

Classic Era and its Effect on Interior Design

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Abstract

The classical era in architecture developed most of its principles consciously in the development of structures that remain significant to this moment. The era was characterised by numerous construction designs in varied platforms including the domes, the interiors, and the columns. Architects displayed numerous skills through the design of symmetrical structures with a focal point acting as the separating and distinguishing factor. The era remains influential to modern architects who seem to emulate the various aspects established in the classical era. The interiors and designs of modern buildings including various temples emulate classical era buildings. The success of the era was influenced by some of the greatest minds in architecture including Sebastiano Serlio, Vitruvius, and Giacomo Barozzi da Vignola among others.

The impacts of the classical era influence various segments in modern architecture where the architects and the interior designers incorporate the best from the period and the contemporary designs. The era provides significant inspiration and remains a relevant topic of study.

I. Introduction

The classical era in architecture is a period characterised by constructions based on principles derived rather consciously and involving different designs. Though some varying designs characterise the classical era in architecture, what counts is that the elements of this architecture are just but the same. Architectural structures in this era portray constructive and decorative elements that are almost similar in every single structure (Lawrence and Richard 68). This era has an origin with famous architectures as the drivers behind it and it has also been copied by many nations all over the world.

The effects of the classical era get incorporated into the modern architectural design giving modern houses a unified structure. The classical era designs in the modern architecture create architectural designs based mostly on the balance, symmetry, and order. Modern interior designs have much to copy from these designs owing to their durability and elegance. The paper will discuss some of the impacts of the classical era in modern architecture. The paper will provide a detailed analysis of the primary architects who ensured the success of architecture in the classical era and the contributions to modern architecture.

I.1 Place and Time context

Looking at the origin of the classical era in architecture, this is a period in construction traceable to the ancient Greece and the Roman Empire, especially in Rome. This two were geographical locations where the classical era originated. This form of construction design was carried on even after the collapse of empires such as the Roman Empire.

This continuance can be illustrated because the Byzantine Empire carried on with the classical style of construction (Morgan 14). Even though the Roman Empire collapsed and the classical era was eroded fast in areas formerly under the Roman Empire, various efforts of revival were conducted in Europe. The efforts were meant to help bring back the beauty of the classical era that can be traced to Carolingian Renaissance in the eighth and ninth century. Architecture from the classical era has been witnessed across the surface of the earth since inception and remains present in some architectural designs today (Lawrence and Richard 50).

1.2 Countries copying the design

Architectural designs from the classical era have been emulated by some countries that majorly include countries from Europe, especially the western European nations. In Europe, the major countries to copy from the classical era architectural design include Italy. This presence can be attributed to the close association with the Roman Empire before its disintegration. France is also a country whose architectural design is influenced by the classical era as can be seen in the construction of Virginia State Capitol (Lawrence and Richard 10). Germany adopted designs from the classical era early in history following the fall of the Roman Empire. This feature can be witnessed in the periods between the eighth and the ninth century following the construction of the Lorsch Abbey gatehouse. The architectural era has subsequently influenced a lot of construction designs to date. This illustration is just to mention a few since this architectural design is present in all

countries with prevalence in the United States and Australia (Morgan 18).

1.3 Famous Architects

The classical era had famous architect pioneering major construction developments. These architects saw the completion of some structures that influenced the others in developing the classical era in architecture. There is one mastermind behind the classical era and this is a great Greek architect, Vitruvius (Blunt 37). The classical era borrowed significantly from the various works of this Greek and this has been the basis of what is now referred to as the classical era and the classical architecture.

Upon the fall of the Roman Empire that led to most of the European nations attempting to do away with the Roman architectural designs, the classical era slowly defaced. However, a bunch of architects came up to ensure that the classical era stayed alive by promoting it in Europe (Blunt 11). Architects in the names of Giacomo Barozzi da Vignola, Leon Battista Alberti and Sebastiano Serliotried to revive the classical era after the fall of Rome. This group of architects studied *De architectura* by Vitruvius to bring back the classical design from ancient Rome into the architecture of that time. They also studied the remains of the buildings that formed part of what was the then Roman Empire so as to help develop the classical era (Morgan 56).

