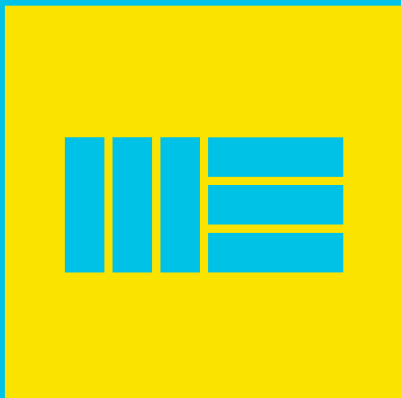


33 FITZROY SQUARE: THE SCULPTED MEDALLIONS

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HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

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1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report is about the two sculpted medallions on the exterior of No 33 Fitzroy Square, which forms part of the Grade I-listed southern side of the square, built in the late 1790s to the designs of Robert Adam.
- 1.2 The medallions play an important part in the design of the elevation and are highly characteristic of the design approach of the Adam practice. They contribute considerably to the overall special interest of the elevation, and hence to the significance of the building overall.
- 1.3 They are, however, in very poor condition and in need of conservation.
- 1.4 Extensive research has been carried out into this subject. Several questions still remain about the roundels: about their authorship, about their subject matter, and about the precise material they were executed in.
- 1.5 Their most likely sculptor is Joseph Rose II, a member of the celebrated dynasty of plasterers; the subjects of reliefs remains unidentified; and the precise material the plaque is made of awaits identification. It is an unspecified moulded stucco, rather than being carved in stone.
- 1.6 These roundels were manufactured from moulds, and other examples of some of the roundels on the south side of Fitzroy Square can be found elsewhere in buildings designed by the Adam brothers. The left-hand roundel on No 33 was previously used to embellish the entrance portico of Kenwood, built for Lord Mansfield in 1767-70, for instance, and all of the medallions upon the façade of the south side of Fitzroy Square are also found in the staircase hall of No 20 St James's Square.



Fig 1: No 33 Fitzroy Square in 2018 (Thomas Croft Architects)

2.0 OUTLINE HISTORY

- 2.1 The outline history of Fitzroy Square has been related in earlier reports which have been prepared to support the applications to restore this grade I house. Only an outline account is given here.

The Adam Style

- 2.2 **Robert Adam (1723-92)** One of the greatest architects of Georgian Britain, Robert Adam was the leading member of a Scottish dynasty of architects and builders whose range of work extended from country houses to town developments, interiors to tombs. His Grand Tour in 1754-7 brought him into contact with many classical survivals and with important designers such as Charles-Louis Clérissseau (1721-1820) and Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-78). Clérissseau in particular urged the Scottish architect to study all of the arts and to augment his design approach with this widened range.
- 2.3 Robert Adam's contact with Clérissseau was particularly influential. In a letter to him of February 1755, Adam wrote how 'I hope to have my ideas greatly enlarged and my taste formed upon the solid foundation of genuine activity. I already feel a passion for sculpture and painting which I before was ignorant of, and I am convinced that my whole conception of architecture will become much more noble than I could ever have attained by staying in Britain'.¹
- 2.4 The intensity of the Adam brothers' engagement with Roman remains was profound and marked their subsequent design approach. One aspect of this was the emulation of the richness of Roman design: in the marrying architecture with the applied arts, and the importance in particular of sculpture and decorative painting in their design approach. Interiors such as the Etruscan Room at Osterley Park (from 1761) used painted medallions as central motifs in the overall decorative effect and drew on the discoveries at Pompeii and Herculaneum as inspiration.
- 2.5 At its grandest, as at Kedleston Hall (Derbyshire, c.1761), the effect was opulent and emulative of Roman buildings, and medallions played their part in the overall effect (Fig. 2). One of the most renowned examples from Ancient Rome to include sculpted relief medallions was the Arch of Constantine, erected in AD 312-15 close to the Coliseum.² This had pairs of roundels on either side of the main opening, and single medallions on the sides. There were of different subjects than the ones at Fitzroy Square.
- 2.6 The style could be adapted for London town houses as well and modified in scale: modest brick-fronted terraced houses could still contain plasterwork which evoked Roman remains, and the introduction of ornamental decoration on the exteriors of houses (as memorably displayed at the Adams' Adelphi development (1768-72) was a further way of presenting a Neoclassical note to modern buildings.

¹ Quoted in Charles Saumarez-Smith, *Eighteenth-century Decoration. Design and the Domestic Interior in Britain* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1993), p. 215.

² See Iain Ferris, *The Arch of Constantine: Inspired by the Divine* (2013)

