

# SPECULATIVE MINDS

COMMERCE, EXPERIMENT, INNOVATION  
& THE ARTS IN GEORGIAN IRELAND

ONLINE SYMPOSIUM

Thursday 27th May 2021

# SPECULATIVE MINDS

COMMERCE, EXPERIMENT, INNOVATION & THE ARTS IN GEORGIAN IRELAND

**Date:** Thursday 27th May 2021

**Price:** €40

Maynooth University and the Irish Georgian Society are partnering to deliver a live online symposium, *Speculative Minds: Commerce, Experiment, Innovation & the Arts in Georgian Ireland* on Thursday 27th May 2021. The symposium has been convened by Dr Toby Barnard, Emeritus Fellow of Hertford College, Oxford University and Dr Alison FitzGerald, Associate Professor, Maynooth University.

The symposium will appeal to both a specialist audience of academics and the general public. Bookings can be made online through the Irish Georgian Society's website ([www.igs.ie](http://www.igs.ie)). **Price:** €40. Fulltime students free. To register for a student place please email [emmeline.henderson@igs.ie](mailto:emmeline.henderson@igs.ie) with a photo of your student ID.

**Irish Georgian Society, City Assembly House, 58 South William Street, Dublin 2.**

[www.igs.ie](http://www.igs.ie) / 01 6798675 /[info@igs.ie](mailto:info@igs.ie)

## INTRODUCTION

The period between 1750 and 1837 saw a striking increase in the introduction of new materials, new manufacturing processes and new products. 'Novelty' was at a premium: touted in newspaper advertisements, puffed in trade catalogues and pattern books, and encouraged by energetic individuals and learned groups. These initiatives were driven by simple curiosity, focused experimentation, patriotic and humanitarian ideals, and the quest for profit. Homes, small workshops and large manufactories all felt the impact of these 'polite and commercial' impulses and the resulting artefacts; they spread beyond the peerage and landed elite through the professional and middling sorts. Arguably it was the latter who spread these developments most widely, thereby drawing Ireland deeper into the ambit, attitudes and fashions of Britain, continental Europe and the North Atlantic world. British artists, artificers and entrepreneurs were quick to exploit the Irish market, feeding the appetite for what was new; as the potter Josiah Wedgwood wrote to his business partner in 1773 'Will not the people of Ireland like these things better that come from London?'. This symposium investigates the intellectual, cultural and mercenary forces behind these phenomena, looking closely at specific cases. It aims to clarify the nexus between art, commerce and science in Georgian Ireland, especially in towns, most notably in Dublin, Britain's 'second city'.



Cover: Extract from John Rocque's *Exact survey of Dublin* (1756).

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Speculative Minds has been made possible through sponsorship from Sara Moorhead and Ecclesiastical Insurance.

The symposium forms an action of the Irish Georgian Society's Conservation Education Programme, overseen by Emmeline Henderson, IGS Assistant Director and Conservation Manager. The IGS's Conservation Education Programme is supported by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and The Heritage Council and Merrion Property Group.



An Roinn Tithíochta,  
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreachta  
Department of Housing,  
Local Government and Heritage



An Chomhairle Oidhreachta  
The Heritage Council



MERRION  
PROPERTY GROUP



David Allan, *James Tassie*, 1781, Scottish National Portrait Gallery.

# PROGRAMME

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- 9.45 am **Welcome**  
David Fleming, Senior Lecturer, University of Limerick
- 10.00 am ***A taste for pastes: Dr Henry Quin, James Tassie and the Empress of Russia***  
Toby Barnard, MRIA (Hon.), Emeritus Fellow of Hertford College, Oxford University
- 10.30 am ***Classicism and commerce: Josiah Wedgwood and his 'seed[s] of consequence'***  
Alison, FitzGerald, Associate Professor, Department of History, Maynooth University

**11.00 am - 11.30 am: Coffee Break**

- 11.30 am ***The impact of the English visual caricature tradition on the product of single-sheet caricature in Ireland 1780-1830***  
James Kelly, MRIA, Professor of History, and Head of the School of History and Geography, Dublin City University
- 12.00 pm Questions & Answers

