of Galway, here the visitor is greeted by a grand entrance hall and staircase richly stuccoed with birds and foliage in the rococo manner. (**Figure 1.7**)

As the principle function of the Georgian residence was to entertain and impress guests, very little floor space was assigned to bedrooms, which were kept to the upper stories of the house. Servants slept in the basements and attics as there was a shortage of space to house the large numbers of domestics employed. In no. 85 St. Stephen's Green, lack of space would have necessitated the lodging of servants in the entrance hall. The truth was that there were far too many domestics."We keep many of them, in our houses as we do plate on our on our sideboards," wrote Dr Samuel Madden in his book Reflections and Resolutions Proper for the Gentlemen of Ireland, published in Dublin in 1738, "more for show than use, and rather to let people see that we have them than we have any occasion for them."(Constantia Maxwell 1936 p.86)

Indulgence was a common vice among the rich in Dublin during the Georgian era.



Figure 1.7: No.20 Lower Dominick St. built and stuccoed by Robert West.

Many intellectuals of that period such as Bishop Berkeley in The Querist and Dr Samuel Madden in Reflections and Resolutions Proper for the Gentlemen of Ireland , wrote at lengths about the excesses of Dublin society. Mrs Delaney, niece of Lord Landsdowne and used to good society, wrote in 1752: 'You are not invited to dinner to any private gentleman of a thousand pounds a year or less, that does not give you seven dishes at one course, and Burgundy and Champagne; and these dinners they give once or twice a week' (Constantia Maxwell 1936 p.85).

Balls were a very popular form of entertainment, the finest being held by the Lord Lieutenant and his wife at Dublin castle. Mrs Delaney records in her memoirs in 1732 that seven hundred attended the Spring ball of that year. This large number was not unusual at Dublin Castle it was the custom of the time to pack as many people as possible between street door and attic. Indeed complained that many Dublin houses to which he was invited were not nearly large enough for the company (Constania Maxwell 1936 p.94).

A night's entertainment consisted of the guests dancing until eleven in the evening and then assembling to play cards with one another for an hour, at midnight guests were served supper afterwards dancing was resumed and in some houses the company did not break up until six am.

When entertaining hosts provided plentiful quantities of wine to guests, not only to assure that their guests enjoyed themselves but also to demonstrate personal wealth and generosity. The large quantities of wine consumed by the Anglo-Irish gentry led Bishop Berekley to question in 'The Querist' "whether any kingdom in Europe be so good a costomer at Bordeaux as Ireland?" While the Viceroy Lord Chesterfield believed that 5000 tuns of wine were imported into Ireland every year to quench the thirst of the wealthy (Constantia Maxwell 1936 p. 84). At social gatherings toasts were the cause of some of the most copious drinking of wine.

Among the most famous toasts of that time was one composed in honour of the victory of William of Orange over the Jacobites in 1690 'To the glorious, pious and immortal memory of the good and great King William, who saved us from popery, slavery, arbitrary power and wooden shoes'.(Tracey Fahey Nov 11 1996)

Yet another area of entertainment was the theatre. The two main theatres were located in Smock Alley and Crow Street. The members of high society more often than not, went the theatre to flaunt both themselves and their children all wearing the latest fashions (David Dickson 1987 p.60). As a result of this interest in the theatre, private theatricals became the fashion of the time with popular plays being re-enacted in the salons of the great houses. In 1761 the popular play The Beggar's Opera was performed at Carton, with Lord Charlemont playing Peachum, and Lady Louisa Conolly playing Lucy (Constania Maxwell 1936 p.99).

Duelling, drinking and gambling were among the most notorious pastimes engaged in by rich and lawless young men of the time known as 'bucks'. Among them anything could instigate a duel; to tread upon the train of a buck's morning gown was punishable by the sword. Favoured duelling sites included the Phoenix Park, the courtyard of Lucas' coffee shop on Cork Street and the fields behind Merrion Square (Tracy Fahy Nov 11 1996).

This golden era in Irish Georgian history drew to a close following the Act of Union in 1801, with this there was a sudden exodus of wealth fashion and power from Dublin. Property values fell to extraordinarily low levels; Georgian houses which had been newly purchased between 1760 and 1790 were resold a decade later for only a fraction of their original price. An example of this was the home of Lord Cloncurry, Mornington House on Upper Merrion St, bought in 1791 for £8000 but sold in 1802 for £2500 (Maxwell 1936

p.77). By the early nineteenth century further devaluation had occurred as previously illustrious areas such as Mountjoy Square (**figure 1.8**) and Gardiner Street had degenerated into tenement slums. Even though many of these once splendid residences have now fallen into disrepair it is still possible glimpse the craftsmanship and design that went into the construction of the buildings and the execution of the stuccowork by eighteenth century craftsmen.



Figure 1.8: What remains of an eighteenth century town house on Mountjoy Square.

CHAPTER 2

Paolo (1695-1770) Filippo (1702-1779) and Pietro Natale (1705-1788) were born in Bironico a parish in the Swiss canton of Ticino, into the family of Giovanni Antonio Francini, architect and stuccodore who in 1711 completed the stucco decoration on the church of S. Maria delle Grazie in Modena (C.P. Curran 1967 p.30). Like many other craftsmen and artists, such as Borromini, Giovanni Bagutti and the Artari family they left their hometowns to work for patrons in Europe. The Francini forty year span of work and affiliation with the German architect Richard Cassels guaranteed them a position as one of the dominant forces in Irish stuccowork. Although the delicate style of rococo was beginning to gain a foothold in European fashions around this time, the Francini brothers remained true to late Italian Baroque.

The word 'Baroque' means 'misshapen' and is especially descriptive of pearls. This was the name given to the originally Italian movement which penetrated Europe, influencing many forms of art, architecture, interior decoration, painting, sculpture and music. It deserted the earlier static Renaissance forms of the square and the circle for shapes that swirl and move, such as flowing S and C curves, while the circular form was distorted into forms based on the oval shape. Borromini and Bernini were two of the original founding fathers of this style in the sixteenth century, but it was through Carlo Fontana's lighter interpretation of this innovation that baroque infiltrated European courts. Baroque art is dramatic and theatrical and endeavours to draw the spectator into the miniature drama being portrayed, curious viewers responded "to baroque as the artist intended them to: they involved themselves in the drama and excitement that the artist sought to communicate, and are carried away by the infectious vitality of the art."(Patrick Nuttgens 1983 phaiden p.196)

Baroque stuccodores deserted rigid compartmented ceilings to experiment with a new and vigorous massing of allegorical figures framed within oval quartrefoils, surrounded by

curving scroll-shaped acanthus, putti and classical motifs. Ceiling compositions were specifically designed to be viewed 'sotto in su', from below upwards, where figures are slightly elongated or compressed to compensate for the curve of a ceiling which would destroy their original naturalism, this can be seen in the Francinis' stucco figures on the salon cornice of no.85 St. Stephen's Green and Carton Co. Kildare.(figure 2.1)



Figure 2.1: Grand salon, Carton Co. Kildare; allegorical themes represented by Roman gods and goddesses.

Paolo La Francini, the eldest of the Francini brothers, is recorded as having worked for the Bishop of Fulda at his castle in Johannisberg im Rheingebirge in northern Germany between 1721 and 1722 under the direction of Andres Schwartzmann a master stuccodore (Joseph Mc Donnell 1991 p.1). Here he undoubtedly would have come in contact with the work of Jean Berain, an exponent of rococo, whose designs were sweeping Europe in the the form of pattern books, (figure 2.2) and imitative works by other craftsmen.

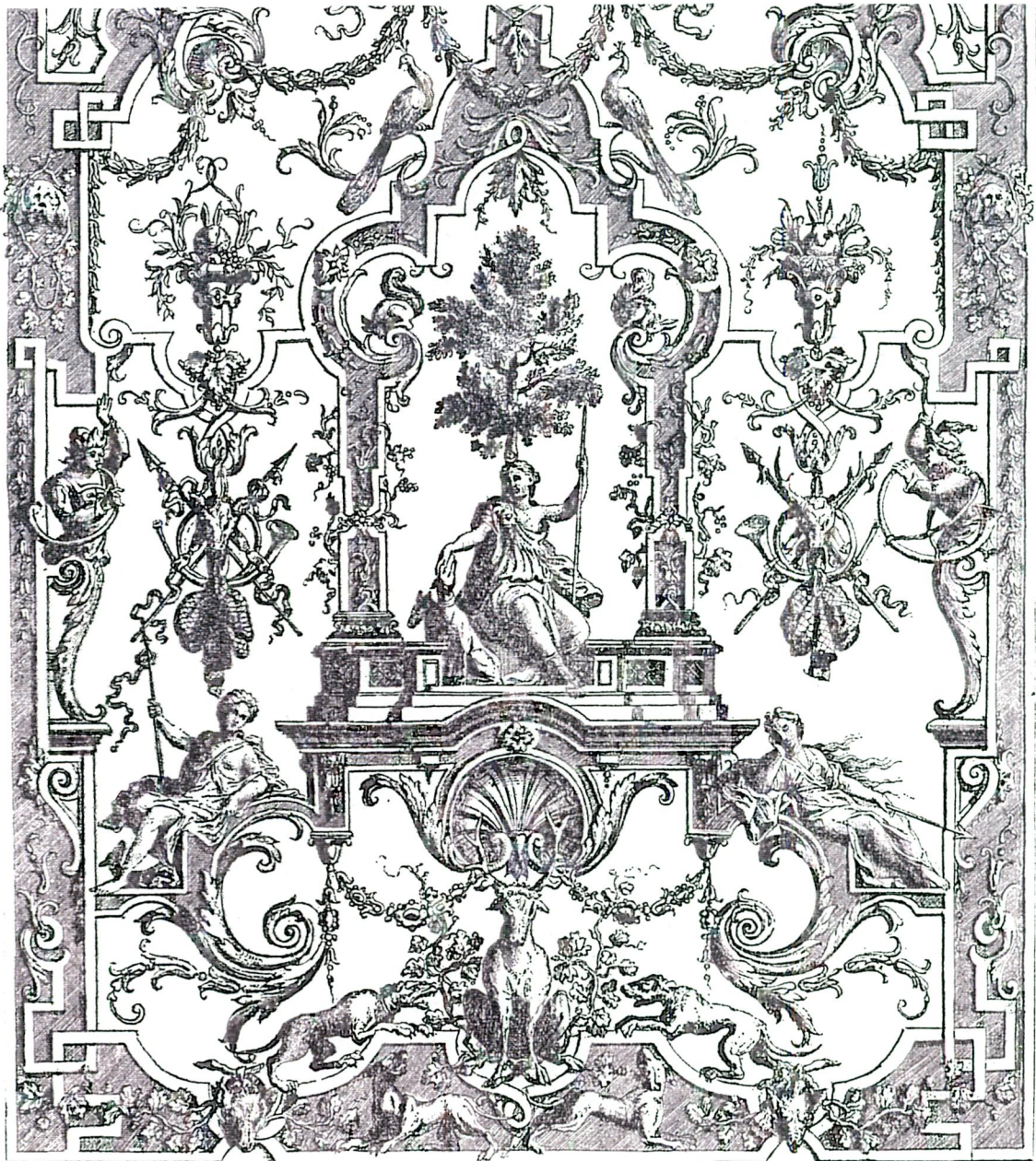


Figure 2.2 a design taken from the repertoire of Jean Berain.

