

Epistle IV, To Richard Boyle, Earl of Burlington

Alexander Pope

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*Est brevitare opus, ut currat sententia, neu se
Impediat verbis lassas onerantibus aures:
Et sermone opus est modo tristi, saepe jocoso,
Defendente vicem modo Rhetoris atque Poetae,
Interdum urbani, parcentis viribus, atque
Extenuantis eas consulto.*

(Horace, *Satires*, I, x, 17–22) 'Tis strange, the miser should his cares employ

To gain those riches he can ne'er enjoy:
Is it less strange, the prodigal should waste
His wealth to purchase what he ne'er can taste?
Not for himself he sees, or hears, or eats;
Artists must choose his pictures, music, meats:
He buys for Topham, drawings and designs,
For Pembroke, statues, dirty gods, and coins;
Rare monkish manuscripts for Hearne alone,
And books for Mead, and butterflies for Sloane.
Think we all these are for himself? no more
Than his fine wife, alas! or finer whore.

For what his Virro painted, built, and planted?
Only to show, how many tastes he wanted.
What brought Sir Visto's ill got wealth to waste?
Some daemon whisper'd, "Visto! have a taste."
Heav'n visits with a taste the wealthy fool,
And needs no rod but Ripley with a rule.
See! sportive fate, to punish awkward pride,
Bids Bubo build, and sends him such a guide:
A standing sermon, at each year's expense,
That never coxcomb reach'd magnificence!
You show us, Rome was glorious, not profuse,
And pompous buildings once were things of use.
Yet shall (my Lord) your just, your noble rules
Fill half the land with imitating fools;
Who random drawings from your sheets shall take,
And of one beauty many blunders make;
Load some vain church with old theatric state,
Turn arcs of triumph to a garden gate;
Reverse your ornaments, and hang them all
On some patch'd dog-hole ek'd with ends of wall;
Then clap four slices of pilaster on't,
That lac'd with bits of rustic, makes a front.
Or call the winds through long arcades to roar,

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Proud to catch cold at a Venetian door;
Conscious they act a true Palladian part,
And, if they starve, they starve by rules of art.

Oft have you hinted to your brother peer,
A certain truth, which many buy too dear:
Something there is more needful than expense,
And something previous ev'n to taste 'tis sense:
Good sense, which only is the gift of Heav'n,
And though no science, fairly worth the sev'n:
A light, which in yourself you must perceive;
Jones and Le Notre have it not to give.