

# SELF-LED ACTIVITY

## DESIGN YOUR OWN ROBERT ADAM INTERIOR



KS3

KS4

### Recommended for

KS3 and KS4 (Art and Design)

### Learning objectives

- Identify some key characteristics of Robert Adam's neo-classical interior design style.
- Apply understanding of Robert Adam's style to a room design, including decorations and furniture.

### Time to complete

60–90 minutes



Portrait of Robert Adam by George Willison (c.1770–5).  
© National Portrait Gallery, London

### SUMMARY

Robert Adam designed the inside and outside of Kenwood House. He paid great attention to detail, and even his decoration included plasterwork, furniture, carpets, railings, even doorknobs.

### HOW TO RECOGNISE THE WORK OF ROBERT ADAM

This kit includes various resources you can use to make students familiar with the characteristics of Adam's work before you visit:

- Read the sections 'Grand Designs from Ancient Rome' and 'Robert Adam's Work on the House' on page 15 of the Historical Information.
- Examine 'Source Group 4 – Robert Adam' on pages 67–8 of the Sources.
- Use the 'Robert Adam Design Toolkit' on page 77–9.

During your visit, encourage students to look closely for evidence of Robert Adam's neo-classical style around the house. His style is present in large features like columns, but also in smaller features like table legs. Students may notice patterns repeated in various rooms, which will give them a sense of Adam's favourite decorative motifs.

Back in the classroom, ask students to apply their understanding of Adam's work to their own designs. Students can use the activity sheets on pages 80–2 for this task, which guides them through the process of designing a fireplace, a cross-section of the whole room, plus a plan for the ceiling. We've provided some of Adam's engravings as exemplars.

### MORE LEARNING IDEAS

Encourage students to take photos of the Robert Adam features they see as they explore. They should try to capture whole rooms as well as patterns and details that will inspire their own designs back in the classroom.

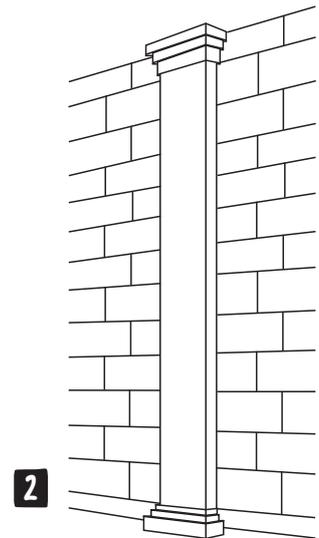
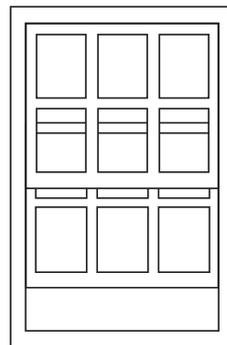
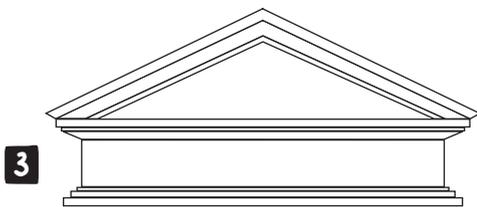
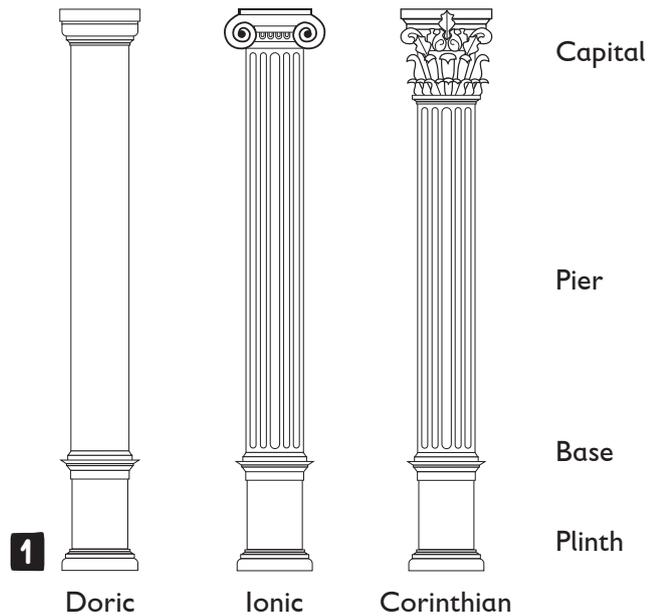
# ROBERT ADAM DESIGN TOOLKIT

