

The Neoclassical in Providence:
Columns!
Columns everywhere!

By Rachel Griffith and Peter Hatch

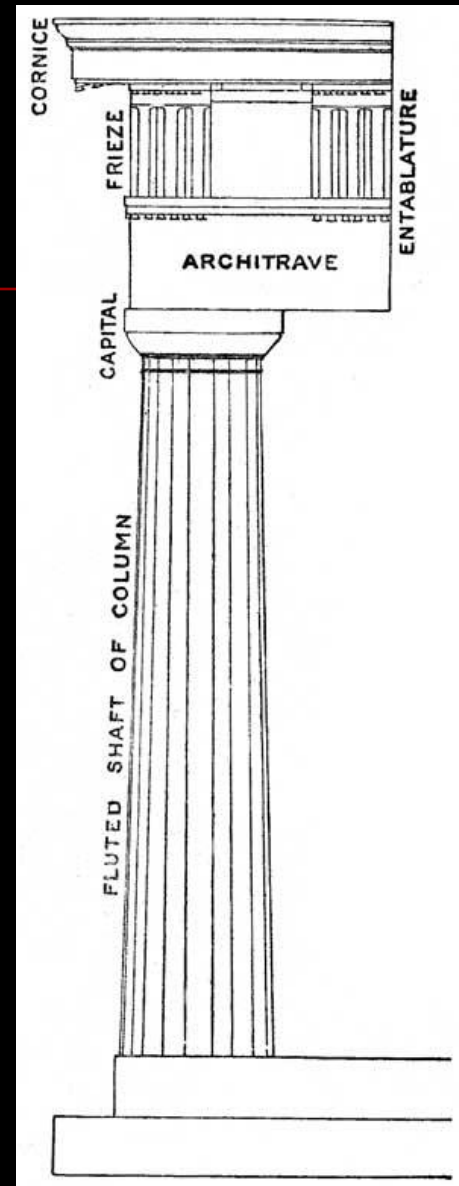
Introduction

- From our experiences in this class and in the everyday world, we have seen that the Greek column is one of the most important, and pervasive contributions of Ancient Greek architecture to the architecture that followed it. In fact, so many examples of columns modeled after the Greek style exist, that in just a short walk from the Pembroke campus down toward RISD, we were easily able to find not only multiple examples of columns that epitomize all three Greek orders, but also numerous examples of columns obviously inspired by Greek forms. This influence even shows up in some very unexpected places.
- We have organized this presentation by those three orders, and by how closely each example follows the conventions of the style it comes from.

Doric Columns

Features of the Doric Column

- Overall simplicity
- Frieze above, containing alternating metopes and triglyphs
- Capital consists of a square sitting atop a flaring round component
- Fluted shaft
- No base, column rests directly on the stylobate



Pure Doric

- The modern example at right, from a house on Brown and Meeting, is a faithful representation of the Doric order columns
- The shape of the capital, fluted columns, and lack of a base are consistent with the Doric order
- The only major departure from this style is the lack of metopes and triglyphs above the columns



Pure Doric

- Manning Hall, modeled on the temple of Diana-Propylea in Eleusis, is an excellent example of most all the features of the Doric order, on a very large and impressive scale
- This building features Doric order columns with the characteristic fluting, simple capital, and a frieze with metopes and triglyphs, guttae along the roofline, and a shallow-sloped triangular gable, called the pediment.





Impure Doric

- The columns pictured are more loosely derived from the Greek Doric order
- They lack the characteristic frieze and fluting
- The major Doric contribution is the overall simplicity and distinctive capital

Impure Doric

- This example, on Waterman, lacks fluting on the columns and features a base, suggesting that it derived more from the Roman Doric order, which in turn derived from the Greek Doric order
- The frieze is particularly Greek Doric in style, with the first triglyph positioned in the corner of the frieze, rather than centered above the column as in the Roman Doric order
- Also of note is the fact that the false columns which shadow the true columns are fluted



Impure Doric

- This column contains Doric fluting and capital, but is otherwise quite removed from the Doric tradition
- The column rests on a base and does not support a Doric order frieze at all
- Rather, it is integrated into a much more modern style frieze
- Like the previous example, it contains a false column shadowing the actual one in similar style



Doric in Victorian Context

- This building features classical Greek columns integrated into a distinctly Victorian railing and frieze
- This is a particularly good example of how classical Greek design has blended with architectural elements from much later periods and styles





Connections to the Greek even show up in buildings you would not expect...

- ...as with this building.
- Though mostly without neoclassical elements, it still employs Roman Doric columns as a decorative detail



Doric False Columns

- This false column is characteristically Greek Doric based on its capital and fluting
- Unlike all preceding pictures, it is integrated into the building itself, unlike it would be in a Greek context
- The column is found attached to the corner of a building adjacent to a false railing, possibly to give the illusion or suggestion of a porch



Another unexpected place for Greek influence...



