

# Introduction: a new apology for the builder

It is not knowing what people did but understanding what they thought that is the proper definition of the historian's task.

R.G. Collingwood<sup>1</sup>

Built in response to a broad range of social and economic imperatives, and subject to both abstract theorizing and the market economy, the brick terraced (or row) house of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries remains one of the most potent symbols of architectural modernity throughout the British Atlantic world (Figures I.1 and I.2). Produced in large numbers by artisan communities of bricklayers, carpenters, plasterers and related tradesmen, these houses collectively formed the streets and squares that comprise the links and pivots of 'enlightened' urban city plans. From London, Bristol, Dublin and Limerick to Boston, Baltimore and Philadelphia, this historic building stock continues to play a significant role in the national and cultural identities of these modern cities. Indeed, while civic and ecclesiastical buildings constitute the most conspicuous monuments of the period – under the various rubrics of 'Georgian', 'Colonial' or 'Federal' architectures – the urban house remains central to interpretations of historic space, time and place in both academic circles and in the popular imagination. Despite its ubiquity, however, the brick town house arguably remains one of the most misunderstood and misrepresented building types in the wider discourse on the historic built environment. Disparaged in eighteenth-century architectural discourse as both a jerry-built commodity and an inferior manifestation of the classical hegemony, its form, design and aesthetic character have arguably been marginalized in a burgeoning modern literature focused on the relational effects of urbanism, industrialized capitalism and contracted labour. The building artisan, despite enjoying a position of particular significance in American architectural histories,



**I.1** Bedford Square, London, 1775–83.

has suffered a similar fate. While some individuals have received sustained critical attention and enjoy reputations of distinction in fields as various as architectural pedagogy (the Boston carpenter Asher Benjamin) and interior decoration (the Dublin plasterer Michael Stapleton), the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century tradesman remains essentially a figure of building production, disassociated from issues relating to design, style and taste.<sup>2</sup>

Taking a cue from Brian Hanson's assertion that the architect-dominated culture of the twentieth century has witnessed 'an enormous, largely unheeded, "dumbing-down" and loss of creativity in the "operative" parts of the building world', this book is an attempt to rehabilitate the reputations of both product (house) and producer (builder), and to establish their rightful places within the architectural firmament.<sup>3</sup> Mindful of Spiro Kostof's observation that 'the same urban form does not perforce express identical, or even similar human content, and conversely, the same political, social or economic order will not yield an invariable design matrix', the present narrative foregrounds commonalities rather than dissimilarities.<sup>4</sup> While geographical or regional inflections are not ignored, the focus here is on processes of making and vocabularies of design



**I.2** 257–263 South Fourth Street, Philadelphia, built by Jacob Vogdes, carpenter, 1810–12.

common to building producers in cities across the Atlantic world between 1750 and 1830 – widely recognized as a period of critical transformation in histories of architecture in Britain and its colonies. Bookended by the beginning of the modern era in architectural design at mid-century and by the absolute division between ‘architecture’ and ‘building’ at the end of the Georgian era, these date parameters also embrace the birth and efflorescence of neoclassicism (the first self-consciously ‘modern’ architectural style), the emerging autonomy of the building artisan as a building capitalist and the standardization of architectural form based on increasingly industrialized processes in construction and decoration. Opening with a cultural history of the building tradesman in terms of his reception within contemporary social and architectural discourse, subsequent chapters consider the design, decoration and marketing of the elite town house in the foremost cities of the eighteenth-century Atlantic world, focused on London as its cultural and economic hub, Dublin as ‘second city’ of the nascent British empire and Philadelphia as both the largest city in the colonies and the principal metropolis of early national America.

### Architecture and the artisan:<sup>5</sup> a historiographical gloss

Given the interdisciplinary nature of this book, the secondary literature which provides the context for study is wide ranging in scope and methodological approach. Many of these contexts have already received considerable treatment elsewhere: a full analysis of the legal and financial instruments that facilitated property speculation, for example, or the historical implications of house building for early modern urbanization lie beyond the scope of the present narrative. Equally, while classic urban histories of London, Dublin and Philadelphia have informed the text in myriad ways, this account draws more particularly on studies of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century building production to illuminate the ways in which builders made houses and, in the process, made reputations.<sup>6</sup> Sensible of Peter Borsay's description of the eighteenth-century construction industry as one of the most important elements in the growth of luxury craftsmanship that defined a new urban economy, this study further situates the building tradesman within the wider literature on design, taste and material culture, arguing for his place alongside Wedgwood, Chippendale and other celebrated (and commercially shrewd) tastemakers of the Georgian era.<sup>7</sup>

Despite some disparities in the broader historiographies of house and home, the social production of the built environment has remained a consistent feature of urban house histories on both sides of the Atlantic. Important studies by Linda Clarke and Donna Rilling, for example, have examined the emergence of capitalist modes of building production in London and Philadelphia respectively, considering its impact on the dynamics of social relations, on systems of subcontracting and wage labour, and on the standardization of architectural form through increasingly industrialized processes of construction and materials manufacture.<sup>8</sup> So, while the brick house as a typology remains central to their respective theses, issues of design and taste are necessarily downplayed in favour of establishing complex socio-economic (and, in the case of Clarke, determinedly Marxist) frameworks. James Ayres's study of the construction industry in Georgian England also necessarily foregrounds materials and methods; so while trade cards and bill heads are used extensively to illustrate chapters on individual trades from bricklaying to glazing, their function as marketing tools within the context of genteel real estate consumption is not explored.<sup>9</sup>

More pertinent for the present narrative are histories by Elizabeth McKellar, Carl Lounsbury, J. Ritchie Garrison and others that consider design as a constituent element of house building within artisanal circles.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, Joseph Moxon's *Mechanick exercises* (1703), a guide for building tradesmen, confirms that 'many Master Workmen' in the early modern era routinely produced designs of their own volition, especially those

that understood ‘the Theorick part of Building, as well as the Practick’.<sup>11</sup> But whereas the complex relationship between design and production in speculative housing markets has long been recognized – in particular the economic and legal imperatives of the ground plan, the role of pattern books and the vocabulary of built examples – the synergy between the business of building and the business of taste has yet to be adequately addressed in this literature.<sup>12</sup> While Sir John Summerson, writing in 1945, acknowledged that eighteenth-century London tradesmen ‘could not afford to be behind in questions of taste’, our understanding of how builders designed their products and marketed their services within competitive property markets has not substantially evolved in the interim.<sup>13</sup> Dan Cruickshank and Neil Burton, for example, although recognizing that builders, ‘being aware of market trends, were intensely aware of the changing nuances of fashion’, are nonetheless unequivocal that ‘The builders of Georgian cities were highly conventional men; they were not imbued with the spirit of individuality and would happily copy whatever detail was fashionable at the time.’<sup>14</sup> Timothy Mowl’s history of Georgian Bristol is equally dismissive: while that city’s brick terraces ‘often have great charm’ they ‘rarely represent an original vision’, being the product of individuals concerned foremost with making ‘a fast sale’.<sup>15</sup>

By contrast, emerging critical and revisionist responses to the established teleological histories of architectural design in eighteenth-century Britain posit new ways of thinking about the artisan’s response to canonical tastes. Ignoring the connoisseurial bias embodied in evaluations of terraced houses as the ‘lowest denominator’ of architectural design,<sup>16</sup> or as examples of ‘hit-and-miss builder’s classicism’,<sup>17</sup> these studies consider adaptation as a form of invention. Elizabeth McKellar’s account of the design and building process in late seventeenth-century London, for example, understands the urban house as the product of a culture that ‘did not privilege one form over another but instead preferred to operate on the basis of stylistic diversity and eclectic plurality’.<sup>18</sup> This finds a consonance with Bernard L. Herman and Peter Guillery’s recent suggestion that the vocabulary of Palladian classicism in England and America was understood as a flexible system of design within artisanal circles, freely adaptable to different circumstances and expectations: ‘Classicism did penetrate all levels of society, but not always on an emulative basis, nor as a whole. This was not necessarily because it was poorly understood, rather because it continued to be regarded without deference.’<sup>19</sup> A recent account of the New River Estate in London, built from the 1810s, epitomizes such a balanced approach: while the design of terraces was ‘made up of stock forms and details’, representing a ‘highly standardized surveyor’s architecture’, the social process by which the estate was realized, and the guidelines that controlled its visual appearance, are delineated without aesthetic bias.<sup>20</sup>



