

Books

Matthew A. Cohen and Maarten Delbeke, eds.

Proportional Systems in the History of Architecture: A Critical Reconsideration

Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2018, 600 pp., illus. \$125/€102.50 (cloth), ISBN 9789087282776

The history of Western architecture is marked by ample attention to the concept of proportion, a concern that has affected both architectural theory (ever searching for aesthetic recipes for harmony) and architectural practice (seeking to balance loads and structure). In fact, the term *proportion* expresses a quantitative relationship between measurable elements and is therefore intrinsic to the geometric forms commonly employed in building designs. According to Western classical traditions, humans have always aspired to the perfection of natural forms; this helps to explain the enduring fascination with proportional systems in architectural design.

For a long time, geometry and proportion represented secret and sacred tools that assured formal coherence and structural balance. Through them, early modern thinkers such as Galileo sought to establish the foundations of experimental science and to demonstrate thresholds of validity for structural principles. According to Goethe's famous aphorism, "Provision has been made to keep trees from growing

up into the sky"—in other words, there is a rational limit to all things.¹

Given the significance ascribed to proportion by so many for so long, it is not surprising that architectural debates continue to explore the multiple implications of proportion for the history and theory of design. The invention of new design technologies has also drawn renewed attention to the theme, reviving interest in the generative algorithms of "visual design" and the ways in which these are controlled by geometry, and therefore proportion.

The study of architectural proportion systems employed in the classical world and during the Renaissance boasts a rich and varied international bibliography. Such research flourished in particular just after World War II, most notably with the publication in 1949 of Rudolf Wittkower's landmark *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism*, a book long credited with awakening the interest of architectural historians in the topic. This was followed in 1958 by Peter Scholfield's *The Theory of Proportion in Architecture*. In the period between these two books, in 1951, Anna Ci-moli and Fulvio Irace organized "De Divina Proportione" in Milan; this major international conference on architectural proportions brought together some of the most prominent architects, historians, and critics of the time, including Wittkower, Sigfried Giedion, James Ackerman, Bruno Zevi, Matila Ghyka, Pier Luigi Nervi, and Le Corbusier.² Matthew A. Cohen and Maarten Delbeke's important edited volume *Proportional Systems in the History of Architecture* now brings this discussion into the twenty-first century. The book consists of articles originally published from 2014 to 2016 as part of a series in the journal *Architectural Histories* that followed from an international conference (also titled "Proportional Systems in the History of

Architecture") held in Leiden in 2011 to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of "De Divina Proportione." Cohen and Delbeke's book thus takes part in an ongoing debate regarding architectural proportions that extends across time and has attracted the attention of both academics and practitioners.

A signal contribution of this new book is its presentation of several key original sources, including an English translation by Caroline van Eck of an unpublished 1933 essay by Wittkower, "The Problem of Movement in Mannerist Architecture"; some short writings by Le Corbusier presented by Jean-Louis Cohen in his study of Le Corbusier's Modulor; and a transcription of Matthew Cohen's interview with James Ackerman, the last living participant of the 1951 conference. The conversation with Ackerman explores different approaches to the study of proportional systems and establishes a strong link between the 1951 and 2011 conferences by assessing the legacy of Wittkower, Le Corbusier, and Colin Rowe. It concludes with reflections on the future of proportional systems as related to digital design practice.

Framed by an introduction and a conclusion by Matthew Cohen, the essays contained in the book enable readers to better understand the potential of architectural proportional systems in terms of their relevance for computer-aided design and their impact on the history and theory of architecture. The book will thus provide an important resource for a wide audience of scholars and practitioners. In his introduction to Part I, "Two Kinds of Proportion," Cohen focuses on the debate between those who claim that proportion represents a subjective solution in the search for harmony and those who assert that it offers an objective measure and reference. As Cohen argues, these two antithetical but inseparable

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extremes inevitably permeate discussions of dimension, composition, and aesthetics. Cohen continues the debate in Part VI, following his interview with Ackerman, where he lists ten fundamental principles for the study of proportional systems in the history of architecture. These principles derive from Cohen's critical reworking of the conclusions proposed by the volume's twenty-two contributing authors.

Part II consists of six chapters that examine theoretical principles in architecture from the classical world to modernity. Mario Curti addresses the unresolved conflict between proportional canons that claim to express natural laws, from the Renaissance to Le Corbusier's Modulor. Caroline van Eck considers the anthropomorphic characteristics of Michelangelo's design for the Laurentian Library vestibule as related to Wittkower's essay on mannerism. Sigrid de Jong explores the question of subjectivity with regard to classical proportions, focusing on eighteenth-century discussions of the anomalous Temple of Neptune in Paestum. Anthony Gerbino discusses the study of proportions in the work of François Blondel in early modern France. Stephen Murray explores the construction of Gothic architecture using digital studies of Beauvais Cathedral, comparing plans and sections to reconstruct geometric proportions. Marvin Trachtenberg closes the section with an essay on Wittkower's study of the role of perspective in shaping Filippo Brunelleschi's design practice and Renaissance theories of architectural proportion.

Part III considers proportion as a design tool and its relationship to modules and modular grids. Eight chapters span the history of architecture from the classical world to the dawn of the Enlightenment. Elizabeth den Hartog explains the symbolism of numbers in early Gothic constructions. Lex Bosman contextualizes the role of the module from Vitruvius through Italian Renaissance treatises. Mark Wilson Jones tackles measurement and the design logic of the Parthenon. Franco Barbieri examines Vincenzo Scamozzi's proposals for the correct dimensioning of rooms. Krista De Jonge investigates the significance of proportion for early modern Flemish artists and architects as seen in prints. Konrad Ottenheim illustrates the application of proportional systems in Dutch civil

architecture. Jeroen Goudeau explains the use of the modular grid as a design tool in early nineteenth-century France. Finally, Robert Bork provides an original reading of design strategies in Gothic architecture, demonstrating how geometric matrices formed a key element in design practices.

Part IV documents how sets of data provided by new analytical tools enable scholars to reassess earlier studies and conclusions, underscoring the value and effectiveness of digital representations for the study of architecture. Andrew Tallon describes the application of laser scanning to the study of the proportions of Bruges Cathedral. Gerd Graßhoff and Christian Berndt analyze entasis in the columns of the Pantheon portico. Francesco P. Di Teodoro explains the role of proportions in Leonardo da Vinci's drawings of religious buildings. Sara Galletti examines the chronology of Philibert de l'Orme's treatise in light of his changing ideas about proportions. Maarten Delbeke considers Claude Perrault's rejection of proportion as an aesthetic rule.

Part V comprises three chapters that explore theoretical interpretations of proportion. Jean-Louis Cohen approaches the debate around proportional systems in twentieth-century France by investigating Le Corbusier's reliance on the theoretical studies of Matila Ghyka for his Modulor measurements. Caroline Voet illustrates the refined proportional principle behind the Belgian Benedictine monk Hans van der Laan's plastic number, which anticipated the parametric logic of solid modeling. Finally, Francesco Benelli investigates the argument between Wittkower and Le Corbusier that stirred backstage at the 1951 conference.

