

Foreword

I had a fairly traditional Grammar School education in the north of England. Then at some point in my mid to late teens I decided that self-directed, life-long education made more sense. It was a quiet personal rebellion at first, but it chimed with the spirit of the times in the late 60s and eventually blossomed into a series of adventures that have greatly enriched my life. During this journey, drawing has been my constant companion and one of my primary learning tools. I have been drawing for as long as I can remember: thinking things out in visual terms, taking my pencil for a walk across the paper, searching for new discoveries.

In my mid-thirties I discovered the world of CAD and was especially excited by the three dimensional capabilities of this new tool. For someone who had laboured for long hours constructing a perspective by hand, 3D CAD was a revelation. Here was power and fluency beyond our wildest dreams. It may be hard for those who have grown up playing with computer games to grasp how mind-blowing this was for us old timers. But there was more to come, and over the next decade or so various programmes contributed to the approach which is now called BIM. You can read a lot of nonsense about BIM, but it does herald a fundamental shift in the way that the construction industry will work. I use the future tense, because BIM is very much a work in progress. The good news is that this means you can contribute to the process while it is still fluid. From my perspective BIM is another pencil. Yes it is also a database and a management tool, which is great, but I am a visual thinker. It's in my bones and Revit is my current tool of choice. Revit gives me the power to explore building designs with a speed and fluency I would never have believed 40 years ago when I was sitting at a drawing board with my Rotring pen. The fact that you are reading this foreword suggests that you too are excited by what Revit can do. Take my advice. Grasp the nettle. Don't look back.

Classical Architecture has roots that go back almost three thousand years to the Mediterranean world of ancient Greece and Rome. From austere Doric Temples to flamboyant Corinthian Public Baths, myriad variations flourished around a strong, unifying central theme. After the collapse of the Roman Empire, the mystique faded and Europe explored the more organic & muscular approach that we have labeled Gothic. Some centuries later, when new economic forces had pulled the focal point away from the inland sea and towards the Atlantic rim, the classical mode experienced a dramatic rebirth. It became the unifying style of European civilization during its remarkable and somewhat scary rise to dominance. As a result, classical buildings can be found almost anywhere in the world: New York, Chicago, Delhi, Cape Town, Mexico City, Auckland, Lagos, Saigon ...

Paul Aubin has carved out a distinctive niche in the overlapping worlds of BIM, Revit & Education. He offers support to self-directed learners who have caught the BIM bug and are seeking greater fluency & deeper knowledge. To a large extent I think his success is rooted in his own eagerness to explore and learn; plus his ability to share that enthusiasm with others. In this book he has taken that approach to a new level, seizing on one of his long-term interests, embarking on a journey of discovery, and sharing the results with his audience.

Copy-paste architecture is rarely successful, and I would caution the reader against this approach. We don't necessarily explore the classical tradition in order to copy it. Le Corbusier was hugely enthusiastic about Greek temples and Roman amphitheatres. He drew them from life and enthused about the play of masses in light & shade. Then he took this inspiration and transformed it into buildings like the Villa Savoye and the chapel at Ronchamp. Take that lesson to heart and use the classical style as a source of deep inspiration rather than a treasure chest to be pillaged.

By taking this journey with Paul as your guide, you will come to a much deeper and richer understanding of classical form. To maximize this experience you should open your eyes to the world around you. Look at classical buildings with new eyes, take out a book on Palladio or Brunelleschi. Wren, Jefferson, Bullfinch ... there is no shortage of examples. And as you explore, you will realise how rich and subtle are the variations. It is difficult to find two columns that are identical in size and proportions, except for those standing side by side on the same building. It is a constant marvel to me how the classical style maintains this impression of unity while allowing such room for experiment and elaboration. Perhaps that is the secret of its appeal, down the centuries and across the continents. And there is no better way to deepen your insight than to build your own versions of the classical orders using a programme like Revit.

Around 40 years ago I went to see Buckminster Fuller speak in London. It was a riveting experience. At some point in that immense monologue he spoke about synergy. In a way it's like chemical reactions. Put two substances together and sometimes they will just sit there minding their own business. But other combinations will smoulder, fizzle, change colour, explode, and give birth to something entirely new. I think Paul has hit upon an explosive combination. Let him draw you in and take you on two rides for the price of one. Let the synergy generated by the disparate worlds of software & history drive your learning experience forward. You may well find that, like a child, you learn new skills and knowledge in an effortless riot of exploratory play.

So buy the book, make the journey and take your BIM pencil for a walk across the virtual pages of history.

Andy Milburn is an architect and BIM addict, currently living in Dubai. He spent his twenties laying bricks and playing in a rock band, his thirties as a teacher and curriculum developer in newly independent Zimbabwe, returning to Architecture at the age of 40. He is an active member of the global Revit/BIM community, an associate at GAJ Architects and a lifelong believer in open learning. Check out his blog on www.grevity.blogspot.com