Related to this is the historiography on eighteenth-century building craftsmen. While pioneering studies by Geoffrey Beard, Fiske Kimball and C.P. Curran established a canon of figures that remain central to the present study, recent monographs informed by material culture studies advance new ways of thinking about issues such as agency and volition.<sup>21</sup> A good example is Mark Reinberger's account of the career of English-born ornament manufacturer Robert Wellford, who immigrated to Philadelphia in 1797. Although the serial production (and thus democratization) of domestically produced composition ornament is the focus of his narrative, Reinberger also describes Wellford's products as an 'important conduit for neoclassical imagery from England to America', and outlines his expansion of consumer markets through a network of distributors from Baltimore to Charleston.<sup>22</sup>

### The reputation of the building industry

House builders, as we shall see, enjoyed a great degree of design autonomy and social mobility in eighteenth-century Britain, Ireland and North America; but the second half of the eighteenth century also witnessed the emergence of what we now recognize as the architectural profession. John Wilton-Ely, Mark Crinson and Jules Lubbock, and Brian Hanson, among others, have charted the emerging authority of architects on building process in Great Britain during this period, a situation concurrent with the founding of institutions devoted to improving standards in design.<sup>23</sup> Nonetheless, while the formal distinction between the intellectual and manual dimensions of building were becoming increasingly codified, the brick town house represented something of a conundrum. This is confirmed in Robert Campbell's *The London tradesman*, first published in 1747 and intended, as the author notes, to advise parents and guardians 'in what manner to discover and improve the natural genius of their children, before they put them out apprentices to any particular trade, mystery, or profession'. In chapter 31, entitled 'Of Architecture, and those employed in that branch', Campbell asserts the architect's role as both the author of a building's design and the supervisor of the various trades necessary for its construction. However, while Campbell suggests that the architect *should have* a liberal education, *should have* a taste in architecture improved by foreign travel and, above all, *should be* 'eminent in design and invention', he is unequivocal that:

I scarce know of any in England who *have had* an education regularly designed for the Profession; Bricklayers, Carpenters, &c. all commence Architects; especially in and about London, where there go but few Rules to the building of a City-House.<sup>24</sup>

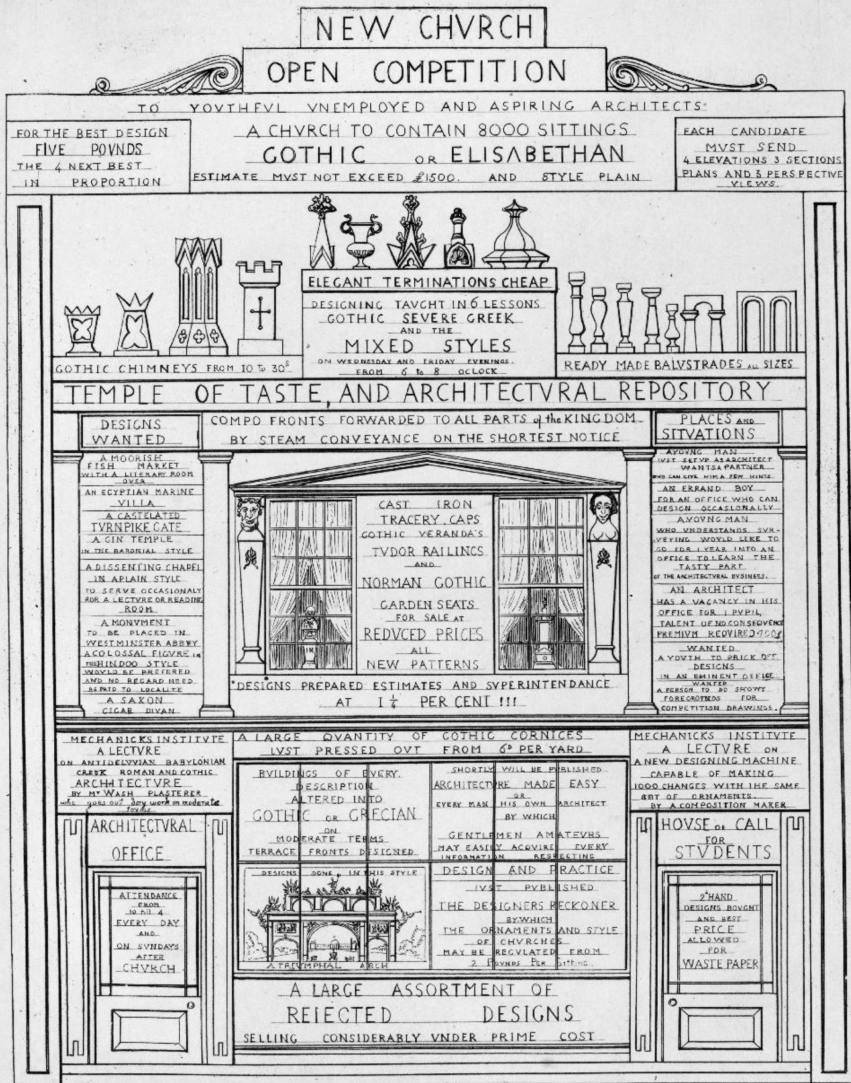
This perception of the city house as the product of an unfettered building industry – with all of the implied deficiencies in qualities of design and

standards of construction – lingered long in the historical interpretation of eighteenth-century urban domestic architecture. Campbell's barely concealed contempt for those who 'commence Architects' was later quoted in a chapter on the building industry in Sir John Summerson's seminal *Georgian London*. Describing how 'One often finds a man described as Mr So-and-so, carpenter, becoming in a very short time So-and-so, Esq., architect', Summerson corroborates the fluidity of professional identity in eighteenth-century England while simultaneously suggesting that the shift in nomenclature from carpenter to architect was both fatuous and unwarranted.<sup>25</sup> Central to his thesis is the distinction between architecture as an intellectual pursuit and building as a commercial enterprise: eighteenth-century builders, by their nature, produced bad or indifferent architecture. At best, the house builder was someone who customarily sacrificed classical manners for commercial gain.<sup>26</sup>

The origins of this invective towards product (house) and producer (builder) are legion and drew opinions from some of the most significant critical voices in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century architectural discourse. In his penultimate lecture to students at the Royal Academy in 1815, for example, Sir John Soane decried the state of contemporary domestic architecture in London. Noting how architects were 'seldom consulted' when 'a neighbourhood of houses is to be new modelled', Soane laid the blame squarely on 'the rapacity of the builders', whose principal concern was 'to raise the largest possible rental'. By such means, he argued,

our buildings are limited to heaps of bricks with perforations for light and the purpose of ingress and egress, without the least regard to elegance of composition. Thus the character of our architecture and the higher feelings of art merge into the system of profitable speculation.<sup>27</sup>