By the early years of the eighteenth century, Italian baroque in Germany and Austria was giving way to the lighter more fluid style patronised by the French court of Louis the fourteenth. The Francini, however, remained true to their native style, only selectively assimilating facets of Berain's repertoire.(figure 2.2)

Rococo took its name from 'rocaille' meaning rocks and shells, to indicate the natural forms of its decoration, leaf and floral swags, flowing branch shapes and shell forms incorporated into elegant delicate 'S' and 'C' shaped scrolls. The first indications of an emerging style were seen at the court of Louis the fourteenth at Versailles. The classicist Hardouin Mansart had been commissioned to design the interior ornamentation for the apartment of the thirteen year old fiancee of Le grand Dauphin, Louis' eldest grandson (Patrick Nuttgens 1983 p. 210). The king felt that the designs submitted to him by Mansart were too sombre for the apartments of a child. It was Watteau's master, Claude Audran who evolved the light delicate decoration of arabesques and filigree, depicting hunting dogs, maidens, birds, garlands, ribbons, plant fronds and tendrils to decorate the interior.

As this new style had the patronage of the prestigious French court, many European artists adopted its mannerisms and furthered its evolution. One such artist was Jean Berain who according to Joseph Mc Donnell in his book Irish Eighteenth Century Stuccowork (1991) revolutionized the standard formula for ceiling design of the eighteenth century; this consisted of attaching the border ornament to the ceiling or cove.

The Francini brothers, however preferred to have the arabesques detached from the sides, gravitating towards the centre of the ceiling. This was the scheme adopted by Irish stuccodores who emulated the Francinis' designs. They did not merely transcribe the designs from book to ceiling but

chose segments that suited, combining them with designs from other sources to achieve a coherent scheme. Often certain details had to be ignored as they would have destroyed the prominence of the main focus; emphasis was also laid on creating strongly silhouetted figures to achieve visual clarity. This is evident in the ceiling of Carton in Co. Kildare, built by Richard Cassels for the Duke of Leinster (1739). (figures:1.2, 2.1)

This was one of the first commissions undertaken by the Francini in Ireland and the first of many collaborations with Cassels, an association which was to guarantee them a position at the forefront of Irish stucco. The stucco on the salon cove of Carton consists of a series of six trefoil-lobed ovals framing paired figures of Roman gods ;these figures were taken from engravings by Pietro Aquila (Joseph Mc Donnell 1991 p.4). True to the Francini nature, the original pattern is only partially adhered to as the figures are manipulated to suit the composition, infact a totally different Venus was supplemented to achieve balance. C.P. Curran has suggested that the composition represents the courtships of the gods, who are linked by oak leaf swags taken from engravings by Dorigny while twenty four putti play on the coves. Framed in the centre of the ceiling sitting on the back of his symbol the eagle, is a resplendent Jove hurtling thunder bolts, through the stucco in Carton, the Francini set the fashion for figurative ceilings in the late Baroque style.. (figure:1.2)

Robert West was the of the first Irish stuccodores to imitate the Francinis' style; however he was also well acquainted with rococo pattern books and selectively adapted aspects from these sources to suit his own repertoire. West's first known work in Dublin was executed on the staircase of the Rotunda Hospital on Great Britain St now known as Parnell St.. This stucco at first glance appears very Franciniesque due to the use of broad curling acanthus leaves (employed

throughout the Francini repertoire) Yet West's acanthus appear more naturalistic and less restricted as they curl in on themselves with fluid movement.

Reference to Berain can be seen in the corner ornamentation of the ceiling; here three rippling acanthus leaves at right angles to one another are drawn into a stem of rococo bandwork emanating from a frame; which encloses further acanthus leaves, C-shaped forms and foliage bandwork, these natural forms in turn frame a central rosette. Fruit baskets floral arrangements and curling acanthus leaves form a naturalistic repeated pattern within the cove. The entire composition is arranged in a symmetrical fashion with the individual motifs forming a harmonious structure. As regards relief, this work is characteristically early, being of low relief, as his later work employed a high relief, asymmetrical style.

After completing work on the Rotunda West turned his attention to No. 9 Cavendish Row,(**figure 2.3**) one among three houses built by Dr Mosse, John Ensor and Henry Darley on Cavendish Street which borders Rutland Square (renamed Parnell Square after the founding of the Irish Free State in 1922). The first floor drawing room ceiling is composed of three frames, one within the other, the outer frame is of broken trabeated C-shapes which sprout waving acanthus fronds that overlap at intersections the plain second frame; and coil around the central frame also composed of trabeated C-shapes. Two simple shell decorations appear within this frame, they seem out of context in this composition as they are the only reference to shell motif found through out the ceiling. Unusually West has not placed further reference to them in the outer frame or cornice to tie them into the overall composition.

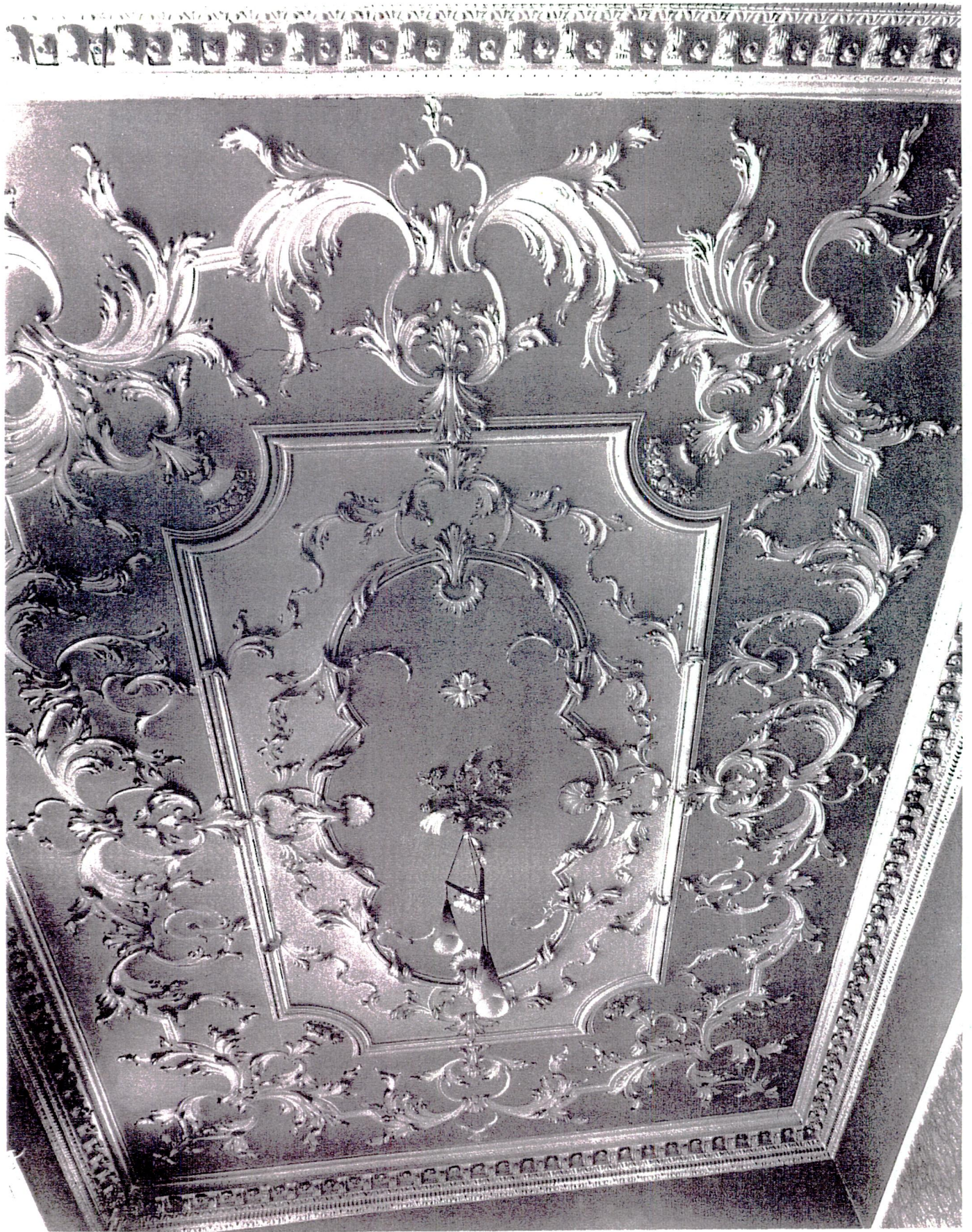


Figure 2.3: Cavendish Row, Parnell Square, first floor drawing room.

In 1757 John West purchased two adjoining lots of land on Lower Dominick street from Ussher St George of Hereford, Co. Galway. He built several houses the most notable being no.20, for its proportions and fine stucco. **(figure 1.7)** The stuccowork in the entrance hall is among the most celebrated in Dublin reflecting the flamboyant nature of the Georgian period and the more mature style of Robert West. The proportions of the hall and staircase are much greater than those found in most terraced Georgian houses, creating the impression of greater height and space than expected.

West's ceiling design is also unique, as he combines a variation of sixteenth century compartmented frames, curling acanthus and rococo motifs. The ornamentation on the ceiling is not framed by a compartmented cove; in this case the curved section of the ceiling is incorporated into the overall ceiling design by acanthus leaves, birds, floral garlands and busts that gravitate toward the central decoration.**(figure 1.7)** West created the the compartments from a symmetrical arrangement of eight semi-circles which form four diamond shaped compartments around the central rosette, these were filled with pairs of overlapping cornucopia. This choice of a symmetrical circular shape over that of the oval is unusual considering the baroque and rococo influences prevalent at that time, which advocated asymmetrical oval forms

Large birds on the walls of the staircase perch on German-style clamps surrounded by swirling acanthus leaves, unlike the formal eagle and swan flanking Jove at Carton West's' birds with their outstretched wings portray natural movement.**(Figure 2.4)** Robert West's use of bird motif may have been inspired by the unknown stuccodore who worked on the chancel of St Peter's church in Drogheda, the ceilings of Russborough and no. 40 St Stephen's Green; the repertoire and style of this craftsman is distinctly continental and on some ceilings (Russborough House) more baroque than the Francini (Joseph Mc Donnell 1991 p.9).

The rendering of the salon in Dominick St is lighter and of lower relief than the entrance hall, acanthus leaves are employed to frame naturalistic birds, putti and musical instruments, corner decoration consists of 'C'-shaped rocaille gravitating towards the central frieze of two putti. Unlike the putti of the Francini at Carton and Newman House, which are modelled into three-dimensions, West's putti are on a reduced scale and of much lower relief. They do not break free of the ceiling as birds and acanthus do; however where West employs birds and putti as central motifs, the Francini use them as part of a network of ornament to frame allegorical friezes of Roman gods.

