



Right: *Palazzo Vecchio, Florence.*
The Studiolo of Francesco
I De' Medici (1570-72)

Designed by Giorgio Vasari and Vincenzo Borghini, with paintings by many artists.

even 'classical' detail in the 15th century sometimes became 'Gothicized'.

In many rooms of the Renaissance period, it was in the details that a room achieved its classical feel. However plain the walls and ceiling of any room were, an elaborate chimneypiece or doorframes could transform it, and it was frequently on such carved decorations that the greatest expense would be lavished. In particular, the chimneypiece lent itself to personal interpretations, as Sebastiano Serlio already noted in Part One of his *Treatise on Architecture* published in Venice in 1537. Although it harked back to medieval prototypes, the hooded variety continued in favour well beyond the 15th century and into the next. Sometimes this had only small beams for support, particularly in poorer homes, as is shown in Paolo Uccello's painting *Woman Redeeming her Cloak with the Host* of the 1450s in the National Gallery in Urbino. This was because it could thus project into a room without taking up space at the sides if supported on brackets, and offered considerable opportunity for ingenious decoration, sometimes including the family coat of arms. As early as the 1460s the type that was to dominate most European rooms from the later 17th century onwards, with the fireplace recessed well into the depth of the wall and a simple moulded surround to the opening, made its appearance in Mantua's Camera degli Sposi.

As the focal point of any room, as much for light as for heat on dark nights, it was natural that artists should

(see above), and rapidly developed his almost romantic ideas of movement and variety in architecture from his experience of the Roman baths and palaces. Adam was a brilliant architect, and his external designs for Edinburgh University and Kedleston Hall are of European importance. But he excelled at interior design, to which he devoted his greatest inventiveness, in his London business with his brother James.

In spite of the new feeling against Palladian heaviness that had appeared in the mid-century, it was Adam who declared war on ponderous architectural features in interior design. Although he was brilliantly familiar with the entire vocabulary of Roman decorative art, he had the genius to couple this with his study of other styles such as the Italian Renaissance (notably 16th century artists including Michelangelo and Giovanni da Udine); the result is best seen in his Entrance Hall at Syon House, Middlesex, where the rich effect is the result of an amalgam of ancient and Renaissance Roman detail. Paramount also is Adam's immaculate sense for colour, and the play of light and shade, again notably revealed at Syon where he has us pass from whites and greys in the entrance, to sumptuous greens and gold in the famous Ante-Room, and then into a series of alternating paler and richly-coloured interiors which also vary greatly in shape and size. Syon's Long Gallery is one of the most satisfying rooms of the 18th century.

Similar contrasts are found in all his major country house interiors, notably at Kedleston, Osterley Park, Harewood



Previous page left: *Kedleston Hall, Derbyshire, England.*

The Alabaster Hall (1765)

Architect: Robert Adam.

An "antique" feel is clearly sought after in the use of lavish material for the columns, the niches for statues and the moulded plasterwork on the strongly shaped ceiling. *Photograph by English Life Publications Ltd.*

Previous page right: *Catherine's Summer Palace, Tsarkoe Selo, Leningrad, Russia (c. 1780)*

Architect: Charles Cameron. The architect carried out much Neo-Classical decoration in the interior of Rastrelli's earlier palace, recognizable in idiom but unusual in flavour, using stronger colours than in contemporary European work.

Left: *Syon House, Middlesex, England. The Ante-Room (1761)*

Lesson HD 6

Towards Stylistic Variety: from Empire and Regency to the Romantic Period and Historicism

In our age of internationalism and the rapid spread of information through photography and television, it is difficult for us to imagine the excitement felt by artists and designers at the new accessibility of visual records of historical styles increasingly encountered from the 18th century onwards. In the previous Lesson we saw how books of engravings spread accurate archaeological information not only about Greece and Rome, but also about other, more exotic styles. The allure of classical architecture and decoration could not sustain itself exclusively against the appeal of new styles, some of which made their appearance in the midst of Neo-Classicism - the Egyptian, for example, first in the work of Piranesi, then in much Empire and Regency taste.

The transition in France from the Neo-Classicism of the 18th century to the Empire style is arguably smoother than the arrival of the contemporary English Regency style. Parallels are always drawn between the principal national representatives of the styles, Charles Percier and Pierre François Léonard Fontaine in France and Thomas Hope in Britain. Both published their ideas in highly influential engraved books, on the one hand the *Recueil de décorations intérieures* (from 1801) and Hope's *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration* of 1807. Percier and Fontaine spent three years in Rome and knew Renaissance and Baroque architecture at first hand; it seems extraordinary that they noted how much more suitable Renaissance works were as sources of inspiration for their day. This was a feature which linked them with Hope, since



Left: *The Royal Pavilion
Brighton, England (1815-22).
The Banqueting Room*



Right: *Thematic House, London (1979-84). The Library*

Architect: Charles Jencks

Photographer: Richard Bryant/Arcaid

Next page: *Perpetual Savings Bank, Los Angeles, California. Banking Hall (c. 1963)*

Architect: Ed Stone. Decorative treatment of structural columns incorporates effective lighting and a vigorous sense of form.

Photograph by Elaine Denby.

in 1925, and the style managed to exist alongside the innovations of the modern movements in architecture and the decorative arts. Much of its appeal was its eminent suitability for mass production, although there it also provided excellent opportunities for extravagant displays of conspicuous consumption when expensive materials were adopted by designers like Jacques-Émile Ruhlmann (1879-1933) and Robert Mallet Stevens (1886-1945).

Sometimes known as the 'jazz style', Art Deco designers took advantage of fashionable quirkiness such as the interest in ethnic art, the use of Deco on ocean liners and the image of speed (the *Train Bleu*), Orient Express and so on to incorporate elements from these areas into their designs. This resulted in cross-fertilization of motifs, with 'yachting' style creeping into rooms such as the Chanin bathroom in New York's Chanin Building of 1929, and the type of decorative detail associated at the time with railways (concealed electric lighting, streamlined forms suggestive of locomotion) appearing in interiors such as the Lobby from the Strand Palace Hotel, London (now dismantled, Victoria and Albert Museum) and the famous bathroom of Tilly Losch, combining coloured glass, concealed lighting and mirrors to suggest a glamour worthy of Hollywood.