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A History of Interior Design

SECOND EDITION

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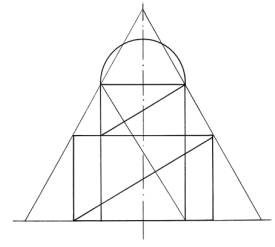
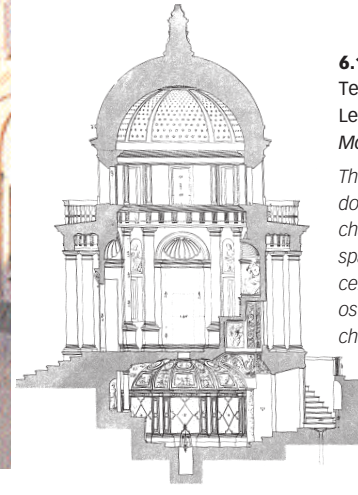
6.14 Donato Bramante, Tempietto, S. Pietro in Montorio, Rome, 1502.

The Tempietto represented a highly successful effort to adapt the vocabulary of Roman classicism to a circular, domed structure. The building dominates the small monastic courtyard in which it stands.



6.16 Elevation of the Tempietto.

The elevation of the building is made up of two overlapping golden rectangles, one horizontal, one vertical. The entire elevation fits into an equilateral triangle.

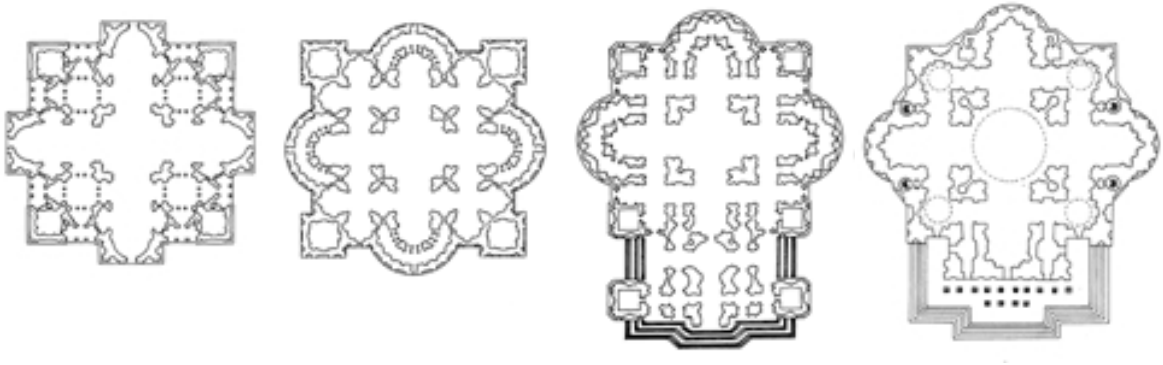


6.15 Engraving of the Tempietto from Paul Letarouilly's *Edifices de Rome Moderne* (1825–60).

This cross-section shows the domed circular space of the chapel and the subterranean space beneath, with its centrally located reliquary, the ostensible reason for the chapel's existence.

choices of lines for measurement show up relationships that correspond to the golden section ratio of 1:1.618. The interior uses eight pilasters arranged in pairs separating window panels and larger niches, while the drum above has eight windows below the domed ceiling. There is also a round subterranean chapel reached by twin stairs leading to a door at the rear. Although it is not based on any one ancient Roman building, there is a quality of organization and coherence about the Tempietto that makes it seem truly classical in spirit. In spite of its small size, the richness and complexity of the design give the Tempietto a visual power that explains its influence on subsequent development.

