

*Lisbet Balslev Jørgensen: The Freedom of Architecture*

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The philosophers of the Enlightenment were of the opinion that the rigours of nature fostered freedom-loving people. The Scandinavian artists who travelled to Rome were received in that spirit and participated actively in the process of liberation. In a letter from

Rome in 1812, the architect Peder Malling related that Thorvaldsen wished to “reinstiate the golden era of the Greeks in the present age” and wished himself to “create a second Athens in his native land. If one makes a detailed study of the Greek column orders and familiarizes oneself with the Roman arches, one can master the application of any style ... and take liberties that by no means offend the eye.” Styles became divorced from time, and the archeologists revived the life that had come to a standstill with the eruption of Vesuvius. Art styles were to have equal value. Thorvaldsen had liberated sculpture from architecture. Landscape painting was just as valuable as historical painting.

In the liberated Greece, democracy was to be revived and the Acropolis cleansed of the additions of the tyrants. The uncovered Acropolis was to become the symbol of freedom. To this, the sons of freedom from the North made a great contribution. E. G. Schaubert from Breslau, Ludwig Ross from Kiel, and Christian Hansen from Copenhagen re-erected the temple of Nike Apteris. Thus the new Athens was to grow naturally up from the ground. Demosthenes valued the Propylaia just as highly as the Parthenon. The Scandinavian architects saw that the monuments on the Acropolis were autonomous buildings that were intended to be viewed diagonally. They should be seen from all sides, like Thorvaldsen’s sculptures. In the new town plan from 1833, S. Kleanthes and Schaubert visualized monumental buildings in diagonal lines. Athens should also be a garden city. Free people owned their own houses and gardens. In 1834 Leo von Klenze corrected the “geometrical defects” and the “all too broad” streets. Christian Hansen built Athens University during the period 1839-50, while his brother Theophilus Hansen built the Academy of Sciences (1859-87) and the National Library (1859-92). The buildings are not aligned to the street or to one another, but stand freely in a garden. Peder Malling and M. G. Bindesbøll also loosened the “restrictive bonds of tyranny” in Copenhagen – Malling with the main building of Copenhagen University (1831-36), and Bindesbøll with the Thorvaldsen Museum (1834-48). The hierarchy was broken down. The dissolution of Classicism had begun – a process that is still going on.