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ROBERT FLECK

THE OLD PENNSYLVANIA SUPREME COURT CHAMBER in Philadelphia's Independence Hall.

swirls yielded to Newtonian balance and simplicity.

Newtonian neoclassical balance is evident in several monumental buildings of the period, which display on a rather ostentatious scale the century's vogue for mathematical regularity in architecture. Examples include Vienna's Schönbrunn Palace, remodeled in neoclassical style starting in 1743; the Circus, a ring of townhouses built beginning in 1754 in Bath, England; and Madrid's Prado Museum (see page 11), designed in 1785.

Lesser known is the interior of the old Pennsylvania Supreme Court Chamber, which I photographed when I visited Philadelphia's Independence Hall (see above)—itself a building symmetrical and balanced in design, like much of Georgian colonial architecture. Here, the door on the left is real and functional; the one on the right, however, is fake: It is inoperable, but necessary to preserve the overall symmetry of the room. The English architect-scientist and Newton contemporary Christopher

Wren declared that “the geometrical is the most essential part of architecture.”⁴

While connections between science and the cultural expressions of society are interesting in and of themselves, appreciating them helps bridge the science-humanities “two cultures” divide. As emphasized by the American Association for the Advancement of Science, science literacy “includes seeing the scientific endeavor in the light of cultural and intellectual history.”⁵ Recognizing that relationship enhances and enlivens education in and awareness of STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics) and, at the very least, helps humanize science.

References

1. J. H. Randall Jr, *The Making of the Modern Mind: A Survey of the Intellectual Background of the Present Age*, 50th anniversary ed., Columbia U. Press (1976).
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3. H. W. Janson, *History of Art*, 3rd ed., Prentice-Hall (1986), p. 574.
4. M. Kemp, *Nature* **447**, 1058 (2007).
5. American Association for the Advancement of Science, Project 2061, *Science for All Americans Summary*, AAAS (1995).

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Letters and commentary are encouraged and should be sent by email to ptletters@aip.org (using your surname as the Subject line), or by standard mail to Letters, PHYSICS TODAY, American Center for Physics, One Physics Ellipse, College Park, MD 20740-3842. Please include your name, work affiliation, mailing address, email address, and daytime phone number on your letter and attachments. You can also contact us online at <https://contact.physicstoday.org>. We reserve the right to edit submissions.

Correction

April 2023, page 30—Panels a and b are mislabeled in the figure 3 caption. Figure 3a is a cross-sectional image of a pre-eclamptic placenta, and figure 3b is a cross-sectional image of a normal placenta. **PT**