With its distinguished list of contributors, this large and impressive book deserves careful reading. It offers a series of well-articulated perspectives on proportional systems across time and space and raises provocative questions. Persistent, centuries-old debates around proportion have reappeared in the new millennium. The rise of digital technology, contributing to this resurgence, offers yet another means through which scholars can understand and investigate the value and significance of proportional systems.

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Notes

1. "Es ist dafür gesorgt, daß die Baume nich in den Himmel wachsen." Quoted in A. D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson, *On Growth and Form* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1917), 20. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Goethe's Collected Works*, trans. Robert R. Heitner (New York: Suhrkamp, 1987), 4:333.

2. Tensions between Wittkower and Le Corbusier, both of whom claimed to have rediscovered classical proportional theory in architecture, are well documented. For a discussion of Wittkower's impact on modernist architecture, see Alina Payne, "Rudolf Wittkower and Architectural Principles in the Age of Modernism," *JSAH* 53, no. 3 (Sept. 1994), 322–42.

Emanuele Lugli

The Making of Measure and the Promise of Sameness

Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019, 309 pp., 16 color and 40 b/w illus. \$35 (cloth), ISBN 9780226612492

An inscription on the inner courtyard of the Sponza Palace (ca. 1516–21) in Dubrovnik promises that all merchants who pass through the city will be treated fairly: "Our weights do not permit cheating or being cheated. When I measure goods the Lord measures with me." The city claimed it was an honest broker and verified its measures—according to the declaration—by divine presence. Asserting its independence in the Adriatic, Dubrovnik offered a promise of fair trading practices that lifted it above other settlements along the Dalmatian coast.

Measuring was a way for travelers to understand places they did not know. When they knew a building or a town square, they might begin to compare it to other places. Early guides to Rome routinely included the dimensions of the Aurelian Walls and the number of their gates. Such quantitative description then justified a qualitative assessment of a city's greatness. Measuring was also a way to study architecture closely through the often physically demanding work of recording actual dimensions to document relative size. If a sketch offered an impression of a building, a measured drawing allowed an architect to copy the building's ornament or even reconstruct the entire structure in a new location. Sebastiano Serlio notes throughout his sixteenth-century treatise that he measured ancient buildings himself,

using both words and images to reinforce the authority of his descriptions (Henry Parke shows such an activity in his 1819 painting *Student Measuring the Temple of Castor and Pollux in Rome*). Measuring represented a way of knowing and understanding, as well as a means of communication.

In *The Making of Measure and the Promise of Sameness*, Emanuele Lugli deals mostly with medieval Italy, and Dubrovnik is not included among his examples. However, after reading this challenging and original book, I could not stop thinking of all those other examples where number, proportion, and measure are at the heart of architectural history. As with the study of materials, measurement has frequently been taken for granted, at least until recently. Correct and consistent measuring was believed to be inherent in sound buildings, and it was considered to be the determining factor in the success or failure of a structure. To be fair, Lugli is not immediately concerned with the nature of architectural or building practice. Rather, he approaches measurement and its objects as an index of a more diffuse process of cultural change and debate during the Middle Ages.

The book is organized in reverse chronological order, belying the author's method and bringing to the Middle Ages a modern perspective and a poetic eye. Lugli begins in Napoleonic France with the invention of the meter. The decision to start there, in the modern era and with the history of the meter, defines the book's approach and marks its baseline. The shift from national and regional units of measure to a standard that transcended political borders and united an empire was accomplished only through the advocacy of scientists and politicians. Trade before this time required participants to determine equivalencies and to rationalize the units of one national market with those of another through mathematical processes and the use of *tavole di ragguaglio*, or conversion charts. Yet the history of measurement is not, Lugli asserts, simply a result of merchants and civic authorities seeking standardization. Measurement and its tools were a form of political control that expressed deeply held assumptions about the role of the state and the sources of its power.¹

The four sections of Lugli's book move out in ever-expanding spatial realms, from

the safe that encloses the meter rod to city squares and layouts to agricultural fields. As the author makes clear in his preface, the reader is not obligated to start at the beginning and push straight on to the end. The narrative circles back on itself, and themes repeat in a way that some readers might find exasperating. Yet it is also part of the book's argument that the history of measurement is not one of a linear progression from lesser to greater precision and ultimate surety. Rather, it is enmeshed in the motivations of political actors and their desire to find external justifications in the power of numbers.

The objects of measurements can be almost transparent, as the representation of ideal standards that dissolve themselves in the authority of nature, and the study of the physical objects through which measurement was accomplished helps to trace this history. The platinum meter rod enshrined in the Paris archives is unmarked and unsigned, as if its universality removes it from human interaction. In contrast, medieval *pietre di paragone*, to use Lugli's term for standards inscribed on buildings, were placed in the most public of spaces, near the market and city center. These incisions in stone, against which merchants and others could compare their own measuring tools, created a pact of trust in the public sphere.

These objects and tools of measuring are some of the physical evidence that Lugli discusses, yet he misses an opportunity here to explore how these instruments could become extensions and avatars of the human body. For example, I wanted to know more about the seeming neutrality of the nineteenth-century metric standard, as opposed to the lavishly ornamented weight standards crafted into the shape of an amphora in the sixteenth century by Bernardino Arrigoni for the Gonzaga family. Every bit of ornament on this amphora seems a willful and superfluous addition, from its coat of arms to its elaborate handles. Nothing seems divinely given or neutral. All the design decisions were made by an artist, not a notary or keeper of truths. Yet, as Lugli points out, the abundance of ornament made replication of the object impossible. It was unique as well as a standard, and therefore it served dual purposes, one seemingly at odds with the other.

This is not precisely a book about architecture, although buildings and spaces are

woven throughout the medieval history of measurement, from the cathedrals carrying standards in their fabric to the critical role of surveyors dimensioning agricultural fields. Lugli approaches measuring as a process rather than a product, one that occurs over time and directly engages with the social conditions in which it is performed. The size and location of a cathedral might be ordained by a divine sign, such as the miraculous snowfall in Rome during the summer of 358 that determined the dimensions of Santa Maria Maggiore, but such sacred or profane signs were made both visible and permanent through measuring. As Lugli argues: "Measuring does not enact order, but it is the process that interlocks various practices, enabling forms to exist across them and through society. And it does so because it constantly joins the source of legitimization to its destination" (193).

From Ovid to Fibonacci, Lugli focuses on texts as evidence for ongoing debates about the unifying diversity of measures and the possibility of reaching universal consensus. Yet if texts offer insights into this long evolution throughout the Middle Ages, the material evidence is more elusive. While some measures, such as standards inscribed into buildings, might survive, the ephemeral and human experience of measuring is more difficult to recover. The use of measuring instruments, for example, seen throughout the ancient Roman world and still visible in the form of Italian cities today, coexisted with the common act of pacing out distances. Before surveyors worked out ways to measure through instruments and devices, there was the movement of the body walking and the length of a stride.

