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Thomas Hope
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An Historical Essay on Architecture

With a fondness for classical antiquities and neoclassical design, the connoisseur Thomas Hope (1769–1831) sought to influence Georgian taste by promoting informed interior decoration, displaying his own considerable art collection, and writing with insight on aesthetic topics. This two-volume work, originally published posthumously in 1835, traces the evolution of Western architecture since antiquity. Hope was a keen traveller, and the examples he cites are drawn from buildings that he studied on journeys through Europe and beyond, notably in those countries bordering the Mediterranean. Reissued here in the third edition that appeared in 1840, Volume 1 examines how religions, climates, landscapes and prevailing mores shaped the architectural preferences of civilisations from ancient Egypt to the Gothic revival, as well as how different cultures adapted foreign or ancient architectural innovations for their own ends.

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An Historical Essay on Architecture

VOLUME 1

THOMAS HOPE



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AN
HISTORICAL ESSAY
ON
ARCHITECTURE.

BY
THE LATE THOMAS HOPE.

ILLUSTRATED FROM
DRAWINGS MADE BY HIM IN ITALY AND GERMANY.

VOL. I.

~~~~~  
*THIRD EDITION.*  
~~~~~

LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.

—
1840.

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[More information](#)

LONDON :
PRINTED BY STEWART AND MURRAY,
OLD BAILEY.

THE following remarks formed part of a pamphlet published some years since by the Author of the work now offered to the public : —

“ Architecture, as it is one of the noblest, is likewise one of the most arduous and difficult, among the fine arts. No man can be entitled to the appellation of a proficient in its higher branches, who has not seen much and thought more.

“ That taste, that knowledge, which, in minds the most happily disposed for the arts, are never the result of sudden inspiration, but must be acquired by long study and mature reflection, I dare venture to assert, that I have done more to obtain, than almost any other person of my own age living. From an infant, architecture was always my favourite amusement. I scarcely was able to hold a pencil, when, instead of flowers, landscapes, and all those other familiar objects of

which the imitation chiefly delights the generality of such children as show a turn for design, I already began dealing in those straight lines which seem so little attractive to the greatest number, even of good draughtsmen of a more advanced age. No sooner did I become master of my own actions, which unfortunately happened at the early age of eighteen, than, disdaining any longer to ride my favourite hobby only in the confinement of a closet, I hastened in quest of food for it, to almost all the different countries where any could be expected.

“Egyptian architecture I went to investigate on the banks of the Nile — Grecian, on the shores of Ionia, Sicily, and the Peloponnesus. Four different times I visited Italy, to render familiar to me all the shades of the infinitely varied styles of building peculiar to that interesting country, from the most rude attempts of the Etruscan, to the last degraded ones of the Lombards. Moorish edifices I examined on the coast of Africa, and among the ruins of Grenada, of Seville, and Cordova. The principle of the Tartar and Persian construction I studied in Turkey and in Syria. Finally, of the youngest branch of the art, that erroneously called Gothic, I investigated the most ap-

proved specimens throughout England, and most of the provinces of France, Germany, Spain, and Portugal.

“During eight years that this research lasted, I willingly encountered, to perfect myself in an art which I studied from mere inclination, and from which I expected nothing beyond the pleasure of understanding it, fatigues, hardships, and even dangers, which would have disheartened most of those who follow it as a lucrative profession, and who build on it their hopes of subsistence and fortune.

“Soon after my roving life ceased, I determined to add practice to theory.

“I must, in justice to myself, add, that had I more extensive means, and a better opportunity, I feel myself capable of designs far beyond the few and trifling specimens I have hitherto been able to exhibit.”*

* Of this enthusiasm in the cause of the arts, thus described, the following lines, written late in life, entitled an “Adieu to Youth,” give a vivid and a touching picture; and, though they never were intended to meet the public eye, I cannot refrain from inserting them, as a confirmation of the sentiments expressed above:—

“Distant plans of daring pride,
Views remote of wild romance,
Whose perspective vast and wide
Could my youthful soul entrance;

The following pages present but a brief epitome of
the result of the Author's studies and investigations in
his favourite art of Architecture.

Trophies which I hoped to raise,
Regions where I meant to rove,
Schemes of pleasure and of praise,
Which my early fancy wove.
Projects mad all things to scan
Which the Gods vouchsafe to man,
Where the Pole's resistless chill
Bids the Ocean's self stand still,
Or the Tropic's fellest sun
Man compels his shafts to shun ;—
You I cherished so before,
I must cherish you no more.
Niagara's foaming fall,
China's everlasting wall ;
Chimborazo's snowy top,
Which appears the sky to prop ;
Hoary Hecla's watery spires ;
Raging Ætna's rolling fires ;
Torneo's sun, whose glimmering light
Half a year still haunts the sight ;
Towering Thibet's lofty plain,
Which conglomerate mounts sustain ;
Sacred Ganges' secret source ;
Niger's unexplored course,
Hapless Park's unravell'd dream,
Quench'd for ever in its stream ;
Deep Ellora's sculptured caves ;
Desert Memphis' gorgeous graves ;

