

Discuss or debate the
renaissance belief
that harmoniously
proportioned
buildings...



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Renaissance Architecture and the Ideal Citizen Renaissance is the period in Western civilization that ignited the rebirth of the intellectual and economic stature of Europe. From the fourteenth century to the sixteenth century, the Europe rekindled its drive for excellence of its artistic, social, scientific, and other intellectual pursuits, which were almost stagnated during the Middle Ages. It also laid down a fertile soil for the questioning of the authenticity and rationality that characterize the next period of Western civilization, the Reformation.

Logic and balance became the pillars of Renaissance. The fanaticism and mysticism that are imprinted into the European mind brought about by the Middle Ages has been gradually debunked by the resurgence of rational thought of the period. Reason and not a blind following of the imposed doctrines by the church became the yardstick of the beauty, morality, and rightness of a principle or a thing.

Rigid rationality and mathematical exactness has also been manifested in the artistic pursuits during this period. The beauty of balance and symmetry became evident in the artistic masterpieces that were produced herein.

Having the notion that the ideal works of art should follow the strict logical and mathematical guidelines, artists in this era produced almost perfect symmetrical, proportional and balanced works of art.

Renaissance architectural masterpieces were towering proofs of this artistic principle. According to Art History 361: Summary of the Renaissance: “ A harmony of all parts with symmetry and order of geometric proportions and designs using Classical architectural elements” characterize Renaissance architecture. The intricacy of the designs during the medieval times was

toned down to simplicity cleanness of design. Architectural beauty was a by-
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product of mathematical exactness.

Claude Fayette Bragdon critically discussed the relation of the artist's personal beliefs and lifestyle to his works, in his book *The Beautiful Necessity*. For him, "art is an expression of the self in terms of sense." Art then is physical manifestation of one's self—one's ideology and tenets. Since art is a medium of expression, it subliminally evokes messages that create an effect in a person's consciousness. Just as a writer can affect the psychological status and character of his reader, artists, such as architects, also can affect the psyche spectator of his magnum opus. If writers use meticulously chosen words, sentences, and paragraphs to evoke effective messages to influence his readers, we can also say that each component of an architectural feat affects the psychological status of a person that receives what the particular work of art conveys. Thus, the structural organization of the parts of his art form reflects his personal character and by way of visual communication, he can also affect moods of those seeing his work.

This is what the Renaissance artists believe in the process of creating their masterpiece. The predominant philosophy in those times is the rebirth of intellectual and rational appetite that was mitigated by the mysticism of the Middle Ages. The orderly, systematic, harmonious, symmetric, and mathematical precision of architectural works during this period subliminally evoke the message that the person seeing the artist's work should likewise become orderly, systematic and precise—qualities that personify the "ideal" person of the Renaissance period.

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