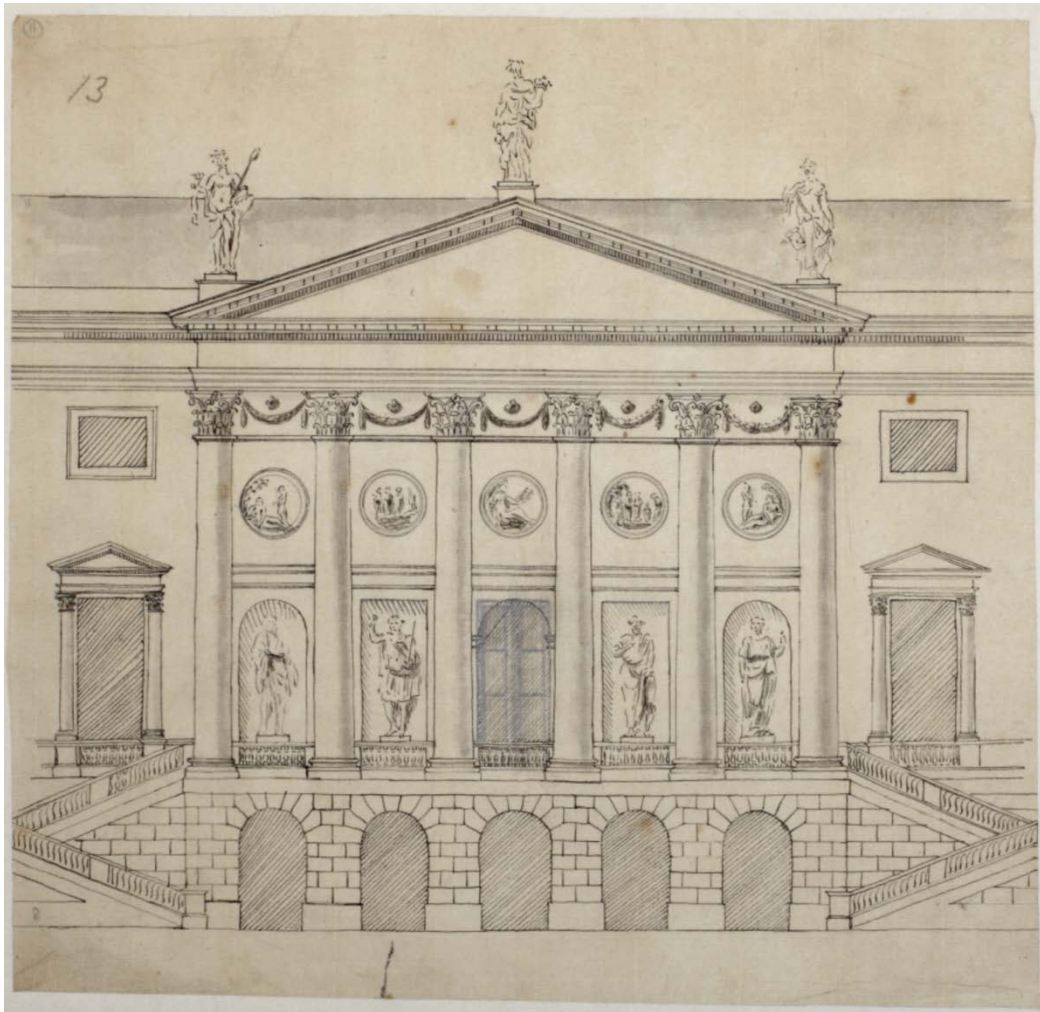


Fig. 2: Robert Adam: 'new design of the North Front of Kedleston House' c.1761 (Kedleston Hall, National Trust)

2.7 Relief plasterwork, painted decoration, sculptural embellishment were integrated into an immersive design approach and became an important signifier of the 'Adam Style'. This 'Adamitic mode' came in for ridicule from some critics. 'Jose Mac Packe' (actually Joseph Peacock, a surveyor) published a volume of architectural designs called *Nutshells* in 1785, and mocked the style thus:

Here let the light and elegant ordonnance of the bed post triumph over the clumsy orders of old Greece. Here let Pilasters rival the substance and ornaments of figured ribbons, and the rampant foliage of antiquity give place to the exquisite prettiness of casts from the cabinet, the medal case or the seal engraver's show glass.³

'Casts from the cabinet, the medal case' was a good way to describe the enlarged medallions which became a consistent theme in the Adams' work. More recently, John Summerson expressed a similar admiration for the sheer prettiness of the Adam style, and the place played in this by architectural decoration:

The feeling for the externals of architecture changed, after the arrival of Adam, from the grimness of a mask to the delicacy of a feminine 'make-up'. Stucco and Coade stone have a slightly cosmetic character; they suggest, faintly and agreeably, the artificiality of powder and rouge.⁴

³ Quoted in Arthur T. Bolton, *The Architecture of Robert & James Adam* (London: Country Life 1922) vol I, p. 109.

⁴ *Georgian London* (2003), p. 130.

Fitzroy Square: History

- 2.8 **Fitzroy Square** was one of the very last works from the brothers' office, being commenced in June 1790, not long before Robert's death in 1792. Only the east and south sides were built to the Adam designs: the north side was constructed in 1827-8 and the west side in 1832-5. Credit difficulties during the Revolutionary Wars hindered the building, and uncertainty over the whole Fitzrovia venture further delayed the square's development. It was also a very ambitious development, designed around a palace front and incorporating a masonry façade. The concept owed much to the large-scale urban projects the Adams had been undertaking in their native Edinburgh, such as Charlotte Square, begun in 1791. Stone fronts were the norm in Edinburgh: in London they were exceptional.
- 2.9 The **later history** of the house includes a remarkable period in 1913-19 when the Omega Workshops were based here. After a brief period of industrial use, it became the premises of the London Foot Hospital in c.1929. This remained here until 2003, when the house returned to residential use.
- 2.10 **The recent history** of the house has comprised of two major restoration schemes: one overseen by Ptolemy Dean Architects and the present campaign, under Thomas Croft Architects. These have involved extensive internal remodelling to undo earlier interventions. The front and side elevation are now undergoing work as well.

