

An analysis of the New York professional milieu between the Wall Street Crash of 1929 and the aftermath of WWII reveals an unexpected scenario, in which diverse branches of technical culture and professional and institutional spheres often overlap, and initiatives in the field of architecture are characterised by tensions between designers and technicians, which pave the way for issues of architects' autonomy, responsibility and social roles in the New Deal.

From an initial portrayal of William Lescaze (1896–1969) as an unconventional figure “straddling two continents,” this book challenges a long-established interpretation that sees Lescaze exclusively as promoter of the International Style canons in the United States. Moving beyond it, this book focuses on the role that the Swiss architect played in defining the main features of New York social housing and in the evolution that marks the encounter between European modernity and an American federal scene still profoundly tied to local conventions. From an initially difficult status as an émigré to his involvement in decisional processes and bureaucratic organisations, Lescaze’s professional progress coincides with the gradual acceptance of European forms and models, which, little by little, became part of the institutional language related to public housing which would remain prevalent in New York City until the end of WWII. Drawing from yet-unpublished archival sources pertaining to two disciplines – housing and architecture – which have traditionally been separate in American historiography, this book sheds light on many crucial issues in a branch of architecture that is particularly relevant today.

Architect and historian **Gaia Caramellino** received her PhD in History of Architecture and Town Planning from the Politecnico di Torino. Her research focuses on the history of housing forms, cultures, policies and practices, and on the circulation of architectural and urban discourses between Europe and the Americas during the 20th century. She teaches architecture history and theory at the Politecnico di Milano, and was the coordinator of the national research project “Architectures for the Middle-Class in Italy, 1950s–1970s”, funded by the Italian government. She has lectured in Europe, the United States, Canada and Japan, and was visiting scholar at the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal in 2011 and visiting professor at Kyoto University in 2015. She has received several grants and fellowships for her research, including from the Graham Foundation, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Studies, and the Rockefeller Foundation. She is the author of *William Lescaze: Un architetto europeo nel New Deal* (2010) and *Housing the 40,000: Explorations in the Middle-Class City, Turin, 1945–1980* (with F. De Pieri and C. Renzoni, 2015). She has served as guest editor of several journal issues, and co-edited *Post-War Middle-Class Housing: Models, Construction and Change* (2015) and *Storie di case: Abitare l'Italia del boom* (2013).

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Cover image Photograph of William Lescaze in his office, 1940, William Lescaze Papers, Special Collections Research Center at Syracuse University Libraries, 2016. **Cover design** by Graciliano Berrocal (studioata), 2016



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With a preface by Jean-Louis Cohen

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William Lescaze, Architect of Modern Housing