This book moves fluidly through varieties of evidence, yet clearly these were often in conflict. The materiality of the measuring process, even when it does not offer the promise of sameness, deserves further study. Lugli ends his book by returning to measurement in the modern era and the promise of atomic studies, analyzing objects that we cannot see or touch. In the premodern period, by contrast, measurements were embodied in the fist of a merchant or the length of a measure cut into the side of a building.

Measuring brings with it assumptions and alignments. Precision and the promise

of sameness, as the book's title makes clear, are interests embedded in the power of numbers. Lugli cites the work of Filippo Brunelleschi, whose religious architecture articulated inherent modular and numerical systems in both its spaces and its surfaces. The Renaissance attention to number offered a mechanism for understanding a divine world through the materials and composition of earthly objects. And thus, one can trace out of medieval traditions a history of architecture commanding both precision and authority because of this fundamental belief in the power of numbers. Lugli's book offers an important and subtle reading of that history before the emergence of better-known Renaissance traditions. The dominance of this history, however, leads me to wonder how much of this model is unique to the Western tradition and what results might come from the study of other architectural histories. At the very least, perhaps a session at a future SAH meeting could expand this topic to address a global perspective.

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Note

1. See, for example, the essays produced by the Instruments project, organized by Zeynep Çelik Alexander and John J. May, available on the website of the Aggregate Architectural History Collaborative: <http://we-aggregate.org/project/instruments> (accessed 12 July 2020).

Christiane L. Joost-Gaugier

Islamic Elements in the Architecture of Puglia

Turnhout: Brepols, 2019, 220 pp., 234 color and 1 b/w illus. \$143/€110 (paper), ISBN 9782503580319

There is a clear faith-based division in the Mediterranean region today. The north, from Portugal to Greece, is mostly Christian. The south, from Morocco to Egypt, is mostly Muslim. The east, which includes Turkey and the countries of the so-called Levant, is largely Muslim with sizable pockets of Christians and Jews. Europe purged itself of Islam centuries ago and has sought to uphold a monoreligious culture ever since; the Islamic side has rarely uprooted its native Christian populations,

although it has not always treated them fairly.

The division was not as neat in medieval times. The two sides intermingled in ways that render any projection of the present split into the past difficult to sustain. Christians were numerous in the Islamic countries, and Europe had Islamic dominions in all of its southern edges. We are all familiar with the cultural achievements of the Muslims (the Moors of yesteryear) in Iberia (modern Spain and Portugal), which emerged over seven centuries. Some of us are also aware that Sicily was part of the Islamic world for three centuries (from the ninth to the end of eleventh century), although almost all Islamic traces there have long been erased. Few, however, know that parts of the Italian peninsula, especially the heel of the geographic boot known as Puglia, witnessed a sustained Islamic presence for long stretches from the ninth to the thirteenth century.

Only hints of these settlements appear in written sources, and even less in architectural remains, so thorough has been the eradication of any reference to Islam or Muslims since the medieval period. It was not until the late nineteenth century that a new generation of Orientalists, notably the Sicilian historian Michele Amari (1806–89), began to dig into the history of Islam in medieval Italy and to uncover textual references hidden in plain sight in well-known (and sometime obscure) treatises.¹ Later scholars added archaeological research and evidence from building techniques, ornamental details, and reused fragments from destroyed Islamic monuments all over the region, especially Sicily and northern Puglia, to their source material.²

This is where Christiane L. Joost-Gaugier aims to make a contribution with her *Islamic Elements in the Architecture of Puglia*. An art historian whose previous publications focused on masters of the Italian Renaissance, the author deploys an impressive survey of Pugliese late medieval and later monuments and a keen eye for architectural and artistic details to make the case for a robust Islamic influence on the architecture of (northern) Puglia long after the Muslims themselves had been deracinated. Her main example is Lucera, today a small town, the site of an unusual and cruel experiment in

population engineering initiated by the celebrated Holy Roman Emperor, king of Sicily, Italy, Germany, and Jerusalem, Frederick II of Hohenstaufen (1194–1250).

Facing resistance and potential rebellion by the remaining Muslims in Sicily more than a century after its conquest by the Normans, Frederick II decided to banish them all to southern Italy in 1220. A large number of the expelled (estimated to be between twenty thousand and sixty thousand) were forcibly settled in Lucera, to the dismay of the local Christian population. Muslims expelled from Sicily built an urban compound complete with a congregational mosque, madrasas, houses, markets, and a castle with a palace inside for the emperor. However, this Muslim community did not survive for long in Lucera. Living precariously under Manfred, Frederick's son and heir as king of Sicily, and later under Charles I of Anjou, Manfred's vanquisher and successor, the city was finally eliminated in 1289 by Charles II. It was destroyed and the bulk of its population was slaughtered or sold into slavery.

In her chapters 5 and 6, Joost-Gaugier questions the degree of the destruction. Through a stylistic and visual analysis of the new cathedral of Lucera, built in record time (1300–1302) on the site of the main mosque, she convincingly argues that, contrary to boastful claims, the mosque was not razed to the ground before Christian construction began. Thus, not only did the cathedral's architecture diverge from the expected Gothic model, but it also incorporated distinctly Islamic elements, such as the minaret base and the main façade of the supposedly destroyed mosque. Continuing her architectural detective work in chapters 6 and 7, Joost-Gaugier asserts that at least three other early churches in Lucera, built in the aftermath of the Muslims' annihilation, and many other buildings with towers or domes in the city and its immediate rural vicinity were originally Islamic. She reads the survival of these distinguishing elements, truncated, displaced, or recovered between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries, as signs of "appreciation" for Islamic architecture. Such an assessment sounds farfetched to this reviewer given the fervor with which the Muslims were decimated. Instead, it is more plausible that the total destruction of the Muslim settlement was a tale invented by the Angevins

to draw attention away from their exploitation of their opponents' structures, which they converted into churches by introducing slight and inexpensive stylistic modifications.

In chapters 8 and 9, Joost-Gaugier examines churches and mansions in various towns across northern Puglia and suggests Islamic origin, influence, or continuity as justification for many of their structural or ornamental details. Some connections are straightforward: the interlacing arches in the cathedrals of Giovinazzo and Molfetta, the suspended double arch in the cathedral of Troia, and the decorated timber beams in the ceiling of the cathedral of Bitonto. Others are more tenuous or require the postulation of intermediate stages between Islamic origins and current forms, a connection that Joost-Gaugier does not pursue. This is the case, for instance, regarding the impressive and enigmatic octagonal Castel del Monte, built by Frederick II, and the pseudo-*muqarnas* cornices in Lucera. Still other links may refer to the rich architectural tradition of Byzantium, which enjoyed many channels of communication with Puglia that Joost-Gaugier ignores.

