



# Shades of Green

AN EXCLUSIVE SHOWCASE OF ARCHITECTURE BY THE  
WORLD'S LEADING PRACTITIONERS OF SUSTAINABLE ARCHITECTURE

# ERIC STENDEL ARCHITECTURE

Nashville, Tennessee



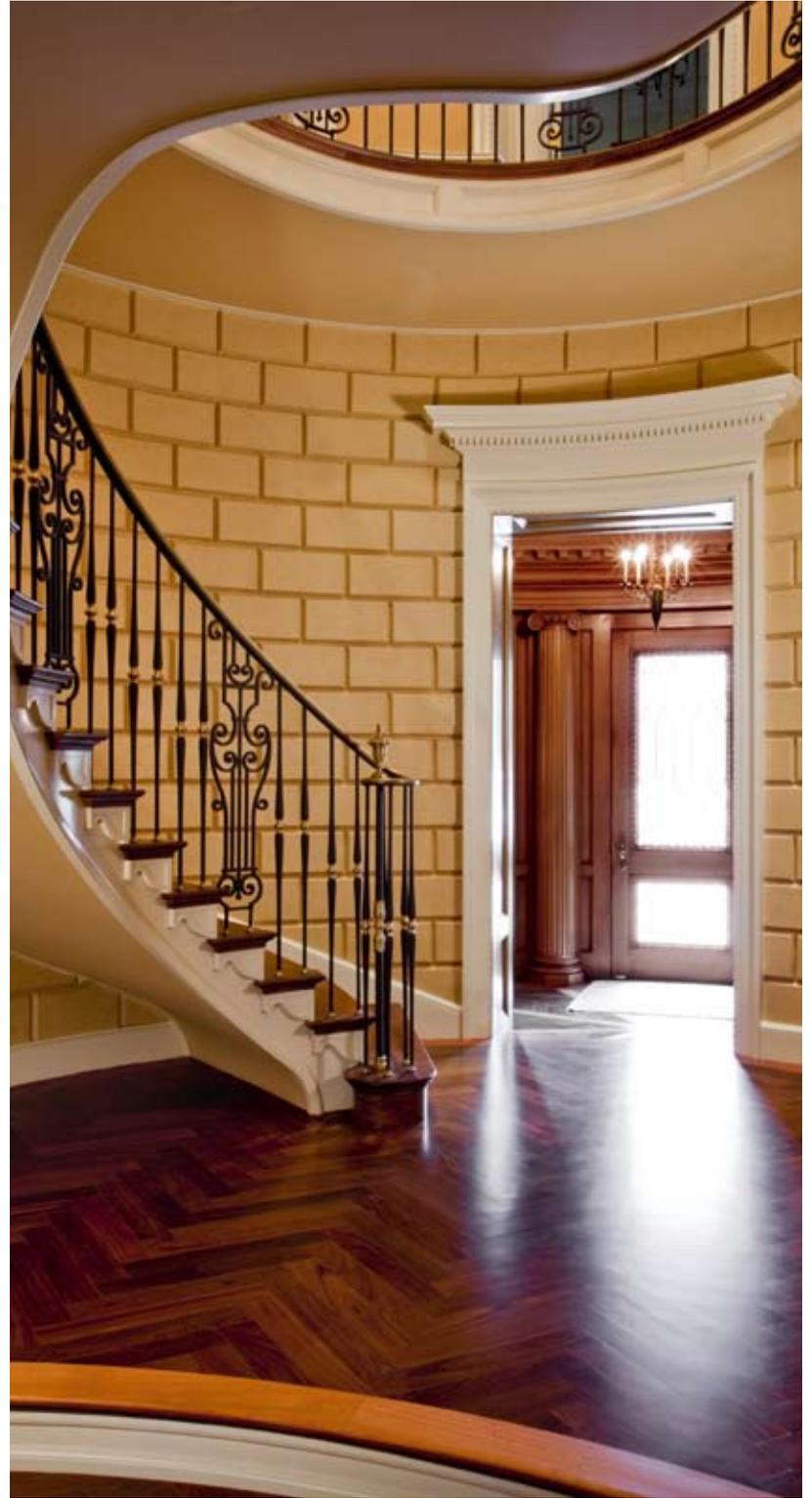
Following a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Parsons School of Design in Manhattan, Eric Stengel received a Master of Architecture from Harvard University; he was also educated in decorative arts at the Musée du Louvre. Thus, combining his passion for architecture—its preservation—and an unmitigated education, Eric founded his firm, specializing in the language of classical architecture. As a founding and board member of The Institute of Classical Architecture and Classical America's Tennessee chapter, Eric teaches the language in his Classical Arts Studio annex. Key to his instruction is reconnecting his students with the rich discipline of classical architecture and how its fundamental tenet of utility, strength and beauty was the progenitor of green architecture through conservation of resources.

