Justin Shubow Draws Sold-Out Nashville Crowd With Case for Classical Architecture

Former U.S. Commission of Fine Arts chairman tied Tennessee's new classical federal courthouse to a national debate over civic beauty

Justin Shubow, former chairman of the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts and president of the National Civic Art Society, speaks on classical civic architecture at Meriwether Academy's event at the Belmont Mansion in Nashville, Tenn., on Sept. 23, 2026.

NASHVILLE, TN, UNITED STATES, September 25, 2026 / EINPresswire.com/ -- Justin Shubow, former chairman of the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts and president of the National Civic Art Society, argued before a sold-out audience at Nashville's Belmont Mansion on Sept. 23 that America's public buildings should return to the classical tradition. Meriwether Academy, a Nashville nonprofit, hosted the evening.

The talk came as the national debate over federal architecture reaches Tennessee. In June, the U.S. General Services Administration unveiled the design for a new federal courthouse in Chattanooga, the first major design the agency has announced since President Donald Trump's August 2025 executive order "Making Federal Architecture Beautiful Again," which Shubow helped draft. The courthouse, designed by HOK in what supporters call a "Greco-Deco" style, is scheduled to open in 2030. A 2020 Harris Poll survey commissioned by the National Civic Art Society found that 72% of Americans prefer traditional designs for federal buildings.

> Architecture is inherently public. It is forced upon us, it is a pervasive force that shapes our everyday lives regardless of our worldview. Therefore, architecture is the most political of the arts.”
>
> *Justin Shubow*

"Architecture is the fruit of culture and civilization," said Warren Steury, president of Meriwether Academy. "We should be thinking about what people might say about us 500 years from now, and build and act accordingly."

In his remarks, Shubow traced American civic architecture from the Founders, who looked to Greece and Rome in designing the nation's capital, through a classical tradition that shaped federal buildings for roughly 150 years. He described its postwar abandonment in favor of modernism, citing the 1963 demolition of New York's Pennsylvania Station as a civic loss, and argued that the architecture profession, rather than the public, has sustained modernism's dominance. The audience rose for a standing ovation at the close of the program.

A sold-out audience fills the Belmont Mansion in Nashville for Meriwether Academy's September 2026 evening with architecture critic Justin Shubow.

Meriwether Academy President Warren Steury introduces Justin Shubow at the Belmont Mansion.

"Architecture is inherently public. It is forced upon us," Shubow said. "It is a pervasive force that shapes our everyday lives regardless of our worldview. Therefore, architecture is the most political of the arts."

Shubow served on the Commission of Fine Arts, the federal design review board for the nation's capital, from 2018 to 2021 and was elected its chairman in 2021. In January 2026, Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy named him the inaugural chairman of the Department of Transportation's Beautifying Transportation Infrastructure Council. The New York Times has called him "one of modern architecture's biggest critics."

The evening opened with a reception in the 1850s Italianate villa followed by the lecture and an audience question-and-answer session. Earlier that day, Shubow joined about a dozen guests for a VIP luncheon discussion of Nashville's rapid development, the influence of computer-aided design on modern buildings, and the role of classical education in forming future builders. Attendees traveled from as far as Atlanta and Cincinnati. The Pamphleteer, a Nashville publication, served as cornerstone sponsor for the event.

The lecture opens a full fall calendar for Meriwether Academy. The Pamphleteer, in collaboration with the Academy, will present the Nashville Antichrist Lectures, a four-part series by investor Peter Thiel beginning Sept. 28. The Academy will also host technology writer Joe Allen for the dinner lecture "AI as Antichrist" on Oct. 6. On Oct. 24, it will hold an Anti-Propaganda Workshop

with author and private investigator Elijah Buffalino.

Information on upcoming Meriwether Academy events is available at https://meriwetheracademy.com/events/.

About Meriwether Academy
Meriwether Academy, Inc. is a Nashville-based classical education nonprofit and registered 501(c)(3) organization. Through dinner symposia, lectures, study clubs and wilderness expeditions, the Academy cultivates virtue, adventure and brotherhood among men and boys, drawing on the classical tradition of Western education. Its long-term goal is to establish a classical boys' boarding school in Tennessee. More information is available at https://meriwetheracademy.com.

Warren Steury
Meriwether Academy
+1 615-212-5768
email us here
Visit us on social media:
LinkedIn
Instagram
Facebook
YouTube
X

This press release can be viewed online at: https://www.einpresswire.com/article/945259674

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.
© 1995-2026 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.