Written at a later period, when, instead of affording
 a constant and connected pursuit, they were sketched
 as a relaxation from labours of a nature altogether dif-

Phile's Isle, whose ruins smile
 In the mirror of the Nile;
 Peaceful Cashmere's flowery vale,
 Hallow'd scene of Eastern tale;
 Mounts of Kaff, where fairies dwell,
 And contend with sprites of hell;
 Georgia, where God's noblest creature
 Shows his noblest form and feature;
 Mecca's house, Medina's shrine;
 Sheeraz, flush'd with rosy wine; —
 You, which once to face I swore,
 You I ne'er must think of more;
 Bold achievements, noble feats,
 Whose emprise man's wonder greets,
 Whose success e'en glads his ghost; —
 You I ne'er must hope to boast.
 By the foolish vulgar throng
 Both detain'd and dragg'd along;
 After things just born to die,
 Made to join the vulgar cry,
 In the toil of each dull day
 My best years have roll'd away,
 Till, approaching fast my wane,
 Winter claims my worn-out brain.
 Tales that used my soul to inspire,
 Now I hear with calmness told;
 Sights that set my blood on fire,
 Now that torpid blood leave cold.

ferent, and far more absorbing — forming to them a brief and temporary interruption — intended as little more than an explanation to the drawings which accompany them — they may not treat the subject in the elaborate, complete, and comprehensive manner, which would have marked such a work, if the Author had put forth in it all the faculties of a mind imbued with every kind of knowledge, and embellished by the purest taste; which, while it embodied his learning and research, might also have been enriched with his

Slow and tedious is my pace,
 And no longer dare I hope
 Vigour while I run the race,
 Pleasure when I reach the scope.
 Then adieu, once dazzling dreams!
 Leave, oh! leave my haunted mind,
 Weary of its brilliant schemes,
 To an humbler fate resign'd.
 Simpler tasks my toil demand,
 Nearer objects claim my care,
 Higher duties for my hand,
 Humbler labours, fast prepare.
 These with honour to achieve,
 And a virtuous race to leave,
 When in everlasting rest,
 And perchance among the blest,—
 I this globe's vain joys deride,—
 Henceforth be my only pride."

matured criticism on the works of others, and the stores of his own fancy, genius, and imagination. Neither can they boast the minuteness and accuracy which they might have attained, had they been, in their present shape, put forth under his own superintendence; had the authorities been multiplied, some arguments strengthened, some inserted, the clue to which only existed in the mind of the Author; and that which now appears as mere frame-work, made to display a polished form and a finished construction. Aware of these defects, but knowing also that the drawings were intended for publication, and the following pages destined, in a shape similar to the present, to accompany them—trusting that they may not altogether be without value in illustration of the art of Architecture—his son, in offering them to the public, requests their indulgence for the numerous deficiencies arising from the circumstance that the work has not had the advantage of revision or reconstruction by the Author.

In selecting, from among a considerable number of manuscripts which treat both historically and critically of many branches of the fine arts, one which may rather be considered as a sketch than a finished history of the extensive subject to which it refers, he has been

guided entirely by the knowledge that this work was designed for early publication : in arranging it, he has been actuated solely by the desire of adding nothing, and of altering as little as possible ; and he believes that the following extract from another manuscript, will exhibit the views and feelings of the Author better than any description he could give, or any remarks he could add in explanation of them :—

“ I, who, though of merchant’s blood, am not a merchant ; who, though dabbling in authorship, rank not among the inspired ; who can neither uphold the arts with the hand of a sovereign, nor praise them with the pen of a poet ; who have only been able to bestow on a few humble artists the feeble patronage of an humble individual ; and who can only, athwart the din of trade, the bustle of politics, and the clamour of self-interest, blinded by ignorance, raise in favour of the Fine Arts a feeble voice ; have done all I could : but the most general flame may begin in a single spark ; and should I succeed in kindling for the arts a purer, a more intense, a more universal love ; should I thus be instrumental in promoting in the country a new source of health, wealth, strength, vigour, and patriotism, and nobleness of mind and feeling, most copious

and most lasting—in calling forth to the evils awaiting a society whose prosperity borders upon plethora and dissolution, the most powerful preservative; I shall think myself the humble instrument of the greatest good that can be conferred upon humanity; and when comes the hour of death, I shall think I have not lived in vain.”

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CONTENTS.