II. Traits of the Classical Era

Architectural construction in the classical era had some characteristics that are borrowed to form part of

the classical architecture today and among these include symmetry, domes columns and acroteria. This section seeks to discuss some of these traits onto their finer details (Blunt 12).

2.1 Columns

The columns form some of the principal elements of architecture in the classical era and represent the significance of the classical approaches towards architecture. These are primary elements that can be physically identified easily as a trait of architecture in the classical era. These columns can appear in the interior of the buildings or even in the exterior and play two major roles. The first role is to support the building and this is the major reason as to why columns were considered in architecture. The second role was decorative and this can be attributed to the Romans and Greeks constructing columns outside of building just to decorate them (Wittkower 30).

2.2 Symmetry

Symmetry in the buildings characterised the classical era architectural design. This symmetry includes balance in the building design and thus an even distribution of various elements in the construction of the building. This approach applies to both interior and the exterior designs (Wittkower 62). This trait of the architectural construction in the classical era can be witnessed today in modern buildings. Some of the most notable ones being temples include the Temple of Aphaea. In modern day England, the council house located in Birmingham can be seen to possess this trait from the classical era (Morgan 132).

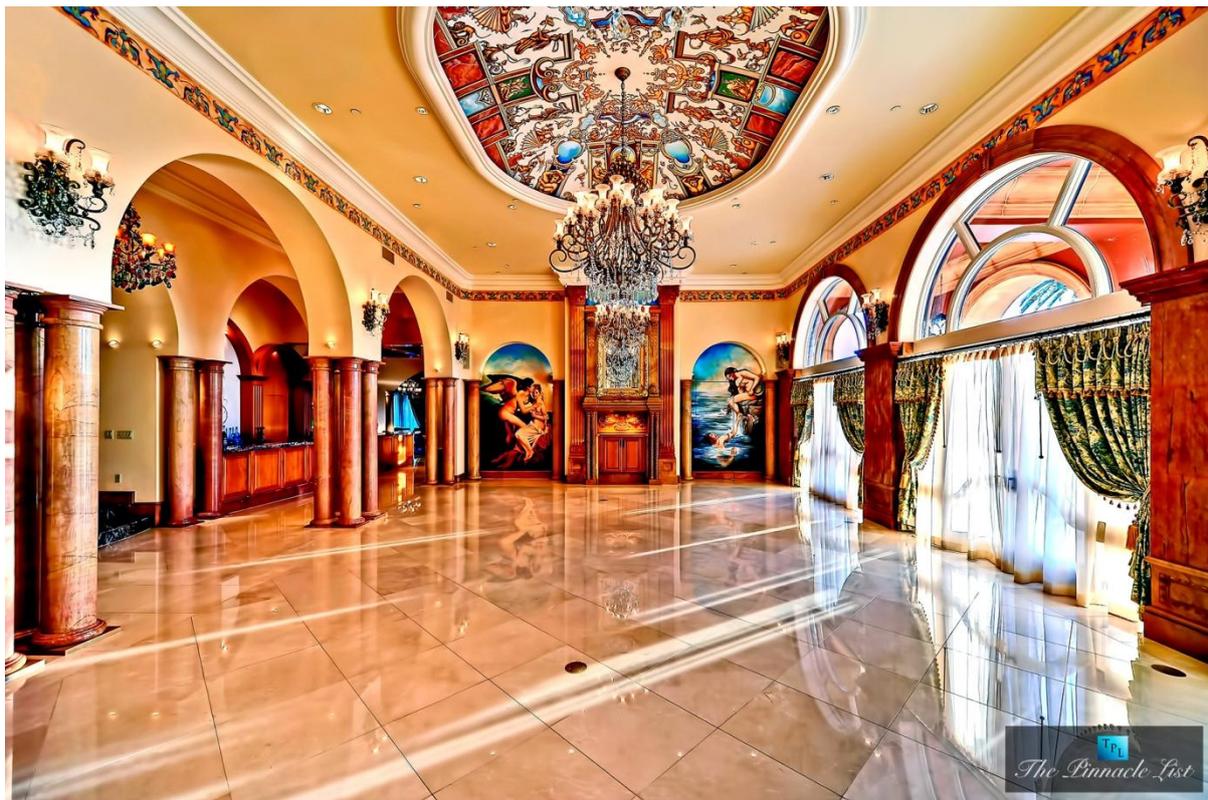


Fig 1. Symmetry design creation in the classic period

2.3 Domes

The architectural construction under the classical era was associated with domes as seen on various buildings at that time, and especially in ancient Greece and the Roman Empire. The domes were constructed in the classical style and their purpose was primarily meant to give such houses and buildings a decorative touch (Vitruvius and Granger 11).

The domes, like seen in ancient architecture and even under classical architecture today, are important to the preservation of history. The domes are relevant to the field of architecture at large since many buildings of the world including mosques and temples still utilise them making such houses look more attractive (Wittkower 154).

2.4 Acroteria

Acroteria refers to ornamental structures within the design of a building with a role that is more decorative than functional. This kind of element could be witnessed both on exteriors and interiors of buildings introduced by the Greeks. These criteria could either include ornaments with fine shapes built on top of buildings or in many times as the Greeks did it; it was usually of a statue on a pediment (Vitruvius and Granger 16).

All these traits as discussed were the most notable ones of the classical era in architecture and they are replicated in various building designs of today. Even

though some of these traits are of functional values or decorative values, they bring the best out of a building.

