

The work of an architect essay example

[Countries](#), [United States](#)



Introduction

Andrea Palladio is one of the world's most influential architects. His ideas, known as Palladianism, may be seen in numerous buildings in the world which are styled neo-classically. For example, in Washington, the Capitol, Whitehouse and the John A. Wilson building embody Palladio's style and motifs. He was born in Padua, Venice in 1508 and became the apprentice to a stone cutter at the age of 13 before fleeing to Vicenza. He became an assistant in the Vicenza masons guild. While at Vicenza, he met Giangiorgio Trissino, an amateur architect, who took care of him. Palladio also worked with Daniele Barbaro in his first commissions. His first works included villas and palaces for the aristocracy. In the 1560s, he began to design churches and temples and rose to the status of architectural adviser in the Venetian Republic. Although his style was greatly influenced by various Renaissance architects and thinkers, Palladio largely used contemporary ideas (Loth 6). His ideas were creatively linked to traditions of Bramante and Alberti. His buildings exemplify rhythm, symmetry, proportion and modularity that are not easy to come by among other works from neo-classical architects. This paper examines Andrea Palladio's approach as an architect and provides reactions to his work.

Palladian Style

Most residential architecture in America has its inspiration roots on the great England mansions. These buildings are based on the Palladian style, credited to Andrea Palladio. Most of his buildings are found in Vicenza and Venice as well as in surrounding towns. Palladio's work has been widely copied to the

extent that several elements of his work have evolved over time. For example, many American homes have a slight variation of what is known as Palladian windows. These windows usually form the focal point of most living rooms. The Palladian window has a center light and a semi-circular top as well as two rectangular side lights on the left and right. Palladio is a contemporary architect of the early Baroque and late mannerist styles. As a result, it is surprising that his style is Renaissance in proportion and color (Loth 16). According to historians, his work was not largely favored at the time. However, his popularity must have been made possible by the British. The Renaissance period saw man cast at the center of the universe. This contributed to the challenge and subsequent reformation of the Vatican authority. It also contributed to a harmonious and simplistic architecture. The counter-Reformation period represents the Vatican's attempt to recover lost ground. The Vatican needed to reinforce their arguments. What resulted was the Baroque style. This showed an elaborate ornamental system that was not logical and could only be explained by the Vatican church. The fact that Palladio's style was not aligned to that espoused by the Vatican meant that the British (who were not inclined to the prevailing styles of the Vatican) could apply classical architecture to contemporary times.

Reactions to features of Palladio's work

There are various characteristics of the Palladian theory. Balance, harmony, and a sense of proportion were derived from a complex of Palladian elements. These include paying careful attention to planning and use of pure geometric shapes such as spheres and cubes which create pleasant space sequences. In addition, columns were used in place of pilasters to enable the

creation of rich sculptural effects. There are four main components which were used predominantly in Palladio's architecture. These include porticoes, Palladian arch or motif, light and the thermal or Diocletian windows (Loth 5).

Porticoes

First is the use of classical porticoes. The portico was a feature developed by ancient Romans for their religious buildings and was meant to create awe. These are columns and pediments in churches, villas and palaces which echoed the grandeur of Ancient Rome. Palladio wrongly thought that Romans used porticoes for temples and dwelling façades. This explains why he used porticoes widely in his houses. Nonetheless, porticoes helped create a dignity of appearance to plain dwellings. This feature was prevalent in his villa designs and its use spread throughout Europe, gaining particularly strong toe-hold in Britain with what was known as the Anglo-Palladian movement. In the mid 18th century, the portico found its way to America. One of the earliest buildings where it was used is the 1749 Redwood Library in Rhode Island, which was built by the English architect Peter Harrison. Other works by Harrison also had this characteristic signature (Loth 10). They include the Boston King's chapel and the Newport Brick Market. The portico has been continually used as a status symbol in American houses to date. The pediment and columns are associated with success and opulence. Without the portico, most majestic houses in America would lose their psychological and visual impact. In addition, Palladio also popularized a two tiered portico. These are porticoes which utilize two floors of columns. An example of this in the United States is Drayton hall, which was built in 1740 in Charleston, South Carolina.

The Palladian arch or motif

Second is the use of Palladian arch or motif. This is a triple opening which comprises of four columns plus an entablature. The middle column pair underpin a rounded arch at the top, which when rounded is known as a Venetian window. This motif was not invented by Palladio. It was particularly favored by the Romans at the time of Emperor Hadrian. This is as in the Temple of Hadrian located in Ephesus. It became known better to the world as an illustration of the Aqueduct arch in Hadrian's Villa. This motif was used before the Renaissance by architects such as Sergio and Bramante in their works. This is particularly in the Venetian palaces. However, the motif was made famous by Andrea Palladio. He employed serlianae to screen the galleries of the medieval basilica in Vicenza. Because of close linkage with the Anglo-Palladian group, it would become known as the Palladian window or Palladian arch. Perhaps the most popular example of this arch in America is on the Philadelphia Independence Hall. Other examples of usage include the Fairmont Park in Philadelphia and the Mount Claire, Baltimore.