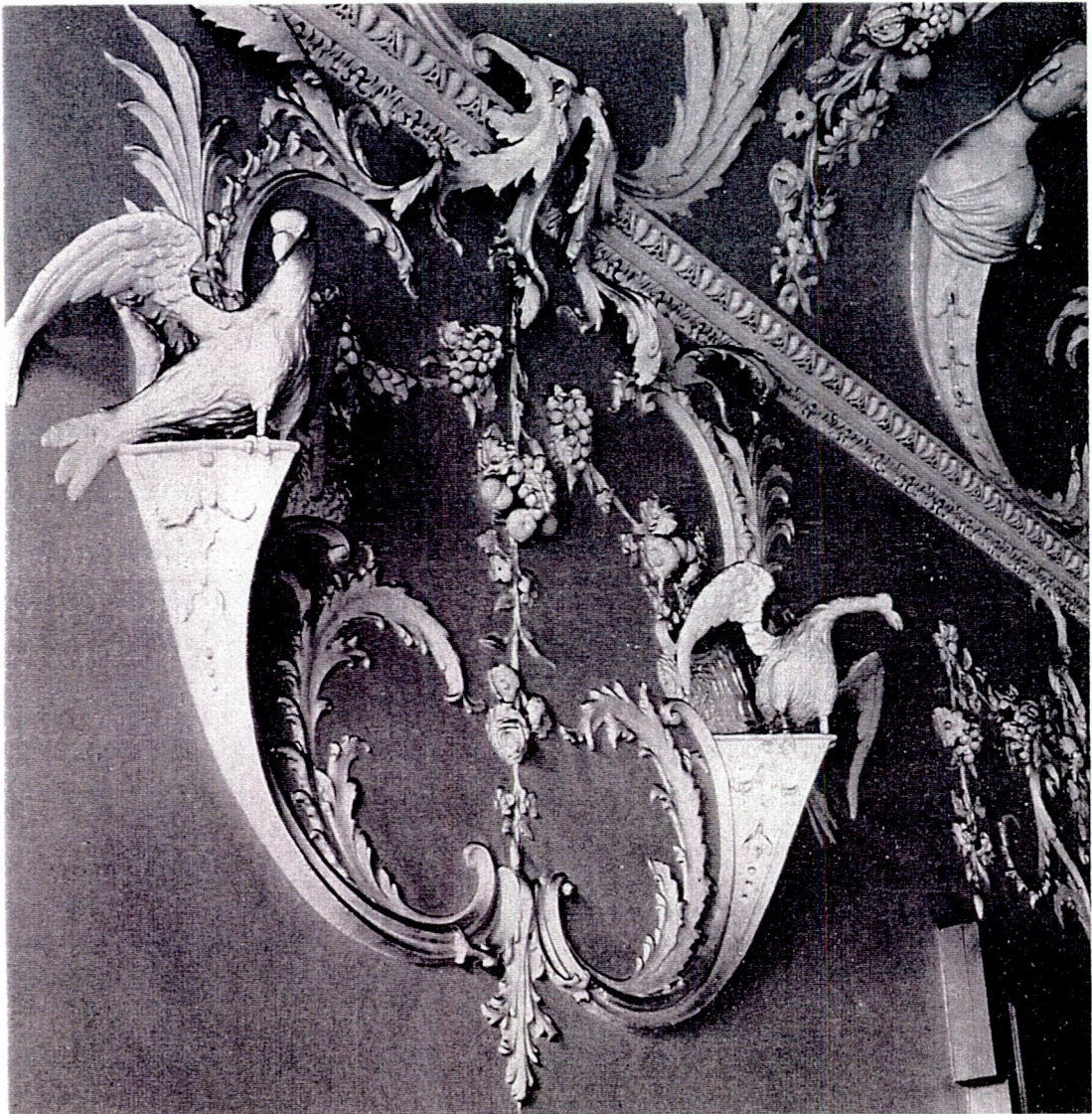


Figure 2.4: Detail on staircase of No. 20 Lower Dominick St.

CHAPTER 3

The stucco of Newman House (nos. 85 and 86 St Stephen's Green) provides a unique opportunity to examine the development of plasterwork design in Ireland between 1739 and 1775. This Palladian-style mansion demonstrates the Swiss-Italian contribution of the Francini brothers to Irish stuccowork and later Rococo stucco of Robert West. no. 85 St Stephen's Green was the first granite faced building erected on the south side of the Green it was designed by the Palladian style architect Richard Cassels for Captain Hugh Montgomery, Member of Parliament. (figure 3.1)

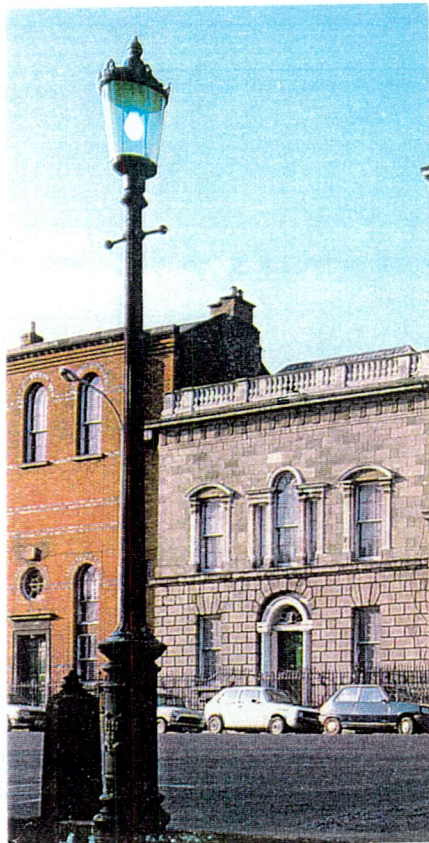


figure 3.1: No. 85 St Stephen's Green, part of Newman House.

Following the death of Captain Hugh Montgomery in 1741, no. 85 was occupied by several distinguished families. Among these were the Whaley family, who built the adjoining house no.86; the Huguenot banking family of La Touche, one of the wealthiest and the most enduring financial dynasties of Anglo-Ireland. In 1786 the Earl and Countess of Clanwilliam took up residence in no.85 and the house became known as Clanwilliam House The last private owner to acquire no. 85 and no. 86 in 1830, was Judge Nicholas Ball a well known legal figure in mid nineteenth-century Dublin and one of the first Catholic Barristers promoted to a Judgeship after the passing of Catholic Emancipation in 1829. In 1854, the Catholic University opened in no. 86 St Stephen's Green, John Henry Newman was rector of the new university from 1854 to 1858. On the death of Judge Nicholas Ball in 1865 no.85 was sold to the Catholic University, both houses combined were named Newman House in Honour of John Henry Newman.

The Francini brothers, Paolo and Fillipo were commissioned by Captain Montgomery to carry out the stucco schemes shortly after the completion of their work on Carton House. Co. Kildare in 1739. no. 85 required a decorative composition that would be suitably impressive to Montgomery's Dublin guests. Based in Co. Louth with his regiment Montgomery would have viewed his town house as an architectural show piece and the stucco as a splendid interior feature.

Between 1739-1740 the La Francini began to stucco the Apollo room which opens off the entrance hall, originally it may have been used as a small dining or music room. During the early Georgian era interiors were simply furnished leaving the stucco to command full attention. The room is named after the Francinis' scheme as the figure of Apollo god of the Arts stands resplendent over the chimney piece between the mantle shelf and ceiling cornice, this figure is a

variant on engravings of the Apollo Belvedere found in the Vatican(Crofts 1994 p.2).

Over a moulded dado, the walls carry in series the nine Muses set in individual panels they are based on engravings by Rheimach and de Rossi(1704 Rome) the originals being owned by Queen Christina of Sweden. Above the muse panels floral and linenfold swags hang from unidentified portrait heads one of which may represent Montgomery. C.P. Curran has put forward in Dublin Decorative Plasterwork 1967 that the portrait heads represent ancient Greek philosophers, in keeping the classical theme prevalent in the room, as philosophy is among the attributes of Apollo.

Moving clockwise around the room, the figured panels of the Muses appear as follows: Polyhymnia, Calliope; Urania; Thalia; Melpomene; Terpsichore; Erato; Clio and Euterpe. Each muse is accompanied by a symbol of her attribute to define respective identities as Urania who's attribute, astronomy is defined by the globe she holds on her lap; Euterpe as music by the double flute she plays; Thalia clutching a mask represents comedy and Melpomene as tragedy by a scroll and mask. **(figure 3.2 and 3.3)** The Francini when designing the composition of the Apollo room, perhaps unwittingly, substituted the Greek muses for those of Rome; as in Greek Myths Robert Graves names the muses as Phthia, Talia, Coronis, Aria and Cyrene (Robert Graves 1950 p.76).

A characteristic of the Francinis' work are figures executed in high relief; the figures in this scheme adhere to this stylistic trait and seem on the point of stepping down from their panels. Elements of Rococo enter this composition in the form of strapwork delicately intertwined with acanthus leaves and surmounted by rocaille. This shell-like decoration appears on either side of the mantelpiece framing Apollo and is reminiscent of the delicate strapwork designs employed by Berain. found in Ornaments Inventez par Jean Berain



figure 3.2: The nine muses of the Apollo room; from left to right :Melpomene, Terpsichore, Erato, Clio.



Figure 3.3: The nine muses of the Apollo room: from left to right, Euterpe, Polyhymnia, Calliope, Urania.

