

History of Architecture and Culture III

Lecture 8

English Baroque

Moving on to the English Baroque architecture. Baroque aesthetics were so potent in 17th-century France, made a very little impact in England during the Protectorate and the first Restoration years. Baroque architecture made a direct impact in Italy because Italy was where it started. After that, in France it made quite an impact in the beginning itself. In England, what happened was, it didn't exactly have much of an impact in the architecture of the particular space but later what happened was, it didn't have a direct or much of an impact in changing the architecture of that particular era. For a decade between the death of Inigo Jones, we would have discussed Inigo Jones in the 6th lecture of this particular subject. Inigo Jones was an English architect and was very much affected by the Palladio's work. For a decade between the death of Inigo Jones in 1652 and Christopher Wren's visit to Paris in 1665 there was no English architect of the accepted premier class. There were English architects but architects of that stature like Italian architects or a French architect wasn't there, apart from these two. At that particular time in England and unsurprisingly, general interest in European architectural developments was slight. It is Wren who preceded over the English Baroque architecture which differed from the continental models of a clarity of design and subtle taste for classicism. So what happened was, English architecture was very simple and more of forms and there was not much clutter in the architecture in England before. That era liked extraordinary architects or architects of a particular stature. However after Christopher Wren travelled to Paris, he saw a lot of architectural changes in Paris which he brought back with him to England and he pioneered what is known as 'English Baroque architecture'. This is very different from the continental models by a clarity of design and that brought in a subtle taste for classicism in the Architecture of England. His most ambitious work was St. Paul's Cathedral, bears comparison with the most effulgent domed churches of Italy and France.

To further understand Christopher Wren's work, he was a scholar and a mathematician and a professor of Astronomy at Gresham college at the University of Oxford. His early mathematical training fitted him for the constructive skill shown in his later works. In the beginning of Wren's work, there was not much of constructivism but later on, as months moved on with him pursuing his architectural work, he brought in a kind of constructive skill that was a direct impact of him being a mathematician before being an architect. Study of French architecture at Paris and elsewhere in France was an important part of his education. Christopher Wren was not direct, he brought in more understanding to his architecture by going to a different country, learning and understanding what is happening there to bring back to this particular architectural concepts of his. It kind of had a direct French influence than that of Inigo Jones.

Inigo Jones as I said had a direct impact of Palladio which is an Italian influence but later this particular architect, Christopher Wren had a direct impact of the French architecture rather than the Italian architecture. Wren, never visited Italy but often gave a semi-French turn to his designs instead. It was not English as such, it was more of a semi-French architecture than English architecture, especially in the decorative detail. As I said, English architecture was more about lines, functionality, classic kind of beauty. It was less about decoration or decorative detail. You can see that in the French architecture which he brought into England's architecture. That is the reason why Wren's work was compared to Inigo Jones's work. He became one of the most celebrated architects of all time in England. Many of his designs in which he was obliged to study economy indicates a careful study in the proportion of part to part. Many of these as St. Paul and the city churches were executed in Portland stone. Previously in English architecture, Portland stones were not used and now Wren's architecture, in particular; St. Paul's and city churches, he used a lot of Portland stone. Portland stone had a lot of weathering properties that kind of added to the dignity and importance of this. In the domestic work, he used red brick with stone dressings, as at Hampton court, Marlborough house and elsewhere. There was a great fire in London in 1666 which kind of brought in a lot of destruction in the city of London. That kind of proved to be a boon to Christopher Wren because that restoration led Wren to

be what he is right now because that is what gave him a lot of work and the legacy he has right now. He devised a grand plan for the reconstruction of London after the Great Fire of London which was however abandoned for peculiar and other reasons. Whatever regal plan was given for the reconstruction of the city was beautiful but was later left for certain reasons but he was employed in a large number of churches including St. Peter's Cathedral and other buildings which was actually one of the most refined work of Christopher Wren. Even though his whole plan was abandoned, he was given a lot of different projects within the city and many churches were being reconstructed so that he could prove his craftsmanship or an architectural ability.