In fact, Joost-Gaugier is so fixated on her main argument that she not only overlooks possible Byzantine influence in many details, such as cushioned voussoirs and floral motifs, but also neglects to explain historical incongruities in more solid Islamic attributions. Chief among these are how to account for the appearance of Islamic elements that were developed after the eradication of the Islamic presence in Puglia and how to explain obviously deliberate deviations from putative Islamic models in many of the examples discussed. This is a conceptual rather than a historical problem, for the author treats Islamic architecture as an unchanging and insular monolithic tradition frozen in time. The reality is far from this outdated ideal-type construct: as many scholars have demonstrated, Islamic architecture evolved over time, adapting new forms and motifs and discarding or modifying others. Islamic architecture also interacted with various neighboring traditions in different ways and produced numerous hybrid traditions (a term that does not appear in this book), like the Seljuk and post-Seljuk architecture of Anatolia, the Tughluqid architecture of India, the architecture of post-*reconquista* in

Al-Andalus, and the Norman and Angevin architecture of Sicily and Puglia.

The book's historical sections, extending from chapter 1 through chapter 4 and shifting from a broad overview of the land and its ancient history to a focus on the medieval period in Puglia up to the end of the Muslim presence, suffer from a number of problems in style and substance. One is sloppiness in the treatment of the complex interrelations between Muslims and Christians in Sicily. Many paragraphs meander around their central topic while others are marred by baffling use of conjunctive adverbs. The text would have benefited from better editing and fact-checking. Second, for a book on an Islamic topic today, it is archaic, and pejorative, to use "Moorish" and "Saracen" where the simpler "Muslim," "Arab," or "North African" would be more accurate and current (see pp. 19, 25, 43, 44, 57). A whiff of bias pervades the description of Islamic and Christian occupations of Puglia: the Muslims "sacked," "menaced," and "invaded," while the Christians "settled," "established," and "dominated"—thus Christians are portrayed as the rightful owners of the land long before that question was conclusively resolved. The Islamic presence in Sicily too is described in a confusing way (see p. 43), leading the reader to think that the Muslims were invading a Norman and later a Germanic territory, rather than the other way around.³

Thankfully, these weaknesses do not undermine the relevance of the second and more substantive part of the book, which deals with the architectural and ornamental analysis of Pugliese monuments. To be sure, such weaknesses still slip in every now and then: assertions regarding the abhorrence of figural images, or the notion of the octagon symbolizing heaven (50), or the use of columns for decorative rather than structural purposes (200). None of these are accepted by Islamic art historians today, and removing them would not have diminished the strength of the arguments here about the penetration of Islamic influence into various aspects of post-Islamic Pugliese architecture. The author could have further benefited from recent scholarship on the post-Islamic Norman architecture of Sicily (twelfth and thirteenth centuries), which explores the adaptation and transformation of Islamic architecture in an environment whose later occupants were

intent on eliminating all traces of that earlier polity and culture.⁴

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Notes

1. Michele Amari, *Storia dei musulmani di Sicilia*, 2 vols. (Florence: Felice le Monnier, 1856); Michele Amari, *Storia dei musulmani di Sicilia*, 2nd ed., rev., 3 vols (Catania: Romeo Prampolini, 1933–39).
2. Sarah C. Davis-Record, "Medieval Sicily and Southern Italy in Recent Historiographical Perspective," *History Compass* 8, no. 1 (2010), 61–87; Leonard C. Chiarelli, *A History of Muslim Sicily* (Santa Venera, Malta: Midsea Books, 2011).
3. For discussion of these relations, see Julie Anne Taylor, "Muslim-Christian Relations in Medieval Southern Italy," *Muslim World* 97 (2007), 190–99; Julie Anne Taylor, *Muslims in Medieval Italy: The Colony at Lucera* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2003).
4. See Jeremy Johns, "The Norman Kings of Sicily and the Fatimid Caliphate," *Anglo-Norman Studies* 15 (1993), 133–59; Karen C. Britt, "Roger II of Sicily: Rex, Basileus, and Khalif? Identity, Politics, and Propaganda in the Cappella Palatina," *Mediterranean Studies* 16 (2007), 21–45.

Eugene J. Johnson

Inventing the Opera House: Theater Architecture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018, 348 pp., 63 color and 132 b/w illus. \$54.99 (cloth), ISBN 9781108421744

This magisterial account of the evolution of the early opera house as a building type, the *teatro all'italiano*, stems from the author's long-standing interest in the subject, beginning in the late 1970s, when he was on sabbatical at the Biblioteca Hertziana in Rome. *Inventing the Opera House* integrates many publications dating from before and after these initial investigations, drawing together an extensive body of scholarship that until now has been largely published only in Italian and focused on individual buildings. By synthesizing this literature into a single account, Eugene J. Johnson makes it accessible to a wider audience. He recounts the story of a building type that culminated with Giuseppe Piermarini's Teatro alla Scala at Milan (1776–78), the largest and grandest opera house to that date (La Scala is beyond the chronological scope of Johnson's discussion).

The book is remarkable for resurrecting a nearly vanished group of buildings in

Renaissance Italy. Johnson examines numerous theaters, both permanent and temporary, from a period extending over two centuries, yet only three of these structures still stand. Many were destroyed by fire, including the first of the permanent theaters to be built, those of Alfonso I d'Este in Ferrara and Giovanni Battista Bertani in Mantua. The earliest survivor from this period is Andrea Palladio's Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza (1580–85), an innovative interpretation of a classical theater, soon followed by Vincenzo Scamozzi's freestanding Odeon (1588–90), a landmark of the ideal city of Sabbioneta built by Duke Vespasiano Gonzaga. The third surviving theater is Giovanni Battista Aleotti's Teatro Farnese at Parma (1617–18), almost destroyed in 1944 and later rebuilt in unpainted wood. Here the architect elongated the *cavea*, or seating section, to form a U, thereby creating a large arena in front of the stage. In 1628, during the performance of a "drama-tourney," *Mercurio e Marte* (Mercury and Mars), with *intermedi* by Claudio Monteverdi, the spectacle's climax coincided with the sudden flooding of this arena. A storm and sea fight ensued, the fury finally being quelled by Jupiter seated on a cloud, representing the triumph of peace.

Johnson reconstructs many of the other theaters discussed here from contemporary descriptions, a process that he describes as "imagining lost structures" (1). The narrative is organized in geographical and chronological order, located across the many independent states of Italy, some secular, others under papal domination, and explores how varying types of government, laws, and societal demands influenced the theaters' design. While the book confines itself to theater projects built or designed for specific sites and does not consider contemporary design principles and theory, a brief appendix summarizes the key ancient and Renaissance texts, from Vitruvius to Leon Battista Alberti, to which patrons referred as key sources for classical theater.

The story begins with late fifteenth-century revivals of Roman comedies not seen since antiquity, usually performed in temporary wooden structures with stages and risers. The earliest recorded event of this kind occurred in 1486 during the carnival season in the *cortile* of the Palazzo Ducale at Ferrara. Johnson paints a vivid

picture of the performances that took place, with crowds packed around the duke and other spectators seated, standing, or watching from windows. The accounts of celebrations and spectacle in Venice are especially colorful and entertaining. With the erection of public grandstands in Piazza San Marco and elsewhere, Venice became a citywide theatrical backdrop during and beyond the festive carnival season. In July 1530, a floating theater with eighty-seven young dancing women, carried by two boats, toured the city: it was towed up the Grand Canal to the Rialto Bridge and then back to Piazza San Marco. The book finally progresses to seventeenth-century Rome, where public opera was introduced some thirty years after its appearance in Venice. Compared with theaters in Venice, Roman theaters had a more troubled history, given that staging a theatrical performance in Rome required obtaining papal permission, and the frequent turnover of elderly popes caused disruptive changes in policy.