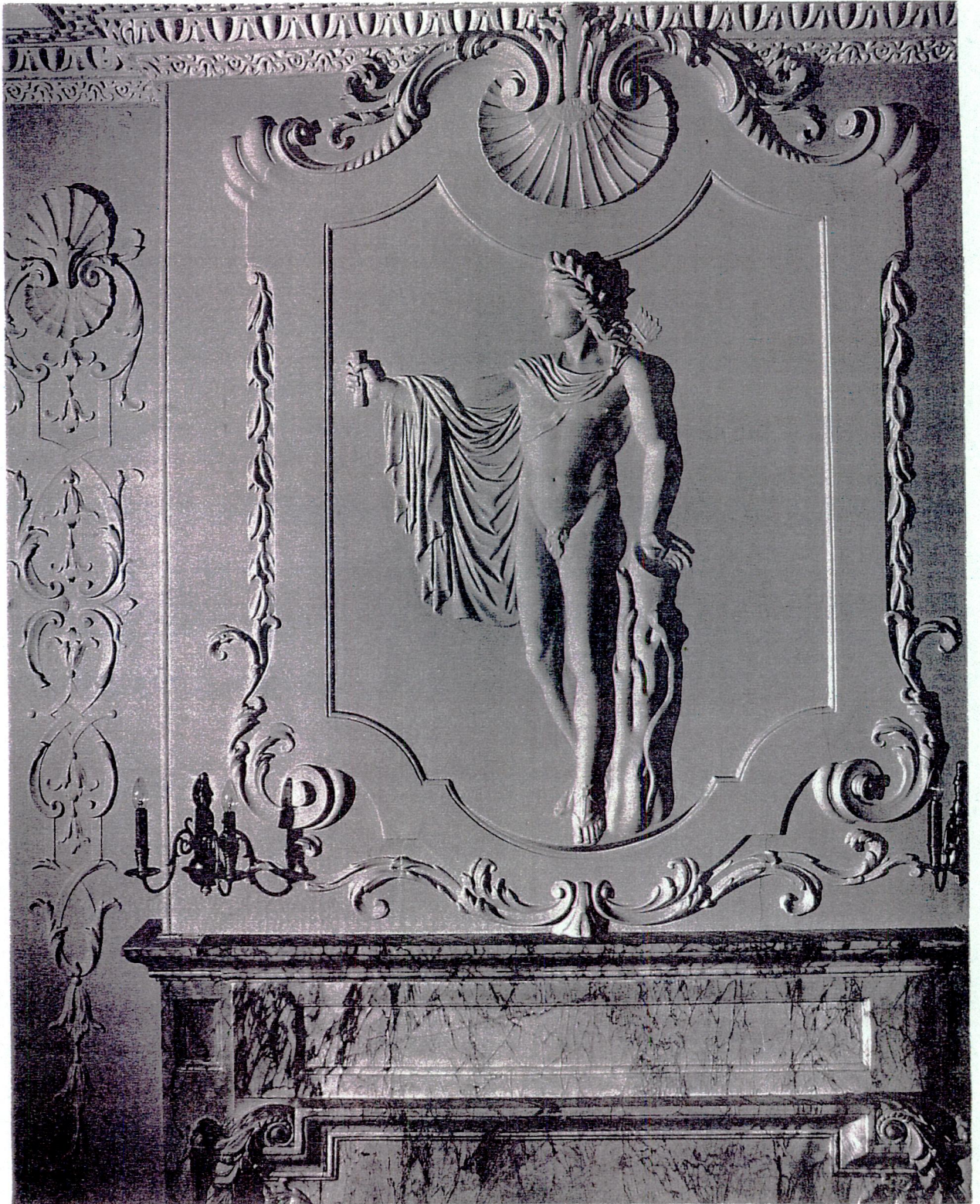
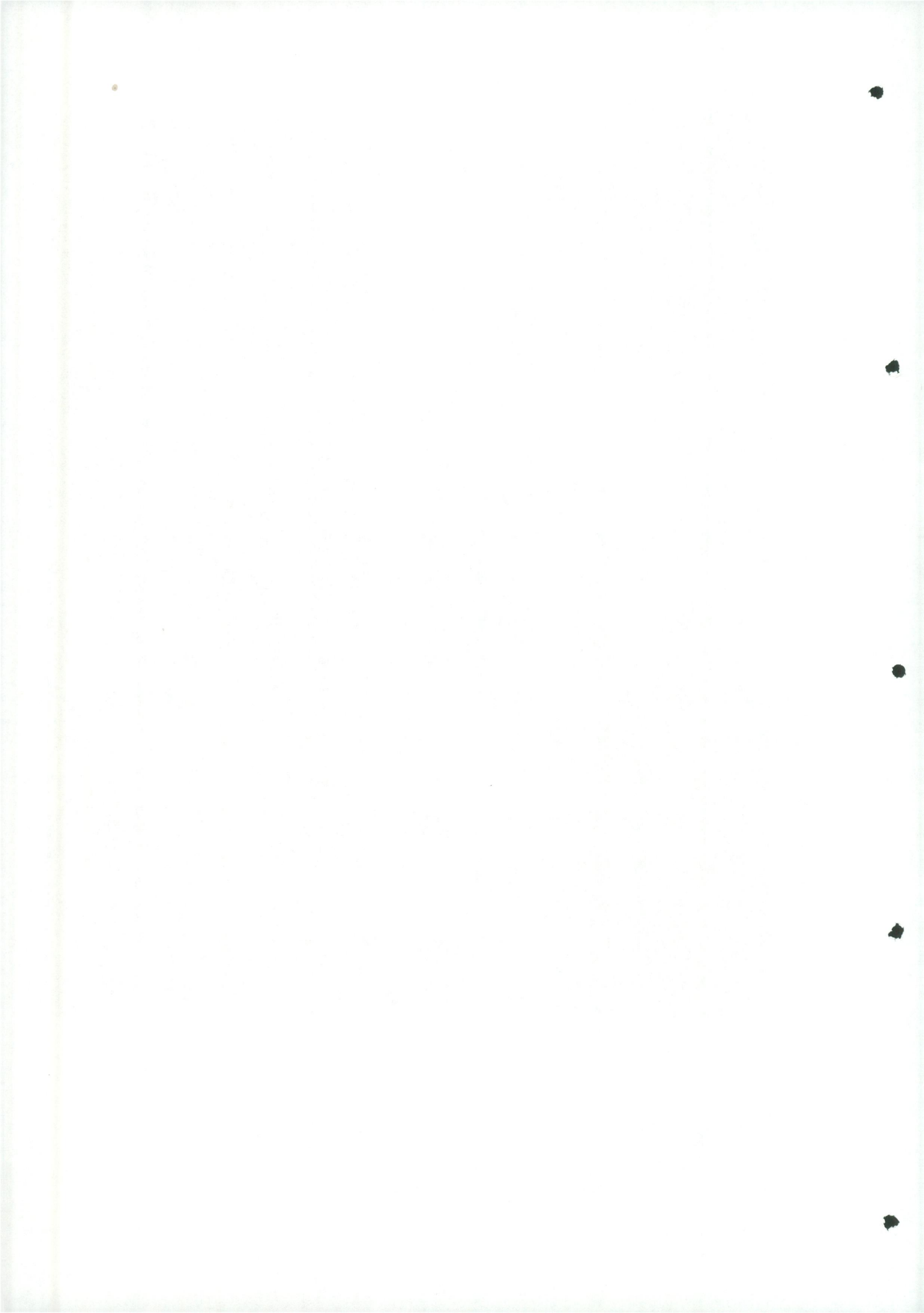


Figure 3.4: Apollo by the Francini brothers, no.85 St Stephen's Green.



(Joseph Mc Donnell 1991 p.10). (see figure 2.2 p.28) The acanthus leaves in this decoration are somewhat out of character for the Francinis' work as they are of low relief and play a minimal role in the ornamental scheme as a whole. Rocaille motifs appear in three places on the chimney piece, two flanking Apollo, and one above this figure incorporated into part of the Louis the fourteenth frame. From this point, the scallop shell motif is spread into a broad fan-shape that leans towards the Apollo figure as acanthus fronds emanating from its base at the top of the frame and curl over the cornice decoration and curve along the top of the frame.

Apollo is positioned within the frame in a frontal pose, with his head turned in profile to the right, as his right arm extends, clutching a scroll, the object of his attention while Apollo's left hand rests on a tree trunk. (**figure 3.5**)

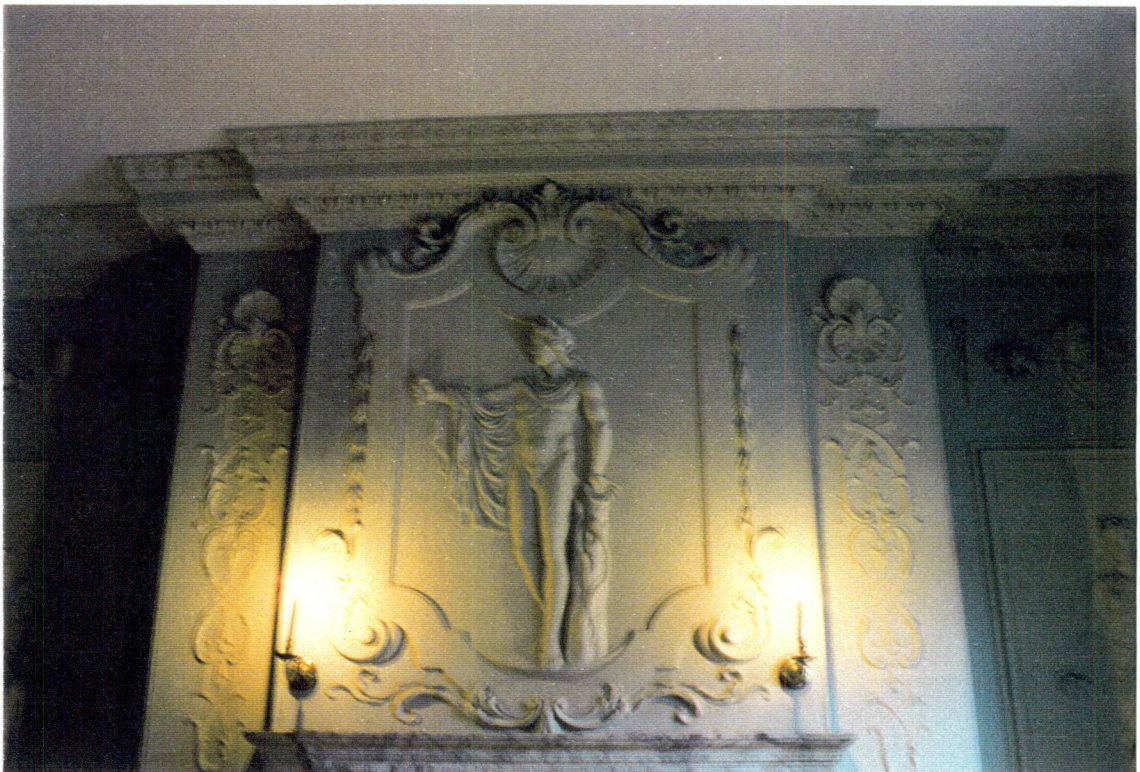


Figure 3.5: Apollo, surrounded by rocaille motif and acanthus ornament.

Draped loosely around Apollo's neck and outstretched right arm is a flowing cloak, He also carries on his back a quiver full of arrows strapped across his chest. The figure's lower body, legs and feet are positioned a manner which leads the spectator to imagine that Apollo is about to step out of his frame onto the mantelpiece. This figure is of lower relief than the muses but the exhibits the same rigid classical mode of posture.

Two overdoor panels depict putti playing with hares; this design was adapted from engravings of Pietro Da Cortonas' ceiling decoration at the Villa Del Pigneto in Italy (Joseph Mc Donnell 1991 p.44). The putti are of high relief but do not break from the confines of the frame as they do on the cornice of the first floor saloon. As these over door panels were placed high on the walls which would cause detail to be lost; Because of this I believe the Francini brothers found it necessary to eliminate several background details of foliage, thus enhancing the visual clarity of the motifs and their prominence within the frame. **(figure 3.6)**



Figure 3.6: Two putti playing with hares.

The entire scheme attains a classical balance with the Francinis' arrangement of figurative panels, floral decoration and rocaille; this composition is similar and may be compared to the stucco in the home of Dr Jemmett Browne, Riverstown, Co. Cork executed several years earlier.

In Smiths' History of Cork,(1750) Riverstown is described as a 'house beautified with several curious pieces of stucco.' (C.P Curran vol 9 p.3) As a member of distinguished Georgian society Smith would have been acquainted with the stucco of many fine houses, his statement highlights how the Francinis' work was perceived as novel and impressive to an eighteenth century visitor at Riverstown. Other fine examples of the Francinis' stuccowork at no.85 St. Stephen's Green, at Carton , Co. Kildare and at Castletown Co. Kildare must have inspired similar responses from visitors

Either side of the mantelpiece, attached to the wall are two candle sconces which would have provided light during dinner parties or music recitals held in the Apollo room . This flickering illumination would have added life to the silhouetted figures of Apollo and the nine muses, as they were caught in the candle light, enhancing their visual appearance.

In the majority of their interiors the Francini pay particular attention to the embellishment of the ceiling and cove, yet in the Apollo room of no. 85 St Stephen's Green the ceiling is disregarded completely and minimal decoration assigned to the cove, all primary stuccowork is reserved for the wall. This change of their standard practice, must have been prompted by the restricted size of the Apollo room which could not accommodate the elaborate stucco usually assigned to the ceiling and cove; the effect of which would have reduced the ceiling height, creating a cramped, uncomfortable environment, thus reducing the impressive atmosphere intended by the Francinis' scheme.

The saloon of no. 85 St Stephen's Green was designed to be the most impressive room and the focal point for entertaining in the house. It is beautifully proportioned, running the entire breadth of the mansion, measuring about thirty foot by twenty as the magnificent high-coved ceiling reaches towards the roof and occupies attic space. It is undoubtedly the greatest room in no. 85 St Stephen's Green, a fine example of the pride Hugh Montgomery took in entertaining guests while displaying his wealth and fashionably classical tastes.. This ceiling is a variant on the one produced by the Francini at Carton Co. Kildare but unique in the city of Dublin (Tracy Fahy 11 November 1996). (**Figure 3.7 and 3.8**)

On turning from Carton to Montgomery's saloon, the Francini brothers produced a less ostentatious and refined design scheme perhaps to accommodate the smaller proportions of the saloon, or perhaps Montgomery's finances may not have allowed him pay the Francinis¹ as much as the Duke of Leinster, one of the richest men in eighteenth century Ireland. An elaborately framed, flat rectangle occupies the level section of the ceiling, enclosing a central rosette. Between this frame and another running along the top of the walls lies a wide cove containing six oval quatrefoils decorated with the figures of Roman gods, goddesses and their attributes. As was appropriate to all wealthy landowners, the classical figures within this allegory symbolise the effects of Good Government and Prudent Economy; they may be viewed clockwise, beginning above the chimneypiece.

Within this frame the figure of Juno, Queen of the Roman Gods, and goddess of Divine Justice sends forth her winged messenger Iris; above her a small winged putto holding scales places a crown on her head as a symbol of her divine authority. In keeping with all divine figures in this scheme, she is seated on a cloud signifying the importance of Good Government. (**Figure 3.9**)

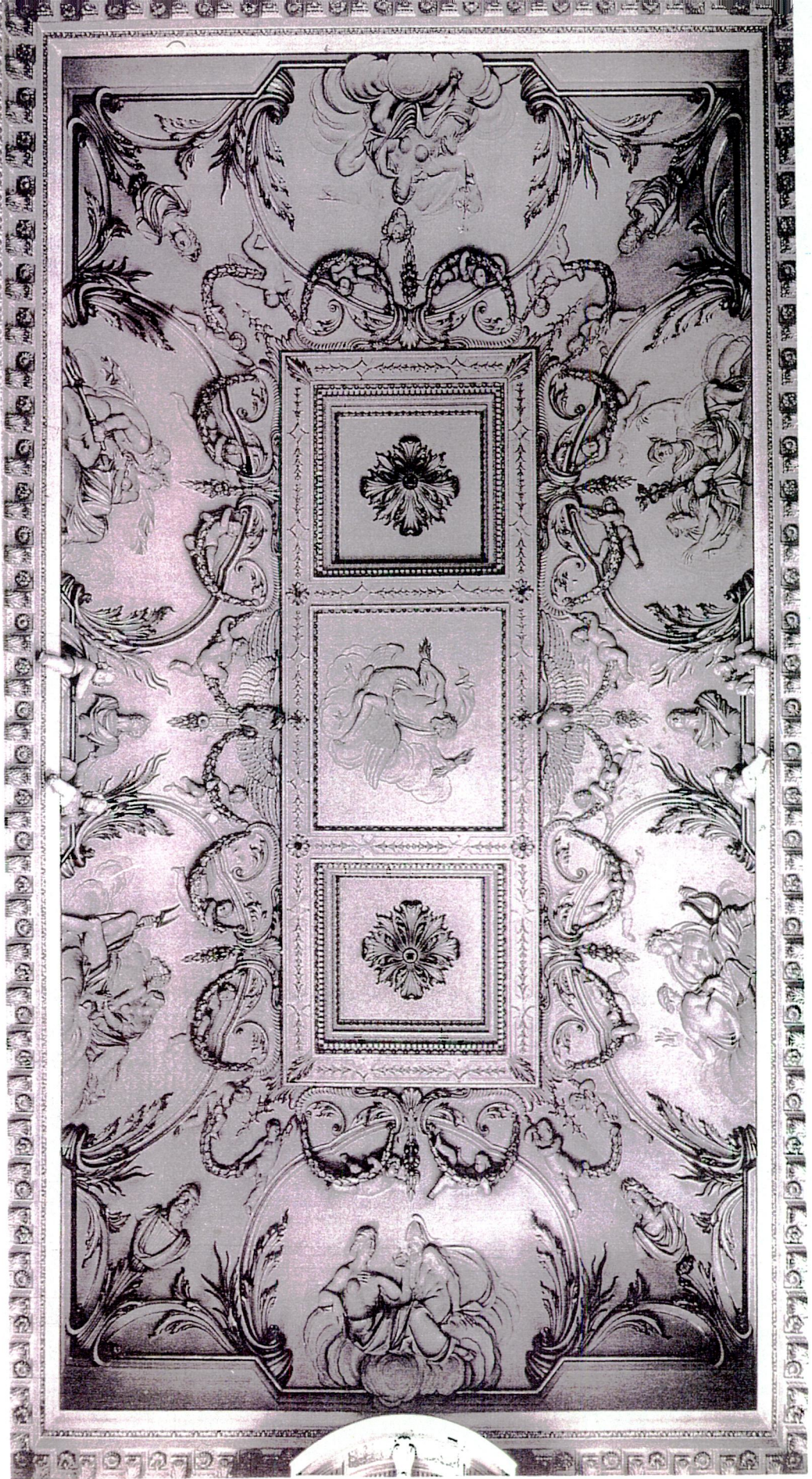


figure 3.7: The ceiling executed at Carton, by the Francini brothers for the Duke of Leinster.

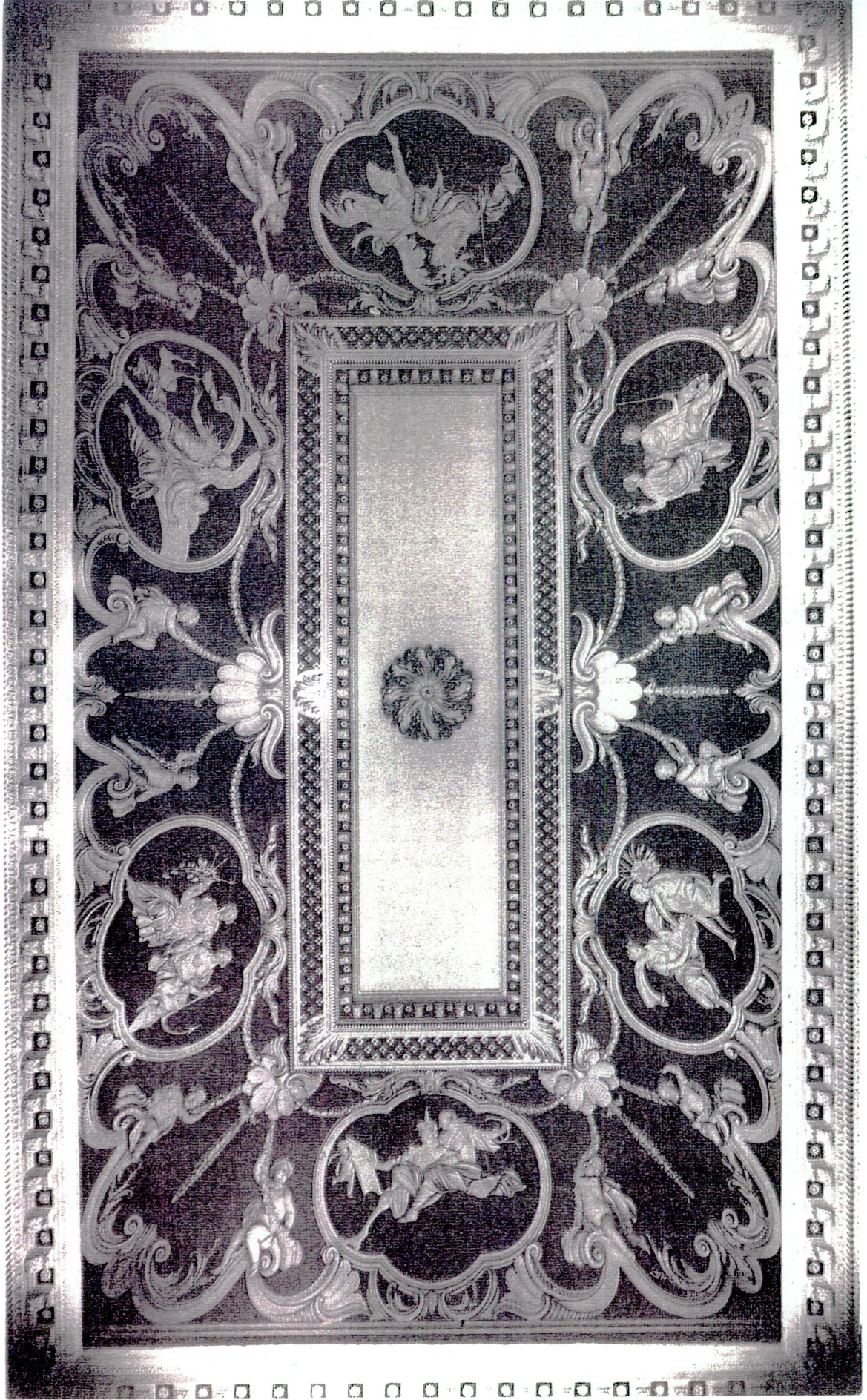


Figure 3.8: The saloon of no. 85 St Stephen's Green executed by the Francini.



Figure 3.9; Juno, Queen of the Roman gods represents 'Good Government' within the allegory.



Figure 3.10 Juno and Iris representing the element of Air.

The next frame in line also shows the figures of Juno and Iris, but this time they symbolise Air, one of the four elements.(figure 3.10) Juno can be identified by the two peacocks by her side, this figure was originally sculpted in the nude by the Francini however when the Jesuits took over the house in the 1880s the saloon was converted into a chapel, Juno's state of undress was deemed inappropriate and so a stuccodore was employed to 'clothe' all offensive figures in the composition(Joseph Mc Donnell 1991 p.7). (figure 3.11)



Figure 3.11: Detail of Juno, identified by the peacocks by her side.

During the restoration of the saloon in 1992 the censoring garments were removed from the figures apart from Juno, providing an example of one stage in the history of no. 85 St Stephen's Green. Both Iris and Juno face each other as Iris embraces the arc of a rainbow.; this composition is an adaptation of engravings by Michel Dorginy of the In Semita Justitiae by Simon Vouet found in Versailles (Joseph Mc Donnell 1991 p.7). In order to enhance the visual clarity of the main themes in this particular composition, the Francini brothers eliminated the details of two putti grasping a globe

and scales from Vouet's scheme, thus Juno and Iris maintain their position of prominence, and have not been lost in an overcrowded composition .

The following frame represents the riches derived from maritime trade;(figure 3.12) these are symbolised by two partially clothed female figures, the figure on the right grasps an anchor a symbol of hope while the other, holds a rudder in her left hand and in her right a cornucopia overflowing with crowns, necklaces and coins.



Figure 3.12; Maritime Trade.

Jupiter and Prudence occupy the oval quatrefoil opposite Divine Justice; within the theme of this allegory the figures represent Prudent Economy. Prudence one of the cardinal virtues, is depicted showing Jupiter, personifying wisdom, his reflection in a mirror. indicating that the wise man has the ability to see himself as he really is. The snake which Prudence holds is an attribute derived from Matthew (10:16), ' Be ye wise as serpents.' (Sinead Crofts 1995 p.3).