Fitzroy Square: Design

- 2.11 Only the southern and eastern sides of the square were designed by Robert Adam: the other sides were not built until the 1820s. The two Adam sides differ considerably in design, with the longer east side having wider end houses and a wider centrepiece than the southern side. There are many variations in detail, with the eastern side generally being more elaborately treated. The exception to this rule is in the medallions on the south side: these are the only pieces of figural sculpture in the square.
- 2.12 The designs for the square evolved over time. A wash drawing in Sir John Soane's Museum entitled 'South Side of Fitzroy Square' (Fig. 3) shows a more ornamental design than that which was built, with the end-houses articulated with paired pilasters and a sphinx on the parapet. It had no medallions at this stage.⁵

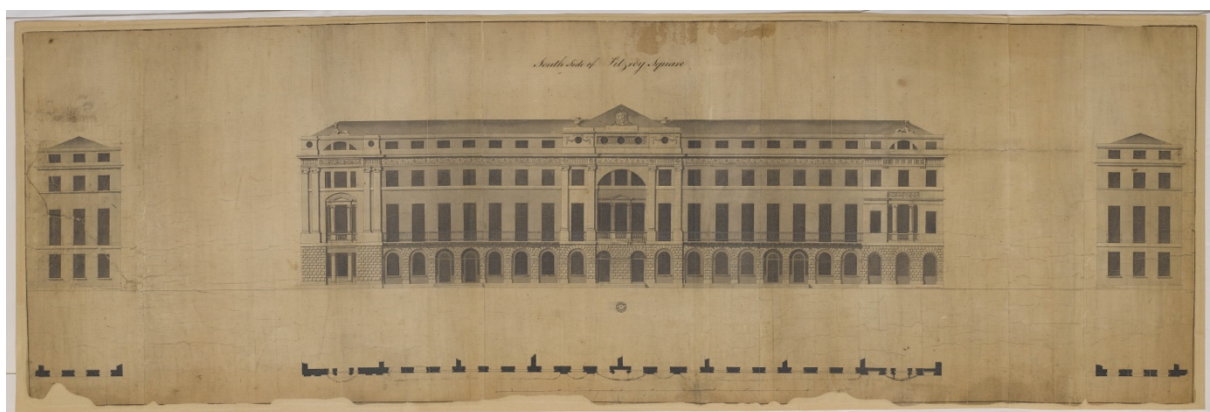


Fig. 3: Adam office: outline drawing for south and east elevations of Fitzroy Square (not executed). Sir John Soane's Museum cat ref SM Adam Volume 4/102).

⁵ Anna McNally of the Soane Museum kindly assisted with these drawings.

- 2.13 The other Adam drawing of the range which survives does show the eventual design, complete with detailed measurements (Fig. 4). While the essentials of the design were to be found in the earlier drawing, this one shows how the composition had been pared down and resolved. The medallions contributed to the closure of the range, by giving each end a greater definition and distinctiveness. Unlike the broader end-houses of the east range, these narrower units needed greater articulation: the medallions helped achieve this.

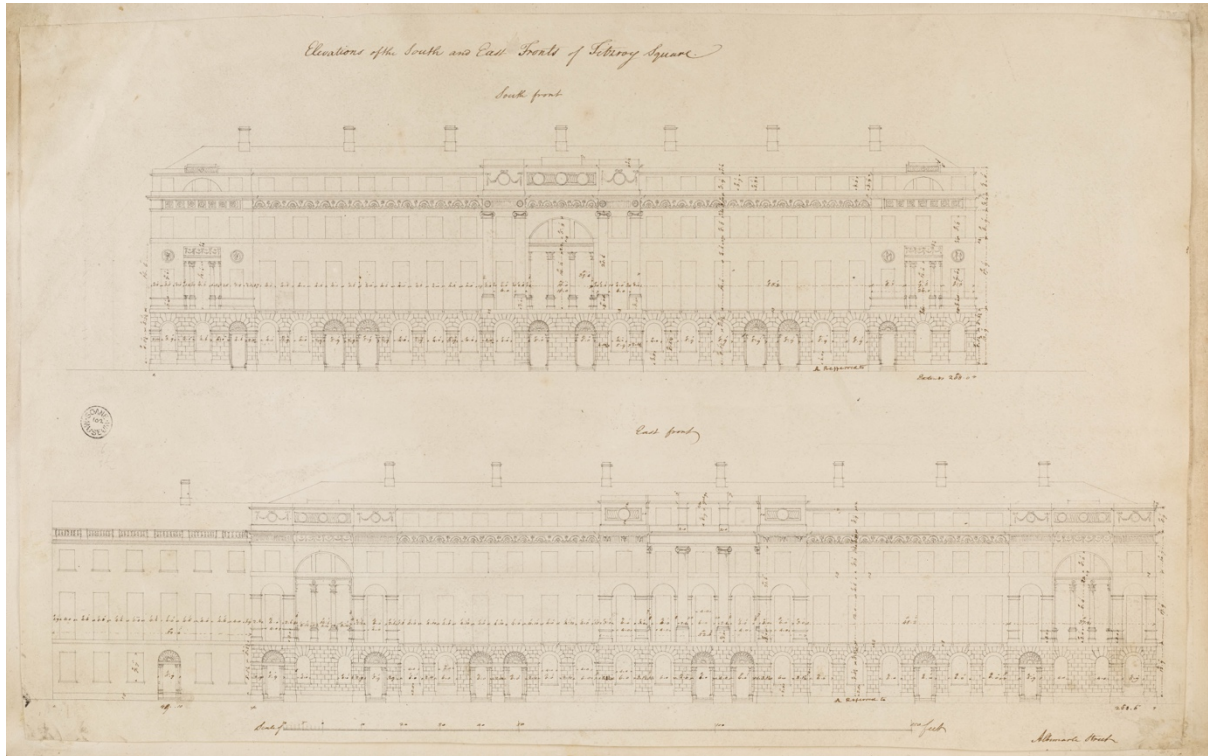


Fig 4:

Adam Office: 'Elevations of the South and East Fronts of Fitzroy Square'. (Sir John Soane's Museum cat. Ref. SM Adam Volume 32/009).

