

after all only another form of drawing which equally empowers the designer. Arguably virtual reality might give even more credence – and standing – to its creator because of its higher verisimilitude.

Was it like this?

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Whether we are intent on pursuing continuity or innovation, or probably a combination of the two, the past is of relevance. It is either the source of an initial model or simply something to be continued uncritically. Can we, however, ever read and understand the past, even the recent past, with sufficient certainty or are we always in the position 'that what we think of as someone else's past was never anyone's present'? It is a question of considerable relevance to the preservation and restoration of old buildings, to the demands made by institutions claiming to safeguard our heritage and to our general understanding of how to approach the past.

In order to know the past we rely on some form of document, using the term in its widest sense: on a treaty, an account book, a building, painting, photograph, a surviving eye-witness and of course on earlier histories which themselves depended on some documentary evidence. In the case of architecture we have to rely heavily, though not solely, on visual evidence.

Manuscripts of Vitruvius have come down to us with no illustrations except for one diagram in the margin though Vitruvius refers to illustrations which should be at the end of several

Below
John Wood the Elder,
Queen's Square Bath,
England 1728; south
elevation