**12.30 pm - 1.30 pm: Lunch Break**

- 1.30 pm ***A culture of curiosity: scientific enquiry in the eighteenth-century home***  
Leonie Hannan, Senior Lecturer, Department of History, Queen's University Belfast
- 2.00 pm ***Dublin's sugar landscapes in the eighteenth century***  
Finola O'Kane, MRIA, Professor, School of Architecture, Planning and Environmental Policy, University College Dublin, University College Dublin
- 2.30 pm ***The merchant, the Quaker and the enslaved boy: a story of slavery in mid eighteenth-century Ulster***  
Jonathan Wright, Lecturer, Department of History, Maynooth University
- 3.00 pm Questions & Answers & Conclusion
- 3.30 pm Symposium Ends

# SYMPOSIUM ABSTRACTS

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## ***A taste for pastes: Dr Henry Quin, James Tassie and the Empress of Russia*** **Toby Barnard**, MRIA (Hon.), Emeritus Fellow of Hertford College, Oxford University

James Tassie, a Scotsman, emerged in London during the 1780s as a highly successful and fashionable maker of copies of antique intaglios and gems. His success was confirmed by a huge order for his 'pastes' from the Empress Catherine of Russia. The commission survives in the Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg. What the paper explores is the technical help and encouragement that Tassie received from a leading Dublin physician, Dr Henry Quin. During the 1760s, Tassie experimented with Quin in Dublin, and remained in touch into the 1780s. Tassie acknowledged the importance of Quin's contribution, but subsequently it has been rather forgotten. Unfamiliar evidence, some of it still in Dublin, is presented. The origins of Quin's interest through travel to Italy are traced, together with wider resonances of this revival or re-invention of classical taste across Europe, and specifically in Ireland.



Anon. *Dr Henry Quin*, reproduced courtesy of the Royal College of Physicians, Dublin.

## ***Classicism and commerce: Josiah Wedgwood and his 'seed[s] of consequence'*** **Alison FitzGerald**, Associate Professor, Department of History, Maynooth University



Josiah Wedgwood, *Marriage of Cupid and Psyche*, white jasperware with green dip with applied bas-relief in white, Staffordshire, c. 1790–1800, © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

As Adrian Forty observed in *Objects of desire: design and society since 1750* (London, 1986), 'The paradox of eighteenth-century taste – that an age which was so fascinated with progress was at the same time devoted to the study of the far distant past – was expressed in all the artistic products of neo-classicism'. This paper addresses the issues of commerce, experiment, innovation and the arts in Georgian Ireland, using the example of the entrepreneurial potter, Josiah Wedgwood, whose 'speculative mind' reveals a passion for experimenting in the production of neo-classical cameos and intaglios. As 'second city' to London, Georgian Dublin offered an ideal market for these small, easily portable commodities, which expressed an affinity with the past while simultaneously reflecting novelty, innovation and fashionable taste. Wedgwood's correspondence, offers new insights on his trade with Irish clients, the logistics of his new modes of selling and the rivalries, collaborations and experimentation and breakthrough that underpinned the production of these neo-classical wares.

