

School News

Architecture: The Mother of All Arts

By Van James

Architecture is what we create between the given forms of nature and the structure of our own physical body. We put ourselves “into” our buildings and they affect our environment as they work back upon us. As Winston Churchill said during the rebuilding of London after the bombings of WWII, “We shape our buildings and our buildings shape us.”

The first main lesson block for HWS 12th graders is the History of Architecture, a subject that explores the connections in the humanities (history, anthropology, archaeology, mythology, and literature), mathematics, and the science of engineering, not to mention art and aesthetics. In this way it provides a solid foundation for starting this last year of high school, as it supports young adults in their own search for balancing inside and outside - inner life and outer reality - and provides a perfect keystone for centering many fields of study. By way of drawing, writing, hands-on projects, oral presentations, and discussion, students begin to see the built environment around them in an entirely new way. Field trips aid and deepen this process, for buildings are not just theoretical; they need to be experienced in three dimensions.

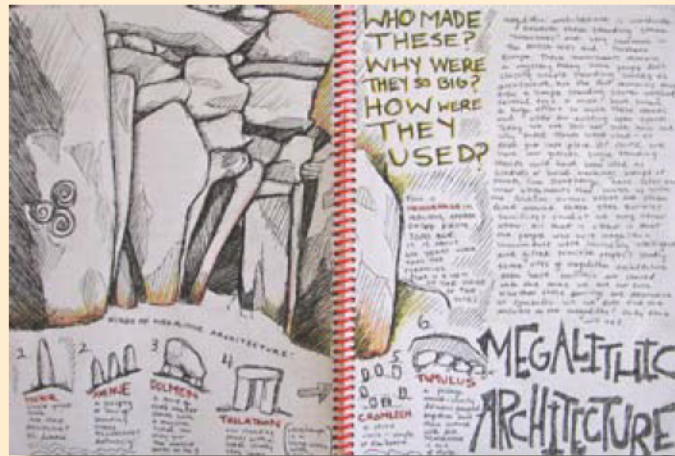
The Waldorf schools in New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Sydney, London, and Berlin have the unique opportunity for seeing great architecture in their cities. The Honolulu Waldorf School students do as well! On a recent field trip to downtown Honolulu, the 12th graders saw buildings of many different styles, utilizing various construction techniques and a wide range of building materials, and made sketches of Neo-Classic, Renaissance Revival, and Modern Symbolist architecture. The fact that Honolulu has the only royal palace in the United States (which had electric lights before the White House, and indoor flush toilets and inter-room phones well in advance of other cities) is worth noting, and that is what the seniors have done by creating their own History of Architecture notebooks during this course (see photos).

Rudolf Steiner, Ph.D., the founder of Waldorf education, was not trained as an architect, yet he designed and had built some twenty-four buildings during his lifetime, including the internationally acclaimed first and second Goetheanum buildings in Switzerland. He said that in the future buildings would have the power to “speak” to us. That they would influence us in such a way that they could even prevent crime and wrongdoing simply by way of their dynamic, expressive forms.

During an Architecture block several years ago one student commented on the rhythmic changes in styles from constricted geometric structures to flamboyantly fluctuating buildings. She said that because of this ever-alternating expansion and contraction in the styles of architecture (Egyptian to Greek, Romanesque

to Gothic, Renaissance to Baroque, Neo-Classic to Neo-Gothic, International Style to Organic) it was like the “heartbeat of civilization.” She went on to study medicine.

Understanding the history of architecture can have far-reaching effects on the young persons as they design their identity and build their future.



History of Architecture Main Lesson book work by Aloe Corry (Class of 2013)