III. How the Classical Era influences the architect and design of buildings

The classical era in architectural design had various impact on building construction and design at that point in time. The approach influences today's constructions as seen in various elements representing the classical era of construction. This section of the discussion seeks to look at some of the ways this architectural design has impacted the construction of buildings in the past and the present (Vitruvius and Granger 18).

The classical era had a significant influence on the construction of temples in ancient Greece. The architects at the time made use of the classical era designs in constructing such important buildings as the Greek Temples making them suitable for use since they derived great satisfaction (Wittkower 45).

Another form of building that was built at this time using the classical era construction techniques in setting up structures includes theatres. In this time, art was just as important as the various scientific inventions. The theatres played a role that was way above the entertainment function as even young people could be educated by coming to the theatre

that contributed to the improvements in the society (Serlio 16).

The applications of the architectural designs in the classical era are highly encouraging. Those excavators who have dug out remains of buildings constructed during the classical era have helped in the understanding of its usage more efficiently (Frampton & Futagawa 24). For example, understanding that it would be ideal to use this design technique for buildings for social use such as the construction of temples and theatres helped in the growth of the design.

The practice is still present to the moment. Learnings from history in the field of construction architecture are evidently illustrated by many temples across the globe today that adopt the classical designs. In most countries, a population that makes use of the temple for worship has an opportunity of witnessing the acts of architectural practices from the classical era (Serlio 98).

IV. Architects

There are some architects that played major roles in seeing to it that the architectural designs with the classical era were a success and something great that would be copied on to future generations. This section seeks to discuss some of the various architects who engineered this construction design and also look at their various contributions to the course of the classical era in architectural construction (Frampton & Futagawa 7).

First, I would start by discussing the founder of this design of architectural construction and this, as stated earlier, is Vitruvius. Vitruvius was a famous Greek architect upon whose works the classical era in architectural design developed. Upon studying the resource *De architectura* by Vitruvius, one can understand the ancient Greek construction designs. This understanding together with the remains of the former Roman Empire, make it clear to stake what the classical era in architectural construction presents. Therefore, architects can develop it further through such means like those applied following the collapse of the Roman Empire (Serlio 22).