“Every great patron of architecture stands on the shoulders of architectural giants. Their work resonates with nature: who we are and how we are made.”

>>E.L. Stengel

Eric strongly believes that modern architecture has sacrificed the earth's natural resources for its own gain. The social reform the movement promised never came; its unintended consequences clouded the vision of those trained to uphold it. Eric holds the rigid, though occasionally unpopular view that modernism asks us to build meaningless shapes at a gargantuan scale; shapes get larger and require more energy to heat, cool and artificially light, only to be removed in a matter of decades. We now look at water and see land because a machine can pump enough earth from one place to another—we are making palm tree-shaped islands in the desert. And one thing that history teaches is the desert always wins. Artificial change lasts only so long; the civilization evaporates; the sands return.





“The classical language of architecture gives form to the sacred geometries of nature, putting man’s presence in harmony with the natural world.”

>>E.L. Stengel

Reform is required. For a truly green architectural approach, which has always worked, Eric asserts that we need a few fundamental elements: strong, inert, natural materials that work as one with the environment; reusable materials that require little processing, that can be recycled and that are safe to life; lower window-to-wall ratios; thermal mass for passive solar performance; architecture for craftsmen’s hands worth doing; towns that are walkable; all organized in harmonic architectural proportions that resonate with who we are and how nature is made.

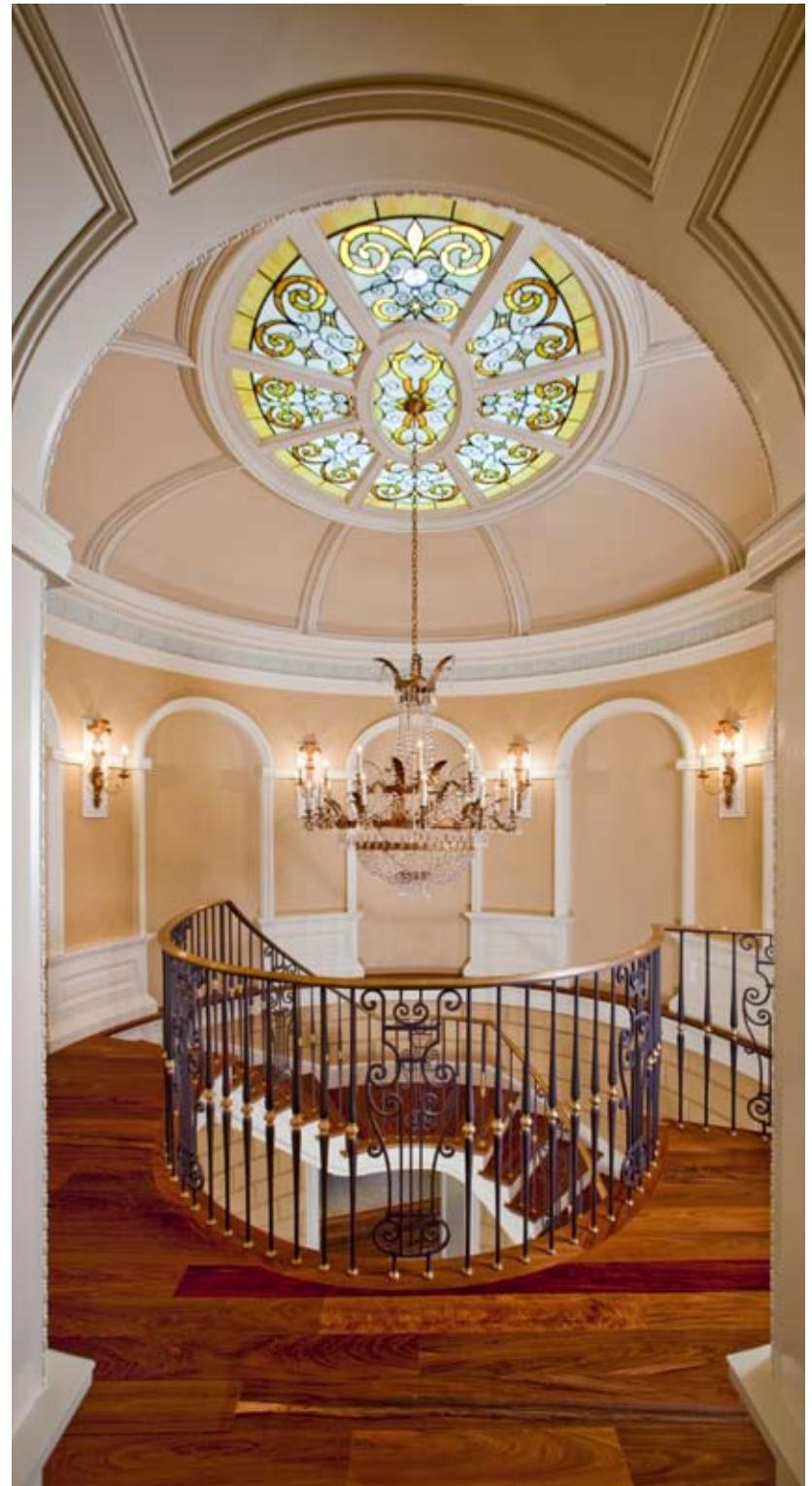
We love our ancient cities because of their natural resonance. To Eric, this Classicism is not a style, but a language, just as French, German and Russian are languages for communication, not styles of communication. Words, grammar and syntax allow expression, and the different expressions are styles—a textbook of biology, a sonnet by Shakespeare, a technical manual on thermodynamics. And though we all use the same words in the dictionary, syntax sets the rules of correct combinations that allow for the different styles to emerge; allowing and enhancing the creative process of prose or the practical art of disseminating technical information in a manual.