Bramante was asked to prepare plans for the construction of a new St. Peter's Cathedral for Rome (**6.17**). His complex central plan called for a



6.17 Donato Bramante and others, plans for St. Peter's, Rome, 1506–64

The evolution of the plan for the great cathedral can be seen in the designs of (left to right) Bramante, 1506; Bramante and Baldassare Peruzzi, before 1513; Giuliano da Sangallo, 1539; and Michelangelo, 1546–64. Further design modifications, made by Carlo Maderno in the seventeenth century were incorporated in the building as completed.

domed crossing, four identical radiating arms forming a Greek cross, and smaller domed chapels fitted into the resulting corners. Construction began in 1506 on the basis of this plan and, despite the modifications made by a sequence of successors, St. Peter's still incorporates the basic concepts of Bramante's plan. The change in plan concept to a Latin cross (cruciform) scheme seems to have been dictated by a feeling in the Vatican that a central plan carried a suggestion of Roman paganism and lacked both reference to the Christian symbol of the cross and a dominant orientation toward the east. As built, St. Peter's is largely based on Michelangelo's plan of 1546, although it was in turn extended to the west and elaborated by Carlo Maderno in the seventeenth century (see p. 94).

Palaces

The palaces (really town houses on a palatial scale) and country villas of the High Renaissance were built by wealthy and powerful families, who were patrons of the greatest artists and architects of their time. The Farnese family made Antonio Sangallo the Younger (1484–1546) the designer in charge of their grand Roman palace (1513–89). He planned a large symmetrical block surrounding a central court in the manner of the earlier Florentine palaces, but moved toward a more perfect use of the classical Roman vocabulary than Early Renaissance architects had been able to manage. The entrance to the Farnese Palace (**6.18**) is through a broad, tunnel-like passage, vaulted overhead and with lines of six Doric columns on either side (actually antique columns of a red Egyptian marble that had been excavated in the ruins of the ancient Roman forum). Beyond this dim passage, the bright central court is visible, with an exit on axis leading to the garden at the rear. The court itself is a square, with colonnades in the classic orders at each of three levels. Unlike the earlier Florentine palaces, arches here do not rest on columns—they bear on solid piers with engaged columns on the faces of the piers running up to a continuous entablature. This is the system of the ancient Roman Colosseum, which gives the court a sense of solidity and, incidentally, solves the problem of corner treatment, since arches bear on corner-angled piers and two columns stand on the adjacent surfaces without interference. At ground level the order is a correct Roman Doric; at the second-floor level the order is Ionic, with pedimented windows fitted within each arch. The third level was planned as Corinthian but, before it was built, Sangallo had been replaced by Michelangelo as architect in charge, leading to a more complex treatment that omits arches and substitutes overlapping Corinthian pilasters framing windows topped with curved pediments. The pilasters rest on a podium base with rectangular panels under each window. Some of these turn out to be small windows lighting a service mezzanine tucked between the second and third floor levels for part of the building perimeter.

A monumental stair leads to the main (second) floor where a passage runs around three sides of the court, giving access to rooms of various sizes. The largest room of the palace, the Salle des Gardes, is of double height, its two levels of windows continuing the external pattern of fenestration without change so that the exterior design gives no clue to what is within. There is an elaborate fireplace mantel, classically framed doorways, a coffered ceiling, and a decorative tiled floor. Otherwise, the room is simple and austere except for small relief rondels half way up the walls and tapestries hung high above. Other rooms vary from severe simplicity to elaboration with tapestries and fresco paintings. The room

6.18 Antonio Sangallo and Michelangelo, courtyard, Palazzo Farnese, Rome, 1513–89.

The lower two levels of the courtyard, which are by Sangallo the Younger, follow the design of the ancient Roman Colosseum, while the upper level, which is by Michelangelo, exhibits a much freer interpretation of its Roman antecedents and hints at a movement toward Mannerism.

unpretentious comfort. Wood furniture was often painted in bright colors with designs using birds, flowers, and decorative scrolls in the vocabulary of the peasant art of Europe.

American Georgian and Queen Anne Furniture

In the latter part of the Georgian era, American craftsmen and cabinet makers became increasingly skillful and expert in working in the styles fashionable in England. Queen Anne and Chippendale designs were both much used, sometimes even intermixed. The term Philadelphia Chippendale is often used to describe the work of cabinet makers in that city, such as John Folwell (active in the 1770s), who was sometimes called "the American Chippendale," and William Savery (1721–88), best known for fine highboys. Highboys and tall secretary desks often had plain tops, but pediments, particularly broken pediments with S-curved scroll shapes, were used on the most elaborate versions. The tall clock was made in handsome designs and became a much treasured family possession (**10.14**).