Figure 1: The Palladian Motif/ arch

The use of light

Thirdly, light was a major element in Palladian interiors. The use of light varies widely. For example, in Italy, interiors were designed to be cool and to provide shade. This is because Italy has predominantly intense sunshine. In Britain, there is weaker sunshine. This explains why light had to be maximized even in the interior design. This fact may be used to differentiate between the works of Palladio and those of his British imitators. The employment of artificial and natural light was important to depict the

potential of a room. Shadows could be employed to create dramatic effect in sculptural niches and apses as well as in the definition of rich moldings and carvings of the architecture. Light was incorporated into a building mainly through the use of windows. Windows were a symbol of opulence and wealth in the 17th and 18th centuries. This is because glass was handmade and very fragile, making it extremely expensive. Palladian windows were large so that they would light domes and high halls. Mirrors were used extensively and were animated through the flickering of artificial light emanating from fireplaces and chandeliers. Three types of windows were used in the Palladian style. These include the Venetian, Diocletian and the oculus.

Thermal or Diocletian windows

Fourth is the use of thermal or Diocletian windows. These are semi-circular windows which are usually divided into three using vertical mullions. The origin of this style is the bath buildings belonging to ancient Rome. An example of this is the Chiswick House which has an octagonal dome. The Diocletian window is a famed characteristic of Palladian design which was largely imitated in Britain in the 18th century. The elegance captured by the proportion and symmetry provided a balance for most of Palladio's architecture. The function of this window was to permit the entry of light but also to create a sense of time passage. This is because the light permitted into the building mimicked the sun's movement across the sky, a perfect arc over the horizon.

Figure 2: Diocletian Window (source: <http://www.architecture.com/LibraryDrawingsAndPhotographs/Palladio/PalladianBritain/PalladianInteri>
<https://assignbuster.com/the-work-of-an-architect-essay-example/>

ors/PalladianPrinciples/Light/DiocletianWindow. aspx)

Palladio's elevations are prevalent in his work, probably to reflect the axial symmetry embodied in the plan. An example of this is the palazzo Valmanara built in Vicenza in 1565. He regularly used stucco surface relief and gigantic columns which extended beyond one storey. This is a form of mannerist elements, notably used by Michelangelo. Giant columns were used in the 1571 Loggia del Capitano which was built to emulate similar Loggias in Venice and Florence. Although one can see that Palladio absorbed contemporary mannerist motifs, his elevations and plans always maintained an order and repose which was not characteristic of the Mannerist style of architecture. He must have abandoned the simplicity of his earlier designs to integrate details of the styles inherent in the late Roman Empire. Notably, even though Palladio frequented Rome, the designs of his Villas were rarely affected. They featured stuccoed brickwork and limited carved-stone detail. His objective was to develop the Roman Villa as he interpreted it from descriptions given by Vitruvius and Pliny in their writings. His villas were meant for capitalist gentry who had found economic breakthroughs in land reclamation and agricultural improvement.

Two examples of Palladio's architecture

- Villa Rotunda (1550-1606)

Figure 3: The Villa Rotunda. (Source: www.essential-architecture.com)

The Villa Rotunda is considered to be the most complete building by Palladio. The houses are located on top of a small hill where 4 separate porticoes overlook the surrounding landscape. The plan of the house is based on 9 geometric squares. This is a Renaissance style of interior architecture. The

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massing and plan of the building are joined in a perfect composition. This building is majestic as a result of its tall stature and its location. The porticoes and Palladian motifs indicate the opulence and association of the building with wealth.

Loggia del Capitaniato

This building was designed in 1571 by Andrea Palladio to replace a late medieval building, former palace of the “Capitano.” Red color of the building comes from the bricks while the white comes from the stuccoes and stone. Unlike other buildings by Palladio, this one was not plastered. There are 4 statues located on the upper floor. These represent virtue, mercy, faith and honor. The loggia has an interior harmonious space with niches and columns. The upper hall comprises of frescoes from the 16th century.

Figure 4: Loggia del Capitaniato (Source: <http://www.psupress.org/books/titles/0-271-00089-9.html>)

Conclusion

Andrea Palladio is one of the world’s most influential architects. Palladianism may be seen in numerous buildings in the world which are styled neo-classically. For example, in Washington, the Capitol, Whitehouse and the John A. Wilson building are all representative of his work. Although most of his buildings are found in Vicenza and Venice as well as in surrounding towns, the Palladian style has been widely employed throughout Europe and in the United States. There are four main components which were used predominantly in Palladio’s architecture. These include porticoes, Palladian arch or motif, light and the thermal or Diocletian windows (Loth 5). Porticoes

are columns and pediments in churches, villas and palaces which echoed the grandeur of Ancient Rome. The Palladian arch is a triple opening which comprises of four columns plus an entablature. The middle column pair underpins a rounded arch at the top. Light was a major element in Palladian interiors. In Italy, for example, interiors were designed to be cool and to provide shade. This is because Italy has predominantly intense sunshine. To bring in natural light into interiors, three types of windows were used in the Palladian style. These include the Venetian, Diocletian and the oculus.

Work Cited

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