Fig 2. The interior of the Pantheon (from an 18th-century painting by Panini). A heritage of Vitruvius designs after his death

Another prominent architect is Giacomo Barozzi da Vignola. Giacomo was an Italian architect key to the revival of the classical era after the doom faced by the Roman Empire. His works such as the Villa Farnese in Capraola the construction of a church in Rome, the Jesuits' Church of the Gesu, helped return the vibrancy of architectural design that had faded in Europe (Frampton & Futagawa 51).

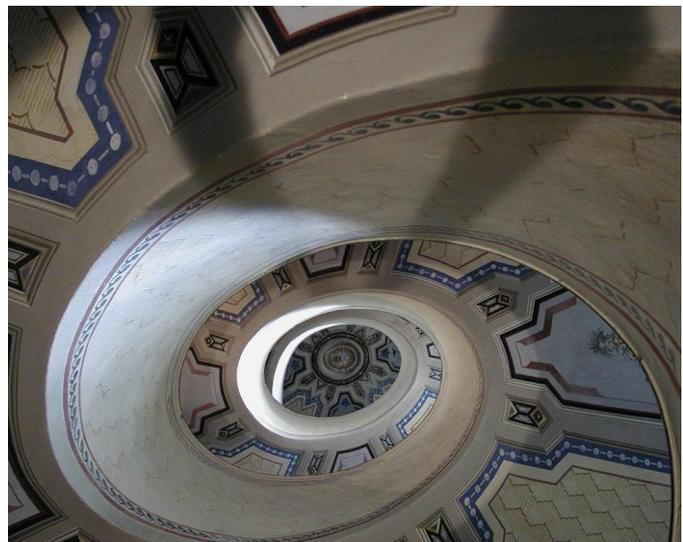


Fig 3. Spiral Stairs by Giacomo Vignola

Leon Battista Alberti is another significant architect representing the classical era. Just like Barozzi, he too came from Italy where some wonderful works under classical architectural design had been commissioned in his lifetime. Even after his death, the kind of influence this architect had was so

huge that some buildings were erect in the classical design just to honour his contributions.

Italy saw a wonderful building in the classical architectural design in the name of Palazzo Rucellai, thanks to the marvellous works of Battista. Battista continued to inspire constructions based on this design even through writing, for example in him translating the book *De Re Aedificatori* by Alberti (Willich 6). This measure was a great achievement as it helped spread the design technique to English-speaking nations of the world. Upon his demise the Sant' Andrea, Mantua, was built in a design by Battista to honour his contribution to architecture (Alberti 142).

The last architect that I will look at under the classical era regarding the architectural design is Sebastiano Serlio. I consider this architect special to the classical era as he brought this design to the building of the Palace of Fontainebleau. Other than this, he spread the ideas of the classical era and classical architectural design to other architects for generations to come through his books; *I sette libri dell'architettura* and *Tutte l'opere d'architettura et prospetiva*. These books have helped spread the classical architecture to broader areas (Willich 60).

V. Effect of the Classical Era to Today's Architecture

The Classical era has had great effects on the kind of architecture that is practised today as elements from the classical era can be witnessed in various structures constructed in the modern times. In this section, I would highlight some comparisons between previous and modern classical era structures (Alberti 14).

First, I would look at the Acropolis in ancient Greece and compare it to the White House in Washington DC. The White House bears much resemblance to the Acropolis in Athens in that they both have the elements of classical architectural designs. The similarity is illustrated in the use of columns in their fronts, something typical of the classical era (Willich 36). This approach shows the modern day adoption of the classical era into the architecture of modern buildings.

Another example is the modern temple of Zeus in Athens that based its design on an ancient temple of Apollo, in Bassea. The two temples have a resemblance in their use of columns to support the structures. The pillars are also used for decorative purposes since they can be seen outside the temples

with nothing to support while others support the roof of the temples.