But those artisans who did aspire to 'elegance of composition' and 'the higher feelings of art' were often mercilessly denigrated for their efforts. While carpenters and housewrights were instrumental in elevating the practice of building into architecture in early national America, in Britain by the 1830s the building artisan was routinely held responsible for a broader malaise in design.<sup>28</sup> A.W.N. Pugin's 'Temple of taste and architectural repository', one of three declarative plates forming a preamble to his polemical treatise *Contrasts* published in 1836, unambiguously complements his assertion that 'Architecture and decoration is a *trade* at present and no great results can be produced while such a system lasts' (Figure I.3).<sup>29</sup> Here the sarcasm is pointed and unrelenting, taking the form of a shop front inundated with advertisements and commercial notices and dedicated ('without permission') to 'The Trade': a lecture on the architecture of the ancient world at the 'Mechanick's Institute' is offered by a 'Mr. Wash, plasterer'; an individual 'just set up as architect' seeks a partner 'who can give him a few hints'; while 'Designs Wanted' include those for



THIS ILLUSTRATION  
OF THE PRACTISE OF ARCHITECTURE IN THE 19 CENTURY ON NEW IMPROVED AND CHEAP PRINCIPLES  
IS DEDICATED WITHOUT PERMISSION TO  
**THE TRADE**

1.3 A.W.N. Pugin, 'Temple of taste, and architectural repository' from *Contrasts* (London, 1836).



a 'Moorish Fish Market' and an 'Egyptian Marine Villa'. Echoing contemporary architectural writer James Elmes's lament that design was then the province of 'non-descripts of every sort, from the plasterer to the paper-hanger', Pugin's 'Temple of taste' mocks the tradesman's grasp of architectural history (making no distinction between 'Antideluvian Babylonian' and the established canons of classical and gothic design), his unwarranted, self-appointed position within the architectural hierarchy (requiring 'hints' from a qualified individual) and his ignorance of the proper semiotics of style (the inappropriate use of 'exotic' modes of design and decoration).<sup>30</sup> In concert with their forgoing of public decorum for private gain, builders misread architectural vocabularies and consequently built in bad taste.

### 'Builder architect' or 'master workman'?

Notwithstanding the widespread recognition that bricklayers, carpenters, plasterers and others from the building trades were in fact responsible for the brick streetscape that remains such a part of everyday life in cities like Dublin, Limerick, Boston and Philadelphia, modern resources such as the online *Dictionary of Irish architects* or the *American architects and buildings* database contain few biographies of early building craftsmen: the bias remains squarely in favour of the architect or, in American terms, on those retrospectively designated as 'proto-architect'.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, while the artisan inevitably enjoys a more privileged place in histories of early American architecture, the canon suffers from the same art-historical partiality that privileges 'architecture' (read 'bespoke houses') over 'building' (read 'row houses'). Owen Biddle, author of one of the first American-authored architectural books, has long been associated with important public buildings in Federal-era Philadelphia, including the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (1805–6; dem.), for which he was the principal building contractor, and the Arch Street Meeting House (1803–8), for which he supplied original designs. Yet despite identifying primarily as a 'house carpenter' throughout his career, his house-building business has only recently been established.<sup>32</sup> A further equivocation is found in the language used by historians of early modern working lives, underscoring the distinction between the polite (intellectual) and vulgar (manual) aspects of the eighteenth-century artisanal world: this is implicit in the characterization of the journeyman's peripatetic existence as 'tramping', defined somewhat sardonically as 'the artisan's equivalent of the Grand Tour'.<sup>33</sup>

At stake here is the distinction between architecture as a profession and building as a trade: the difference between designing houses and making houses. Howard Colvin situates the 'nucleus of an architectural profession' in Britain and Ireland during the accession of George III, distinguishing figures like Robert Adam and Sir William Chambers from both the 'builder architect' of the early modern period and the 'new

type of builder' that emerged in response to capitalist modes of building production during the course of the eighteenth century (and who is characterized as 'more of an entrepreneur than a craftsman').<sup>34</sup> But the matter is complicated when America's building traditions are embraced as part of a wider Atlantic world narrative. Jeffrey Cohen, adopting Colvin's terminology, identifies the 'builder architect' as a significant step towards professionalism in colonial America at mid-century: defined as 'usually recently arrived from Britain', such individuals, Cohen argues, represented a challenge to both the 'vernacular-oriented builders' and the 'gentleman amateurs'.<sup>35</sup> This finds accord with Mary Woods's account of what she calls 'the practice of architecture' in early national America, which locates the growth of professionalism in the decades after 1820: architects (in the modern sense) were 'latecomers on the scene' and 'always a very small part of the American building industry'.<sup>36</sup> Anthony Lewis's recent study of the building community responsible for Edinburgh's first New Town, largely built between 1765 and 1795, also argues that *builder* represented a 'a new intermediary stage' between *tradesman* (practice) and *architect* (design).<sup>37</sup>

This brings us to the question of language in eighteenth-century architectural discourse. Omitting definitions for 'builder' or 'craftsman', *The builder's dictionary*, published in London in 1734, variously defines the 'architect' as the 'Chief, and an Artificer or Builder', the 'Master Workman in a Building' and the 'Surveyor, or Superintendent of an Edifice',<sup>38</sup> and thus confirms what Stana Nenadic has described as 'the ambiguous status of architects' at a time when tradesmen were 'branching into new areas of business that included building design and project management'.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, just as 'architect' was evidently a protean term – and indeed a protean figure – so too were the designations of those working in the construction industry.<sup>40</sup> Elizabeth McKellar's account of the building world in early modern London reveals that 'artificer' and 'tradesman' were the most commonly used terms, while 'mechanic', though popular in the American colonies, carried with it derogatory implications and was less prevalent, being defined by Dr Johnson as 'a low workman'. She further notes the distinction that Johnson makes between 'craftsman' (both 'artificer' and 'mechanick') and 'craftsman' ('a man skilled in his trade').<sup>41</sup> But Johnson's terminology is in itself very imprecise. An 'artisan', for example, is described simultaneously as 'artist; professor of an art' and as a 'low tradesman', while 'artificer' is 'an artist' but also 'one by whom any thing is made'. Builders and building are equally described in ambiguous terms: Johnson defines a 'builder' as 'he that builds; an architect', but the verb 'to build' as 'to play the architect'. Moreover, while the bricklayer is one 'whose trade is to build with bricks', the carpenter is the 'builder of houses'.<sup>42</sup> The matter is further complicated if we refer to Daniel Defoe's *The complete English tradesman* (1726), which notes that

the said term *tradesman* is understood by several people, and in several places, in a different manner: for example, in the north of Britain, and likewise in Ireland, when you say a tradesman, you are understood to mean a mechanic, such as a smith, a carpenter, a shoemaker, and the like, such as here we call a handicraftsman.<sup>43</sup>

The figure at the centre of this narrative is an individual from the building trades who embraced the business of house building and self-fashioned as an arbiter of architectural and decorative tastes. (In creating this distinction within such a broad occupational category, I acknowledge that this necessarily represented a small minority of the urban work force at any one time.) For the purposes of clarity, and with the aim of assisting the modern reader, the terms ‘tradesman’ and ‘artisan’ (and its derivative ‘artisanal’) have been selected to reflect the nature of the work undertaken by these individuals, based on practical skills typically acquired via indentured apprenticeships and often augmented and refined in drawing schools and builders’ academies.<sup>44</sup> The slippery terms ‘master builder’ and ‘speculative builder’ which historians customarily use to refer to any person involved in the *business* of property development – as building undertakers generally, and not necessarily building tradesmen by training or profession – are here replaced with the more precise term ‘house builder’.<sup>45</sup>