- 2.14 **No 33**, the western-most house on the southern side, is one of the key elevations in the square. It acts as a book-end, closing the western end of the range. It was not occupied until 1805, according to rate book evidence, when W.T. Stretton Esq is listed in residence. An earlier Montagu Evans report, issued in August 2019, described it as 'Stone-fronted and conceived as an end pavilion to the terrace, the northern elevation is of extremely high distinction, displaying the Adam brothers' reputation for 'movement' and an inspired way with the classical language. The western return elevation is extremely plain, by contrast, and executed in brick with stone cills and plat-band.'
- 2.15 **The frontage of No 33** is busier than most of the others in the square. The rusticated ground floor with triple-arched openings is as per other fronts, but only this and its eastern equivalent (No 40) have the recessed tripartite first floor window and the flanking medallions. At the upper frieze level, the anthemion motifs of the main run of houses is replaced by a projecting strip of paterae set within inset square frames. The thermal window to the attic is topped with a strigillated panel with a central disc. The arched windows, medallions and the upper thermal window unite to form a series of curved elements in the otherwise strongly orthogonal design.

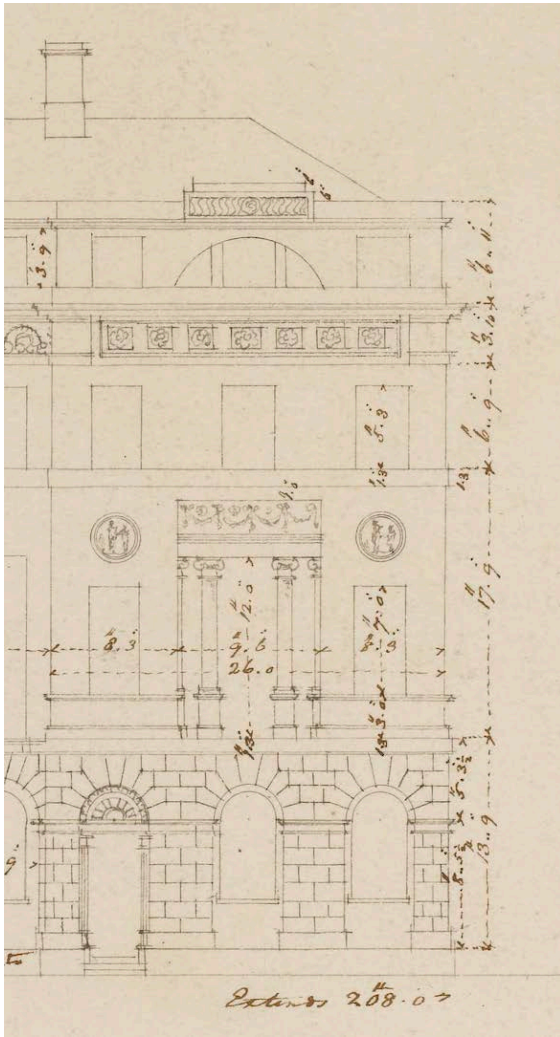


Fig. 5: detail of Fig. 4, showing the front elevation of No 33. The medallion designs are schematic and were not indicative of what the actual plaques would look like.

3.0 THE SCULPTURAL MEDALLIONS

- 3.1 **Description:** the medallions are approximately 36 inches (1 m) across, including their raised frame, and consist of figural reliefs of classical scenes.
- 3.2 **Left-hand medallion: description.** The left-hand relief [hereafter LHM] (Figs. 6-7) depicts a standing figure, draped and wearing a cloak and knee-length garment, who turns round to attend to a kneeling figure on their right. This figure, wearing billowing draperies, and seemingly male, raises their right hand up towards the standing figure's head; their left hand, partly lost, is extended forward. The gesture is one of supplication. Behind the kneeling figure is a third figure: male, with short hair, in a toga, their left hand resting on the back of the kneeling figure and their right hand raised up flat towards the left-hand figure.



Fig. 6: left-hand medallion on exterior of No 33 in 2018. NB wires in place to prevent material falling off.



Fig. 7: left hand medallion seen under scaffolding, 2019.

- 3.3 **Right-hand medallion: description.** This relief [RHM] (figs. 8-9) matches the LHM in consisting of a standing figure turning to face a kneeling suppliant, with a third interceding figure in the background. The standing figure is female, and partly-clad in a loose drapery which leaves her body exposed. Her left hand extends towards the edge of the roundel; her right arm runs down alongside her torso, her hand open to grasp the extended left hand of the kneeling heavily draped figure. This figure has lost its head, and its right arm extends towards the standing figure. Between them is a third figure, female, leaning in to the standing figure in a confiding way; her left arm is held up over her chest while her right arm, now lost, may have rested on the kneeling figure's back. The RHM has suffered from losses and possibly from earlier attempts to repair the modelling: there is a confusion of articulation in the arms which gives the right-hand figure the impression of being a multi-armed creature.