## STRUCTURES

**1 Column** – a vertical supporting pillar used in classical orders of architecture. There are three main orders: Doric, Ionic and Corinthian. They are graded by the amount of decoration they have and their proportions. Doric is the plainest and stoutest and Corinthian the most elaborate.

**2 Pilaster** – an attached rectangular column sticking out slightly from the wall.

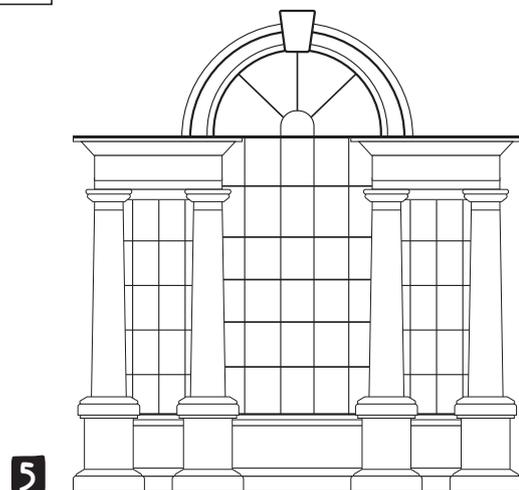
**3 Pediment** – a low-pitched triangular gable often used over a window or door.



## WINDOWS

**4 Sash** – a window that opens by sliding up and down on pulleys.

**5 Venetian** – an arched window type common in neo-classical architecture.



# ROBERT ADAM DESIGN TOOLKIT

## COLOURS

Robert Adam was known for using a pale colour palette to make rooms feel light and airy. White was often used to frame other colours and ceiling paintings. Darker colours were used scantily, for emphasis.



White



Light Blue



Dark Blue



Pink



Green

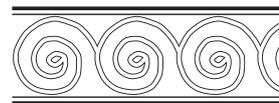
## MOULDING AND MOTIFS

Each style of architecture has its own unique moulded decorations.

**Frieze** – a decorated band of plaster used along a wall.



**Vitruvian scroll** – a repeating pattern of linked spirals.



**Egg and dart** – an alternate pattern of egg shapes and arrowheads.



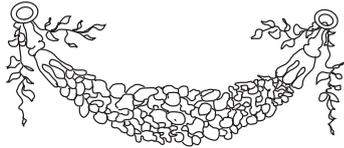
**Greek key** – an interlocking geometric pattern.



# ROBERT ADAM DESIGN TOOLKIT

Motifs are symbols with particular meanings repeated in decorations around the house, which can appear in mouldings, in ironwork and on furniture.

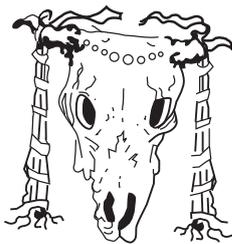
**Festoon** – a curved swag of flowers, foliage or drapery.



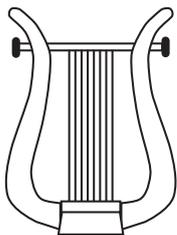
**Lion** – an animal symbol of bravery from Lord Mansfield's coat of arms.



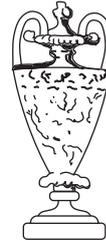
**Bucranium** – a religious symbol associated with sacrifice, based on an ox skull.



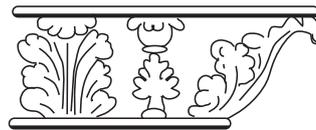
**Lyre** – a stringed instrument that features in Greek and Roman myths.



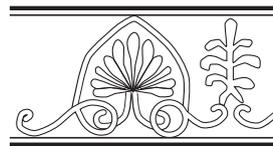
**Urn** – a classical vase often associated with death as they could be used for ashes.



