

# Trinity college exam hall classical



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‘ Classical’ architecture is a language that speaks to us with antiquity. The Exam Hall, once Theatre, on the campus of Trinity College Dublin can be viewed as a neo-classical building, built during the Georgian era. Neo-classical architecture is the revival of Greek and Roman classicism that took place in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This revival of architecture as James Adams, a famous English architect said, “ was ready to seize with some degree of success, the beautiful spirit of antiquity,” which is quintessentially seen in the Exam Hall.

The exterior of the Exam Hall displays classical semblances of the Roman Corinthian Order while the interior is decorated using a classical color pallet and style. This paper will explore the reasons why Trinity College Dublin’s Exam Hall, being a neo-classical building, can be measured ‘ classical’. The Exam Hall’s architectural structure and decorations derive purely from the world of classicism with minor exceptions. This predominance of classicism is why the Exam Hall is justifiably ‘ classical’. Sir William Chambers was the visionary of the Exam Hall though he did not see through its construction.

He became fascinated in the revival of classicism through his study of architecture in Italy. Chamber’s design for the Exam Hall resembled some of his other works that can be seen in Ireland. One such building precedent to the Exam Hall is the Casino at Marino. Casino at Marino was commissioned by Sir William Chambers in 1773 and is “ acknowledged as the most important neo-classical building in Ireland. ” The columns, overall symmetry, as well as a portico are a few key classical motifs the two buildings have in common.

The Royal Exchange building, now Dublin's City Hall, designed by Thomas Cooley in 1769 is the spitting image of Trinity College Dublin's Exam Hall. The Royal Exchange building “ was the first neo-classical public building in Dublin and ‘ acted as a manifesto for the new style’. ” Both buildings are rich in neo-classicism, which displays classical themes throughout. They specifically display close to identical columns holding a single pediment as well as harmony and balance. In comparing the Exam Hall to renowned neo-classical buildings we can deduce that we are rightful in describing Trinity College Dublin's Exam Hall as being ‘ classical’.

Chamber's classical style shined in much of his work, specifically the exam hall. Trinity College's Exam Hall can be described as classical because it is built following the guidelines of Corinthian Order. During the period of classical architecture the Greeks founded the original three orders—Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian—different classical styles of building that followed certain rules and mathematical ratios. The Romans adopted these orders and made them their own. Roman Corinthian Order is the style of the Exam Hall.

The most distinctive element is the columns, which support an entablature. The Exam Hall's columns contain smooth unfluted shafts made from Portland Stone, a highly sought after stone at the time. The column capital is ornate as all classical capitals are. The capital is decorated with acanthus leaves and small volutes. There is also a fleuron in the center of the abacus, which lie atop the column capital. The capitals are also made of Portland stone. The entablature, being held up by the columns, contains three discrete elements that are classical in architecture.

The Exam Hall exemplifies all three of these elements. The architrave and frieze are found to be smooth while the cornice contains dentils, another common attribute to Roman Corinthian Order. The base of Roman Corinthian Order columns are usually basic and have low pedestals, the Exam Halls are slightly larger. The Pantheon in Rome, Italy, which was built in the classical era is an example of an awe-inspiring architectural masterpiece that is built using Roman Corinthian Order columns very similar in design to the ones on the Exam Hall.

The classical interior of the Exam Hall serves just as aesthetically beautiful as the exterior. Classical interior designs were very common during the Georgian Era as seen in the Exam Hall. Perfect harmony and balance are key elements portrayed in classic interiors. When walking into the Exam Hall one is brought into a large elegant open room. The room is steeped in tradition. Classic designed rooms often contain large focal points; all other items within the room are placed in order to enhance the look of the chosen focal point.

The large groin vaulted chamber with a semi-circular apse serves as the focal point in the Exam Hall. The regal portraits on the walls are hung in opposing sides as if to guide your eyes to the apse. The walls and ceiling display magnificent stuccowork done by Michael Stapleton, a notable stuccodore in Ireland. The exterior style was seen in the interior of the Exam Hall. The Hall contains engaged Corinthian pilasters as well as a frieze decorated with stuccowork. “ Shades of cream, grays, sage greens...were popular in neo-classicism.

Colors were frequently brightened by the lavish use of goldleaf. ” The Exam Hall’s walls are a beautiful sage green and the room displays goldleaf as a contrast to the sage green. The interior is notably pure neo-classical from the color pallet and stuccowork to the pilasters and apse. The grandiose interior is a place of harmony and symmetry. The pure ‘ classical’ style portrayed in the Exam Hall is seen in the interior and exterior. The Exam Hall’s ‘ classical’ elegance is met with exceptions that make us ponder whether we can truly call the Exam Hall ‘ classical’.

The smooth ashlar granite countered with the rusticated granite on the lower half of the facade is not seen as ‘ classical. ’ This style was first seen in the sixteenth century. I would argue that we can indeed define the Exam Hall as ‘ classical’. The ratios in the building and symmetry of not only the Exam set alone, but of that and the chapel which is nearly identical in exterior characteristics, forms a symmetrical front square at Trinity College Dublin. The perfect mathematical ratios and thought out symmetry bring pure harmony to the architecture.

The Exam Hall is justifiably ‘ classical’ despite the exceptions. As a final point, it is appropriate to say that the Exam Hall is of classical attribute. The exterior brought harmony and balance as a building on its own and to the Front Square of Trinity College Dublin. The interior allowed for a soothing relief with its pale walls and ornate stuccowork. William Chambers, Christopher Myers and Michael Stapleton created a magnificent building enriched in classicism. Despite the need for modern exceptions the Exam Hall is virtuously classical. Works Cited Baker, William T.

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