CHAP. I.	Page
INTRODUCTION - - - - -	1
CHAP. II.	
Origin and Nature of the Egyptian Style of Architecture	6
CHAP. III.	
Origin of the Architecture of the Greeks - - -	17
CHAP. IV.	
Influence upon Architecture of Habit and Religion -	20
CHAP. V.	
Nature and Character of the different Orders of Grecian Architecture - - - - -	28
CHAP. VI.	
Natural and adventitious Circumstances by which Grecian Architecture was affected - - -	40
CHAP. VII.	
On the Origin of the Arch - - - - -	45

	Page
CHAP. VIII.	
Decay of the Architecture of the Greeks, and Progress of that of the Romans - - - -	49
CHAP. IX.	
Effect upon Architecture of the Introduction of Chris- tianity, Occupation of Basilicas, and Use of ancient Materials - - - - -	74
CHAP. X.	
Effect upon ancient Architecture of the Want of Glass, and Changes produced by its Introduction - -	98
CHAP. XI.	
Some Account of Round or Polygonic Buildings -	103
CHAP. XII.	
Rise and Progress of the Architecture of Byzantium -	109
CHAP. XIII.	
Derivation of the Persian, Mohammedan, and Moorish Architecture from that of Byzantium - -	130
CHAP. XIV.	
Derivation of Russian Architecture from that of By- zantium - - - - -	140
CHAP. XV.	
Destruction of Pagan Works of Art, which took place in the early Days of Christianity, and Progress of the Use of Mosaic and other gaudy Decorations -	143
CHAP. XVI.	
Symbols used by the early Christians, and introduced into their Constructions - - - - -	159

CONTENTS. xvii

CHAP. XVII.

	Page
Heathen Customs kept up or emulated by the Christians	165

CHAP. XVIII.

Schism between the Greek and Latin Churches, and its effect upon the latter — the multiplication of sculptured Representations	- - - - 169
--	-------------

CHAP. XIX.

Sepulchral Architecture	- - - - 181
-------------------------	-------------

CHAP. XX.

Early Styles of Architecture on this Side of the Alps derived from Italy	- - - - 186
--	-------------

CHAP. XXI.

Investigation of the Circumstances which, towards the End of the Tenth Century, affected Architecture generally and extensively throughout Europe	- - - - 194
---	-------------

CHAP. XXII.

Lombard style of Architecture	- - - - 221
-------------------------------	-------------

CHAP. XXIII.

Progress of the Art of constructing Arches and Vaults	- 238
---	-------

CHAP. XXIV.

Forms of the Absis, Entrance, Cupola, Spire, and Steeple usually seen in Lombard Architecture	- - - - 240
---	-------------

CHAP. XXV.

Lombard Monastic Architecture	- - - - 248
-------------------------------	-------------

a

CHAP. XXVI.

	Page
Private defensive Architecture of the Ninth and Tenth Centuries - - - - -	251

CHAP. XXVII.

Lombard Civic Architecture - - - - -	255
--------------------------------------	-----

CHAP. XXVIII.

Allegorical and other ornamental Additions to Lombard Architecture - - - - -	256
--	-----

CHAP. XXIX.

On the Use of Brick - - - - -	260
-------------------------------	-----

CHAP. XXX.

Doors of Churches - - - - -	266
-----------------------------	-----

CHAP. XXXI.

A List of Churches in the Lombard Style, which possess remarkable Features, on the Continent - - - - -	267
--	-----

CHAP. XXXII.

Some Account of the Characteristics of the Pointed Style, and its universal Adoption accounted for by its peculiar Qualities - - - - -	306
--	-----

CHAP. XXXIII.

The Question of the Person by whom, or the Place where, the Pointed Arch was invented, not to be solved, and of no importance to the general Question of the Invention of the Pointed Style - - - - -	322
---	-----

CONTENTS. xix

CHAP. XXXIV.

	Page
Examination of various Conjectures on the Subject of the Change from Round to Pointed Architecture, and of the Origin of the latter - - -	328

CHAP. XXXV.

The Author's Theory respecting the Invention and Adoption of Pointed Architecture - - -	344
--	-----

CHAP. XXXVI.

A brief Examination of various Conjectures as to the Country in which Pointed Architecture originated -	349
--	-----

CHAP. XXXVII.

Inquiry into the Claims of England to the Invention of Pointed Architecture - - -	354
--	-----

CHAP. XXXVIII.

Inquiry into the Claims of France and Italy -	364
---	-----

CHAP. XXXIX.

Inquiry into the Claims of Germany - - -	370
--	-----

CHAP. XL.

A short Account of some Developments of the Pointed Style, religious and civic - - -	379
---	-----

CHAP. XLI.

Diffusion of the Pointed Style through France, Eng- land, Spain, Portugal, and Italy - - -	399
---	-----

CHAP. XLII.

A List of remarkable Edifices in the Pointed Style -	411
--	-----

CHAP. XLIII.

Local Peculiarities of Architecture - - - 446

CHAP. XLIV.

Causes which produced the Decline of Pointed Architecture, and Return to an Imitation of the Antique - 449

CHAP. XLV.

Characteristics of the resumed Style of the Ancients - 465

CHAP. XLVI.

Adoption throughout Europe of the resumed Style of the Ancients - - - - 477

CHAP. XLVII.

A list of Edifices in the Cinque-cento Style - - 480

CHAP. XLVIII.

Remarks upon Architecture since the Time of Michael Angelo, in Europe - - - - 487