Doric False Columns

- This column is quite similar to the previous one, with false Doric column and railing
- It makes further departures from its Greek past because it is painted wood
- Additionally, the proportion of the column is more clearly different from the Greek Doric order than any previous examples— it is much taller in proportion to its width



Doric-inspired Elements

- This picture and the three following it show columns that are not strictly Doric, but are at least reminiscent of Doric order columns



Doric-inspired Square Columns



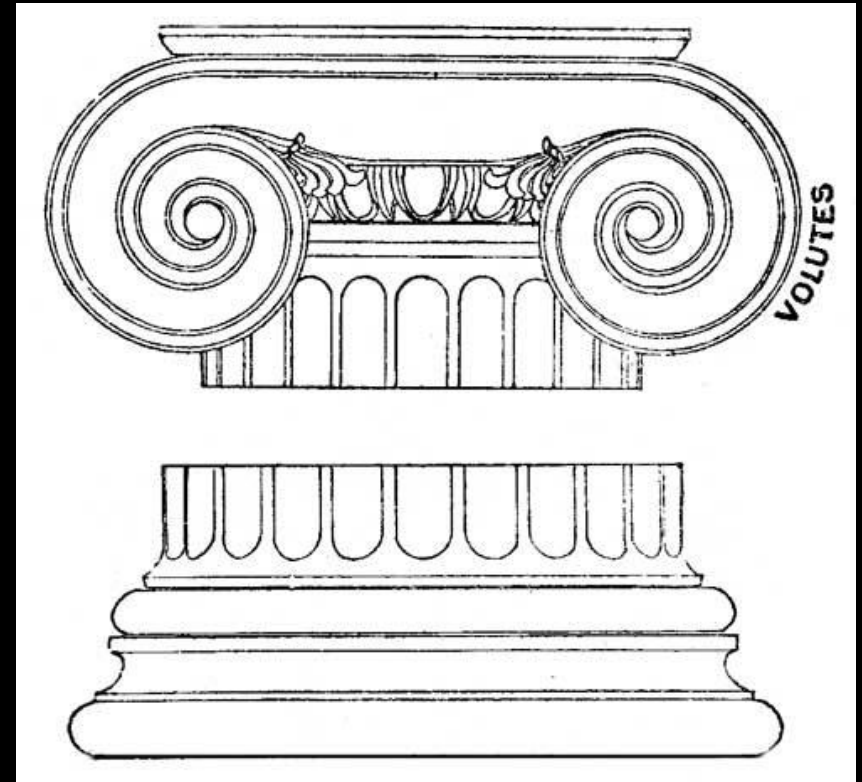
Doric-inspired Octagonal Columns



Ionic Columns

Features of the Ionic Column

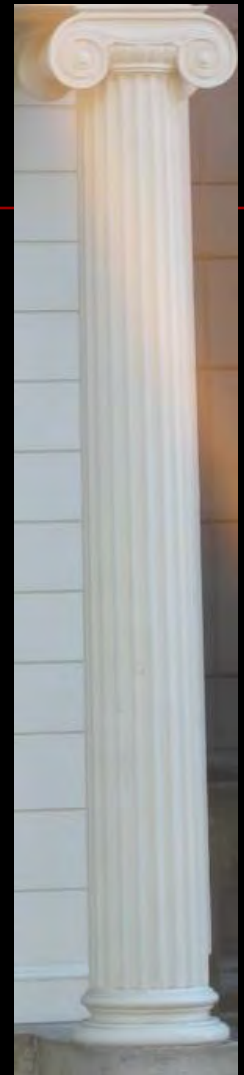
- The Ionic column has more decoration and detail than the Doric form.
- The most prominent features of this decoration are the volutes (thought to be organically inspired) on the capitals.
- Another prominent feature is the carved base, which delineates the column from the surface it stands on.



Pure Ionic Columns



- This doorway, from Waterman street, is a pure example of the ionic.
- Its columns follow all the conventions of the Ionic order, with a carved base and volutes on the capital
- Note that the top portion of the entrance also follows the conventions of Ionic entablature, solidifying the connection to the Greek.





Pure Ionic Columns

- This example, from Alumni Hall, also uses Ionic columns
- In this case, the volutes go outward diagonally from the face of the building, rather than running parallel with it.
- The entablature above the door, with a curve where a triangular pediment would normally be, does not follow any Greek order

More Ionic

- This house as a whole obviously draws on Greek style, and specifically uses Ionic columns
- In this case the columns are also incorporated into a more modern feature, a porch railing.



Impure Ionic Columns

- The top of Brown's tower uses unfluted columns with Ionic capitals.
- Other elements of the tower, like the arch at the left of the picture, and the decorations at the top, demonstrate Roman influence layered on among the Greek.



Ionic in Victorian Context

- The columns pictured here have all the characteristic of the Ionic order, in still a different kind of context
- However, they are also incorporated into the railing of a rounded, much more Victorian porch.



