

## **A terrace for contemplation: The Cameron Gallery**

ITM London



**In 1779, the Empress Catherine II “the great” invited a Scots architect, Charles Cameron to turn her dreams of a unique building in to reality. She read his publication Roman thermae, was impressed with his creations and considered him the only person able to fulfil her wishes. “I have got together with Mr Cameron and we are creating a terrace with hanging gardens, a bath house and a terrace”, the empress enthused.**

During his time in Russia, Cameron established himself as one of the empress's favourite designers, whose most prominent creation was the Cameron Gallery.

:”If you stand in the gardens looking up at the terrace outlines against the blue sky, you can imagine the abode of the gods on Mt Olympus.

Mary Brown a great admirer of the Cameron Gallery observed that

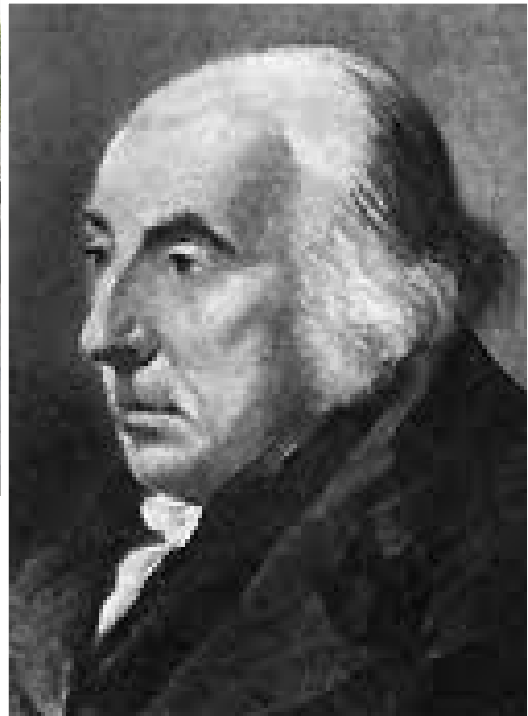
The empress instructed Cameron to create a colonnade for strolling



An alley of statues



Charles Cameron





Bust from the Cameron Gallery

and philosophical discussion and the result was an elegant two-storied building that stands perpendicular to the east wing of the Catherine Palace.

Nowadays it is considered to be one of the most beautiful galleries in Europe. The colonnade was designed to be used by Catherine as a place for tranquil, philosophical contemplation with the best possible views over the surrounding park, especially the

Great Pond.

Cameron's penchant for classical symmetry and his superb taste for colour are evident in the charming Green Dining Room, originally fitted for Catherine's son Paul, and the delightful Blue Drawing Room, with its blue-and-white painted-silk wallpaper and superb painted ceiling. More flamboyant but equally charming, the Chinese Blue Drawing Room also boasts exquisite painted-silk wallpaper

featuring intricate Chinese landscapes. the end of the 18th century.

The ground floor is built of rusticated stone while the upper floor is an enclosed pavilion with a neo-classical colonnade of 44 slender, white Ionic columns forming a covered walking arcade on either side. Between the columns Cameron placed bronze busts of ancient Greek and Roman philosophers, orators, politicians and generals including Plato, Cicero and Seneca. These are copies of antique original cast at

The southern side overlook the private Garden, and from the east the terrace joins the Hanging Garden. Both walls of the terrace are painted in light blue and the floor is paved with marble. A monumental flight of curved steps leads down to the garden. On the walls which flank the floor of the stairs stand bronze statues of the ancient hero Hercules and goddess of flowers Flora, copies of ancient originals.

Cameron gallery



## Catherine Palace & Cameron Gallery



Catherine and Cameron sought to create an idealised, elevating and stimulating place to stroll, sit read in peace and contemplate.

“In this beautiful gallery where Catherine went every day when in residence, they succeeded well as you will discover when you visit and get a change to enjoy the serenity of this place for contemplation”, Mary Brown observed.

Empress Catherine II (reigned

1762 – 1796) known as Catherine the Great was a German princess brought to St Petersburg to marry Peter III. She was well-educated speaking French, German and Russian and read extensively, keeping up to date on events in Russia and the rest of Europe. She corresponded with many of the prominent minds of her era, including Voltaire and Diderot. She believed that education would change the hearts and minds of the Russian people and turn them away from backwardness. This

meant developing people both intellectually and morally and providing them with skills and knowledge.

Charles Cameron (1743-1812-) studied in Italy and France. In addition to his work for Catherine the Great he also designed Sophia

Cathedral. For the future Emperor Paul he built an extensive residence, the Pavlovsk Palace, somewhat plain in exterior appearance but dazzlingly luxurious inside. In 1799-1803- he rebuilt the Razumovsky palace in Baturyn, Ukraine.



The Agate rooms of Catherine the Great