### The right to design ... and to good taste

As we have seen, a distinction between architecture (design) and building (production) has coloured histories of the typical town house: although an aesthetic appreciation of the brick terrace has been advanced by historians as diverse as Steen Eiler Rasmussen and Marcus Binney, the emphasis in architectural histories has been on the set pieces of architects John Wood (Bath) and John Nash (London) as paradigms of a neo-classicizing attempt to make architecture *from* building.<sup>46</sup> But semantics aside, at issue was what Anne Puetz has identified as the ‘right’ to design.<sup>47</sup> In Britain and Ireland by mid-century the importance of design for improving standards in manufacture, and its related economic benefits for domestic consumer markets, had long been recognized.<sup>48</sup> This translated into a type of institution – initially sponsored by private enterprise – formed with the intention of augmenting the typical skills-focused trade apprenticeship and offering premiums for draughtsmanship and innovation: the Dublin Society for Improving Husbandry, Manufactures and other Useful Arts, founded in 1731, was followed by the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacture and Commerce in London in 1754.<sup>49</sup> Those who attended the drawing schools of the Dublin Society received practical instruction in design and draughtsmanship with the intention of improving their careers in a variety of craft industries. Artisans and apprentices from the building and decorating trades typically enrolled at the School of Ornament and the

School of Drawing in Architecture, but plasterers and stucco-workers also benefited from classes at the School of Figure Drawing.<sup>50</sup> However, while early advocates of design education in Britain and Ireland envisaged a teaching programme that catered for a wide student body, from artists and architects to artisans and ‘mechanics’, the entitlement to design became, according to Puetz, ‘an increasingly contested issue’.<sup>51</sup> So, although the rise in the production and circulation of drawing books, artisanal model books and ornament prints from mid-century arose as a response to ‘the very topical demand for artisanal design instruction’,<sup>52</sup> the increasing professionalization of architectural design and its preferred control over all aspects of the building and decorating process, from construction and stone-carving to joinery and upholstery, effected a separation between the *design* of architecture and the *making* of architecture. (This was further underlined by the theoretical and hierarchical model espoused by the Royal Academy, founded in 1768.) From mid-century, drawing was increasingly regarded within academic circles as the *mechanical* arm of design: architectural drawing was therefore regarded as the province of the artisan only in so far as it enabled him to comprehend and translate the designs of professionally trained architects.<sup>53</sup> On the other hand, ideologies rarely impinged upon actualities: artisan-led institutions such as the Builder’s Evening Academy in Dublin or the Philadelphia Architectural Academy continued to satisfy the demand for design instruction among those tradesmen who aspired to both the *art* and *craft* of building. (The absence in America of an architectural profession *per se* offered further opportunities for the immigrant skilled in drawing plans and elevations ‘according to the modern taste in building’.<sup>54</sup>)

This formal separation of design and construction remains a persistent problem in histories of the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century row house. While design historians continue to revise the origins of the division of labour and its impact on invention and manufacture, historians of urban domestic architecture generally, and of building economics particularly, have naturally focused on the off-site standardization of parts and the impact of subcontracting on architectural form – all to the detriment of considering the tradesman’s creative agency. Rachel Stewart’s recent account of the London house, for example, devotes a chapter to the nonappearance of the ‘typical’ terraced or row house typology in architectural pattern books and builder’s handbooks, concluding that it was ‘no doubt because of the limited forms it could take, especially within the speculative market’.<sup>55</sup> But the lack of published exemplars is not in itself evidence that the typical house was not designed. Moreover, although English architectural books fell short of illustrating practicable archetypes, the evidence from a wider range of textual and visual sources reveals how design remained a priority in the building process. Elevation drawings by New York builder John McComb, Jr, the portfolio of Dublin plasterer and

house builder Michael Stapleton and the published designs of Boston carpenter Asher Benjamin, among others, confirm that, contrary to Sir John Summerson's suggestion that the expansion of the architectural profession was coeval with 'the repression of the craftsman's initiative', the spirit of invention remained a constituent part of the house builder's arsenal in the decades either side of 1800.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, despite a shared system of building and vocabulary of design – in terms of aesthetics (a standardized classicism), typology (tall brick houses on narrow plots) and process (the system of subcontracting and wage labour) – there is no mistaking the 'typical' brick London house for its counterpart in Philadelphia or Dublin.

As Britain's eighteenth-century consumer culture embraced an ever-widening social demographic, the middling sorts soon bore the brunt of criticism with respect to class-based anxieties about the acquisition of taste: just as luxury consumption threatened the social order, so taste was regarded as the means to curtail its dissolution. Pierre Bourdieu argued that the struggle for social distinction is a primary feature of social life; consequently, taste becomes 'not merely a reflection of class distinctions but the instrument by which they are created and maintained'.<sup>57</sup> Jules Lubbock's history of the discourse on consumer taste in modern Britain reveals that from the middle of the seventeenth century, 'private consumption was seen to have public effects'; this was implicit in the perennial concern for what constituted 'good design', a discourse that 'connected personal consumption to issues of style, design and urbanism' and was ultimately related to 'morality, social order and political economy'.<sup>58</sup> But taste, like design, was a contested jurisdiction. As Lubbock notes, eighteenth-century theories concerning the social, aesthetic and moral implications of taste embraced divergent opinions, from conceptions of taste as 'relative, fluctuating, at the mercy of markets and of fashion', to the notion that it was 'an absolute, immutable quality'.<sup>59</sup> By 1800, the artisan's ability to comprehend good taste was equally subject to conflicting views, from the connoisseur's demand for the subjugation of the artisan's initiative in the creative sphere, to the artisan's insistence on a combination of drawing skills and practical experience as the criteria for good design.<sup>60</sup>

Further longstanding misconceptions about the process of building and decorating urban domestic architecture affect histories of house and home to the detriment of the builder's reputation with respect to good taste. Summerson's classic account of the speculatively built 'brick shell' changing hands from builder to consumer, most recently echoed by Rachel Stewart and Amanda Vickery, requires particular revision: as we shall see, interior decoration – in timber, plaster and paint – was a constituent part of property development from at least the 1780s in London, Dublin and Bath, and in the cities of early national America from 1800 onwards. This posits the house builder as an important arbiter of fashionable taste, and suggests more complex readings of the urban domestic interior as a sign



of social and cultural capital in elite consumer circles. It also expands the social demographic for what design historian John Styles has described as 'involuntary consumption' in eighteenth-century Britain.<sup>61</sup>

### The British Atlantic world

A holistic approach to the domestic architectures of Britain, Ireland and America necessarily draws on a burgeoning literature devoted to shared cultural and intellectual experiences predicated on early modern transatlantic exchange. With reference to this literature, Daniel Maudlin has recently drawn attention to the development of interdisciplinary initiatives within the humanities, while simultaneously bemoaning the lack of scholarship in the fields of architectural design and the building crafts.<sup>62</sup> But this lacuna is a direct consequence of a dominant thread within that scholarship. Although Maudlin notes a 'shared theme of identity' among scholars of words, ideas and objects, architectural histories have often been concerned with the supposedly representative qualities of style in terms of discrete national or social identities: the 'more purely American' qualities of the Federal style, for example, or the vernacular 'lilt' ascribed to artisanal interpretations of the neoclassical idiom in Ireland.<sup>63</sup> Just as transatlantic studies have helped to 'rethink the ways that national identity has been formulated', so this present study emphasizes cultural contiguity – confirmed by, among other things, the numbers of tradesmen advertising a London training in Irish and American newspapers – and its expression in the urban domestic architectures of the British Atlantic world.<sup>64</sup> But rather than exploring this historic built legacy as a coherent set of 'communicators of meaning and of the values and ideals held by that culture', that is, as signifiers of a shared British identity, this narrative focuses instead on a shared design sensibility among artisans in geographically dispersed urban centres.<sup>65</sup>

While academic studies devoted to investigating networks of cultural exchange between Georgian London and the cities of British North America have gathered momentum in recent years, Dublin has yet to claim a position in this narrative.<sup>66</sup> This omission can of course be ascribed to Ireland's complex social and political relationship with Great Britain and its narration in modern Irish histories: its identity as a separate kingdom throughout the eighteenth century, and its emergence as an independent nation during the course of the twentieth century.<sup>67</sup> But if we acknowledge Ireland's proper place within British history we allow for more nuanced comparative studies of intellectual exchange between centre and periphery. Dublin's proximity to London, for example, compared to the distance between London and Philadelphia (or Boston, or Williamsburg), necessarily informed Irish consumer tastes more precisely and more immediately.<sup>68</sup> Describing the

character and processes of building design in the wider Chesapeake area, Carl Lounsbury concedes that the colonies were ‘too far away and too different culturally from English society to be merely an unreflective extension of British architectural taste’.<sup>69</sup> By way of contrast, the historiography of Irish architecture during this period has long acknowledged its profound debt to British design authority.<sup>70</sup>

With Ireland securely situated within a broader ‘British’ narrative, some further correctives need to be introduced. After London, Dublin was substantially larger than any other contemporary British or North American city – with a population more than four times that of Philadelphia, and larger than that of Manchester and Liverpool combined – and sustained a resident aristocracy of peers and nobles, a parliament and a vice-regal court.<sup>71</sup> Socially and architecturally speaking then, the development of London’s aristocratic West End during the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had more in common with Dublin’s Georgian streets and squares than with the relatively circumscribed residential district that was home to Philadelphia’s post-Revolution elite – known to generations of historians as the ‘Republican Court’ and clustered around one or two blocks of Second and Third Streets (below High (now Market) Street) – which has recently been the subject of a renewed focus of academic interest.<sup>72</sup>

Related to this is the ever-diminishing distance, figuratively speaking, between London and American towns and cities such as Charleston and Philadelphia. While recent Atlantic world histories tend to reduce early modern transatlantic travel to little more than the crossing of the proverbial ‘pond’, the physical, cultural and comprehensible distance between Britain and its colonies informed patterns of migration and consumption in ways that were distinct, from the movement of particular social classes to the availability of particular goods and services.<sup>73</sup> This arguably reflects an example of what has recently been identified as significant ‘mismatches’ in the academic historiographies produced on either side of that pond.<sup>74</sup> Whereas American academics have regarded the rise of a culture of gentility in Colonial America as the expression of an emerging process of Anglicization, English authors such as Peter Guillery are determined to underline those class distinctions central to Britain’s strictly hierarchical social order:

Politeness was in the ascendant in eighteenth-century England, but its roots were in a dominant section of society; the established and prospering members of which would not, as a rule, have been inclined to leave for the hardships of a new country.<sup>75</sup>

Then as now, emigration was as much about economic necessity as social opportunity. This was true also of the builders and decorators who left

cities like London and Dublin for Boston, Baltimore and Philadelphia. Using newspaper advertisements to announce a professional formation 'under the first architects' or familiarity with 'the modern taste' in building and decorating, immigrant English and Irish artisans frequently made bold claims to distinguish themselves within a burgeoning marketplace, but such claims are often difficult to substantiate and even harder to reconcile with the empirical evidence provided by the built environment. This relates strongly to what Richard Alan McLeod characterized as one of the longstanding and persistent fallacies in American labour histories: 'since many of the skilled artisans in the United States were foreign-born, all foreign-born artisans, as a generalization, therefore represent highly skilled workers'.<sup>76</sup> But rather than reiterating outmoded narratives about American (or even Irish) provincialism, the focus here is on the cultural and material integration between Britain, Ireland and America, and the important role of immigrant artisans as agents of architectural fashions and decorative tastes originating in London.

Of course the place of the artisan within the wider Atlantic world raises further questions concerning the divergent social and political status of the artisan classes in the British Isles and in both colonial and early national America. Reflecting on the complexity of early modern artisanal identities, Howard Rock notes how a 'legacy of deference' was countered by 'a colonial experience that, based upon widespread land availability and a shortage of labor, allowed craftsmen greater possibilities for economic advancement than was commonly available in England'.<sup>77</sup> In 1782, for example, one visitor noted of the European immigrant that 'He very suddenly alters his scale ... and embarks in designs he never would have thought of in his own country'.<sup>78</sup> On the other hand, Eric Foner also identifies certain 'ambiguities and tensions' characteristic of Philadelphia's artisan culture, describing 'the inherent dualism of the artisan's role, on the one hand, as a small entrepreneur and employer and, on the other, as a laborer and craftsman'.<sup>79</sup> The individual central to the thesis of this book is a figure whose practice was formed in craft apprenticeship but whose success was converted into house building, a business that demanded an ability to manage labour relations and complex legal and financial instruments. This had the opportunity of widening the social distance between master and employee, and of countering an emerging ideological bias towards a 'middling' labour class. Other routes towards advanced status, such as the publishing of architectural books, might also be construed as attempts at upward social mobility. Of related significance for this study is the different status enjoyed between individuals in town and country, as well as the formal standing of the individual building trades with respect to one another: while the carpentry trade was universally well regarded, for example, house painting was deemed to require 'very small abilities'<sup>80</sup> and 'no manner of Ingenuity'.<sup>81</sup>

## Conclusion: a new apology for the builder

Just as Nicholas Barbon's *An apology for the builder* (1685) argued that builders responded to market demand and, in turn, stimulated the growth of the nation's economy, the purpose of this book is to move a significant step towards rehabilitating the artisan's reputation in design: while reductive images of the 'economic virgin'<sup>82</sup> on one hand and of 'rapacious speculators'<sup>83</sup> on the other have long been put to rest, the urban house builder as an agent of refined architectural taste is not a familiar narrative in architectural histories, especially in Britain and Ireland. Shaped within the discipline of architectural history, the chapters that follow have therefore been designed to complement recent social and economic histories that have successfully established his financial, legal and managerial competence. Embracing philosopher Charles Taylor's notion of the 'social imaginary' – defined as the 'common understanding that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy' through a pragmatic vernacular language – *Building reputations* seeks to add further dimension to working lives spent as building producers, by specifically focusing on their design competence and acuity in negotiating the fickle world of architectural taste.<sup>84</sup> In so doing, it contradicts the still common misconception that town house builders necessarily privileged economic pragmatism over architectural niceties, and suggests instead a more complex, nuanced relationship to style and fashion (hitherto the province of a minority of established eighteenth-century individuals).<sup>85</sup> Such a position considers the design process as relational, predicated on developing negotiations between a wide range of network actors, interest groups and end users.<sup>86</sup> Reflecting on patterns of elite consumption in eighteenth-century Ireland, Toby Barnard notes:

Conventional interpretation would have it that the cultivated ... turned to [the craftsman] for nothing except artisanal skills. For their part, the craftsman learnt polite taste from their betters. In actuality, greater reciprocity may have marked the dealings of the self-appointed arbiters of taste ... with the craftworkers. Master craftsmen, insisting on what was practicable but keen to demonstrate their virtuosity, helped to determine what was erected. In this, they could display a discriminating fancy or taste, improved by handling imports, seeing engravings or pattern books and by themselves travelling.<sup>87</sup>

Although the potential profit from the business of property development was undoubtedly a significant motivating factor, this book argues that questions of style and taste were a constituent part of that enterprise – that an understanding of style and taste was in fact *essential* to the success of a business catering to the genteel real estate market. Indeed, while the recent inversion of emphasis from house to home in the academic literature on Georgian domestic architecture is both timely and welcome, a significant aspect of urban building production

has been accordingly overlooked: genteel lives of polite refinement, vividly captured in recent studies by Amanda Vickery and Hannah Greig, were conducted in houses designed and decorated for the most part by tradesmen.<sup>88</sup>

Of course, not all building tradesmen represented a progressive front. Reflecting on architectural practice in early nineteenth-century America, Mary N. Woods notes how some master artisans had ‘no interest in the new styles’, preferring instead to preserve established – and approved – modes of building and decorating.<sup>89</sup> With such binaries in mind – tradition/modernity and polite/vernacular – Peter Guillery has recently argued that ‘Resistance to fashion can be as significant as susceptibility to fashion.’<sup>90</sup> This book focuses on those individuals who gained a financial competence in the course of their working lives, who turned that competence to competitive advantage by investing in house building and property speculation and who negotiated fashionable architectural tastes in order to make a success of that enterprise. London plasterer Joseph Rose is a representative example of the building tradesman central to this position. In a career spanning more than thirty years he enjoyed the sustained patronage of some of Britain’s most revered architects, including Robert Adam, but he also achieved success as a property speculator and interior designer in his own right. Rose was not Adam’s counterpart, however, and his apprenticeship to the plastering trade does not stand comparison with Adam’s humanist education and formal architectural training in Europe; rather it demands a discrete, impartial assessment. Michael Stapleton and Samuel McIntire, Rose’s Irish and American counterparts, are also diminished by specious evaluations. The respective accomplishments of Stapleton, once described unwisely as ‘our Dublin Adam’, and McIntire, whose ‘unique vision of the neoclassical style’ continues to generate unnecessary superlatives, require a disinterested appraisal germane to their respective cultural milieus.<sup>91</sup> Conversely, a comparison between the portfolios and sketchbooks of Rose, Stapleton and McIntire can yield important insights into how the taste-conscious artisan adapted and translated Adam’s ornamental vocabulary, and how degrees of separation from the source of that language fostered distinct dialects. But rather than reinforcing traditional Anglocentric narratives of centre and periphery, this book makes a case for more complex patterns of cultural production. While America’s dependence on ‘foreign publications’ well into the mid-nineteenth century caused dissent in contemporary architectural discourse, W. Barksdale Maynard reminds us that ‘Secondhand ideas need not be less compelling than original ones, and the very acts of translation and emulation shape architecture in fascinating ways.’<sup>92</sup>

Success in business fostered personal improvement. Those who acquired prosperity through industry necessarily, to paraphrase Oliver Goldsmith, caught manners on the way up and cultivated elegance in their



appearance and deportment.<sup>93</sup> Marketing themselves as authorities of refined tastes, and risking public ridicule, astute individuals further adopted some of the strategies of genteel retailing as aspects of their 'improved' social identities. As Ann Bermingham has argued, 'In this new urban and urbane commercial culture, where one engaged in public life through economic and intellectual exchange, sociability and refinement were valued as much as wealth.'<sup>94</sup> Given the protean nature of artisanal identity in this period, the building entrepreneur thus emerged as a pivotal figure among the burgeoning 'middling sorts'. As we shall see, a formation in trade was not necessarily an impediment to professional status: reflecting on degrees of business, cultural and intellectual competence among New England carpenters, J. Ritchie Garrison notes that 'social class did not determine a builder's progression to prominence. Performance did.'<sup>95</sup>

As the title suggests, *Building reputations* explores how tradesmen self-fashioned as arbiters of architectural taste. Focusing on the opportunities offered by a burgeoning print culture – in the form of trade cards, pattern books and newspaper advertising – it is concerned with rehabilitating the house builder as an agent of building taste as well as a figure of building production. Just as builders 'virtually dominated the supply of housing', so they correspondingly dictated the form and visual character of those houses.<sup>96</sup> In its widest sense, this book situates itself within an already expansive yet still evolving discourse on domestic architecture; within what Alice T. Friedman has identified as a 'profoundly and irrevocably altered' discipline, committed to creating a 'broader view of architectural value'.<sup>97</sup>

## Notes

- 1 Cited in Peter Collins, *Changing ideals in modern architecture, 1750–1950* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1965), p. 16.
- 2 In her seminal account of London's seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century development, Elizabeth McKellar acknowledges that the master builder 'is primarily seen as a production figure and not a design figure' in the historiography. Elizabeth McKellar, *The birth of modern London: the development and design of the city 1660–1720* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 105.
- 3 Brian Hanson, *Architects and the 'building world' from Chambers to Ruskin: constructing authority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 21.
- 4 Spiro Kostof, *The city shaped: urban patterns and meanings through history* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1999), p. 16.
- 5 'Architecture and the artisan' is the title of a chapter in John Summerson, *Architecture in Britain, 1530–1830* (London: Penguin Books, 1953). It has been chosen deliberately to reflect the nature of this revisionist account of the building trades.
- 6 John Summerson, *Georgian London* (London: Pleiades Books, 1945; repr. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003); Maurice Craig, *Dublin 1660–1860* (London: Cresset, 1952); and George B. Tatum, *Penn's great town: 250 years of Philadelphia architecture illustrated in prints and drawings* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1961).

- 7 Peter Borsay, 'The English urban renaissance: the development of provincial urban culture c.1680–c.1760', in Peter Borsay (ed.), *The eighteenth-century town: a reader in English urban history 1688–1820* (London: Longman, 1990), p. 165.
- 8 Linda Clarke, *Building capitalism: historical change and the labour process in the production of the built environment* (London: Routledge, 1992); Donna Rilling, *Making houses, crafting capitalism: builders in Philadelphia, 1790–1850* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001).
- 9 James Ayres, *Building the Georgian city* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996).
- 10 McKellar, *Birth of modern London*; J. Ritchie Garrison, *Two carpenters: architecture and building in early New England, 1799–1859* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2006); Carl R. Lounsbury, 'Design process', in Cary Carson and Carl R. Lounsbury (eds), *The Chesapeake house: architectural investigation by Colonial Williamsburg* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), pp. 64–85.
- 11 Joseph Moxon, *Mechanick exercises: or, the doctrine of handy works* (London, 1703), p. 252.
- 12 See McKellar, *Birth of modern London*, pp. 116–54; Rachel Stewart, *The town house in Georgian London* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), ch. 4; Dan Cruickshank and Peter Wyld, *London: the art of Georgian building* (London: Architectural Press, 1975).
- 13 Summerson, *Georgian London*, p. 56. Summerson's approach and method has itself been the subject of recent scholarship. See Michela Rosso, 'Georgian London revisited', *London Journal* 26:2 (2001): 35–50; and Elizabeth McKellar, 'Populism versus professionalism: John Summerson and the twentieth-century creation of the "Georgian"', in Barbara Arciszewska and Elizabeth McKellar (eds), *Articulating British classicism: new approaches to eighteenth-century architecture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 35–56.
- 14 Dan Cruickshank and Neil Burton, *Life in the Georgian city* (London: Viking, 1990), p. 118. Dan Cruickshank and Peter Wyld's classic account of Georgian building situates the tradesman's engagement with 'architectural fashion' in a decidedly hierarchical system, suggesting that builders 'universally accepted' the dictat of architects. *Art of Georgian building*, p. 1.
- 15 Timothy Mowl, *To build the second city: architects and craftsmen of Georgian Bristol* (Bristol: Redcliff, 1991), pp. 96–7.
- 16 Cruickshank and Wyld, *Art of Georgian building*, p. 1.
- 17 Mowl, *To build the second city*, p. 105.
- 18 'The late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century London house is ... a regional dialect of a vernacular variant of the classical language. In our own postmodern age we should have no problem in understanding a culture which did not privilege one form over another but instead preferred to operate on the basis of stylistic diversity and eclectic plurality.' McKellar, *Birth of modern London*, p. 221. Elsewhere she notes that the rules of classicism 'can only be broken if one agrees to abide by them in the first place'. *Ibid.*, p. 118.
- 19 B.L. Herman and Peter Guillery, 'Negotiating classicism in eighteenth-century Deptford and Philadelphia', in Arciszewska and McKellar (eds), *Articulating British classicism*, p. 188. This echoes Cruickshank and Wyld's earlier comment regarding the 'orderly flexibility of 18th-century architectural classicism', although Herman and Guillery avoid that book's prejudicial tone. Cruickshank and Wyld, *Art of Georgian building*, p. 1.
- 20 'New River Estate: Introduction', in Philip Temple (ed.), *Survey of London*, vol. 47: *Northern Clerkenwell and Pentonville* (London: Yale University Press, 2008), pp. 185–91.

- 21 Geoffrey Beard, *Georgian craftsmen and their work* (London: Country Life, 1966); Geoffrey Beard, *Craftsmen and interior decoration in England, 1660–1820* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1981); C.P. Curran, *Dublin decorative plaster-work of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries* (London: Tiranti, 1967); Fiske Kimball, *Samuel McIntire, carver, the architect of Salem* (Portland, ME: Southworth-Anthoensen Press, 1940).
- 22 Mark Reinberger, *Utility and beauty: Robert Wellford and composition ornament in America* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2003), p. 15.
- 23 Hanson, *Architects and the 'building world'*; John Wilton-Ely, 'The rise of the professional architect in England', in Spiro Kostof (ed.), *The architect: chapters in the history of the profession* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp. 180–208; Mark Crinson and Jules Lubbock, *Architecture: art or profession? 300 years of architectural education* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994); Howard Colvin, 'The practice of architecture, 1600–1840', in Howard Colvin, *A biographical dictionary of British architects 1600–1840*, 4th edn (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), pp. 15–37.
- 24 Author's emphasis.
- 25 Summerson, *Georgian London*, p. 55.
- 26 Colvin, *Biographical dictionary*, p. 22.
- 27 David Watkin (ed.), *Sir John Soane: the Royal Academy lectures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 256.
- 28 Dell Upton, 'Pattern books and professionalism: aspects of the transformation of domestic architecture in America, 1800–1860', *Winterthur Portfolio* 19:2–3 (1984): 107–50. Despite this, English-born architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe described how 'The business in all our great cities is in the hands of mechanics who disgrace the Art.' Cited in Mary N. Woods, *From craft to profession: the practice of architecture in nineteenth-century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p. 10.
- 29 Letter from A.W.N. Pugin to E.J. Willson, 1836, cited in Phoebe Stanton, 'The sources of Pugin's *Contrasts*', in John Summerson (ed.), *Concerning architecture: essays on architectural writers and writing presented to Nikolaus Pevsner* (London: Allen Lane, 1968), p. 121.
- 30 'Lack of taste by clients from commercial backgrounds led to "non-descripts of every sort, from the plasterer to the paper-hanger" being allowed to design, accused the architectural writer James Elmes in his 1821 *Lectures on Architecture*.' Daniel M. Abramson, 'Commercialization and backlash in late Georgian architecture', in Arciszewska and McKellar (eds), *Articulating British classicism*, p. 153. Elmes echoes James Peacock's earlier, satirical admonition of those who entrust design to the 'Fan-painter Toy-Man, Lace-Man, Paper-hanger, or Undertaker'. Jose Mac Packe [James Peacock], *Oikidia, or nutshells: being ichnographic distributions for small villas; chiefly upon oeconomical principles* (London, 1785), p. 53. The vitriol expressed by Soane and Elmes should be understood in the context of the introduction of the system of contracting in gross and competitive tendering in the early decades of the nineteenth century. This had the unwelcome effect of builders regarding themselves as 'the equal of the architect'. Hanson, *Architects and the 'building world'*, pp. 49, 54–8.
- 31 *Dictionary of Irish architects 1720–1940*, online, [www.dia.ie](http://www.dia.ie) and *American architects and buildings*, [www.americanbuildings.org](http://www.americanbuildings.org).
- 32 Conor Lucey, 'Owen Biddle and Philadelphia's real estate market, 1798–1806', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 75:1 (2016): 25–47.
- 33 E.J. Hobsbawm, 'The tramping artisan', *Economic History Review* (NS) 3 (1950–51): 313, cited in E.P. Thompson, *The making of the English working class* (London: Pantheon

- Books, 1964), p. 241. A more positive spin on 'tramping' characterizes it as 'a labor strategy and means of training young artisans'. Garrison, *Two carpenters*, p. xx.
- 34 Colvin, *Biographical dictionary*, p. 28. See also Crinson and Lubbock, *Architecture: art or profession?*.
- 35 Jeffrey Cohen, 'Early American architectural drawings and Philadelphia, 1730–1860', in James F. O'Gorman, Jeffrey A. Cohen, George E. Thomas and G. Holmes Perkins (eds), *Drawing toward building: Philadelphia architectural graphics, 1732–1986* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), p. 19.
- 36 Woods, *From craft to profession*, p. 4.
- 37 A.R. Lewis, 'The builders of Edinburgh's New Town 1767–1795', PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 2006, pp. 198–9.
- 38 *The builder's dictionary or gentleman and architect's companion*, 2 vols (London, 1734), vol. 1, n.p. Similarly, there are no entries for trades such as bricklayer or carpenter.
- 39 Stana Nenadic, 'Architect-builders in London and Edinburgh, c.1750–1800, and the market for expertise', *Historical Journal* 55:3 (2012): 598.
- 40 A London directory of 1763 categorized architects alongside authors and painters, and had separate listings for 'surveyors of land and buildings' and 'carpenters and builders'. Thomas Mortimer, *The universal director* (London, 1763), cited in Nenadic, 'Architect-builders in London and Edinburgh', p. 598. See also Ayres, *Building the Georgian city*, pp. 8–11.
- 41 McKellar, *Birth of modern London*, pp. 95–7.
- 42 Samuel Johnson, *A dictionary of the English language*, 6th edn (London, 1785).
- 43 Daniel Defoe, *The complete English tradesman* (London, 1726), p. 1.
- 44 In using this term I am adopting the view of an artisan as someone 'with generally above-average skills and often some degree of education and upward social and economic mobility'. Richard Alan McLeod, 'The Philadelphia artisan 1828–1850', PhD diss., University of Missouri, 1971, p. 5.
- 45 Dan Cruickshank uses 'builder' rather than 'craftsman'; Linda Clarke underlines the capitalist imperative for building, but insists on 'artisan'.
- 46 Marcus Binney, *Town houses: evolution and innovation in 800 years of urban domestic architecture* (London: Mitchell Beazley, 1998).
- 47 Anne Puetz, 'Design instruction for artisans in eighteenth-century Britain', *Journal of Design History* 12:3 (1999): 218.
- 48 Matthew Craske, 'Plan and control: design and the competitive spirit in early and mid-eighteenth-century England', *Journal of Design History* 12:3 (1999): 187–216.
- 49 Dublin's lead in state-sponsored design education was regarded as an acute embarrassment in some quarters: 'Ireland, Britain's younger Sister, Seems to have got the Start of her in the Encouragement of all the useful and ornamental Arts. ... should we not be displeased, as a Nation, to be ranked, by Foreigners, after one of our own Colonies?' John Gwynn, *An essay on design* (London, 1749), pp. 91–2.
- 50 Edward Robbins, Jr attended all three between 1782 and 1785. Gitta Willemson, *The Dublin Society drawing schools: students and award winners 1746–1849* (Dublin: Royal Dublin Society, 2000), p. 83.
- 51 Puetz, 'Design instruction for artisans', 218. For the broader issue, see Charles Saumarez-Smith, *Eighteenth-century decoration: design and the domestic interior in England* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1993), pp. 135–42.
- 52 Puetz, 'Design instruction for artisans', 220.
- 53 *Ibid.*, 233.
- 54 Advertisement of Dudley Inman, a London carpenter, in the *South Carolina Gazette*, 9 February 1765.
- 55 Stewart, *Town house*, p. 155.

- 56 Summerson, *Georgian London*, p. 58. Colvin echoes this sentiment, describing Palladianism as 'fatal to the craftsman's artistic self-sufficiency' and how 'Vitruvian precedent took the place of personal inventiveness'. Colvin, *Biographical dictionary*, p. 27.
- 57 Ann Bermingham, 'Introduction. The consumption of culture: image, object, text', in Ann Bermingham and John Brewer (eds), *The consumption of culture: word, image, and object in the seventeenth and eighteenth Centuries* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 12. On the shifting boundaries of taste, see John Brewer, *The pleasures of the imagination: English culture in the eighteenth century* (London: HarperCollins, 1997), pp. 87–91.
- 58 Jules Lubbock, *The tyranny of taste: the politics of architecture and design in Britain 1550–1960* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), p. xiv.
- 59 *Ibid.*, p. xiii.
- 60 Puetz, 'Design instruction for artisans', 234.
- 61 John Styles, *The dress of the people: everyday fashion in eighteenth-century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007). For a critique of Styles's argument see Frank Trentmann, 'Materiality in the future of history: things, practices, and politics', *Journal of British Studies* 48:2 (2009): 283–307.
- 62 Daniel Maudlin, 'Introduction', in Daniel Maudlin and Robin Peel (eds), *The materials of exchange between Britain and North East America, 1750–1900* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), p. 12.
- 63 Sterling Boyd, *The Adam style in America 1770–1820* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1985), p. 237; John Martin Robinson, *James Wyatt: architect to George III* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012), p. 105.
- 64 Susan Manning and Andrew Taylor (eds), *Transatlantic literary studies: a reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 4, cited in Maudlin, *Materials of exchange*, p. 3.
- 65 Daniel Maudlin and Bernard L. Herman, 'Introduction', in Daniel Maudlin and Bernard L. Herman (eds), *Building the British Atlantic world: spaces, places, and material culture, 1600–1850* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), p. 2. 'Until a very late period in their development, these colonies each had more communication and connection with Britain than they had among themselves.' Charles N. Glaab, *A history of urban America* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), p. 8.
- 66 No essays on Ireland in John Styles and Amanda Vickery (eds), *Gender, taste and material culture in Britain and North America, 1700–1830* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006); or Maudlin and Peel (eds), *The materials of exchange*; or Maudlin and Herman (eds), *Building the British Atlantic world*. Ireland's place in the wider British context is explored in essays included in Olivia Horsfall Turner (ed.), *'The Mirror of Great Britain': national identity in seventeenth-century British architecture* (Reading: Spire Books, 2012), although for an earlier period. John Brewer is unusual in his consideration of the 'other British capitals' – by which he means Dublin and Edinburgh – as part of his narrative of British eighteenth-century culture; nevertheless, London (and England) remains the sole focus. Brewer, *The pleasures of the imagination*, p. 28.
- 67 S.J. Connolly has argued for Ireland's 'ambiguous status' with respect to Great Britain in the eighteenth century. S.J. Connolly, 'Eighteenth-century Ireland: colony or ancien-régime?', in D.G. Boyce and Alan O'Day (eds), *The making of modern Irish history: revisionism and the revisionist controversy* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 26.
- 68 As Toby Barnard reminds us, 'Dublin and its hinterlands had more in common with London in population, wealth and proximity to sources of fashionable design than with (for example) Philadelphia, let alone Williamsburg.' Toby Barnard, *Making*



- the grand figure: lives and possessions in Ireland 1641–1770* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), pp. 120–1.
- 69 Lounsbury, 'Design process', p. 85.
  - 70 Murray Fraser, 'Public building and colonial policy in Dublin', *Architectural History* 28 (1995): 102–23; Maurice Craig, *The architecture of Ireland* (London: Batsford, 1982), p. 244. Dublin's architecture as the material expression of its Protestant identity is explored in Robin Usher, *Protestant Dublin, 1660–1760: architecture and iconography* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).
  - 71 L.A. Craig and Douglas Fisher, *The European macroeconomy: growth, integration and cycles 1500–1913* (Cheltenham and Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, 2000), p. 152, table 7.2. For Philadelphia, see Mary M. Schweitzer, 'The spatial organization of Federalist Philadelphia, 1790', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 24:1 (1993): 35.
  - 72 Jeffrey A. Cohen, 'Place, time and architecture: materialized memory and the moment of Latrobe's Waln House', in Alexandra Alevizatos Kirtley and Peggy A. Olley, *Classical splendor: painted furniture for a grand Philadelphia house* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2016), pp. 15–36; Ryan K. Smith, *Robert Morris's folly: the architectural and financial failures of an American founder* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014); Amy H. Henderson, 'A family affair: the design and decoration of 321 South Fourth Street, Philadelphia', in Styles and Vickery (eds), *Gender, taste, and material culture*, pp. 267–91.
  - 73 Jennifer van Horn, *The power of objects in eighteenth-century British America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017); Emma Hart, *Building Charleston: town and society in the eighteenth-century British Atlantic world* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010).
  - 74 John Styles and Amanda Vickery, 'Introduction', in Styles and Vickery (eds), *Gender, taste and material culture*, p. 23.
  - 75 Peter Guillery, *The small house in eighteenth-century London* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), p. 275.
  - 76 The author continues: this is 'a situation which is not true at least for the Philadelphia area during the first half of the nineteenth century'. McLeod, 'The Philadelphia artisan', p. 19.
  - 77 Howard B. Rock, 'Introduction', in Howard B. Rock (ed.), *The New York City artisan, 1789–1825: a documentary history* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), pp. xxiv–xxv.
  - 78 Gary B. Nash, 'A historical perspective on early American artisans', in Francis J. Puig and Michael Conforti (eds), *The American craftsman and the European tradition 1620–1820* (Minneapolis, MN: Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 1989), p. 2.
  - 79 Eric Foner, *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 40, cited in Stuart M. Blumin, *The emergence of the middle class: social experience in the American city, 1760–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 36.
  - 80 Joseph Collyer, *The parent and guardian's directory* (London, 1761), p. 168.
  - 81 Robert Campbell, *The London tradesman* (London, 1747), p. 103.
  - 82 Elizabeth McKellar is critical of how the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century craftsman in London has been depicted by historians as an 'economic virgin', whose prime interest was in his handiwork. McKellar, *Birth of modern London*, pp. 94–5.
  - 83 Peacock, *Nutshells*, p. 67.
  - 84 Charles Taylor, *Modern social imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), pp. 23–4.
  - 85 Daniel Abramson's argument that 'The perspective of commercialization widens understanding of the modernity of Georgian architecture beyond examples of

- stylistic abstraction ... and industrial materials', is especially pertinent for this present narrative. Abramson, 'Commercialization and backlash', p. 157. Adrian Forty has noted how 'It is commonly assumed that design would be somewhat soiled if it were too closely associated with commerce ... It has obscured the fact that design came into being at a particular stage of capitalism and played a vital part in the creation of wealth.' Adrian Forty, *Objects of desire: design and society since 1750* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1987), p. 6.
- 86 Kjetil Fallan, 'Architecture in action: travelling with Actor-Network Theory in the land of architectural research', *Architectural Theory Review* 13:1 (2008): 80–96.
- 87 Barnard, *Making the grand figure*, p. 118.
- 88 Amanda Vickery, *Behind closed doors: at home in Georgian England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009); Hannah Greig, *The beau monde: fashionable society in Georgian London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). Recent histories of the American town house have addressed a broader social demographic. See Bernard L. Herman, *Town house: architecture and material life in the early American city, 1780–1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).
- 89 Woods, *From craft to profession*, p. 56.
- 90 Peter Guillery, 'Introduction: vernacular studies and British architectural history', in Peter Guillery (ed.), *Built from below: British architecture and the vernacular* (London: Routledge, 2011), p. 3.
- 91 C.P. Curran, 'Dublin plaster work', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 70:1 (1940): 46; Dean Lahikainen, *Samuel McIntire: carving an American style* (Salem, MA: Peabody Essex Museum, 2007), p. 25.
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- 93 Oliver Goldsmith, *An inquiry into the present state of polite learning* (1759), ch. 11, 'Of Universities'.
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