St. Paul's Cathedral London

Moving on to his first and foremost work; St. Paul's Cathedral London. St. Paul's Cathedral London is amongst the finest Renaissance Cathedrals in Europe and was Wren's masterpiece. It was constructed between 1675-1710. It was an Anglican cathedral and the seat of the Bishop of London. The reason why this church is the most important church in London is because it is the seat of the Bishop of London, it sits in Ludgate Hill at the highest point of the city of London. Its dedication to Paul the Apostle, dates back to the original church on the site, founded in AD 604. There was a church on this site in AD 604 and that particular church is also dedicated to Paul who is the apostle of Jesus and now the same place where this church was built was dedicated to Paul as well. As a part of the major rebuilding programme in the city after the Great fire of London, this church was going to be reconstructed. You can see in this picture, this is the St. Paul's Cathedral in London and the dome of this particular cathedral is a very famous because it took a lot of steps to construct that. There is a final model of the northern triforium of the Cathedral. The initial design of this cathedral was in the form of the Greek cross with the projecting western vestibule. That was the primary and major design that was done before. This is known because there was the final model in this design of the Northern triforium of the present cathedral. The clergy influenced and decided that a long nave and aisle was suitable for ritualistic purposes and that became the final selection of the mediaeval type of plan which is how it had been constructed. You can see the picture on the left represented the church in

Greek cross design, this was the first considered to be constructed and the picture on the right represents the design that has been executed. This as executed, consists of a great central space at the crossing, crowned by a dome, and having east and west a nave and a choir in three bays with aisles, north and south transepts and a projecting western vestibule and lateral chapels. This is the particular plan of the church and this is the elevation. This is where the bigger dome sits in and you can see nave and aisle on both sides. The light is emitted into the particular church through windows and clerestory but the beauty of this architecture is that, from the exteriors you can't see the windows and the clerestory. It can be seen only from the interiors. So this is not visible from the exteriors of the church. The wall surfaces have recently been decorated with glass mosaic, under Sir William Richmond, which has given the colour it was originally intended to have. Sir Christopher Richmond kind of regave the colour it previously intended to have. This is the interior of this particular church and its beautiful and massively done and this is the set done. This is a clerestory window like I said that is not seen from outside and seen only from interiors. You can see how much of detail has been given. It is unlike any English church like before. So much of intrinsic details were given within cathedrals in England. The dome is of triple construction, its carried on eight years, you can see that here. It is 109 feet at the base of the drum, diminishing to 102 feet at the top. The inner dome of brickwork, 18 inches thick, has its summit 281 feet high. The intermediate conical dome also of brickwork 18 inches thick supports the stone lantern, ball and cross, which latter has a height of 365 feet. You can see this is the cross which we are talking about and this 365 feet high. The outer dome is formed of timber covered with lead, and rests on the intermediate dome. Eight openings are formed in the summit for the admission of light to the inner domes. You can see this is very much evident in the interior detail of this particular church. This is again the view of the interior of this church. The exterior is exceedingly effective, and is made to group well with the central dome. The exterior has been made in such a way that it goes well with the dome of this particular church. It has two orders totalling to 108 feet in height, the lower Corinthian and the upper Composite. You can see in the picture, the Corinthians that I am talking about, these are 108 feet in height but the aisles are only one storey high. The upper storey on the flanks is a screen

wall introduced to give dignity and to act as a counterweight to the flying buttresses concealed behind it, which receive the thrust of the nave vault. Basically, the aisle of this particular church is a single floor high. The second floor is a small screen wall, made to give dignity to the space, an addition to give proportion and grandeur to the exterior facade of this building.

The western front is 180 feet wide and is approached by a broad flight of steps, flanked by two finely proportioned towers 215 feet high, having between them the double storied portico of the coupled columns supporting a pediment in which there is a fine representation of the conversion of S.Paul.

The dome externally is probably the finest example in Europe, the projecting masses of masonry at the meeting of nave and transepts expressing the support of the dome from the ground upwards. The colonnade to the drum is particularly effective when compared to the other domes that were built before. This colonnade is being formed of three-quarter columns attached to radiating buttress walls, having every fourth inter column filled with solid and thus it gives an appearance of strength and stability. You can see here in between after every four columns, they have added solid to the void and that kind of gives solid void look to the dome. That gives a feeling of strength and clarity to the design of this particular dome compared to other domes that were constructed previously. Behind the balustrade, known as the 'Stone Gallery', rises an attic above the supporting dome, which is crowned with lantern and cross.