The book reaches its conclusion with Carlo Fontana's Teatro di Tordinona, which opened in January 1671 under the patronage of Queen Christina, horsewoman, dancer, and patron of the arts, who abdicated the Swedish throne to move to Rome. The building's form recalled the more fully developed Italian baroque opera houses of Venice, notably the Teatro SS. Giovanni e Paolo, of which a drawing survives that seems to have served as Fontana's model. The Teatro di Tordinona stood within the walls of the abandoned papal prison, the Tor di Nona, opposite the Castel Sant'Angelo on the Tiber, and represented a curious early example of adaptive reuse. As Johnson observes, theaters have received less scholarly attention than churches, palaces, and villas, but the lack of surviving theaters provides only a partial explanation for this fact. Rather, as this book amply demonstrates, most scholars have failed to appreciate the many motivations—political, intellectual, financial, antiquarian, or a combination thereof—behind the vast investment of resources that fueled theater spectacles.

Perhaps the most significant interdisciplinary relationship addressed in this book is that between architecture and music. Johnson makes fascinating mention of Monteverdi's attention to the exact

placement of musicians in the space of the Teatro Farnese at Parma, as well as his collaboration with Francesco Guitti in the development of an innovative design for the orchestra pit. However, it is disappointing that the book incorporates only limited discussion of the complex relationships among architecture, music, and social demands. Further, Johnson presents no information in layman's language, even in an endnote, on the key topic of acoustics. While he cites a recent technical study in noting that Aleotti's earlier U-shaped Teatro degli Intrepidi at Ferrara was acoustically "first rate" (174), it would have been beneficial if he had addressed the changing acoustic conditions within Italian opera houses over the course of the early modern period. For example, the multiple tiers of opera boxes so characteristic of Italian theaters, an innovation of seventeenth-century Venice, created singularly poor acoustics for their occupants. As Johnson puts it, these "private spaces in a public building created a novel social architectural situation, to say the least" (119). With their divisions like tiny sound-absorptive rooms filled with patrons, with festoons of drapery hung in front (as reported by an eighteenth-century commentator)¹ and with only small openings facing the main volume of the auditorium (about 40 percent of the total enclosing wall area), opera boxes behaved as acoustically separate spaces (a relationship technically defined as "coupled rooms"). Only for those seated at the fronts of the boxes or on the main floor of the theater did the music sound loud and bright. These acoustic shortcomings were recognized in the eighteenth century, and in certain Roman opera houses the sound improved noticeably when, in part as a response to moral concerns, the partitions between boxes were removed.

One of the joys of this book lies in poring over the illustrations, which reproduce contemporary drawings, both previously unpublished and well known. Many appear here for the first time in color, made vivid and unfamiliar, revealed with sepia ink and tinted washes, such as the beautiful annotated baroque plan of the Teatro degli Intronati at Siena, now in the collection of Sir John Soane's Museum in London. The reader has the sensation of studying archival drawings, some on stained and light-damaged paper. Reproductions of

alternative unbuilt designs for a theater for Queen Christina in the Via Lungara at Rome, predating the Tordinona, now in Stockholm's National Museum, are of particular interest. One design includes a peristyle that would have made a spectacular urban statement, as Johnson says, comparable to Gottfried Semper's two opera houses in Dresden. Fascinating, too, is the eighteenth-century copy of a drawing by Carl Fredrik Adelcrantz showing Carlo Fontana's plan for the truncated-elliptical Tordinona and the curious alternative designs proposed by Fontana for the royal box.

The only jarring note in the book is a small one, the brief afterword, a coda that makes the valid if obvious observation that the Italian opera house tradition continues to the present day. The author illustrates this point with Zaha Hadid's Guangzhou Opera House (2003–11), a peculiar choice considering the panoply of architecturally distinguished auditoriums built in recent years in Lyon, Valencia, Oslo, and elsewhere. But these are minor quibbles with what is an immensely valuable study as well as a good read.

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Note

1. George Saunders, *A Treatise on Theatres* (London, 1790), 93.

Farhan Karim

Of Greater Dignity Than Riches: Austerity and Housing Design in India

Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press,
2019, 322 pp., 84 b/w illus. \$55 (cloth), ISBN
9780822965695

In the winter of January 1954, an exhibition on low-cost housing opened in New Delhi—the capital of a country that had been independent from colonial rule for less than six years. Sprawling in the shadow of a sixteenth-century Mughal monument and organized by the United Nations, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and the Indian government, the exhibition was planned in spirit and form by the South African-born British town planner Jacqueline Tyrwhitt. American

architect Joseph Stein designed a model home for the exhibition: a spartan low-cost dwelling constructed with rammed earth and featuring bamboo blinds. While discussion of that exhibition makes up only one part of Farhan Karim's clever new book, it accurately captures the dizzying cast of global actors, disparate architectural methods and ideologies, and various experiments in housing design that aimed to alleviate poverty in independent India. Karim synthesizes evidence from an impressive range of sources (including newspapers, government reports, construction industry trade journals, architectural drawings, and photographs) to forward a compelling history showing how housing India's poor became a preoccupation both for the country's leaders and architects and for the United States and international humanitarian organizations. In doing so, he makes a significant intervention in modern architectural history and a major contribution to housing studies.

During the mid-twentieth century, a global nexus of bureaucrats, politicians, and professionals came to see ideal and affordable homes for India's poor as many things: a human right, the locus of moral growth, a bulwark against communism, an engine for rural development, and a site for harnessing the scarce resources of the nation-state and the labor of individuals to generate greater prosperity. Karim's investigation toggles back and forth between various scales: the laboring bodies of the poor, the ideal home, the crafting of a new citizenry, the bucolic village, the nation-state, and the international geopolitical order that encouraged development for its own sake. As the book's title indicates, austerity (the voluntary choice of modest dwellings and a frugal lifestyle) became a key motif in these architectural and planning interventions. Austerity would provide dignity to India's trajectory of modernization, one that had been badly damaged by two centuries of colonization. It would also serve as the spiritual compass for India's development, keeping control over "consumerist and libidinal desire" (148), which was anathema to the country's socialist agenda. Equally, India's austerity would be the spiritual balm for a "soulless" Western modernity that was just beginning to rebuild itself after World War II. Like modernity's other bold albeit ill-fated experiments with

habitus, these housing experiments sought earnestly and strenuously to find solutions for the poor, but the answers almost never came from the poor. As Karim shows us, India's poor remained little more than anonymous bodies whose inclinations and identities were marked solely by indigence.