On the inner wall facing the allegories of 'Air' and 'Wealth derived from 'Maritime trade' are the final two panels symbolising the abundance of the Earth as a result of Prudent Economy and Good Government.(figure 3.13) Ceres the Goddess of fruitful harvests appears in the first panel holding her symbols, a crown and sheaf of corn; her companion possibly representing the harvest season holds an unusual serpentine cornucopia overflowing with fruits and corn. (figure 3.14)



Figure 3.13: Ceres goddess of the fruitful harvest. In the final frame Proserpina, Cere's daughter offers a platter of companion fruit to her companion Minerva, identified by the spear she carries. According to Roman myth Proserpina spent Autumn and Winter in the Underworld with her husband Pluto; during his time Ceres would mourn the loss of her daughter causing the Earth to sleep, every six months Proserpina was allowed to return to Ceres thus regenerating the Earth. (figure 3.15) Minerva is the protectress of Prospernia the Goddess of war, just causes and industry thus

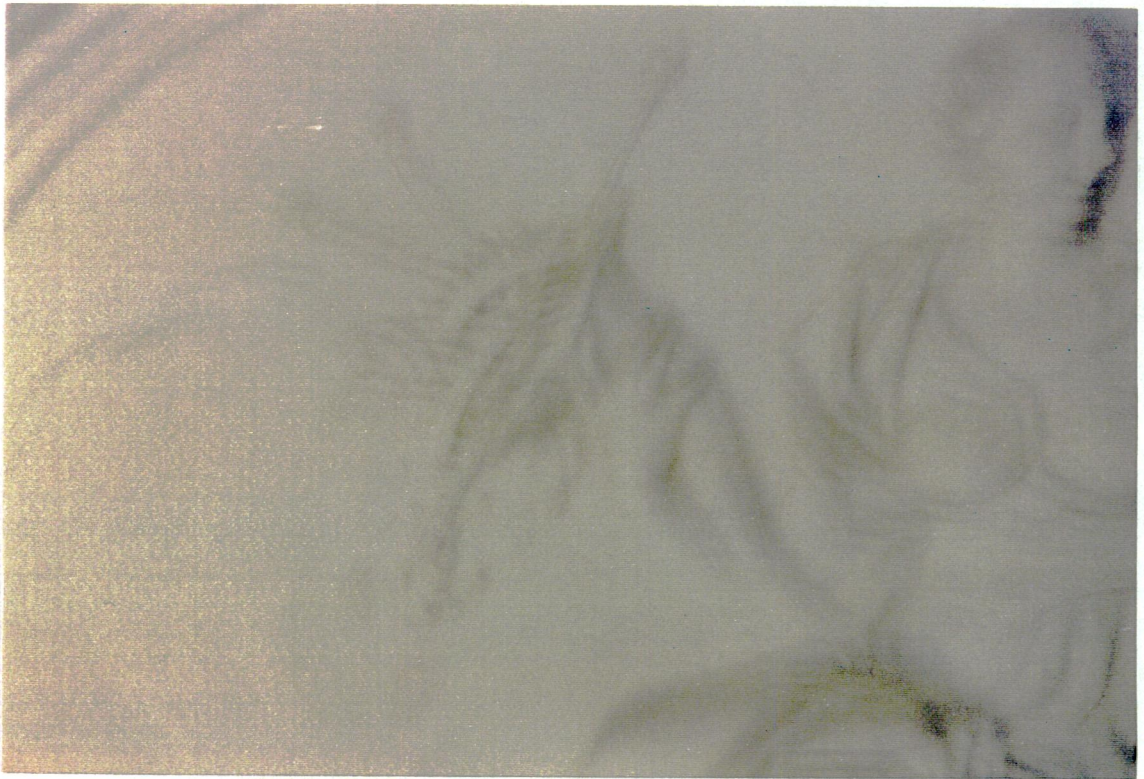


Figure 3.14: detail of cornucopia held by Ceres.

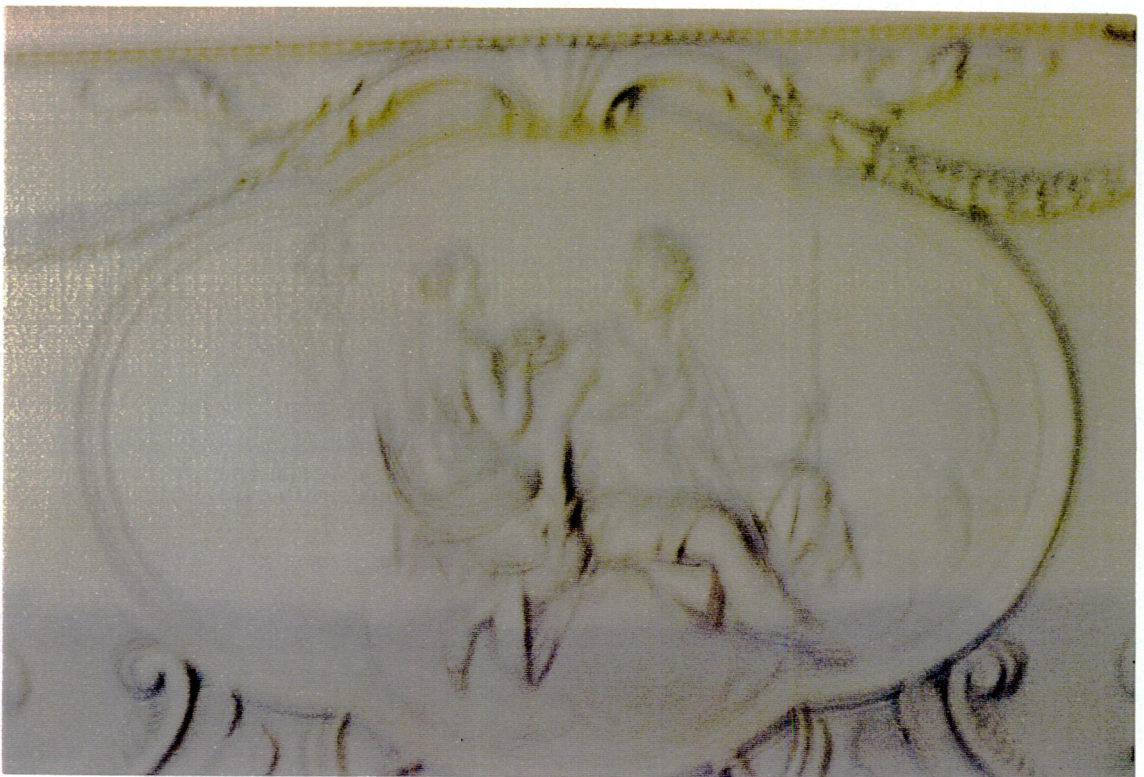


Figure 3.15: Minerva and Proserpina.

adhering to the central theme of Prudent Economy and Good Government. Among the Roman Gods Minerva, Juno and Jupiter were the most powerful and important.

Oakleaf swags (figure 3.16) emanate from stylized scallop shells placed between the allegorical frames; these are held by six pairs of putti representing different times of the day.. (figure 3.17)

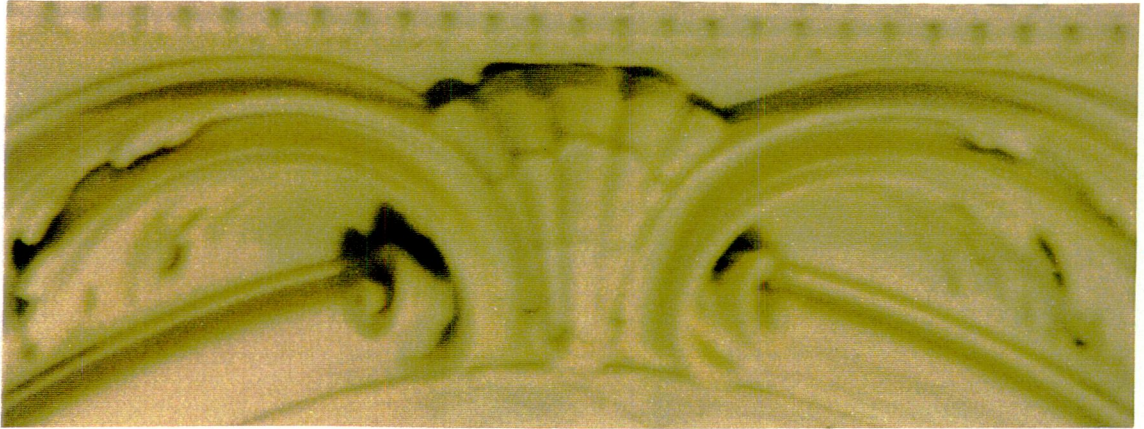


figure 3.16: Detail of scallop shell oakleaf swags.and rocaille ornament.

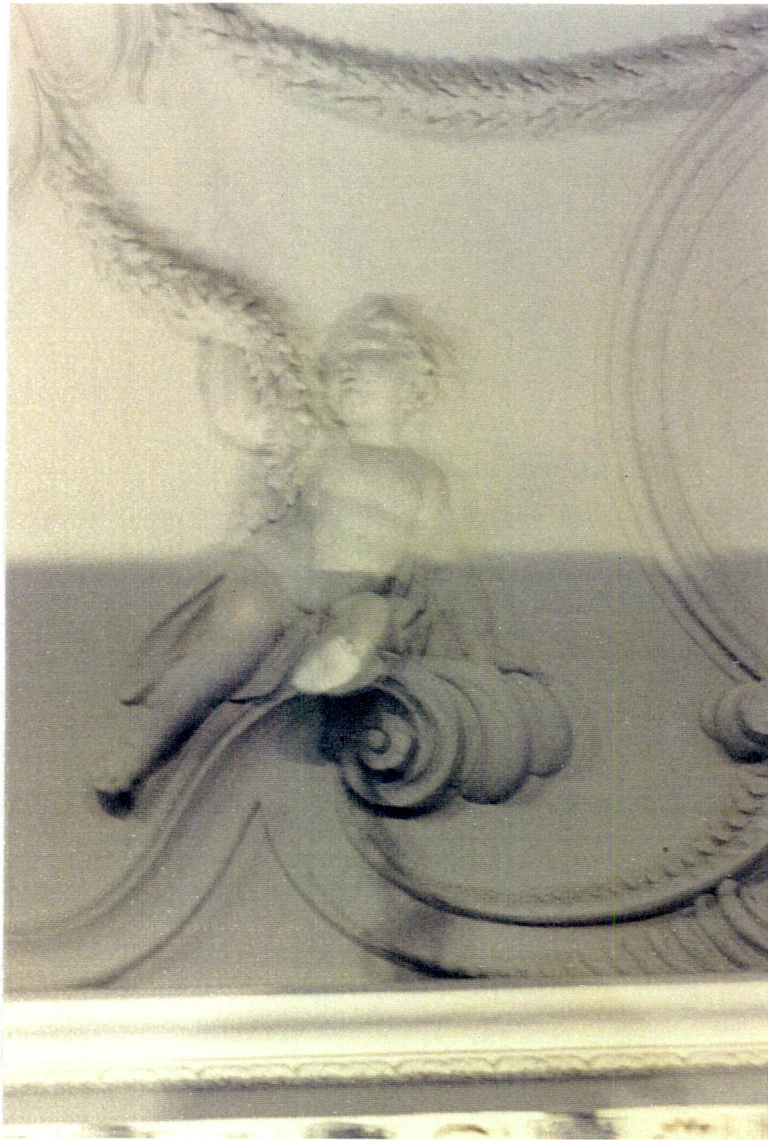


Figure 3.17: Detail of Putto.

Along the bottom of the cornice, acanthus scroll decoration support the quatrefoils and high relief putti, this decoration is mirrored by doubled leaved acanthus which attach the quatrefoils to the central frame.(figure 3.18)

The rendering of figures in the saloon of no.85, exemplifies the Francinis' relief figure found throughout their repertoire, other examples are to be found on the cornice in Carton, Co Kildare. Principal characters such as those of Juno and Iris in the frame of 'Good Government' are given precedence over other details in the scheme, this is achieved by rendering them in higher relief than peripheral details within the frame. (see figure 3.11 p.48) This deferential use of



figure 3.18: Detail of stylized scrolls.

relief is also employed outside the frame where the putti take precedence over ornamental oakleaf swags and acanthus scrolls. The figures were designed with a 'sotto in su' (viewing from below) approach in mind, the torso and limbs of figures being slightly elongated or compressed to allow for the curvature of the cove and height of the ceiling.

