CLAUDE PERRAULT
ORDONNANCE
DES CINQ ESPÈCES
DE COLONNES
SELON LA MÉTHODE
DES ANCIENS

Par M. Perrault de l'Académie Royale des Sciences, Doyen en Médicin de la Faculté de Paris.

A PARIS,
Chez Jean Baptiste Coignard, imprimeur & libraire ordinaire du Roy, au Bœuf d'Or. M. DC. LXXXIII.
Avec Privilege de Sa Majesté.

1683
The ancients rightly believed that the proportional rules that give buildings their beauty were based on the proportions of the human body and that just as nature has suited a massive build to bodies made for physical labor while giving a slighter one to those requiring adroitness and agility, so in the art of building, different rules are determined by the different intentions to make a building more massive or more delicate.
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These differences between the orders that are based, with little exactitude or precision, on their proportion and characters are the only well-established matters in architecture. Everything else pertaining to the precise measurement of their members or the exact outline of their profiles still has no rule on which architects agree...
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BUT THEY DON’T AGREE ON THE ABSOLUTE AND CORRECT PROPORTION OF THEM.
...the beauty of a building, like that of the human body, lies less in the exactitude of unvarying proportion and the relative size of constituent parts that in the grace of its form.
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A face can be both ugly and beautiful without any change in proportions...whereas, the dissimilar proportions of two different faces can be equally beautiful. Likewise, in architecture, we see works whose differing proportions nevertheless have the grace to elicit equal approval...
SO...DOES BEAUTY REQUIRE PROPORTIONS OR NOT?
One must agree, however, that although no single proportion is indispensable to the beauty of a face, there still remains a standard from which its proportion cannot stray too far without destroying its perfection.
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This shows just how ill-founded is the opinion of people who believed that the proportions supposed to be preserved in architecture are as certain and invariable as the proportions that give musical harmony it beauty and appeal...
One must suppose two kinds of beauty in architecture and know which beauties are based on convincing reasons and which depend only on prejudice.
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PERRAULT (A MODERN) CONSIDERED THEM AS ARBITRARY (RELATIVE) AND SUBJECT TO FASHION, TASTE, AND THEIR RESPECTIVE EPSTEMS.
FROM PROPORTION TO SYMMETRY
The word symmetry has another meaning in French; for it signifies the correspondence in a building between right and left, high and low, front and back, whether in size, shape, height, colour, number, or placing -- indeed in everything that can make one part resemble another; and it is rather odd that Vitruvius never spoke of this kind of Symmetry, which accounts for much of the beauty of Buildings.
PROPORTIONS ARE ARBITRARY BUT SYMMETRY IS POSITIVE.
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DIALECTICS ANYONE?
LOUVRE EASTERN COLONNADE, 1667-1670
ESSAI
SUR
L'ARCHITECTURE.
Par M. Laugier.
A PARIS,
Chez Duchesne, rue S. Jacques, au Temple du Goût.
M. DCC. LIII.
Avec Approbation & Privilege du Roy
It is the same in architecture as in all other arts: its principles are founded on simple nature, and nature’s process clearly indicates it rules. Let us look at man in his primitive state without any aid or guidance other than his natural Instincts.
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He needs a place to rest.

...the scorching heat of the sun forces him to look for shelter. A nearby forest draws his to its cooling shade.
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He needs a place to rest.

...the scorching heat of the sun forces him to look for shelter. A nearby forest draws his to its cooling shade.

(But)...soon, torrential rain pours down on this delightful forest...He creeps into a nearby cave and, finding it dry, praises himself for his discovery.
MAN NEEDS SHELTER AND ENCLOSURE.
He leaves (after the storm?) and is resolved to make good by his ingenuity the careless neglect of nature. He wants to make himself a dwelling that protects but does not bury him.
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Some fallen branches in the forest are the right material for his purpose; he chooses four of the strongest, raises them upright and arranges them in a square; across their top he lays four other branches; on these he hoists from two sides yet another row of branches which, inclining towards each other, meet at their highest point. He then covers this kind of roof with leaves so closely packed that neither sun nor rain can penetrate. Thus, man is housed.
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...cold and heat will make him feel uncomfortable in this house which is open on all sides but soon he will fill in the space between two posts and feel secure.
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The primitive hut places nature above culture; the empirical above the mythical.
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THE PRIMITIVE HUT PLACES NATURE ABOVE CULTURE; THE EMPIRICAL ABOVE THE MYTHICAL.

THE PRIMITIVE HUT DISLODGES ESSENTIAL BEAUTY IN ARCHITECTURE FROM CUSTOM AND CONVENTION.