# SYMPOSIUM ABSTRACTS

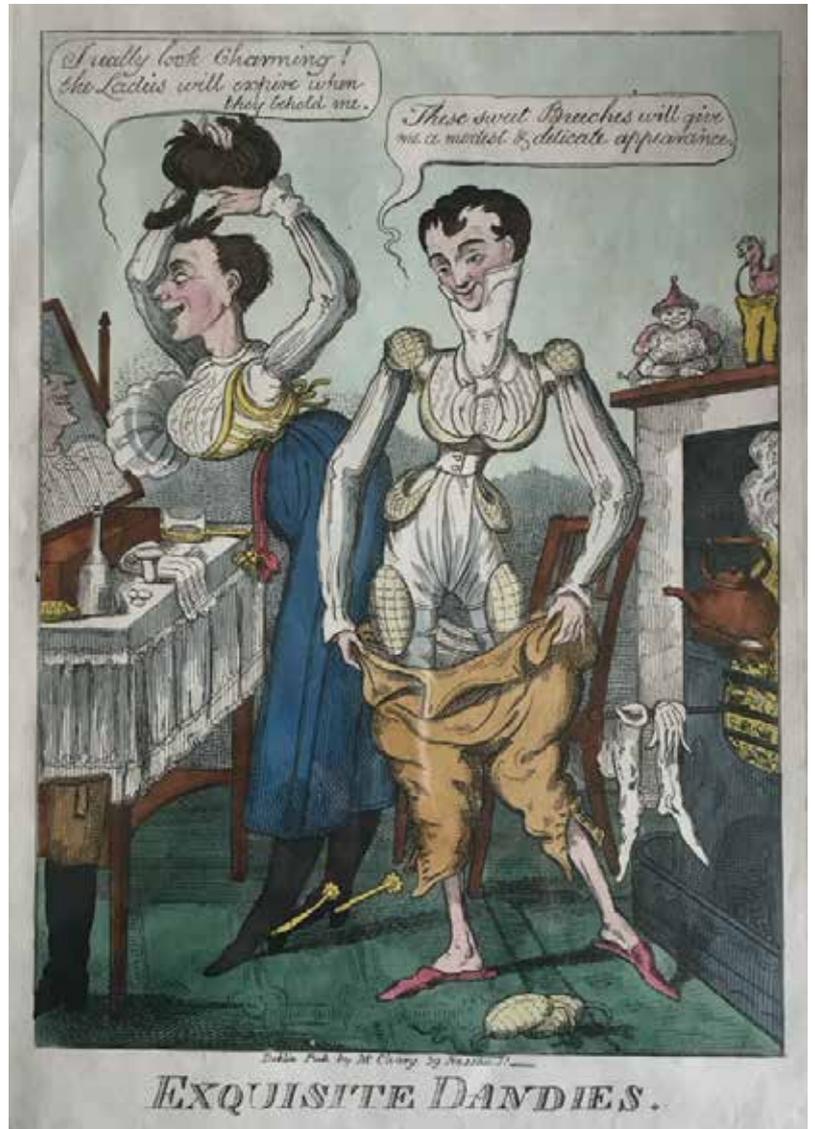
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## *The impact of the English visual caricature tradition on the product of single-sheet caricature in Ireland 1780-1830*

**James Kelly**, MRIA, Professor of History, and Head of the School of History and Geography, Dublin City University

Though relatively modest in scale, and possibly in impact, Dublin sustained a market in the production and sale of caricatures second only to that of London during the great age of 'single sheet caricature' that spans the last half century of the Georgian era. The inclusion of a short overview in the Yale *Art and Architecture of Ireland* was a significant moment in the evolution of an appreciation of its significance, but we remain a long way away from possessing a detailed documented understanding of its trajectory and scale, and still less of the considerations – technical, organisational, commercial, attitudinal and so on – that contributed to make it one of the liveliest and, consistently engaging features of the public realm during the decades when it was at its most vigorous. These caveats entered, it is still possible – thanks in large part to the digital availability of a majority of the important corpus of Irish produced caricatures in the British Museum and the invaluable Nicholas Robinson Collection now in Trinity College Library – to identify the order of the indebtedness of the main Irish caricature publishers to images that originated in England. This was the case

from the outset moreover, as, beginning with William Allen, who operated out of Dame Street in the 1780s, Irish caricature producers copied and resold the images of some of the most popular English caricaturists – at that moment Henry Bunbury and Robert Dighton. But it was when the phenomenon was at its peak, in the first quarter of the nineteenth century that this influence was at its peak as the three men – William McCleary, James Sidebotham and Joseph Le Petit - whose output accounts for a majority of Irish caricature, issued their impressions of English images in large number, and it is on the surviving examples of these images – by Gillray, Cruikshank and Rowlandson in particular – that this presentation will concentrate.



William McCleary, *Exquisite Dandies*, Dublin, c. 1818 (private collection).

