



David Hicks: Commentary on Hospitality, Education History, and Classical Architecture

Lesson 10: Classical Architecture

Outline:

How did you become interested in classical architecture and end up building this home?

- David and his brother had finished a translation of Marcus Aurelius's *Meditations* and wanted to follow it up with a translation of Vitruvius' *On Architecture*.
 - They later abandoned this project but by then David had become obsessed with the theory of classical architecture.
 - Classical architecture is mathematically based and produces beautiful results, but the rules seem arbitrary to modern man.
 - David began his design project as a “thought exercise” to see if he could create a modern home according to classical principles.
- David shares the story of searching for the right columns to adorn the portico of his home.
 - The classical formula dictates the correct specifications of the diameter and intercolumnar spacing for any given height.
 - David needed 24-foot columns with a diameter of 28 inches, which he was not able to find anywhere.
 - He finally persuaded a craftsman in Logan, UT to build his custom columns but only after a personal visit.
- David reflects on Betsy's contributions to the construction of their home, and how she makes all his projects better.
 - It was finally Betsy's idea to turn his “thought exercise” into a real building project.
 - He says their marriage has taught him the importance of finding ways to make things better as a result of disagreeing in the beginning.

What was the purpose of the family trip that you took to see other examples of Palladian homes?

- They wanted to see how Palladian homes were built during the Renaissance.
 - In particular, they learned the *intonaco* method for applying layers of limestone mortar to a home's exterior to give it the impression of cut stone.



- This was the method used by Venetians to build their palazzos when cut limestone was not affordable.
- David also learned to incorporate the *Serliana* window into his design.
 - This is an arched window with two side windows introduced in Italy after the classical design of Greek domes.
 - They are still used in buildings today but rarely with the correct mathematical proportions to make them pleasing.
- David comments on how other homes don't feel right to him when the proportions are wrong.
 - He acknowledges that this may sound snobbish or elitist; however, he claims we're missing out when we don't learn from the proven traditions of the past.
 - Why reinvent the wheel when it already works?

Does your love of classical architecture relate to schools?

- David states that modern schools are like prisons.
 - They are usually based on a utilitarian design that ignores beauty, light, and the harmonious use of space.
 - School architecture reveals what is at the heart of the school. An ugly school is a physical example of internal decay.
- David shares about his involvement building a beautiful classical school in Portugal with architect Fernando González.
 - The large waiting list reflects the demand for a beautiful school.
 - Ultimately, a beautiful school sets the standard for students regarding ideas of beauty and perfection.