RIGHT: Eight archways—some blind, others passageways—surround the upper-floor landing room, and their mouldings are inspired by the 16th-century Ionic order.  
*Photograph by Bob Schatz*

FACING PAGE TOP LEFT: The frieze depicts a palmette—the stylized fan-shaped leaf of the palm tree; this is the source of our word “palm,” as in palm of the hand.  
*Photograph by Bob Schatz*

FACING PAGE BOTTOM LEFT & RIGHT: Expressed as a courtyard with the vocabulary of an exterior space, the inbound room possesses a deeply rusticated base and a stained-glass “sky.” Beyond the indoor courtyard is an elliptical entry hall whose main axes are perpendicular, directing visitors’ views as they move through the space.  
*Photographs by Bob Schatz*

PREVIOUS PAGES: A smooth progression of scale—from the street to the door to the interior—shapes our interaction with the architecture and conveys a quiet resonance. The complete Doric language in the renaissance style is beauty personified. Subtly convex, the hand-cut French limestone fireplace’s detailing is a continuation of a 3,000-year-old language.  
*Photographs by Eric Stengel*





The harmonious permutations of architecture's classical language have survived for 3,000 years. Were it not for the discovery of the thread Plato called "nature's greatest secret", the language would have disappeared long ago in a vacuum of meaninglessness. Nature's sacred geometries set forth instruction for giving form to our creations. Architecture thereby is the "mother of all arts" because it fully integrates nature's proportion (beauty), structural arts (firmness) practical construction arts (utility) and in a way that puts man's presence in sequence with the natural world. The architecture is an homage to the universe by showing who we are and how we are made.



ABOVE LEFT: The baseboards and chair rails are in the language of the Ionic order. The crown moulding is styled and scaled to harmonize with the whole.

ABOVE RIGHT: An elliptical entry hall connects the dining room with the Corinthian parlor. By pressing through the doorway, the entablature's plastic expression demonstrates the language's beauty, reflecting our place in time.

FACING PAGE: The elliptical entry's side-to-side axis directs attention left to the Corinthian parlor or right to the dining room. Rendered in a tea stain, the parlor exemplifies attention to detail, such as with the meticulously hand-placed dentil moulding.

*Photographs by Bob Schatz*



“The thread Plato called ‘nature’s greatest secret’ and ‘the soul of the universe’ is what the church called ‘the golden section.’ It is ‘the face of God.’ For the ancients, this secret proportion was a sacred truth for all things.”

>>E.L. Stengel