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## ***A culture of curiosity: scientific enquiry in the eighteenth-century home***

**Leonie Hannan**, Senior Lecturer, Department of History, Queen's University Belfast

The early modern home was a complex space, through which people, things, materials and knowledge circulated. Masters and servants alike, exercised a wide range of technical competencies and material literacies in the activities they conducted at home – using minds and hands to achieve work of both a necessary and of a more exploratory nature. Here, the study of domestic practice is proposed as a productive approach to understanding the nature of enquiry in eighteenth-century society. This approach also helps us to see who engaged in intellectual life in this period, in terms of both gender and social status. Since our intellectual histories abandoned narratives that privileged the 'great men of science' and their 'discoveries' to the exclusion of other actors and social contexts, scholars in a range of disciplines have identified materials, spaces and marginalised people as being critical to the production of knowledge in this period. Whilst these studies have influenced this research in important ways, what is presented here takes a different approach. Instead of looking to materials, spaces and actors to get to the question of knowledge production, this research argues instead that the practice of intellectual enquiry was just one of many domestic practices and that the relationship between domestic labour and intellectual work was enmeshed.



*Housekeeper in her Still-Room* taken from the frontispiece of Nathan Bailey's *Dictionarium Domesticum* (1736).

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## ***Dublin's sugar landscapes in the eighteenth century***

**Finola O'Kane**, MRIA, Professor, School of Architecture, Planning and Environmental Policy, University College Dublin, University College Dublin

John Rocque's 1756 *Exact Survey of the City and Suburbs of Dublin* depicts two Sugar House Lanes - one an extension of Crane Lane in the Liberties and a second, shown above, lying off Hawkins Street and behind Aston Quay. Lined with the sugar bakers' premises, such as that owned by Peter Maignon on the adjacent Lazer Hill, these lanes and many other streets all over the city reveal the growing popularity of sugar in Dublin in the mid eighteenth century and the fortunes that were being made from it. Although Dublin's sugar-bakers were obliged to import sugar from Great Britain rather than directly from the Caribbean many of them benefitted



John Rocque's 1756 *Exact Survey of the City and Suburbs of Dublin* (detail showing Sugar House Lane).

from long-established connections to Caribbean ports, plantations, islands and families. The process of refining the dark muscovado sugar that was landed onto these quays into the finer sort required for syllabubs, desserts and ices and for sweetening tea required specialised equipment and an emergent factory-like technology. This paper will examine the character of these sugar house lanes, the merchant houses in Liverpool and Bristol that supplied their dark sugar, the Irish-Caribbean families who worked to make sugar a popular commodity and the Dublin and Caribbean houses and landscapes that their sugar profits built.

## ***The merchant, the Quaker and the enslaved boy: a story of slavery in mid eighteenth-century Ulster***

**Jonathan Wright**, Lecturer, Department of History, Maynooth University

Eighteenth-century Ireland was closely connected to the wider Atlantic World. As is well known, emigrants from Ulster crossed the Atlantic Ocean in their tens of thousands during the course of the eighteenth century, and Ireland's merchants were keenly aware of the commercial opportunities offered by Britain's colonies in North America and the Caribbean. They were aware, too, of the brutal realities underpinning the Atlantic economy, and some sought to benefit from them, either by acquiring or participating in the trade of enslaved Africans. Addressing these brutal realities, this paper will seek to reconstruct and explore the story of John Richardson, an enslaved boy who was brought to Ireland in the mid-eighteenth century at the behest of an Ulster merchant with slave trading connections, and who was later transported to North America. In so doing, it will seek to foreground the multiple connections and networks of communication that bound provincial Ulster to the wider Atlantic World, while also highlighting the more unpleasant realities of commercial speculation and the search for novelty in eighteenth-century Ireland.

# BIOGRAPHIES

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**Toby Barnard**, MRIA (Hon.), has been a fellow of Hertford College, Oxford, since 1976 (Emeritus from 2012). His first book, *Cromwellian Ireland* appeared in 1976, and has been followed by *A New Anatomy of Ireland* (2003), *Making the Grand Figure: lives and possessions in Ireland, 1641-1770* (2004), *Irish Protestant ascents and descents* (2004), *Guide to the sources for the history of material culture in Ireland, 1500-2000* (2005), *Improving Ireland? Projectors, prophets and profiteers, 1641-1786* (2008), and *Brought to Book: Print in Ireland, 1680-1784* (2017). He is a Fellow of the British Academy and an honorary member of the Royal Irish Academy.