The book's five chapters are arranged around important exhibitions of housing and design that were staged in India from 1918 to 1961. As such, this may be the first monograph to show the intimate connection between the modern exhibitionary complex and architectural innovation in India. The first chapter provides the colonial context for the housing experiments of the later years. Colonial desires to create a more efficient, productive, and docile workforce spawned a range of housing designs for industrial laborers. Equally important was the architectural impulse to contain diseased bodies via salutary housing schemes following the 1896 outbreak of bubonic plague in Bombay. What contemporary readers might in hindsight recognize as the biopolitics of state control was a moral mission for colonial architects, surveyors, and engineers, who saw their designs as alleviating the suffering of the poor.

Chapter 2 illustrates how narrow concerns of colonial administrators regarding profit and the maximization of labor were folded into independent India's nation-building agenda. "Self-help housing" was seen, both by India and by international actors such as the UN and USAID, as the instrument for eradicating poverty and tamping down the threat of communism. Karim deftly shows how exhibitions disseminated messages of progress by encouraging "native populations to desire development" (99). This chapter also presents a sustained analysis of the role that specific construction materials such as reinforced cement concrete and rammed earth played in the aesthetics of austerity.

Chapter 3 offers a valuable investigation of urban thinkers and town planners Patrick Geddes and Tyrwhitt and their efforts to reconcile modernist design with the environmental, cultural, and political exigencies of the Indian subcontinent. Tyrwhitt (a near contemporary of Jane Jacobs and Catherine Bauer Wurster) was profoundly moved by the social and formal arrangement of the traditional Indian village

and attempted to translate its lessons for the modern nation-state and the West. In Karim's words: "The village center in particular was not exclusively a prescription for India. Tyrwhitt approached it as an introspective moment for Western designers—a moment of self-reflection—to investigate the possibility of a new model for modernity incarnated in low-cost, non-affluent housing in the developing world" (124). Designing the ideal Indian village became something of a cause célèbre for contemporary Indian planners (Sris Chandra Chatterjee's incorporation of Hindu aesthetics into utopian planning schemes is particularly illuminating) and for trade organizations such as the Associated Cement Companies, which advertised their technologies as helping to build a robust new nation-state.

Chapter 4 extends the discussion of Indian villages and their influence on planning schemes by examining the collaborations between U.S. aid and funding bodies and the Indian government. A central figure in this chapter is Albert Mayer, who had a close connection with Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister and a champion of state-led development. Mayer was a strong supporter of the neighborhood unit and bottom-up development, which he believed would "modernize the national economy" and "cultivate new subjects of Indian democracy" (169). While development experts such as Mayer sought to nurture grassroots democracy by planning ideal residential environments, they ignored caste-based divisions and the interests of landowning elites, who often profited from the poverty and desperation of Indian villagers. The myopia of modern expertise and the impotence of technocracies is once again evident here.

The book's final chapter makes an unexpected yet valuable pivot from the broader scale of village and community planning by focusing on the material culture of Indian domesticity. Here Karim shows how Indian decor (furniture, textiles, decorative objects) came to be of interest to European and American designers such as Charles and Ray Eames and Pierre Jeanneret and to institutions such as New York's Museum of Modern Art. Indeed, the book's poignant title quotes Jeanneret: "Poverty can sometimes give an impression of greater dignity than riches" (221).

Western modernists found spiritual succor and aesthetic elegance in traditional Indian manufacture. Equally, the rhetoric of austerity proliferated through the efforts of Indian intellectuals such as Pupul Jayakar and Gira Sarabhai, who called for a new institute of design to be established in their country. Minimalism and austerity were lauded as the hallmarks of Indian domestic spaces and recast as aspirational norms for global modernisms.

Mohandas Gandhi's specter looms throughout this book. His personal asceticism, which became a public spectacle; his ardent belief that India's villages were the spiritual foundations for the modern nation-state; his intense distaste for urban living and bourgeois society; his voluntary adoption and glorification of poverty—these tenets were folded into many of the design schemes developed for the poor in independent India. The results of the impact of Gandhi's charismatic persona on architectural innovation are uncomfortably reminiscent of other architectural modernisms spawned by Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini. Indeed, recent revisionist histories of Gandhi have shown that his utopian visions of sovereignty belied his discriminatory stances on race, gender, and caste.¹ While Karim does not unpack how Gandhian austerity calcified caste-based and gendered inequities in the built environment (this is arguably outside the scope of his project), he urges the reader to consider how India's poor were constantly and variously utilized by a range of actors, from architects and planners to national leaders to international bureaucrats.

Karim ends his book on a compelling, if cautionary, note. He points out that self-help architecture, frugal design, and participatory planning are once again gaining traction across the world. The cases of recent Pritzker Prize winners Shigeru Ban (2014), Alejandro Aravena (2016), and Balkrishna Doshi (2018) provide evidence of the current celebration of socially engaged architecture. Yet, as Karim reminds us in the final sentences of his compelling monograph, the discourse of austerity was about the poor, not with the poor, "whose desires for breaking away from poverty were usurped by elites who stripped them of agency in an idealized quest to emancipate them" (268). Such is the triumph of this fine book: it offers at once a global

history of India's architectural past and a set of timely lessons for this interconnected architectural present.

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Note

1. See Ashwin Desai and Goolam Vahed, *The South African Gandhi: Stretcher-Bearer of Empire* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2016); Arundhati Roy, *The Doctor and the Saint: Caste, Race, and The Annihilation of Caste* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2017); Ramachandra Guha, *Gandhi: The Years That Changed the World, 1914–1948* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2018).

Ana Miljački

The Optimum Imperative: Czech Architecture for the Socialist Lifestyle, 1938–1968

London: Routledge, 2017, 311 pp., 81 b/w illus. \$140 (cloth), ISBN 9781138208179

The production of architects working in the postwar Eastern bloc remains largely absent from surveys of modern architecture and from the consciousness of most architects and historians outside the region. Unlike the global South and categories such as gender, race, environment, and everydayness, the Eastern bloc and the Communist world have not yet been widely embraced as essential topics for architectural history. Ana Miljački's *The Optimum Imperative* makes a compelling case that this absence is not simply a question of geographic inclusion; rather, it is better understood as a failure to engage with the political and material questions posed to capitalist architectural practices by histories of large-scale, state-funded design production. As Miljački states in her introduction, her project serves as an extended response to Western Marxists who have tended to dismiss "the intellectual contribution of the really realized Socialism, which thus detached Socialism from its key attempt at actualization, and its historical lessons" (10). The book joins a growing number of recent monographs about Eastern European architecture with similar intentions.¹

As she recounts in her acknowledgments, Miljački is the daughter of Serbian architects who together built "large swaths

of Belgrade's housing estates in the 1970s and 1980s" (xii). Educated after high school in the United States, she comes to the topic of postwar Czech architecture as an outsider, but one with a particular set of overlapping relationships to the questions being asked. Socialism is not a foreign system to her, but, in comparison with Yugoslavia, the Czech case shows an alternate path more influenced by the Soviet Union, more ideologically dogmatic, and with greater economic and material constraints. References to the work of Fredric Jameson, György Lukács, Manfredo Tafuri, and others link Miljački's research to larger postwar debates on Marxism and humanism, particularly those within American academic literature. Her authorial presence is then simultaneously of the socialist world and apart from it.