Fig. 7: right-hand medallion on exterior of No 33.



Fig. 8: right-hand medallion seen under scaffolding, 2019.

- 3.4 The pair is well-balanced, with standing figures on the outer side of each of the medallions which helps to harmonise the pair.
- 3.5 The other pair of medallions at No 40 Fitzroy Square are similar in conception but different in detail. The left hand medallion consists of two standing men in Roman garb, leading an ox to sacrifice. The right hand medallion shows a seated man to the left, receiving a standing woman to the right; behind are two figures, the left-hand one raising a crown or similar circular motif.



Fig. 9: left hand and right hand medallions on the exterior of No 40 Fitzroy Square.

Legibility and Intention

- 3.6 Questions must be asked however as to whether the legibility of the medallions was ever a consideration. They are placed high up, at second floor level, and are difficult to decipher from the ground. This is not unique to the Fitzroy Square display: earlier displays of medallions on the exteriors of Adam buildings placed them even higher. It suggests that the principal intention of the use of medallions was to enrich facades and add a classical reference which suggested artistic awareness, classical learning, and fashionable *all'antica* taste.

Symbolism

- 3.7 The visual sources for these roundels have not been pinned down. Any roundel design invites comparison with ancient coins and medals, which could have served as an inspiration for the models. These were an extremely important source for Neoclassical artists, and engravings after small-scale classical reliefs were readily available through works such as Domenico de' Rossi's *Gemme Antiche Figurata* (4 vols, Rome 1707-9).⁶
- 3.8 **Meaning:** what unites these roundels is the theme of supplication and appealing to mercy. Famous episodes in classical literature on this theme include the clemency of Emperor Titus (the subject of a late opera by Mozart, *la Clemenza di Tito*, 1791); Alexander the Great sparing the daughters of the defeated Persian emperor Darius; and the 'Continence of Scipio', when the victorious Roman general declined to take advantage of a defeated Carthaginian bride-to-be and the accompanying offer of treasure. Scenes of scantily clad women being in the authoritative position are rarer: one possibility is the mythological subject of Diana and Actaeon, from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in which the huntsman encounters the naked goddess, bathing: no mercy is shown, as he was then transformed into a deer and devoured by her hunting dogs. the absence of hounds rules this out as a possibility, and would be a curious choice for the exterior of a house.
- 3.9 The matching pair of roundels on the eastern end house do not appear to have such similar subject matter as the pair on No 33. The left hand relief shows two men bringing forward a sacrificial ox; the right hand scene is hard to decipher but shows a standing and seated figure, with two supporting figures in the background.

⁶ Accessible in full at https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=cldTAAAcAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false. There are no precise sources for the Fitzroy medallions among the hundreds of cameos and medals engraved by de' Rossi, however.

- 3.10 As commented on at 3.6 above, the high position of the roundels poses the question as to whether they were ever intended to carry specific meaning or be studied in any close way. Inability to pin down their symbolism, and the use of the same designs on other Adam projects

Authorship

- 3.11 Such classically inspired scenes were legion at this period, whether reproduced in architectural contexts, or on furniture marquetry, in ceramic form, in decorative paintings, textiles or other media. London-based artists in the Adam circle such as Antonio Zucchi (1726-95) and Giovanni Cipriani (1727-85) produced many designs, some of which were engraved by their close associate Francesco Bartolozzi (1727-1815). Each was an early member of the Royal Academy, and both worked closely with the Adam brothers. Zucchi's wife Angelika Kauffmann (1741-1807) also worked in this vein: both Zucchi and Kauffmann painted panels for the Adams at Kenwood and elsewhere, including a sequence of mythological roundels in the ceiling of the Library. Other painted roundels by Zucchi are at Saltram (Devon), extensively remodelled by the Adams in 1768-9.
- 3.12 However, the most likely author is the renowned plasterer, Joseph Rose. This is based on the fact that Rose submitted a bill for work at Kenwood to the Adams in 1773 which included 'A Medallion of three figures with enrich'd frame around.'⁷

Joseph Rose II (1744-99)

- 3.13 Rose came from a dynasty of Derbyshire-born plasterers and the firm they set up, Joseph Rose & Co., became the leading practice in this field. They were based in London and enjoyed close links with the Adam office over several decades. Joseph Rose II came to public attention when he won a premium at the Society of Arts in 1765 for a 'Model of ornaments in clay'.⁸ He studied in Rome in 1769-70 and exhibited a bas relief at the 1770 Royal Academy. These reliefs could then be taken to become moulds for the reproduction of plaster or stucco versions. Rose's 1799 will requested the sale of all 'Books, Moulds, Models, Casts, Scaffolding and every implement which belongs to my business'.⁹
- 3.14 Rose's time in Rome gave him a lasting familiarity with antique sources and he continued to study the subject: he was a subscriber to George Richardson's *Ceilings in the Antique and Grottesque Tastes* (1776). Although most of his career was as a contractor, he was also a sculptor responsible for works such as the relief shown at the Royal Academy; he also executed some portraits in pastel. Not only a plasterer, he was an artist too.
- 3.15 When, finally, the contents of the Adam Brothers office were sold in 1818 and 1821, they included friezes by Rose. However, the medallions listed were by the sculptors John Bacon (1740-99), and William Collins (1721-93). The latter, in particular, is known to have worked with Adam on a number of schemes and to have executed a number of medallions.¹⁰ Rose's name is however worth holding in the front of any mind seeking to attribute these reliefs because there is documentary evidence which links the name of Rose to the insertion of one of these medallions at another Adam commission, at Kenwood. This is discussed at the end of this report, where other uses of these designs are discussed.