**Acanthus** – a pattern based on the leaf of the acanthus plant (from Greece).



**Anthemion** – a pattern based on the flowers and leaves of the honeysuckle plant.



A close up of the new library, or 'Great Room' at Kenwood House.

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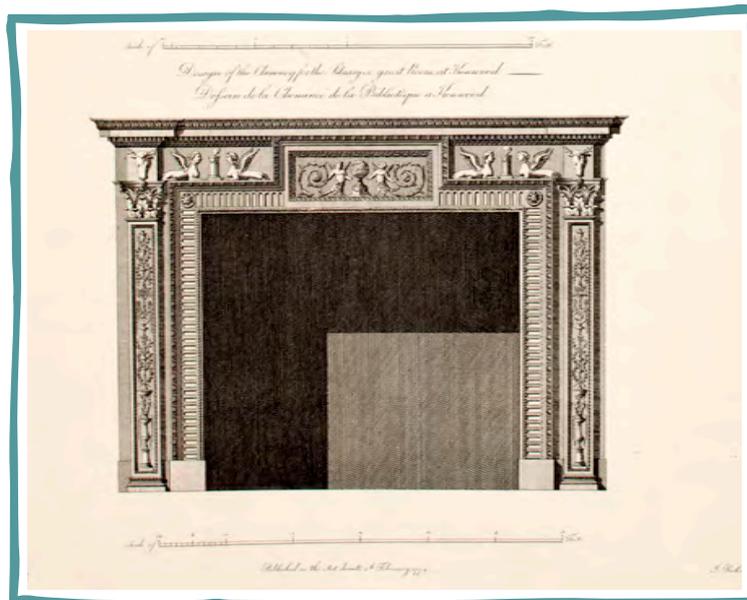


Follow the steps below to design a room inspired by Robert Adam's neo-classical style.

## 1 START SMALL

Choose some of the mouldings and motifs from the Robert Adam Design Toolkit to create a fireplace design.

To help you, here's Robert Adam's engraving of the fireplace in the library at Kenwood:



Design your own fireplace here:



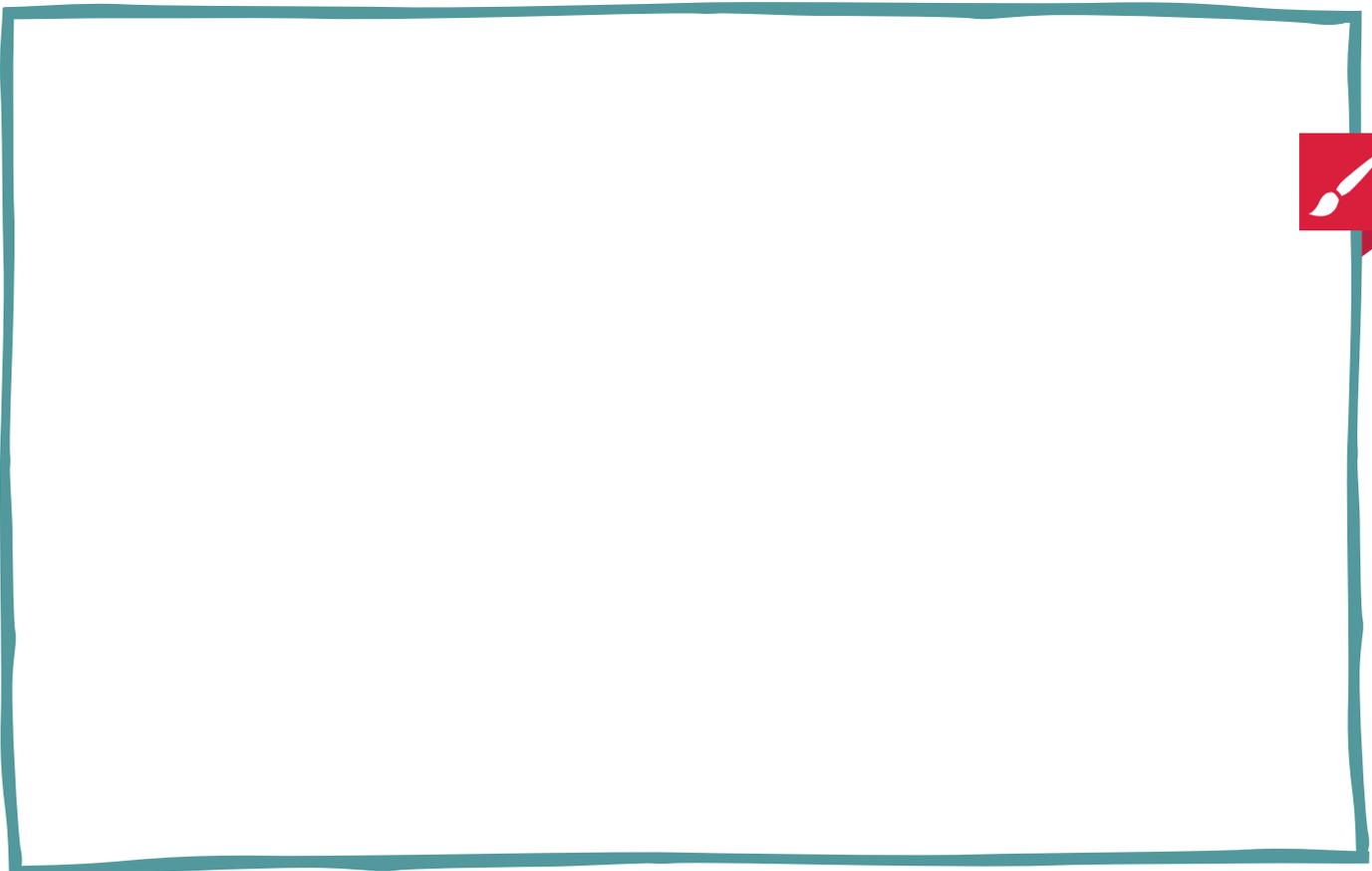
## 2 THINK BIG

Use the structures, windows, colours, moulding and motifs from the toolkit to **design** a whole room.

Here's Robert Adam's cross-section engraving of the library at Kenwood. Notice how he's included details like the painting above the fireplace, benches in the alcoves and books on the shelves:



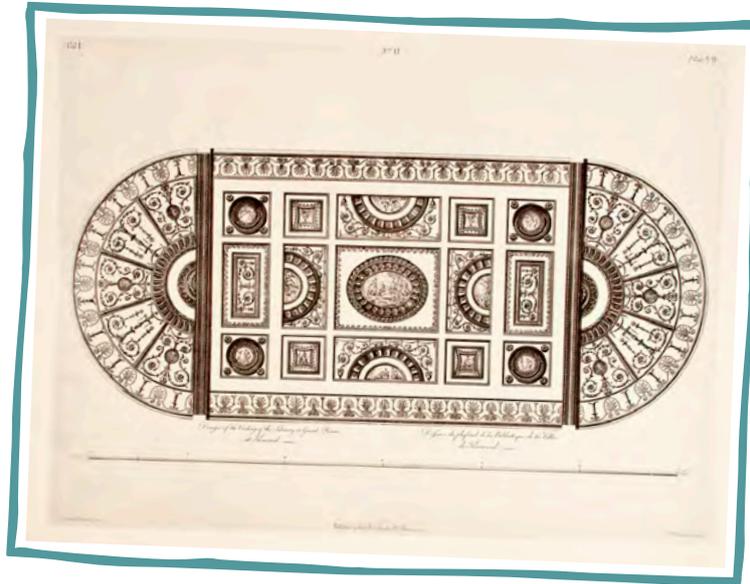
Design your own room here:



### 3 LOOK UP

No Robert Adam design would be complete without an impressive ceiling to draw the visitor's eyes upwards, creating a sense of inspiration and awe.

Here's Robert Adam's design for the library ceiling. The 19 paintings were done by his decorative painter, Antonio Zucchi:



Design your own ceiling here:

