

## THESIS ABSTRACT

### HENRY VIII: INTERIORS OF PERSUASION

King Henry VIII's reign was full of difficulties stemming from his family's weak claim to the throne and their highly contested sovereignty. Furthermore, Henry's particular inability to produce a legitimate male heir until late in his reign created dynastic complications to his already turbulent reign. What is most distinguishable about Henry VIII's response to such tribulations was his meticulous use of architecture and the interior to substantiate his rightful supremacy as King of England. Consequently, a style emerged during Henry's reign that applied innovative Italian Renaissance antique designs and humanist philosophies to established chivalric Gothic architecture and overt heraldry. This Henrician style pervaded the watching, presence, and privy chambers in the king's principal household and seat of official government: Whitehall Palace. Specifically, this sequence of semi-public ceremonial chambers reveals the representation that King Henry VIII desired to propagate throughout Whitehall Palace onto his court.

The political symbolic meanings of the decoration can be gained through a reconstruction of the ubiquitous architecture and decorative elements in the Henrician ceremonial interior. Conceived within the sixteenth-century context of Henrician attitudes toward identity and representation, the application of the Henrician style in the ceremonial chambers was rooted in the newly developed conception of perception and persuasion. In viewing these interiors, Henry's courtiers would be edified of his sovereignty through a visual persuasion campaign meant to reinforce his authority through constructed associations. Particularly, the application of chivalric Gothic and Italian Renaissance antique designs can be seen as Henry aligning himself with the

representational symbols of his historic ancestry in tandem with the imagery of the virtuous Renaissance Prince.

This research focus on the reconstruction and analysis the Whitehall ceremonial chamber's interior decoration, consisting of a multifaceted visual analysis of the remaining Henrician interiors, significant objects, illustrated manuscripts, and key paintings, based on contemporary chronicles, legal documentations, and inventories. By placing the reconstructed Whitehall ceremonial chambers within the Henrician culture that cultivated the interior as the symbolic manifestation of supremacy, the watching, presence, and privy chambers materialize as interiors of persuasion and expose the underlying theories of representation at the court of Henry VIII.