

NEO-CLASSICISM

**Sir John Soane, *The Royal Academy Lectures*, ed. David Watkin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).**

*From Lecture I (advice for students of architecture, 1809)*

The mind of the student should be impressed with the absolute necessity of close and unremitting attention, of deep and indefatigable research. From earliest youth not a moment must be lost by him who desires to become a great artist. He who seeks superior excellence must search deeply into the motives and principles which directed the minds of the great artists of antiquity who produced those works of elegant fancy, of true refinement, and correct taste, which have done so much honour to the human mind and will ever be the admiration of enlightened people of all ages and of all countries. By referring to first principles and causes, the uncertainties of genius will be fixed, and the artist enabled to feel the beauty and appreciate the value of ancient works, and thereby seize the spirit that directed the minds of those who produced them. We must be intimately acquainted with not only what the ancients have done, but endeavour to learn (from their works) what they would have done. We shall thereby become artists, not mere copyists; we shall avoid servile imitation and, what is equally dangerous, improper application. We shall not then be led astray by fashion and prejudice, in a foolish and vain pursuit after novelty and paltry conceits, but contemplate with increased satisfaction and advantage the glorious remains of antiquity.

**Charles-Louis Clérisseau in Clérisseau and Robert Adam, *Antiquities de la France* (Paris: 1778).**

*On study and genius (1778)*

The great masters of antiquity were not so rigidly scrupulous, they varied the proportions as the general spirit of their composition required, clearly perceiving, that however necessary these rules may be to form the taste and to correct the licentiousness of the scholar, they often cramp the genius and circumscribe the ideas of the master.

**Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Della magnificenza ed architettura de' Romani* (Rome: 1761).**

*On study and genius (1761)*

An artist, who would do himself honour, and acquire a name, must not content himself with copying faithfully the ancients, but studying their works he ought to shew himself of an inventive, and . . . of a creating Genius; And by prudently combining the Grecian, the Tuscan, and the Egyptian together, he ought to open himself a road to the finding out of new ornament and new manners.