Togas at Home: Ancient Art and Architecture in New York's Gilded Age Mansions

Scholars have examined the reception of classical architecture in the public sphere, focusing on the appropriation of temple forms in banks, courthouses and other civic architecture as an expression of republicanism and then empire in the United States. This has been defined as the primary expression of the reception of classical architecture of the United States (e.g. Dyson 2001). Recent studies of Pompeian rooms (Nichols 2017) and the Greek music room of Henry G. Marquand (Deusner 2011) challenge this assumption and suggest the re-interpretation of the classical world was an important aspect of private spaces and interior design in late 19th-century and early 20th-century America. This paper examines why New Yorkers appropriated classical antiquity at home. Building on Deusner and Nichols' scholarship, I compare and contrast the immersive environment created by Marquand in his Greek music room to the Pompeian vestibules and rooms that graced the homes of New York City's leading families. The question of why patrons selected a Greek theme or a Roman—often a Pompeian—theme will be considered. In addition, the libraries of the private gentlemen's clubs of the Gilded Age, a home away from home for many of New York's elite, also included ancient-inspired architecture. The library of the University Club was designed to be like the atrium of a Pompeian House by McKim, Mead and White. The appropriation of antiquity was an elite phenomenon that attested to the learnedness and cultural sophistication of its adherents. The popularity of *objets d'art* and furniture executed in an ancient style will also be considered in this paper because it allows us to consider how widespread the appropriation of ancient forms by the middle class was and to examine why classical art and architecture were such an important part of décor and interiors in Gilded Age New York.

Bibliography

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