Materials

- 3.16 The roundels are made of a composition material, or stucco. This comprised various ingredients, and different versions were patented by different inventors which contained different ingredients. Scotsman David Wark patented a 'Composition of stone paste' in 1765 which included 'Oyls of tar, turpentine, and linseed, with sand of freestone, marble, and drift sand, pipe or potter's clay, brick dust, brown sugar, stone, or chalk, lyme, and all sorts or [sic] calceareous earth.'¹¹ The precise ingredients of these different mixes was closely guarded and some worked much better than others.

⁷ Julius Bryant, *The Iveagh Bequest, Kenwood* (1990), p.47-8. Rose had submitted an invoice for work there which included a 'Medallion with enrd. frame' before, in 1768-9: Bryant, p. 47.

⁸ Ingrid Roscoe, *A Biographical Dictionary of Sculptors in Britain 1660-1851* (2009), p.1053.

⁹ Geoffrey Beard, *Decorative Plasterwork in Great Britain* (1975), p. 238.

¹⁰ Ingrid Roscoe, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Sculptors 1660-1851* (2006), p. 307-8.

¹¹ Quoted in Crick Smith Institute for the Research & Conservation of Historic Decoration, *Architectura Paint Research – Kenwood House, Hampstead, London* (2011 report), p. 6, kindly made available by Jeremy Ashbee of English Heritage.

- 3.17 The best-known variety of architectural stucco was Coade stone, and most later Georgian examples of the material are assumed to come from this Lambeth factory.¹² Part of the secret of the success of this material was the use of ground glass in its composition. The Fitzroy Square medallions do not appear among the otherwise comparable examples included in the Coade firm's 1784 catalogue, and the Coade origins of these plaques can be ruled out as a possibility.¹³
- 3.18 However, many other companies had for some time been trying to discover a reliable and enduring form of manufacturing cast ornament which was so much cheaper than carved stone versions; Richard Holt's *A Short Treatise on Artificial Stone* was published in 1730, from the 1760s onwards other variants can be identified.
- 3.19 The Adam brothers were best known for their connection with Liardet's patent cement.¹⁴ This material was patented in 1773 by Liardet, a Swiss clergyman, and its novelty was the addition of oil in its composition of sand and lime. In 1774 the Adam brothers entered into an agreement with Liardet to be the sole manufacturers of his material. However, its performance was soon shown to be problematic and a series of patent law cases ran from 1777 onwards. Other techniques emerged and the secret of successful moulded stucco decoration was discovered to be the use of water as the liquid, rather than oil. It is thus extremely unlikely that the material employed on Fitzroy Square was Liardet's cement, having had bad experience with the material.
- 3.20 However, the link with Liardet has been long established, and promoted by serious scholars of the Adam Brothers. Arthur Bolton, author of a major two-volume survey of their work, was categorical that Liardet stucco was used at Fitzroy Square:

The Portland stone of the facades of Fitzroy Square has a fine effect, and with a little care the patent Liardet stucco decorations might easily have been maintained. The falling away of these superficial ornaments has given a certain air of dilapidation, which, together with the rather obvious disregard of the internal house divisions in the general elevation, has lent much occasion to the hostile critic of Robert Adam.¹⁵

However, as mentioned above, this connection would seem to be unlikely. Other patent stucco methods were available, and the Liardet method had been discredited – to the Adam Brothers' cost, as patent-holders.

- 3.21 The best-known variation was Parker's Roman cement, patented in 1796: it is just possible that this was used at Fitzroy Square, in the closing period of the terrace's construction. James Parker's method included ground-up septaria (the mineral nodules found in clay), which lent his composition a slightly ochre colour. Other kinds were being employed too, and the exact material is unknown, awaiting technical analysis. There was much competition between various plaster manufacturers, and plagiarism was rife: so much so that an Act was passed in 1798, copyrighting products.¹⁶
- 3.22 Whatever the precise material, it did not fare well in the smoky London atmosphere. Bolton's comments in 1922 about the 'falling away' of the stucco ornaments on the Fitzroy Square elevations has been noted above. David King, author of *The Complete Works of Robert and James Adam* (1991; 2nd ed. 2001) observed of Fitzroy Square observed that 'Unfortunately these decorative friezes were done in a troublesome stucco which has partly flaked away over the years.'¹⁷
- 3.23 It was for these reasons that the decision was taken (just when is unknown) to paint over the medallions. Once this had started, it was inevitable that successive layers would have smothered the relief detail and impacted upon their appearance. It is very likely that some attempts were made to reinstate missing parts of the relief once parts had started to break off: this has led to the confusion in figural composition clearly sensed in the right-hand medallion, where it is very unclear just which arm relates to which figure.

¹² Alison Kelly, *Mrs Coade's Stone* (1990) is the most thorough discussion of the topic: Fitzroy Square is not mentioned. More information on the context of architectural stucco is provided in Caroline Stanford, 'Revisiting the Origins of Coade Stone', *Georgian Group Journal* vol XXIV (2016), p. 95-116.

¹³ *A Descriptive Catalogue of Coade's Artificial Stone Manufactory* (1784), copy in British Library. There are 44 designs for medallions, including figural ones, but none of the subjects on the exterior of Fitzroy Square.