Unlike the Apollo room the principal decoration is reserved to the cove and ceiling for aesthetic and functional reasons with each ornament co-responding to its counterpart on the opposite side of the cove. (**figure 3.18**) As mentioned the saloon was designed as the focal point of entertainment in no.85 St Stephen's Green, with many balls and parties taking place here. Unlike the dinner parties held in the Apollo room, they would have been boisterous affairs, involving as many people as could be packed into the saloon; as the French traveller De Latocnaye illustrates houses were packed full of guests; " where a house might comfortably entertain twenty

persons, sixty are invited and so in proportion. I have seen 'routs' (large evening parties) where, from vestibule to garret, the rooms were filled with fine ladies beautifully dressed, but so crushed against each other that was hardly possible to move ." (Dickens 1987 p.13) Any stucco applied to the walls in this environment would have been worn down to a grubby state, by passing guests brushing against it, nor would it be visible through the multitude occupying the saloon. By placing the stucco in the cornice, the Francini guaranteed its visibility and preservation. (Figure 3.19)



Figure 3.19: Cove and ceiling of no. 85 St. Stephen's Green.

The sotto in su rendering of cornice motif, and the ceiling which extends into the attic almost to the roof, combines to create an illusion of great space in the saloon. During the social gatherings that took place here, the proportions of the ceiling space would offer respite from the crowded floorspace

and allow for greater circulation of air thus minimising the effects of a cramped, stuffy atmosphere. This Francini ceiling must have been the topic of many conversations among admiring guests. The fact that the Duke of Leinster a leading member of Georgian society had a somewhat similar ceiling executed by the Francini would only have added to Montgomery's prestige.

In 1741 Captain Hugh Montgomery died and his house was sold to a Mr George Johnson. In 1755 no. 85 and the adjoining site no.86 St Stephen's Green were bought by Richard Chapel Whaley, a wealthy Wicklow landowner(Tracy Fahy 11th November 1996 nos. 85-86 St Stephen's Green).

In 1765 Whaley began to build a larger and more grandiose house next to no. 85. The stuccowork of this house No 86 is attributed to the Dublin- based stuccodore Robert West.

Within the intervening period, between the height of the Francini work and the achievements of Robert West, the emphasis had shifted to the less formal rococo style. Among some of the finest work produced by Robert West during his career as a stuccodore stands the stucco of No.86 St Stephen's Green. Passing through the austere outer hallway, visitors to No. 86 are greeted by an elaborately ornate staircase stuccoed with plaster birds, musical instruments, and acanthus leaves. Although there is no concrete evidence that this work is by West the quality of the stuccowork and many of the features presented, are mirrored on the ceilings and walls of no.20 Lower Dominick St built and stuccoed by Robert West.

The ceiling of the inner hallway has a segmented vault, the compartments of which are divided by strapped ribs and filled with low relief swirling acanthus.(**Figure 3.20**)

Two of the three lunettes contain linenfold swags filled with fruit, while the flanking segments are filled by a scallop shell emanating twisting acanthus fronds.

The third lunette placed over the doorway, facing the stairs contains a bird feeding its young. The staircase decoration has a panel running the length of the hall of Vitruvian

scrollwork resembling stylized waves,(figure 3.21) as the base for five large opposing trabeated frames. Acanthus leaves sprout from the base of each frame curling around the sides, before converging at the top to form an elaborate pinnacle; perched on the top of two of these frames are naturalistic birds which turn to feed their chicks. Originally more birds were placed here with floral tendrils hanging from their beaks but over the years they became damaged and were removed.

Four of the large panels frame an assortment of life-size musical instruments including flutes, oboes, trumpets, french horns, violins, and bows, the strings of which could once be played, (if one climbed the walls to do so) so fine is the attention to detail. These instruments are carefully grouped and hang from ribbons held in the mouths of quirky monkey heads, (figure 3.22) which in turn hang from the tops of the frames surmounted by various naturalistic plaster birds.



Figure 3.20: The segmented vault ceiling of the outer hallway, no.86 St Stephen's Green.

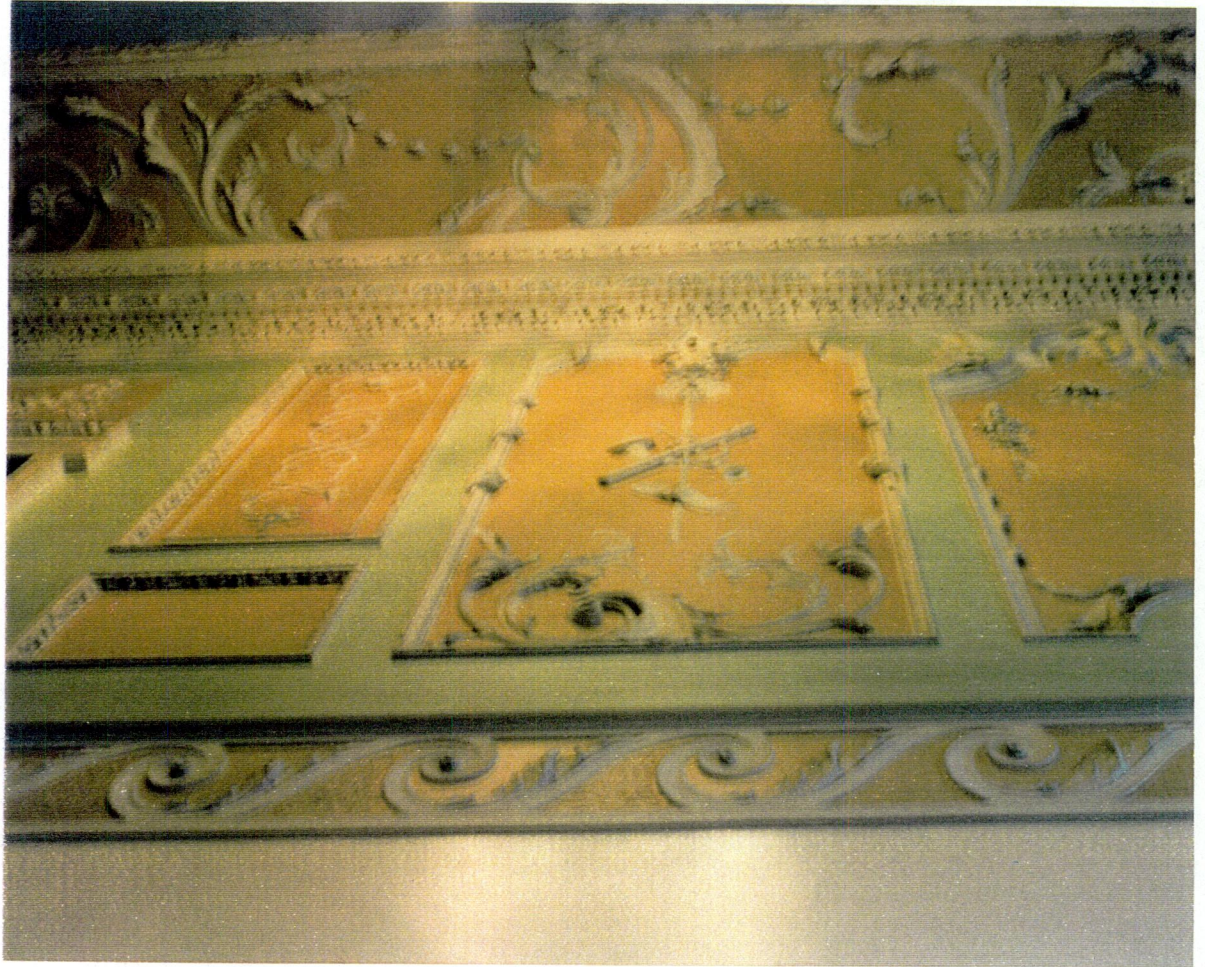


Figure 3.21: A section of the staircase wall depicting vitruvian scrollwork, acanthus curling around the frames and collection of musical instruments.





Figure 3.22: Detail of a monkey head which adorns the staircase wall of no.86 St Stephen's Green.

West reserved the most flamboyant decoration for the cove raised into the high ceiling; large swirls of acanthus leaves and shell ornament adorn the length of the cornice, while at the corners raucous birds converge as if swooping to attack each other. These birds are sculpted in high relief with particular attention paid to feather detail and the rendering of fierce facial expressions; within their talons the eagle-like birds clutch decorative swags of linen, that hang inside the cornice.(**Figure 3.23**) The hall is partially lit by a Venetian window of the highest decorative order, in the cornice section above this five birds of prey intertwined with linen swags and framed by acanthus seem to turn on each other threateningly mirroring their counterparts at the opposite end of the room. The flat part of the ceiling containing three acanthus rosettes,(**figure 3.24**) is encased within a trabeated frame sprouting minute acathus buds. True to West's style in no. 20 Dominick St this scheme is asymmetrical but he achieves a harmonious balance through co-responding motif and a careful, positioning of birds within the design.

The birds in their posture and positioning appear to have just flown in through the Venetian window landing where they please. There is a marked contrasted between the gargoyle-like birds of prey on the cornice and the basic act of a mother bird feeding her fledgling on the frame. Unlike the cornice of the saloon in no.85, where the motifs are highly stylized and symmetrical, here in no. 86 the acanthus and bird motif, although following the same pattern does not always adopt the same forms. However the cornice-ceiling plan of the hallway is reminiscent of the same area in the saloon: like the Francini West bends the rules of perspective to create the illusion of greater height. This was done by employing a large cornice, the curve of which causes the ceiling to appear to recede more than it actually does.



Figure 3.23: The corner section of coving containing fierce birds, swirling acanthus, linen swags. note the top frame sprouting tiny acanthus buds.



Figure 3.24: Staircase ceiling in no. 86 St Stephen's Green.



Figure 3.25: This is a section of the staircase showing how West created an illusion of greater height by employing a large cove which reduces the size of the ceiling thus it appears to be further away than it actually is.





Figure 3.26: Acanthus executed by West on the staircase of no. 86 St Stephen's Green.

The saloon ceiling of no. 86 (**figure 3.27**) is the most stylized found in the house. Birds, which are similar to peacocks, are elongated with each tail forming a continuation of the curling acanthus fronds meandering along the ceiling.. The more classical elements include cornucopia and stylized urns, while the outer section of the ceiling depicts a frame of floral garlands, ripening peas and wheat that co-responds symbolically to the cornucopia within the cove. The north dining room (**Figure 3.28**) displays a more floral composition incorporating birds (**figure 3.29**) and rocaille motifs in the form of 'C'-shaped bands with foliated edges, these constitute the largest, almost freestanding ornament in the scheme. These rocaille are intertwined with floral wreathes which form the principal flow of curving lines throughout the composition. Ten stylized birds disport themselves in an oval formation around the centre of the ceiling, while holding floral decoration in their beaks.

The Bishop's room contains some of the most exciting of West's birds, fierce eagles and imaginary serpentine birds clasp each other in death grips as they combat each other for dominance in the cove. The eagles are endowed with enormous talons and sharp beaks that they use to claw at their enemy, while the serpentine creatures have elongated limbs that wrap around the eagles as if to crush them. These figures are in high relief and great detail, with individual feathers sculpted to stand out from the necks and bodies of the birds which show muscle tension thus heightening the realism of the engagement. Within the cornice, West has placed at various points throughout the cove curiously shaped cornucopia (**figure 3.30**) that twist and writhe as they overflow with fruit and corn; these relate to overlapping pairs of naturalistic corn sheaves found at intersections along the cove. Between these motifs, the curling forms of acanthus progress along the cornice in a fluid manner that is exemplary of West. (**Figure 3.31**) The ceiling design reflects various aspects of the cove motif through the placement of

several fantastical birds among floral garlands and rocaille. Throughout this ceiling West's recurring motif of mother bird and chick are again in contrast with the savageness of battling eagles.