Rather than reconstructing an archival record, Miljački chooses discourse analysis as her methodological framework. More a study of texts and practices than of buildings, *The Optimum Imperative* explores the concept of "socialist lifestyle" in the writings of Czech architect Karel Honzík, in the Czechoslovak pavilions at Expo 58 in Brussels and Expo 67 in Montreal, and in the experimental practice of a group of architects known as SIAL (Liberec Association of Engineers and Architects) who worked in the Czech city of Liberec. The introduction, which makes a strong case for lifestyle as an analytical category, is followed by eight chapters presented in three parts: "Projection, 1939–1948," "Production, 1948–1958," and "Experimentation, 1958–1968." Honzík is the focus for much of the book, with the Liberec architects moving to the forefront in the final two chapters and postscript. Chapter 5, on Expo 58, functions as a hinge between the two narrative arcs. Although Honzík and the Liberec architects are largely absent from the Brussels story, Miljački argues that the Czechoslovak pavilion at the 1958 fair embodied Honzík's conception of socialist lifestyle and served as a jumping-off point for SIAL.

In chapter 1, Honzík's intellectual origins are linked with critic Karel Teige, architect Ladislav Žák, linguist Jan Mukařovský, and the avant-garde collective Devětsil. Miljački provocatively characterizes Honzík, an important interwar functionalist, as being more influential as a writer

than as an architect. He published prolifically from 1929 until his death in 1966 at age sixty-five. Later in the book, Miljački admiringly calls him "an inventor of trends" (142). Chapter 2 begins after World War II and focuses on the short-lived Club for the Study of Consumption, created by Honzík, Žák, and psychoanalyst Bohuslav Brouk, a founder of the Czech surrealism movement. The club published only one book, Honzík's 1946 text *Necessism*, the goal of which was "to define a properly Socialist attitude toward consumption" (61). Through analysis of that book's arguments and those of other publications, including Žák's 1947 book *Obytná krajina* (*Habitable Landscape*), Miljački takes a first step in establishing a continuity in Honzík's thinking from the late 1920s to the 1960s.

Chapter 3 outlines the changes to architectural practice after the Communist Party took control of Czechoslovakia in 1948. Using the title of Honzík's 1956 book *Architektura všem* (*Architecture for All*) as the chapter title, Miljački shows how Teige, Honzík, and others set the discursive terms for socialist architecture and promoted "the idea of architecture produced by the people and for the people" (97), a history discussed in more detail in my 2011 book *Manufacturing a Socialist Modernity*. Chapter 4 takes up the question of how Czech architects confronted the official move toward socialist realism in the early 1950s and considers how Honzík maneuvered through this difficult period when he and his peers were required to publicly disavow their "foolish faith in modernism" (129). Miljački argues that Honzík could integrate a version of socialist realism into his thinking by emphasizing "mass" as the "the new scale of operation" (135). Chapter 5 tells the origin story of the Czechoslovak pavilion for Brussels Expo 58. Starting with the pavilion's libretto, Miljački reconstructs the internal state dialogue that led to particular choices of architects, objects, and multimedia presentations for the pavilion—one of the most popular with fair visitors. As the book's most object-centered discussion, focused on the most iconic Czechoslovak building of the era, the chapter works best as a filter through which the discourse emerges momentarily into a built form.

The third and final part of the book begins by returning in chapter 6 to Honzík's writings after the success of Brussels, including his 1963 autobiographical book *Ze života avant-gardy* (*During the Life of the Avant-garde*), which "positioned the avant-garde as a topic of historical study" (190). Miljački argues that the book allowed Honzík to leave this past behind and look to the future with projects such as Domurbia—his proposal for a self-contained vertical city for two thousand people—alongside Czech writers including Radvan Richta and French authors like Michel Ragon. This genre of "futurology" imagined a fantastical future enabled by new technologies and understandings of the environment (197). Chapters 7 and 8 then turn to the development of SIAL, the best-known group of postwar Czech architects. These closing chapters position SIAL as testing an alternative vision of socialist architectural practice that Honzík and others had been pining for at least since the 1940s. The group's leader, Karel Hubáček, gained widespread attention on both sides of the Iron Curtain for his sci-fi-inspired Ještěd Tower and Hotel in the mountains near Liberec, designed in his atelier at the local state design institute (Stavoprojekt) in 1966. A team from the atelier then designed an early version of the Czechoslovak Expo 67 pavilion for Montreal, having been chosen to develop their proposal further by a 1964 competition jury that included Karel Honzík (a convergence left unremarked upon by Miljački); ultimately the commission went to other architects.

In 1968, Hubáček extracted his atelier from the state design institute and created SIAL as an independent office under the patronage of the Liberec mayor. Together with his key collaborator, Miroslav Masák, other SIAL members, and recent graduates of the Czech Technical University in Prague, Hubáček then started the SIAL Školka (or "Kindergarten") as an experimental communal live-work space in an abandoned hotel on the outskirts of Liberec. This operated for fourteen years, even as SIAL was folded back into the state design institute in 1972. One of the best-known SIAL projects appears in Miljački's postscript: the department store Máj in Prague, which opened in 1975 and is now operated by the British chain Tesco under the name My. The original name in Czech

evoked the May Day celebrations of socialist workers. Miljački observes that the new name, pronounced the same as the original, uses the possessive to emphasize a culture of “individual ownership” and as such is a sad reflection on the current state of Czech ideas about lifestyle (272).

The Optimum Imperative is an uneven book. Its strengths are strong argumentation, elegant prose, and detailed textual analysis. It is weaker in establishing the higher-order importance of its selected examples and in positioning the Eastern bloc as critical to the field of architectural history. Reasons for these weaknesses include the book’s narrow focus on a small group of architects and an inward-looking analysis that does not trace the influences of this discourse in the built environment or in state institutions. Scholars looking to complement this book with more on the buildings and cultural politics of the period in Czechoslovakia can look to the work of scholars such as Dita Dvořáková, Martin Strakoš, and Rostislav Švácha.² The most significant contribution of Miljački’s book is that it breathes new life into the historical discourse on socialist lifestyle, a discourse that has been undervalued because of its association with failed political regimes, but that is in fact urgently relevant to ongoing discussions of alternatives to contemporary global capitalism.

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Notes

1. See Krisztina Fehérvári, *Politics in Color and Concrete: Socialist Materialities and the Middle Class in Hungary* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2013); Brigitte Le Normand, *Designing Tito’s Capital: Urban Planning, Modernism, and Socialism* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2014); Virág Molnár, *Building the State: Architecture, Politics, and State Formation in Postwar Central Europe* (London: Routledge, 2013); Juliana Maxim, *The Socialist Life of Modern Architecture: Bucharest, 1949–1964* (London: Routledge, 2018); Kimberly Elman Zarecor, *Manufacturing a Socialist Modernity: Housing in Czechoslovakia, 1945–1960* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011).