¹⁴ See Frank Kelsall, 'Liardet versus Adam', *Architectural History* vol 27 (1984), 118-26.

¹⁵ Arthur T. Bolton, *The Architecture of Robert & James Adam* (1922) vol II, p. 115.

¹⁶ Timothy Clifford, 'The Plaster Shops of the Rococo and Neo-classical Era in Britain', *Journal of the History of Collections* vol 4 (1992), p. 39-65.

¹⁷ Op. cit., p. 97.

Manufacture and Variants

- 3.24 The appeal of these medallions (as with all cast composition materials) was four-fold: they could be cast from high-quality moulds; they could be mass-produced cheaply; they could be manufactured for different settings, in different materials; and they would endure.
- 3.25 These roundels were first modelled, and then moulds were carved in enduring kinds of wood such as boxwood. These could then be used repeatedly to produce casts, either in plaster for inside use, or composition for outdoor.
- 3.26 The long-established plastering firm of George Jackson was closely involved with the process. As one account puts it, “when Robert Adam bought the famous recipe for composition from John Liardet, George Jackson made the reverse moulds in boxwood and pressed out the ornament in this material. This laid the foundation in 1780 at 49 Rathbone Place, London, of the present firm.”¹⁸ Interestingly, medallions are still available from the current Jacksons catalogue which, at 76 cm, across, are almost as large as the Fitzroy Square examples.¹⁹

¹⁸ Geoffrey Beard, *Decorative Plasterwork in Great Britain* (1975), p. 225.

¹⁹ This depicts a Bacchante with cherubs: https://www.georgejackson.com/range/?show=products-show&products_id=146 . The firm apparently retains over 11,000 boxwood moulds.

4.0 SIMILAR MEDALLIONS FOUND ELSEWHERE IN THE WORK OF THE ADAM BROTHERS

- 4.1 The important place of medallions in the Adam approach to architectural and interior design has been alluded to above. This section brings together some other examples of the motif and sets the Fitzroy Square examples in a wider context.
- 4.2 What emerges is that other examples can be found, and that one of the roundel designs was actually used on a number of other occasions. Interestingly, these appearances span most of the career of the Adams, from their early days of success in the 1760s to the very end of their career in the early 1790s, with the rather less successful Fitzroy Square development.
- 4.3 **Kenwood House, Hampstead** (LB Camden). The Adam Brothers remodelled an earlier house at Hampstead for the Earl of Mansfield in 1767-9 and as part of its aggrandisement added a portico to the northern entrance.²⁰ Sculpted medallions were inserted into this pediment and into that on the south front. That on the north side is the same as the left-hand medallion at Fitzroy Square, and appears to be of a comparable size. This relief includes the low relief figure which appears between the main persons: smaller versions of this same scene omit it.



Fig. 10: Kenwood House, northern entrance (via Pinterest).

²⁰ Bryant (1990), p. 47-8; Eileen Harris, *The Genius of Robert Adam. His Interiors* (2001), p.180 ff..



Fig 11: left: Kenwood, northern entrance pediment (detail showing medallion); right: left-hand medallion at No 33 Fitzroy Square..

- 4.4 **Hampton House / Garrick's Villa, Hampton** (LB Richmond). Robert Adam carried out various alterations in 1775 for the renowned actor David Garrick, including the embellishment of the reception rooms. One room on an upper floor contained a sequence of many plaster roundels, smaller than the Fitzroy Square ones, and many of them more pictorial in terms of incident. One of these repeats the left-hand medallion at Fitzroy Square. Several of the medallions are reproduced in plasterer Phil Bailey's blog, chronicling post-fire restoration.²¹ This appears to be a reduced version of the Fitzroy Square design, reduced in size and simplified for internal use.



Fig 12: medallion in interior of Garrick's Villa, Twickenham. (Via Phil Bailey blog)

- 4.5 **Culzean Castle, Ayrshire**: worked on by the Adams from 1777 until Robert's death in 1792 for the 10th Earl of Cassilis, this coastal pile is best-known as the finest example of the Adams' work in the castle style. The state bedroom includes a plaster version of the left-

²¹ <http://pbaileypplasterwork.blogspot.com>.

hand medallion, comparable in size and simplified form to the Garrick's Villa example cited above. Culzean is now the property of the National Trust for Scotland,²² and the upper rooms are converted into hotel use, called the Eisenhower Hotel.



Fig. 13: medallion from State Bedroom of Culzean Castle, Ayrshire. (Via Pinterest).

- 4.6 **No 20 St James's Square, City of Westminster:** this notable town house was designed by the Adams for Sir Watkin Williams Wynn in 1771-4.²³ Its interior remains intact (although the house was united with No 21 in 1936, and an extra floor placed on the roof). Inside are several sets of sculpted roundels.
- 4.7 Those on the walls of the dramatic staircase hall, at first floor level are particularly relevant.²⁴ Here are to be found both of the pairs of the Fitzroy square roundels: the only location so far identified of this double coincidence, and the sole appearance so far of the right-hand medallion at No. 33.
- 4.8 The roundels are at first floor level, set high up into the walls at second floor level. Those on the south side flank a recess, or exedra, leading off the landing; those on the north side are placed at the same height and flank a large copy of Raphael's painting of the *Transfiguration*.
- 4.9 A list will show most clearly how these two sets of roundels correspond:

20 St James's Square, staircase hall: north side

East medallion: same as right hand one at No 33 Fitzroy Square

West medallion: same as right hand medallion at No 40 Fitzroy Square

20 St James's Square, staircase hall: south side

East medallion: same as left hand one at No 40 Fitzroy Square

West medallion: same as left hand medallion at No 33 Fitzroy Square

²² https://www.nts.org.uk/visit/places/culzean?lang=en_gb

²³ Harris (2001), p. 256 ff.

