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Dallas: Modern-Day Salute to the Glory of Greece



Richard Davis: a purer Post-Modernist

John Ruskin, the great 19th-century British architecture critic, has never been known for the sparsity of his language or ideas. However, in his famous book *The Stones of Venice*, he reduced the whole of architectural history to several straightforward, easily remembered sentences that now, after more than 100 years, retain a fresh and peculiar significance. "All European architecture, bad and good, old and new," he wrote, "is derived from Greece through Rome, and colored and perfected from the East. The history of architecture is nothing but the tracing of the various modes and directions of this derivation. Understand this, once for all, if you hold fast this great connecting clue, you may string all types of successive architectural invention upon it like so many beads. . . . Now observe: Those old Greeks gave the shaft; Rome gave the arch; the Arabs pointed and foliated the arch."

It would be interesting to know what Ruskin would have made of that architecture called Modernism, which dominated the middle years of this cen-



Mr. and Mrs. Alan Hulsey's request for a "charming" home inspired Dallas architect Richard Drummond Davis to create a romantic reinterpretation of a traditional country house in the style of the English Arts and Crafts movement.



"I'm continuing the vocabulary of the early 20th-century eclectics."

—Richard Davis

tury. Many architects from the '30s on into the '60s and '70s avoided the columnar shaft, the arch and the gothic arch with a vengeance and thus created a completely new style, a freakish and petulant bead that just wouldn't slide onto Ruskin's string with the others.

But in the last decade, architects have rejected Modernism and, like so many revived Rip van Winkles, have begun to squint again at the long-lost images about which Ruskin wrote so romantically. These are the architects who have come to be known as Post-Modernists, and although that label has not been universally accepted by architects, it does accurately describe a certain design sensibility that enjoys placing historical forms into spaces otherwise dominated by a modern aesthetic. To see an abstracted Corinthian column or Gothic vault against the backdrop of a clean, almost Corbusian space is to sense that the place in the architect's

imagination once occupied by Modernism is still warm.

There is a type of Post-Modernist, however, for whom the freedom to enjoy historical style is more thrilling than the challenge of creating a new one, and Richard Drummond Davis of Dallas is just such an architect. Although his office has all the right Post-Modern touches—abstracted white pilasters and walls painted in the dusty rose shade made famous by Michael Graves (the movement's hero), Davis calls himself a "soft Post-Modernist." Rather than abstracting historical forms into an entirely new contemporary style, Davis prefers to give his clients authentic renditions of the architecture of the past.

In a two-page summary of his design philosophy—a sort of handout to prospective clients—the architect makes it clear just how much his intentions differ from those of the Modernists, who began anew with each project, or the