In Newport, Rhode Island, a unique version of the Queen Anne style developed in the workshop of Goddard and Townsend, makers of greatly admired tall secretary desks and low desks of the type called **Blockfront**. A fluted semicircular form suggestive of a scallop shell, a carved motif that seems to have been used only in America, is much used in Newport furniture. New York and Boston were also centers of fine furniture production.

Chair design followed English patterns—Queen Anne designs (**10.15**) with simple **Splat backs**, and versions of Chippendale and Hepplewhite with Rococo and Chinese-inspired detail. Windsor chairs were made in many types from simple to elaborate (**10.17**). The fully upholstered wing-back chair was also popular in America, where cold winters probably made its enclosing form particularly welcome.

Late Colonial Public Buildings

As the American colonies prospered, the need for more public buildings emerged. Churches were built in almost every town, and cities often had a number of churches. As the stringent beliefs of Puritanism gave way to more varied religious practices, churches tended to take on the character of English religious buildings. The Carolean and Georgian churches of Christopher Wren and James Gibbs became models for many

10.14 *(above)* Tall case Chippendale clock, 1796.

10.15 *(left)* Ashley House, Deerfield, Massachusetts, *c*. 1730.

A "highboy," a tall drawer chest, can be seen in the far corner. The chairs, which are of the style called Queen Anne, have cabriole legs and simple backs. The walls are paneled, and the oriental rugs were imported. The candle holders with metal reflectors would have provided modest nighttime lighting.

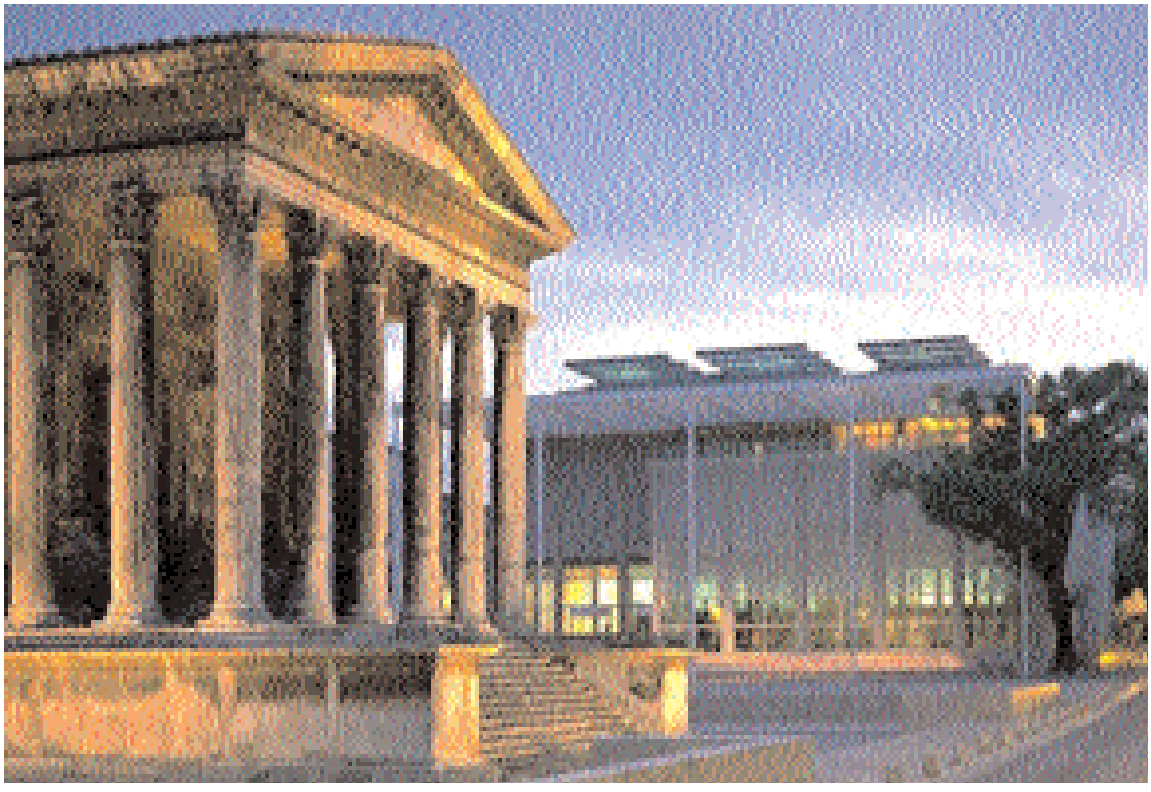
10.16 Peter Harrison, King's Chapel, Boston, 1749–58.

