“The Theory & Practice of Eclecticism in 18th-Century Architecture”

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For the last two hundred years, early modern eclecticism - the selection and combination of elements from existing works - has often been regarded with suspicion as an artistic liability, betraying an inability to create something new. This synthetic approach has roots in antiquity, however, and was an accepted method of working throughout the early modern period. In the eighteenth century, particularly in northern Europe, it was encouraged by a much broader fashion for eclectic thought. This gave it a stronger intellectual foundation than before, and yielded a more overt eclectic emulation than we find elsewhere. Although it was central to the work of many of the outstanding architects of the eighteenth century, such as Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach, Balthasar Neumann, and others, this has been downplayed by most modern writers.

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