

Goethe and Palladio: Goethe's study of the relationships between art and nature, leading through architecture to the discovery of the metamorphosis of plants

David Lowe, Simon Sharp



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Goethe and Palladio: Goethe's study of the relationships between art and nature, leading through architecture to the discovery of the metamorphosis of plants David Lowe, Simon Sharp The poet, dramatist, novelist, and scientist, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe had to wait many years before he was able to travel south to Italy, "the land where the lemon trees bloom." He had gained success in several fields, but he had a sense of being trapped and confined and felt a need for light. Italy would give this to him in a number of ways.

Taking as their basis Goethe's *Italian Journey*, the authors of this fascinating and unusual study explore how Goethe's experience of Palladio's architecture influenced his view of the relationship between art and nature in general and, in particular, helped him form his understanding of metamorphosis, leading to his discovery of the "archetypal plant."

In his carefully written account of his travels, Goethe seems to oscillate between experiences of architecture and experiences of nature. In nature, he searched for the "archetypal plant," the essential form whose metamorphosis through time would produce the plant we see in its cycle from seed to fruit. In the art and architecture of antiquity and in Palladio's classical reformulation of it, he tried to understand the purpose and function of artistic creation.

Until now, no one has put these two together. David Lowe and Simon Sharp show for the first time how these seemingly unrelated subjects are related?how the living geometries and volumes of harmoniously proportioned buildings, the "great idea" of architecture, can lead to the intuition of similar principles in nature.

David Lowe and Simon Sharp have worked together for twenty-one years. One of their first projects was the recreation of Goethe's *Italian Journey*. They have given numerous workshops and presentations on the subject in the U.S. and U.K., including The British Museum, the German Embassy, and the Edinburgh Festival.

This is must-reading for anyone interested in Goethe's ideas on plants and metamorphosis.

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