Those who believe that beauty lies in order, symmetry, and the characteristic geometric ornamentation of the classical style will enjoy this beautifully-illustrated volume, which is divided into two major parts: Essays and Projects. The former are written by architectural scholars, architects, and draftsmen, all of whom articulate their love of the classical tradition. The latter, comprised of illustrations, includes the work of twenty-five architects who design and build homes and estates steeped in this tradition.

The essays are grouped into three parts. Those penned by architectural scholars are more philosophical and historical, arguing poetically and intellectually for the execution of buildings which still rely on age-old treatises and styles (Vitruvius, Christopher Wren, and Robert Adam, to name but a few). David Watkin’s essay “Music and Architecture” argues that classical Georgian harmony parallels the structure and harmony of music—specifically, the music of baroque and classical composers. Similarly, Robert Chitham’s essay “On Mathematics and Symmetry” investigates classicism’s preoccupation with geometry and proportion. The second group of essays, penned by architects, describes the challenges of paying homage to the precedents of the past in the modern age; proportion, order, and harmony continue to be the inspiration for their creative output. Not only do these essays share, for example, historic knowledge and a preference for classical tradition, but also a love of craftsmanship which manifests itself in hand-penned drawings and attention to ornamental detail. The third set of essays is written by craftsmen who work on new constructions but still adhere to classical traditions. It is evident that these craftsmen all love the work that they do and take pride in their execution, no matter if they are making bricks, designing ornamental plasterwork, or extolling the permanency of stone. Unfortunately, given our propensity for mechanical reproduction and immediate demand, these craftsmen are now fewer and farther between.

Nevertheless, the project illustrations of the second half of the book show that the classical tradition is very much alive: here we see the work of architects and craftsmen who execute their creations for clients who share their appreciation of classicism. Contemporary architects with a masterful command of classical architectural language and traditions have designed and built homes or estates primarily in England and the United States. The descriptions of each house and estate (and, in one case, a New York City apartment), are paired with an exterior shot of the building in its environment. Sidebars provide some unique information about the homes, e.g., inspiration for the design, details within the structure, comments on the exterior, materials used, and other observations.

This volume is recommended for academic libraries with strong architectural and design programs.

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