Looking at the Coliseum in Rome, this architectural masterpiece has all the elements of classical era architecture. Many buildings and architectural designs around the globe can borrow at least one element from the marvellous piece of architectural work. This design compares to various cottages with columns at the forefront and is of resemblance to the kind of architecture at the Fontana di Trevi, in the Italy's capital. The use of Doric columns to support balconies also relate to the Roman Coliseum (Alberti 13).

5.1 Effects on Interior Design

Modern architects incorporate the classical era design in the interiors of houses and other apartments. The classical era influences the interiors of both the non-residential and residential houses including the concert halls, offices, banks, and building lobbies. The architect and the designer work in collaboration in ensuring the house has a unified whole. The lighting, fabrics, wall finishes, and floors all have something they can copy from the classic design. Architects incorporate the classical era plasters, polished wood, bricks, damask, and slate to give the interior design an overall impression of the classical impression. Houses influenced by the classical era contain large focal points that define the placement of all other products. Some of the classical era focal points used in modern interior designs includes the fireplace, impressive staircase or the grand table (Design Teacher n.p).

The primary ideas in using the classical era interior designs involve developing a perfect sense of symmetry. Classical era designed interiors reflect each other when divided by half. The placement of all features in the room should be immaculately done including the lighting and the placement of art. Some of the colours used presently and influenced by the classical era are those defined specifically by nature. Some of these colours include deep blue, yellow, brown, and the earth tones. Other common objects in the classical era influenced rooms are the presence of large vases, Roman columns, and the busts. Materials commonly used are the durable fabrics like cotton and linen. The flooring materials include wood, slate, stone, and marble placed in a geometric pattern for the development of a calculated look (Design Teacher n.p).



Fig 4. Sandy colour adds elegance and luxury to the whole room.



Fig 5. A modern enactment of the Classic Era.



Fig 6. Classic Leather chair from the 18th Century used nowadays in household reception areas.

VI. Conclusion

The classical era can be traced back to ancient Greece and ancient Rome. The fact that architecture from this era has been passed on from time to time never to face extinction, has led to classical architecture with distinct properties that have influenced modern constructions. Some of the major representations of classical architecture around the globe include the white house in the United States. The classical era can be accredited to some architects who picked up from the Greek great, Vitruvius and thus the classical architecture is all over the surface of the earth. The most classical architecture bears a great deal of flexibility and variety. For example, the design might be simple or complicated with motifs. Another example is the location of the building that plays a great role in the framework of the aesthetics of classical architecture. All of these examples have a significant impact in following certain architectural properties that suit each region. They also lead to adding some architectural additions depending on the climate and culture of the community. What makes classical architecture special is that it underwent certain philosophical concepts and engineering standards. It is based on ratios that are meant to keep the harmony between technical and architectural elements. The following civilisations were keen on facing the light source and were focused on large light frequencies. Also, the buildings reflected great magnificence and cruelty. On the other hand, interior architecture focused on using white and black stone in the process of paving. They also focused on using motifs and painting on the walls. They covered the walls with different materials such as marble, mosaic glass and ceramics. Finally,

furniture is an important element in interior architecture. Furniture design depends on the function of the piece, space it will occupy and how well it fits in the room. Some pieces of furniture were carried out in different eras in style and super skill. Those pieces were kept later in museums for being special. Humans needed furniture from ancient times. Main furniture pieces are similar in forms, types and functions throughout the ages. They have only changed in patterns, decorations and methods of manufacture from one era to another and from one place to another. Furniture is a part of the environment formed by humans themselves. It has enhanced human affairs and the level of development in all times and places. Different civilisations have developed many kinds of furniture, patterns, materials and techniques used in the industry.

This paper would benefit all people in the field of architecture and those with a keen eye for design. Understanding the various concepts of the classical era as defined on the paper would equip an architect, designer, student, and scholars with the relevant knowledge regarding the classical era and its impacts on contemporary structures. However, the paper is limited to those with the basic knowledge of architecture and would prove useful to the architects and the interior designers. The paper can be applied by any individual with the aim of developing, renovating, or purchasing architectural structures to shed insight on the issue and allow for the efficient decision-making.

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