²⁴ See *Country Life* vol LXXXVI (5th August 1939), p. 116 for a photo of the staircase hall, image accessible at <https://www.countrylifeimages.co.uk/Image.aspx?id=0bafdc6e-9a22-42bf-afa3-51f67e2cedcb&rd=2|20%20st%20james%20square|1|20|7|150> ; and Patrick Baty's website for a recent picture of the space after conservation: <http://patrickbaty.co.uk/2012/11/20/20-st-jamess-square-london-2/> .

- 4.10 Furthermore, these medallions at No 20 St James's Square survive in very good condition having never been exposed to the outdoors, and having recently benefited from professional conservation. Missing elements such as the kneeling figure's head in the right-hand medallion of No 33 would be possible to be restored accurately.
- 4.11 Three of the four equivalences are reproduced below, using images taken by *Country Life* in 1939.



Fig. 14: left: medallions in the staircase hall of No. 20 St James's Square, south side, west;²⁵ right: the right-hand roundel at Fitzroy Square.

²⁵ Detail from Historic England Archive, 1938 photograph, ref. BB82/4873, viewable at [https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/photos/englands-places/card/168043?place=Westminster%2c+City+of+Westminster+\(Place\)&terms=westminster&searchtype=englandsplaces&i=0&wm=1&bc=0%7c461%7c470%7c471&q=4639](https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/photos/englands-places/card/168043?place=Westminster%2c+City+of+Westminster+(Place)&terms=westminster&searchtype=englandsplaces&i=0&wm=1&bc=0%7c461%7c470%7c471&q=4639)



Fig 15: left: medallion in the staircase hall of No. 20 St James's Square, north side, east;²⁶ right: the right-hand roundel at No 33 Fitzroy Square.



Fig 16: medallions in the staircase hall of No. 20 St James's Square, south side, east;²⁷ right: the left-hand roundel at No 40 Fitzroy Square.

4.12 It is likely to be the case that further examples of these medallions will be found, but extensive research in photo repositories and literature has only revealed these examples thus far.

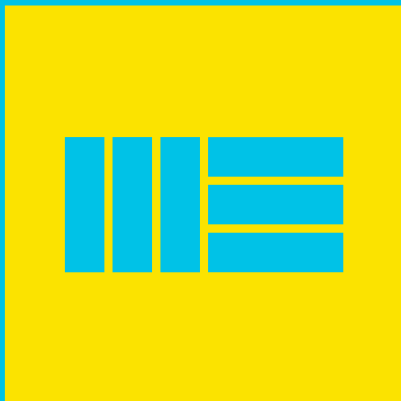
²⁶ Detail from photograph by Martin Charles, reproduced in Harris (2001), p. 259.

²⁷ The image is a detail from Country Life Picture Library, Image 582439, viewable at <https://www.countrylifeimages.co.uk/Image.aspx?id=0bafdc6e-9a22-42bf-afa3-51f67e2cedcb&rd=2|st%20james%20square||1|20|9|150> .

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The two medallions at No 33 Fitzroy Square make an important contribution to the significance of this Grade I building. They are located at second floor height and have always been difficult to see. However, they are in poor condition and are even less legible than they should be.
- 5.2 Their original appearance is known, and other examples have been found in other buildings worked on by the Adams which would be wholly suitable as models to copy for replicas.
- 5.3 The medallions have lost much of their detail and are in aesthetic terms severely degraded. The risk currently exists of their further deterioration and the shedding of pieces onto pedestrians below.
- 5.4 While original sculpted material of historical importance has an innate value, a distinction needs to be made between moulded or cast relief sculpture which is the product of an industrial process, and hand-cut material which is directly carved.
- 5.5 The opportunity currently exists to create replicas of the roundels. In terms of conservation philosophy, there exists a clear need to identify firm evidence of the nature of the originals so that replication is based on solid evidence rather than speculation.
- 5.6 The original roundels should be retained and conserved in order to arrest further decay. Finding a suitable location within the building where the medallions can be seen will preserve their relationship with No 33, and secure them for further technical study if required.
- 5.7 Technical analysis of these roundels will add to the sum of knowledge currently held about architectural sculpture from the mid-Georgian period. A lot is known about Coade stone: other variants are less well understood.
- 5.8 Removal of the existing medallions and their replacement with evidence-led replicas will therefore have a number of heritage benefits. These can be summarised as follows:
- a) reinstatement of legible sculptural roundels which embody the classical revival spirit of Fitzroy Square;
 - b) removal of degraded and deteriorating sculptural elements which do not harmonise with the conserved masonry of the rest of the façade;
 - c) amelioration of a potential safety hazard;
 - d) technical investigation of a little-researched area of Georgian architectural decoration;
 - e) creation of moulds for possible future re-use elsewhere, and the encouragement of high quality sculptural conservation using appropriate expertise; and
 - f) overall, the completion of a major programme of conservation-led restoration at No 33 and the application of a consistent conservation approach to this building.
- 5.9 There are limited arguments in favour of retaining the medallions in situ. Generally overlooked, when they are studied their poor condition becomes evident and they do constitute a safety hazard.
- 5.10 In conclusion

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