The Georgian church interior suggests that Harrison was aware of English prototypes. Paired Corinthian columns support sections of entablature with a partly coved ceiling above. There is a Palladian window above the altar and a fine metal candle chandelier. Placing the seating in enclosed "box" pews was an attempt to minimize winter cold and drafts.

10.17 American Windsor brace back side chair, 1770–1800.

American churches. Christ Church (begun 1727) in Philadelphia, credited variously to Robert Smith and to an amateur architect, John Kearsley, is a fine example of the Wren–Gibbs type. It is built in brick, with the upper part of the spire in wood; inside, white-painted wooden Roman Doric columns topped with square entablature blocks support galleries and a graceful arrangement of arches. A Palladian window forms a focal point above the altar. Peter Harrison (1723–1805) was the architect of King's Chapel in Boston (**10.16**; 1749–58) where paired Corinthian columns with entablature blocks carry the galleries and the coved forms of the plaster ceiling. St. Paul's Chapel in New York (1764–6), by the New York architect Thomas McBean, is of similar design, but is of special interest because recent restoration efforts have discovered the original paint colors—not the conservative white, grey, or beige usually thought to be typical of the colonial church, but strong shades of blue and pink that set off the white-painted wood detail. Waterford crystal chandeliers imported from Ireland add to the sense of richness. Many American churches and meeting houses follow similar patterns in brick or in wood, with the level of elaboration adjusted to the religious beliefs and the wealth of their congregations.

Other colonial public buildings tend to follow the simple Carolean and Georgian tradition established by Wren at the Chelsea Hospital in London—red brick with white-painted woodwork, symmetry, and ornamental detail concentrated at doorways and, where there is one, in a spire. A building for the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia (begun 1716), is known as the Wren Building because of a tradition that the design was actually provided in drawings by Wren. Certainly, the design is a fine example of the Wren style, both outside and in the great hall within, modeled on the wood-paneled dining halls of English university buildings. The Williamsburg Capitol (1701–5) and Governor's Palace (1706–20) are also handsome examples of the Wren style, with beautifully detailed interiors; but it must be noted that these buildings were drastically reconstructed in 1928–34 on the basis of very limited documents and remains.



21.9 Norman Foster, La Carée d'Art Gallery, Nîmes, France, 1993.

At Nîmes, across the street from the ancient Roman Maison Carré (c. 12 B.C.E.), the glass-fronted modern structure makes a dramatic contrast with the Roman temple. Norman Foster's design was selected in 1985, but the building was not completed until 1993.

ideal gallery space for the display of modern art. Other hi-tech projects by Foster include the Law Faculty building at Cambridge, England (1995), which uses a hi-tech truss structure of half-cylindrical form as a glazed shell above multiple level platforms holding stacks and reading areas; a spectacularly tall skyscraper tower office building in Hong Kong for the Shanghai National Bank (1986); and the Sackler Galleries, a new interior inserted into a court space in the buildings of the Royal Academy in London (1991), which makes use of subtle detail to relate the classicism of the older buildings and of the art displayed there to the technically advanced new spaces. A contemporary art gallery and médiathèque, the Carré d'Art (1984–93), in Nîmes, France, places a glass-fronted grouping opposite the classical ancient Roman temple known as the Maison Carrée (**21.9**). Another insert, almost a building within a room, is the renovation of the Great Court of the British Museum in London (**21.1**; 2001), which houses the Round Reading Room of the former British Library (itself now relocated). Here Foster has created a spectacular public space.

