An Analysis of the
North Shore Pool House

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Introduction

The subject of this paper is a pool house located on the North Shore of Oahu. The photographs show the project near completion. This subject is regarded by the Owner as a folly. It is for this reason that this project was chosen for analysis. Americans, and indeed other "New World" cultures display a tendency to revere the architectural vocabulary of Europe. Similarly, the Romans revered the architecture of their ancestors, the Greeks.

The subject, hereinafter referred to as the Pool House, was designed in the Italian Renaissance Style. It is an example of nymphaeum architecture, a building which is a garden structure, and holds nature as its central theme. This structure's motifs include animism, and water. Nymphaeums were commonly found during the Italian Renaissance period in Italy and include the Villa Madama in Rome.
History of the Italian Renaissance Style

During the 15th century in Italy, a renewed interest in Ancient Classical Styles took hold. This interest manifested itself in the Renaissance Classical Movement. The movement worked its way to France in about the mid-16th century, and arrived in England in about the early 17th century. Eventually the movement found its way over to America where it had a significant impact on the architecture of the 18th century.3

In America, the Italian Renaissance Style took on two typologies, the Islamicate (1840-1985) and the Italian Renaissance (1890-1935). Both style share certain distinguishing features including: balanced symmetrical facades, decorative details, and pilasters.

Analysis

A. Form:

1. The layout in plan reveals many characteristics common to 11th century Romanesque architecture. For instance, a Classic Romanesque church layout would include the triumphal arch, the church with side aisles, and the nave with the apse. The Pool House plan possesses three distinctive areas, the approach, the pool deck (pool and side aisles) and the loggia which includes the triumphal arch. The ceiling of the loggia is vaulted, and the arches are round headed, all typical of Romanesque architecture.

3 A Field Guide to American Houses, McAlester, Alfred Knopf, 1992, pg. 6
11th Century Romanesque Architecture
not to scale

North Shore Pool House
not to scale
1 Vincent Scully, attributed quote, architectural historian for the New York Times
2 Raffaello Architectto, Stefano Ray, 1974, Laterza, 165-168
2. In elevation, the building complex is one story. The central block projects forward, has three arched openings and side wings. The arches are round headed and have a molding elements suggestive of a keystone, and of a springer although the arches are not constructed of masonry.

B. Roof
1. The roof is normal pitch, center gabled.
2. There is a eave overhang, boxed with Classical moldings
C. Structure
1. The foundation is slab on grade
2. The framing is stud wood framing
3. The finish material is stuccoed veneer
4. The roof is framed by common rafter roof framing.
   a. The roofing finish material is modern Spanish ceramic tiles.
5. The windows are casement windows constructed of fixed horizontal wood slats.
   a. Windows on the loggia suggest an entablature, although the frieze has been highly modernized.
   b. Windows elsewhere posses architrave trim.
6. The doors are
   a. exterior - none
   b. interior - unglazed (wood) with slate architrave and no decorative crown.
7. Hardscape flatwork is brick on concrete slab.

D. Details and Fenestration
1. The interior doors are flanked by pilasters. The pilasters are half column and are purely decorative. The columns are Corinthian in design, and include capitols with an acanthus leaf design, a projecting cornice and smooth columns which sit on plinths.

2. The complex includes a trellis supported by Corinthian Columns. The columns display all the design elements explained above.
   a. The trellis is wood
   b. Pergolas punctuate the trellis
3. The pool decks are defined by a cast concrete balustrade of a design typical to the Renaissance period.

4. The triangular gable above the cornice (the pediment) is filled with a simple, modern stylized decoration which features the circle form, a design often featured in Paladian pediments. At the corners of the pediment accroteria are featured.
E. Art and Furniture

1. The Pool House project includes many pieces of statuary including the Trident located in the spa. This piece is said to date from about 1735. Urns are massive and display fluting detail.

2. The furniture includes a coffee table constructed of cast concrete and formed to look like a corinthian column capitol featuring large volutes and the architrave. While this is clearly a modern piece, the Italian Renaissance vocabulary is consistent. Likewise, the cast concrete chairs by the spa while obviously modern pieces, have the appearance of traditional Renaissance materials (stone) and employ motifs (stylized animals) typical to the Italian Renaissance period.

3. The furniture within the loggia is upholstered in material which is distinctively Italian Renaissance. The red in the material is Pompean.
red, the weave design is the classic Laurel leaf pattern and color banding is the imperial pattern.⁴

Conclusion

The North Shore Pool House is an example of America's fascination and reverence for classic forms and treatments from our European past. Architecturally speaking, "New World" societies often display the tendancy to the past for guidance and inspiration. During the Italian Renaissance of the 15th century, Romans referred back to the Classical models of Greece. During the Italian Renaissance movement in America, American designers referred back to the Italian models for inspiration and guidance.

Almost all of the items mentioned in the analysis section of this paper are consistant with identification as an example of Italian Renaissance architecture as defined in A field Guide to American Houses⁵. Those items include:

2. Normal pitched roof with central gable and tile roof.
3. Boxed eave overhang with Classical moldings
4. Stuccoed veneer
5. Entablatures at the central block windows, architraves at other windows and doors.
6. Interior doors flanked by Corinthian pilasters.

⁴ Fabrizio Medosi, Architect, Italian National, Personal conversation (April 2000)
⁵ A Field Guide to American Houses, McAlester, Alfred Knopf, 1992, pg. 6, 7, 21-59
7. Corinthian columns.
8. Pergolas.
9. Ballustrade
10. Triangular gable above the cornice. Pediment featuring the circle form and accroteria.

One can assume that it is human nature to draw inspiration from the aesthetics of the past and to want to replicate those aesthetics (and the ideals they imply) in our modern world. It was this tendency that Vincent Scully, Yale professor and Architectural historian referred to when he describing buildings with this objective as just like Coco-Cola, only closer.