Rococo Architecture

Moving on to the Rococo architecture, Rococo architecture is another form of architecture which is like continuation of Baroque architecture, more clumsy in nature. It was more intricate, more detailed than Baroque if there can be something like that. This is an example of Rococo architecture, a typical example of a Rococo church. You can see how many colours, details have been used in every nook and corner. Rococo or Baroque style is a debased application to architecture of Renaissance features, which was followed in the seventeenth century.

Rococo period came after a period of highly systemized classical style. Previously, the architecture was very systemized, they had a particular concept and that was directly followed. There was proportion, symmetry, functionality, everything was very systematic about architecture, there was nothing non-systematic about it. Rococo was highly anarchical reaction to such a systematic form of architecture that was followed till date. It was in many aspects, the continuation of the Baroque style as I said before. It made use of light and shadows specifically and compositional movement made Rococo very similar to Baroque architecture. They made the historians feel that it might be a continuation of the previous one. It rejected the traditional themes of heroes, mythology, it was more secular than Baroque architecture. Rococo was more secular. They kind of said no to heroes and mythology, instead had their own themes, own ideologies of construction. Rococo had sinuous frontages, broken curves in plan and elevation, these were never there before. The curves were there but were never broken. There were straight lines but no curve. This was new to Rococo architecture. In the background, you have an example of the Rococo style of architecture. You can see broken curves, curves and very different forms of architecture in the facade itself. The kind that makes a person think why and what would have made them do something like this. That is the beauty of the Rococo architecture. The columns were placed in front of the pilasters, cornices made to break round them and broken and curved pediments, huge scrolls, twisted columns were used, all these were features about this particular style of architecture.

This is one example of Rococo style palace. You can see there is no symmetry in this architecture. It had its own way of breaking the symmetry tone, it had its own way within symmetry. Rococo architecture had its own features that were never there before. Whilst the styles of Rococo and Baroque were similar, there were some notable differences between both Rococo and Baroque architecture. One of them was the symmetry like I said. Rococo emphasized on asymmetry forms whilst Baroque emphasized on symmetry forms. Baroque directly decided on using symmetrical forms whereas Rococo kind of denied symmetry and went with asymmetrical forms, this formed a major difference between the two forms of

architecture. Both styles were richly decorated, even then they had their own themes. Baroque was more of a serious type of architecture. It plays an emphasis on Christianity. Baroque was started with a purpose, in order to make the church look big in front of protestant reformation, in order to prove that the church still had a say against the protestant reformation. This is why Baroque was started, it had a name. It was more a serious form of architecture. It plays an emphasis on the religion while Rococo was not a Christian themed architecture. It came about in the 18th-century, very secular, it said no to heroes, no to mythologies, it was more a secular adaptation of the Baroque architecture. It was characterized by light hearted jocular themes and it was more simple in concept yet very detailed in construction. The ornamentation in the interiors were carried out to an extraordinary degree. You can see in this particular picture, how extraordinarily the details were carried out. There are paintings, stuccos, details, there is everything that could fill spaces, they have even painted the columns which had never happened previously. It kind of carried out an extraordinary degree of interior detailing without regard to fitness or suitability and consisted of exaggerated and badly designed detail, over emphasized by gilding and sculpted features. They never thought about what would be the consequences of cautious detailing. All they wanted was every particular point of the particular building. They never thought if something complemented the other. They never considered if this would be too much detailing. They just wanted to fill in every part of the every nook and corner of the particular building they're designing. That kind of over emphasized the detail and it was considered badly detailed later by the architectural historians. The features of Rococo described are specially to be seen in the Jesuit churches throughout Italy and the rest of Europe, its almost a universal extension being a monument to their activity. The application of classical ideas to modern forms, beneath the trappings of the bad details can be traced in the later period of the Renaissance movement.

Carlo Maderno, Bernini and Borromini were among the more famous who practised this debased form of art. Among the most prominent examples were the Roman churches of Santa Maria della Vittoria by Maderna, St. Agnese by Borromini, and many churches at Naples and elsewhere. In the background you

can see an example of a Rococo painting work by one of the most famous Rococo painters.