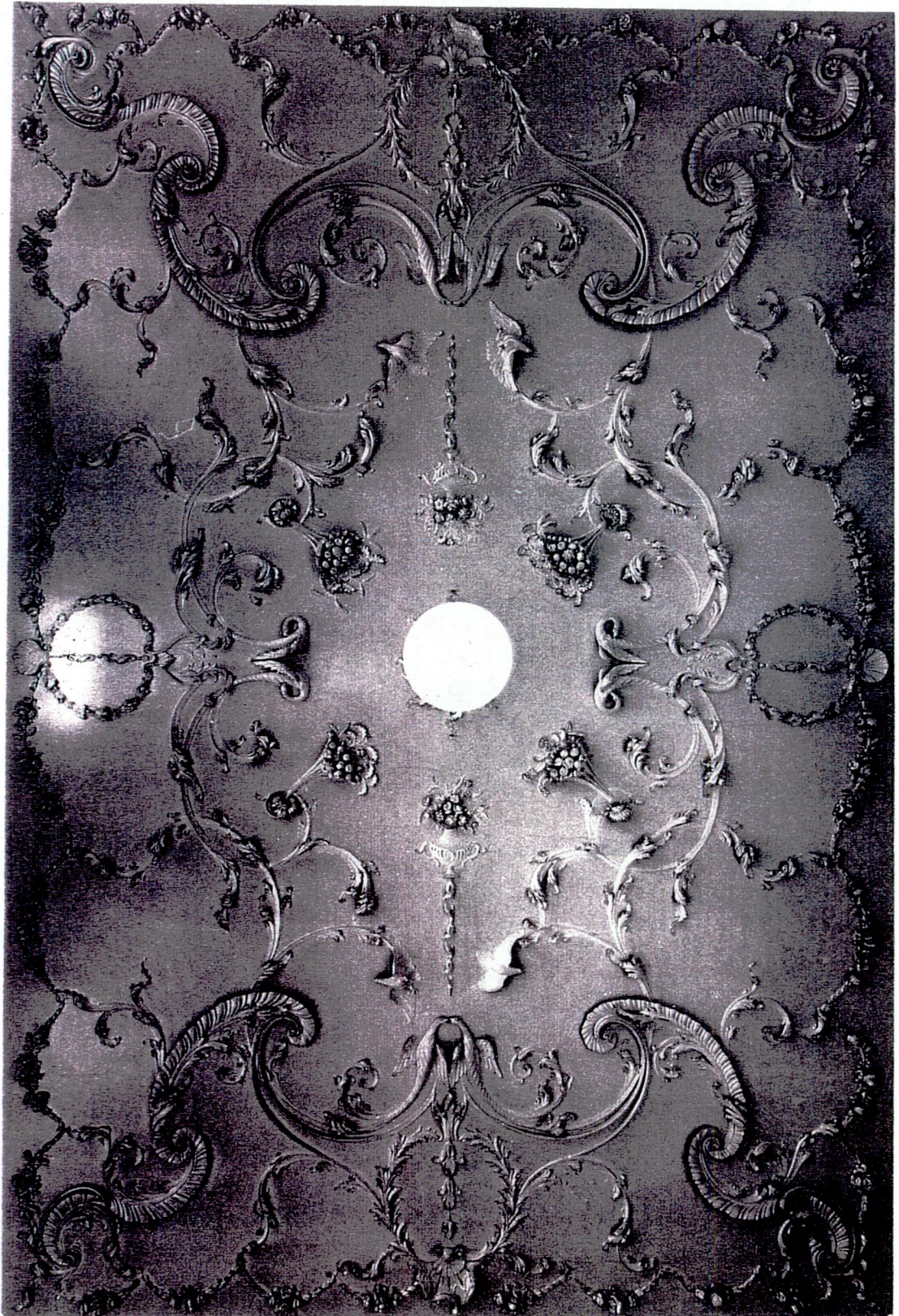


Figure 3.27: The Saloon of no. 86 St Stephen's Green.



Figure 3.28: The North Dining Room Stuccoed by Robert West.



Figure 3.29: A section of The North Dining Room decorated with stucco birds, floral garlands and delicate acanthus swirls.

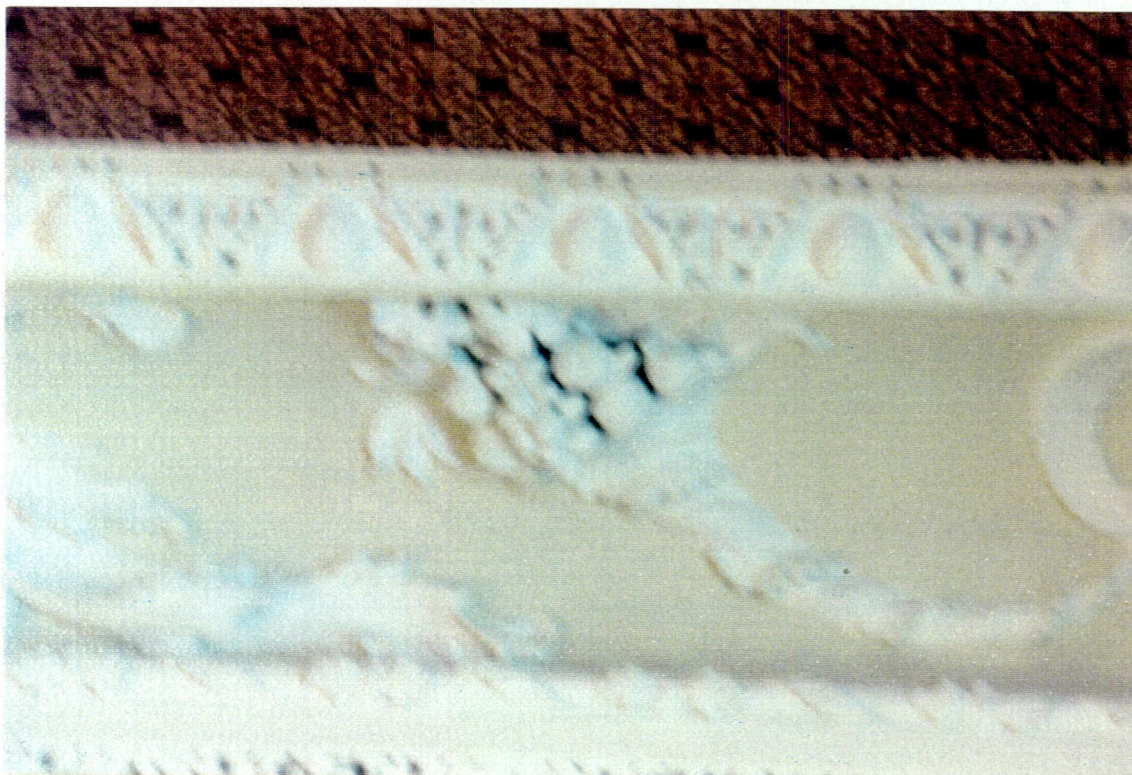


Figure 3.30: Section of the cove from the Bishop's room, containing details of a cornucopia and acanthus.



Figure 3.31: Detail of an eagle head and acanthus frond from the Bishop's room of no. 86 St. Stephen's Green.



MAP OF DUBLIN

CONCLUSION

Robert West, the most accomplished of our mid-century Dublin stuccodores, was lively and various and one might well be slow in setting limits to his virtuosity' (C P Curran 1967 p.48). Robert West was the first Irish stuccodore to adopt the innovations introduced to Ireland by the Francini brothers Paolo and Filippo, most noticeably the high relief sculpting of stucco motif. Joseph Mc Donnell notes in his book Irish Eighteenth century Stuccowork,(1991) that West's design and repertoire is completely in the Francini idiom, including diaper work and broad leaf curling acanthus. This mutual use of motifs include broad curling acanthus leaves, rocaille, cornucopia, floral swags and flowing cloth displayed in Newman house by the Francini in the cornice of the saloon in No.85 and by West on the ceilings and coves of No.86.

Unlike the Francini, West adopted a naturalistic style when rendering motifs; his acanthus seem to grow through the design schemes, curling and twisting at random within their designated pattern as in the cove and ceiling of the Bishop's room. The Francini used panels to frame allegorical figures such as Jupiter in the saloon but West employs them as a trellis for the acanthus to wrap around, as on the frames of the stair case in no. 86. With West, floral and bird motifs come into their own as ornament independent of architectural restrictions; birds are positioned astride acanthus foliage on the staircase independent of the wall structure and ornamental in their own right. In contrast to Juno's stylistic peacocks in the saloon, the Bishop's room displays fantastical serpentine, eagle hybrids the product of West's creative imagination, which break forth from the wall with vicious intent . These creations do not merely constitute an attribute of a goddess but become characters with expression and intent. In no.86 West has substituted the classical Gods with basic depiction such as a mother bird feeding her chick a recurring theme throughout his repertoire.

The Francini brothers adhered to a strictly symmetrical formation when executing stucco compositions in the late baroque style which their work epitomised.

Their compositions are impressive if formal unlike the delicacy and asymmetry of rococo. A definite pattern can be seen in West's ceilings yet he does not follow this as strictly as the Francini do their designs, acanthus leaves and floral swags are allowed to meander slightly off course without destroying the overall structure, often the curve of a wing or the curling tip of an acanthus leaf is West's method of closing a composition.

Although the Francini brothers were a major influence over Robert West, he did not merely copy their style but selectively chose from their Baroque repertoire that which suited him such as the practice of sculpting in high relief and the use of a similar repertoire of motifs, and combined them into an individual style reminiscent of but not inferior to that of the Francini. I believe it was the exhibitionist nature of Georgian high society which fuelled the extravagant expenditure on entertainment, personal adornment, domestic architecture and the creation of lavish interiors. This exhibitionism was brought about by the will to be perceived as affluent and cultured as governed by the fashions of the Georgian era, as one's social standing and financial means could be gauged by how lavishly one dressed and entertained; at what address the host resided and how tastefully and expensively the interior was adorned.

After the defeat of the Jacobite rebellion in 1690, there was a reduced resistance to English rule more than ever before, English settlers began to feel more secure, no longer under serious threat from fenian secret societies such as The Invincibles. With this change in political climate the Anglo-Irish hierarchy, turned from the building of protecting fortresses such as the Ormonde Castle, Carrick-on-Suir and

walled towns such as Derry to the construction of splendid domiciles built for show and comfort rather than protection . The importance of Political stability can be seen in the fact that it was during the years of relative peace, between 1690 and the 1798 rebellions that there was an unprecedented explosion in both public and domestic architecture in Dublin. After the United Irishmen uprising of 1798 and the Act of Union (1801) Dublin went into decline and became a shadow of its former splendour; its fine Georgian homes faded into the tenement slums of the nineteenth century.

As the result of the political stability achieved in the seventeenth century, Ireland developed a flourishing provision trade and in Ulster a strong linen industry. In 1703 (only sixteen years after the Jacobite rebellion) Irish exports combined were valued at £572,000.yet during 1788 they exceeded three million (Constantia Maxwell 1936 p.20). The export profits flowing into the country at this time belonged to the powerful Anglo-Irish, the landed gentry, who were also supported by substantial rents pouring in from their country estates. It was this accumulation of wealth which funded the construction of magnificent homes and the lavish stucco within.

I therefore conclude that although the Francini brothers were a major influence over the Irish stuccodore such as Robert West, by introducing their European repertoire to Ireland, that the socio-cultural, economic and peaceful political climate of the time also played a major role in the flourishing of this craft, for which nos.85 and 86 St. Stephen's Green, among other fine houses are famous for their stuccowork.

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