Stirling

James Stirling (1924–92), a British architect, can be thought of as belonging to the hi-tech direction. The Engineering Building at Leicester University in England (1959, with James Gowan as a partner) attracted wide attention with its glass office tower, wedge-shaped adjacent blocks containing lecture halls, and ship's funnel-like ventilator. There is a large, low adjacent area devoted to shop facilities. The interiors share the mechanistic qualities of the exterior, their exposed structure suggesting the engineering-related role of the building. The History Faculty building (1964–7) at Cambridge University, England, which is mostly devoted to a library, contains a large gallery atrium topped with glass skylight roofing. Here again the mechanics of structure set the character of the large and impressive interior space (**21.10**). As Stirling's career moved ahead, the technological emphasis of his work gradually moved toward a more complex range of values. At the Olivetti training facility at Haslemere in England (1969), interior spaces were more varied, so that a "multispace" could be converted to accommodate meetings of varying size and character. Glazed galleries with ramped circulation paths connect elements of the building.

Stirling's last major work, the addition to the Staatsmuseum in Stuttgart, Germany (1979–84), moves away from technology and toward a more adventurous direction. Gallery spaces are set around a circular courtyard (**21.11**) where marble walls, statuary (from the museum's collection), and a portal using stubby versions of Tuscan

21.10 James Stirling, History Faculty, Cambridge University, Cambridge, England, 1964–7.

This building, largely devoted to library functions, has several floor levels overlooking an open atrium, which is enclosed in glass. Projecting enclosures with windows allow passers-by to look down into the gallery space.

21.11 James Stirling, Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart, Germany, 1977–84.

A central courtyard—really a room open to the sky—forms the core of the art gallery, which was a modern addition to an older museum building. Statuary, an arcade of stone faced in marbles, and stubby Tuscan columns at the entrance point on the left hint at a movement toward post-modernism. A winding ramp leads to an upper level.

columns make references to past architectural styles. The building is totally original, but still suggests complex relationships to art and architecture of the past. It is tempting to suggest that Stirling had moved toward the approach now called post-modern, although the building certainly retained some of the rigors of hi-tech design. The exhibition gallery spaces are restrained in form and color, while the entrance lobby, shop, circulation spaces, and restaurant use brilliant, saturated color as do many details of the exterior.

INSIGHTS

James Stirling

James Stirling studied at The Liverpool School of Architecture in England in the post-war period and remembers the controversies surrounding new, modern architecture:

> *There was furious debate as to the validity of the modern art movement: tempers were heated and discussion was intense. Some staff resigned and a few students went off to other schools, at any rate I was left with a deep conviction of the moral rightness of the new architecture.*

Stirling later modified his views, explaining that it was more important to reflect the needs of the building's occupants than be limited by the rigid restrictions of the building's materials:

> *I ceased to believe in Frank Lloyd Wright's philosophy of truth to materials when I saw for the first time a building by Palladio where the peeling columns were in fact made of bricks and not of marble or stone as I had naively assumed from the books. I believe that the shapes of a building should indicate – perhaps display – the usage of the way of life of its occupants, and it is therefore likely to be rich and varied in appearance and its expression is unlikely to be simple.*

He elaborated these views when designing the addition to the Staatsmuseum in Stuttgart, complaining that he was

> *sick and tired of boring, meaningless, non-committed, faceless flexibility, and the open-endedness of so much present day architecture*

1. James Stirling, *Buildings and Projects 1950–74* (London, 1974), p. 14; 2. James Stirling, speech, 1957, quoted in *Contemporary Architects* (Chicago and London, 1987), p. 230; 3. Quoted in Arnell and Bickford, *James Stirling: Buildings and Projects* (London, 1984), p. 252