**Alison FitzGerald** is Associate Professor in the Department of History at Maynooth University. She has published extensively on the market for silver in eighteenth-century Ireland; her monograph, *Silver in Georgian Dublin: making, selling, consuming*, was published by Routledge in 2016 (pbk 2019). She is a Director of the Castletown Foundation, a member of the academic advisory board for *Irish Architectural and Decorative Studies: The Journal the Irish Georgian Society*, and Secretary to the Antique Plate Committee of the Company of Goldsmiths of Dublin.



**Dr David Fleming** (Symposium Chair) is Head of the Department of History at the University of Limerick and course director of its MA Local History. He is a historian of eighteenth-century Ireland, and has published on topics ranging from provincial politics, poverty, religious conversion, associational behaviour and prostitution. He is editor of *Irish Architectural and Decorative Studies: The Journal the Irish Georgian Society*.



**Leonie Hannan** is a Senior Lecturer at Queen's University, Belfast in the field of social and cultural history. Her work focuses on Britain and Ireland in the long eighteenth century and her interests include gender, material culture, intellectual life and histories of home.



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**James Kelly**, MRIA, is Professor of History, and Head of the School of History and Geography, Dublin City University. His main research interests lie in the areas of Irish political and social history in the period 1660-1860, on which he has published widely. His publications include *That damn'd thing called honour: duelling in Ireland, 1750-1860* (1995); *Henry Flood: Patriots and politics in eighteenth-century Ireland* (1995); *Poynings' Law and the making of law in Ireland, 1660-1800* (2007), *Clubs and Societies in eighteenth-century Ireland* (edited with Martyn Powell) (2010); *The proclamations of Ireland 1660-1821* (5 vols, IMC, 2014); *Sport in Ireland, 1600-1840* (Four Court Press, 2014). His most recent book is *Food rioting in Ireland in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries* (Four Courts Press, 2017). He is editor of volume 3 of the *Cambridge history of Ireland: Ireland, 1730-1880* (Cambridge, 2018).



**Finola O'Kane**, MRIA, is a landscape historian, architect, and conservation specialist. A professor at the School of Architecture, Planning and Environmental Policy, University College Dublin (UCD), her books include *Ireland and the Picturesque: Design, Landscape Painting, and Tourism, 1700–1840* (Yale, 2013) and *Landscape Design in Eighteenth-Century Ireland: Mixing Foreign Trees with the Natives* (Cork, 2004). She has also published widely on eighteenth-century Dublin, Irish urban and suburban history and plantation landscapes, with a co-edited volume *Ireland, Slavery and the Caribbean: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* forthcoming from Manchester University Press in 2021. She is a founding and ongoing contributor to the British Library's Picturing Places website, providing essays on Ireland and the British empire's wider landscape tradition. Currently contributing to the forthcoming exhibition *The Discovery of Scotland at the Hunterian*, University of Glasgow, in 2015 she was a major contributor to *Ireland: Crossroads of Art and Design, 1690–1840* at the Art Institute of Chicago. She continues to advise and consult on the design and conservation of many of Ireland's key landscapes—in recent years, working on Béal na mBláth, Dublin's historic core, and the border landscapes of Northern Ireland. In 2017, she was elected a member of the Royal Irish Academy.



**Jonathan Wright** lectures in history at Maynooth University. His current research focuses on Ireland and the Atlantic World in the Age of Revolution, and his recent publications include *An Ulster slave owner in the Revolutionary Atlantic: the life and letters of John Black* (2019), *Ireland's imperial connections, 1775-1947* (2019, co-edited with Daniel Sanjiv Roberts) and *Crime and punishment in nineteenth-century Belfast: the story of John Linn* (2020).



**Irish Georgian Society, City Assembly House, 58 South William Street, Dublin 2.**