Ionic Inspired

- This doorframe shows heavy Greek influence, with Ionic false columns, as well as entablature and pediment-like elements above the doorway.
- This show the direct translation of Greek temple elements onto the face of an otherwise modern building



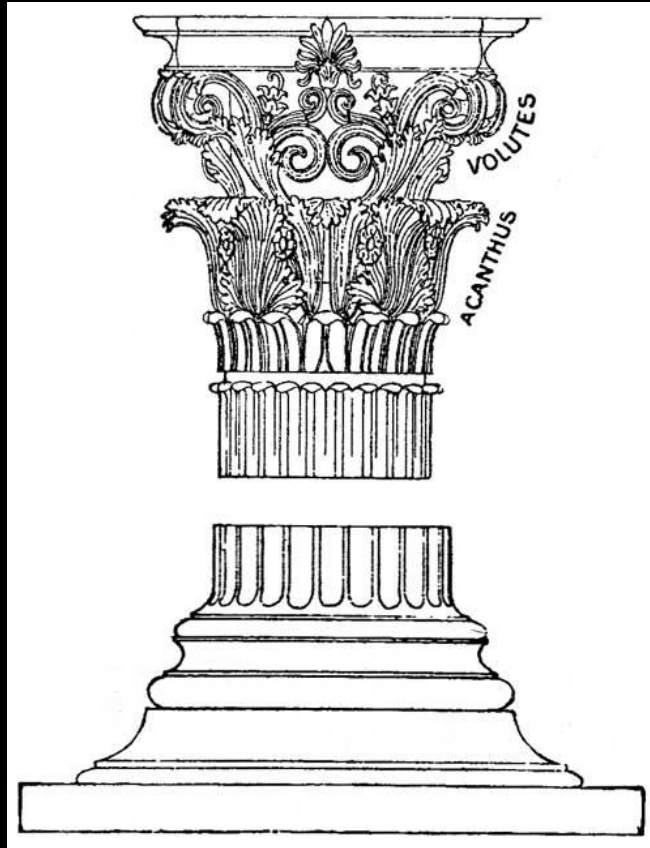
Ionic Inspired

- This example, from near RISD on Main St., is a building with a row of plain, squared false columns topped with portions of Ionic capitals.
- Even though only this one small element is directly borrowed, it gives a Greek association to the whole building.



Corinthian Columns

Features of the Corinthian Column



- The Corinthian style represents an elaboration on the Ionic, and also originates from Ancient Greek architecture
- The characteristic feature of this style is a much more decorated capital with carved acanthus leaves and more understated volute designs.

Pure Corinthian

- This example, from the RISD museum, exemplifies the Corinthian order, with very intricate capitals on both the full columns and the false columns flanking the doorway
- Here is a good place to point out the much more slender and adorned appearance of the Corinthian order especially compared to the Doric.





RI State House

- Although a long distance away from the area we walked, the State House clearly employs much classical influence
- These influences include a large number of unfluted Corinthian columns, visible even from this distance.

Impure Corinthian

- This building, on Meeting Street, offers another example of unfluted columns with Corinthian capitals, a smaller version of the use of this same element on the Rhode Island State House.



Impure Corinthian

- This small colonnade on Main St. contains a row of columns with highly carved capitals with more prominent volute designs, making them more of a composite style, a fusion of Ionic and Corinthian orders.



Impure Corinthian

- This doorway is flanked by columns that also show both Corinthian and Ionic influences in their capitals.
- Also, they represent one of the few examples we have seen where the capital is painted, visually separating the shaft from the capital.
- In that specific respect, it may be historically accurate than the plain white we value as part of the Greek aesthetic in retrospect.



Corinthian Inspired

- These columns, near Prospect and Waterman, have capitals with organic and floral elements, like the Corinthian order, but take that motif in a very different direction, though still not totally divorcing the building from the influence of the classical Greek.



Modern, Greek Inspired Columns

And other interesting stuff





Another Oddity

- This architectural decoration, tucked into a space on Park Row, resembles a Greek column, particularly because of the frieze and cornice like shape above.
- This examples and those that follow show the more subtle, but still common influences of the Greek on much later architecture.

Another unexpected Greek connection



- Although basically just plain concrete tubes, this building on the RISD campus still employs these two columns *in antis*
- This shows the translation of Greek influence onto elements that, even without following the conventions of any of the three orders, are still important and noticeable.

And another

- List Art Center
- Even this building, in a very modern and plainly decorated “brutalist” style, has a regular colonnade framing the inner structure, as in Greek temple architecture



Columns! Columns everywhere!



- Even very modern buildings like this one show Greek influence
- The columns, though square and plain, still have swelling supports at the top that imitate the visual effect of having a capital

Images and Information from:

- <http://karenswhimsy.com/greek-columns.shtm>
- <http://www.cmhpf.org/kids/dictionary/ClassicalOrders.html>
- <http://freenet.buffalo.edu/bah/a/DCTNRY/r/romdorric.html>
- http://www.brown.edu/Administration/News_Bureau/Databases/Encyclopedia/search.php?serial=M0080