2. See, for example, Dita Dvořáková, ed., *Karel Honzák: Beyond the Horizon of Objectivity* (Prague: Arbor Vitae, 2002); Daniela Kramerová and Vanda Skálková, eds., *Bruselský sen: Československé účast na světové výstavě Expo 58 v Bruselu a životní styl 1.položiny 60.let* (Prague: Arbor Vitae, 2008); Martin Strakoš, *Po sorele brusel, kov, sklo, struktury*

a beton: Kapitoly o architektuře a výtvarném umění 50. a 60. let 20. století od Bruselu po Ostravu (Ostrava: Národní Památkový Ústav, Územní Odborné Pracoviště v Ostravě, 2014); Rostislav Švácha, ed., *SIAL Liberec Association of Engineers and Architects, 1958–1990: Czech Architecture against the Stream*, trans. David Brooker (Prague: Arbor Vitae and Muzeum Umění Olomouc, 2012). On cultural politics, see Shawn Clybor, “Prophets of Revolution: Culture, Communism, and the Czech Avant-Garde, 1920–1960” (PhD diss., Northwestern University, 2010); Muriel Blaive, ed., *Perceptions of Society in Communist Europe: Regime Archives and Popular Opinion* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018).

Sonja Dümpelmann

Seeing Trees: A History of Street Trees in New York City and Berlin

New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2019, 336 pp., 20 color and 120 b/w illus. \$60 (cloth), ISBN 9780300225785

The tree is resurgent in architectural history, design theory, architectural curatorial projects, and the larger realm of architectural aesthetics. The recent translation of Cesare Leonardi and Franca Stagi’s *The Architecture of Trees*, first published in 1982; the ongoing *FormaFantasma: Cambio* exhibition and its related catalogue, commissioned by London’s Serpentine Galleries to probe the governance of the timber industry; and the recent exhibition *Architecture Arboretum*, held at Princeton’s School of Architecture and curated by Sylvia Lavin—all point to a contemporary focus on this natural element-cum-artifact.¹ Such interest is partly in response to the carbonization of the atmosphere and the promise that the increased planting of trees will deliver a biotechnical (and ultimately politically palatable) way out of climate catastrophe. It also represents a larger artifactual turn in landscape aesthetics and theory—away from a strong focus on the visual and ecological qualities of urban networks.

Trees represent something more singular, artifactual, and, in many ways, monumental in character than the subjects of water networks, urban waste, and urban food cycles—topics of recent interest to many architectural and urban historians. Sonja Dümpelmann’s *Seeing Trees* complements this work by offering a synthetic landscape history of street trees, one that is also an urban, environmental, and fine arts history. The book examines street trees—

the typically non-fruit-bearing species often planted in allée-type arrangements along streets and boulevards—in a comparative history of twentieth-century New York and Berlin. Many urbanized areas of both cities were once completely free of street trees, and it was only in the early twentieth century that trees began to gain the ubiquitous presence they have there today.

Urban trees, of course, do not simply sprout from concrete and asphalt. Through Dümpelmann’s histories of New York and Berlin, we come to understand how “urban forestry” (a term perhaps novel to many readers) emerged with new forms of municipal management, biological cultivars and their breeding, health reform, real estate development, civil rights movements, postwar rebuilding practices, and Cold War politics. *Seeing Trees* enables us to understand the manner in which trees occupy a variety of biological, municipal, social, and environmental roles. Trees in cities have operated as air conditioners and cleansers, aesthetic metaphors for physical health, forms of urban beautification, rallying points for emerging movements promoting civil rights for women and African Americans, emergency fuel sources, and source materials for postwar fine art.

The combination here of sociopolitical historical subject matter with environmental and biological history is illuminating and reminiscent of other writing on the urban production of nature, including such works as William Cronon’s *Nature’s Metropolis* (1991), Matthew Gandy’s *Concrete and Clay* (2002), and Julie Sze’s *Noxious New York* (2006).² This new book joins them as a must-read of the literature exploring urban nature in the United States and Europe. Dümpelmann continues Sze’s work in emphasizing gender and race as essential to our understanding of urban environmental history—an element often missing in other studies, particularly in a U.S. context. Compared to many other works on urban nature, *Seeing Trees* is more social historical in approach than geographical, and more archival in character than theoretical. The matter-of-factness of *Seeing Trees* can be a bit frustrating at times, considering the larger turn in nature aesthetics that the subject represents and the stakes of this study relative to contemporary environmentalist politics.

Some of the book's most unexpected perspectives concern the unnaturalness of street trees. Many of the species that continue to line the streets of New York and Berlin were actually bred to be resilient forms of urban nature. Numerous tree species succumbed to disease throughout the course of the twentieth century, and many street trees required the expertise of tree breeders as well as "tree doctors" and "tree surgeons." Additionally, the maintenance of healthy trees and healthy human beings was entangled in ways that reveal how early twentieth-century forms of management (e.g., Taylorization) crossed over from human beings to nature. Trees contribute to urban health by providing shade and by scenting and oxygenating air. They also represent ideas of physical rigor and urban management. This is evident in the development of uniforms for park workers and standards for the evaluation of their bodies that mirror those found in manuals for evaluating tree health. Dümpelmann's histories of these modes of nature maintenance and human physicality will be of interest to scholars of urban labor and urban health and offer opportunities for continued research and discussion.

As a landscape architect, Dümpelmann provides aesthetic analyses and folds a variety of aesthetic practices into her narrative. These appear throughout the book, in her examinations of arborist manuals and mapping techniques, for instance, and in her choice of illustrations. In the quality of its images, the book far exceeds many other publications on the history of urban nature. The field of landscape architecture remains instrumental in the aesthetic disposition of street trees in cities, and Dümpelmann also explores what she calls "street tree art" in Germany (188–95). In this context, she explores practices and artworks that rarely enter histories of urban nature, ranging from Manfred Butzmann's 1978 *Ein Platz für Bäume* to Joseph Beuys's well-known *7,000 Oaks* project of 1982. These are exciting additions to the history that Dümpelmann offers here.

The reasons behind Dümpelmann's choices of Berlin and New York for the geographical focus of her book, and her choices for particular case studies, become increasingly clear as the book proceeds. In her introduction, Dümpelmann acknowledges those who compared the forestry of

these cities before, but the historical connections she draws between the two cities are ultimately more those of juxtaposition than of exchange. At no point, for instance, does she follow the movement of a particular arborist or specialist from one of the cities to the other. Hopefully, other scholars will take up where she leaves off and chart a global history that follows trees and other forms of urban nature as they have moved around the world during processes of municipal exchange and development, political alliances, colonization, and decolonization. Such a history will find a strong foundation in Dümpelmann's scholarly achievement.

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Notes

1. Cesare Leonardi and Franca Stagi, *The Architecture of Trees*, trans. Natalie Danford (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2019); Riccardo Badano, Natalia Grabowska, and Rebecca Lewin, eds., *FormaFantasma: Cambio* (London: Serpentine Gallery and Koenig Books, 2020); *Architecture Arboretum*, Princeton School of Architecture Galleries, 4 Nov. 2019–21 Jan. 2020.

2. William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991); Matthew Gandy, *Concrete and Clay: Reworking Nature in New York City* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002); Julie Sze, *Noxious New York: The Racial Politics of Urban Health and Environmental Justice* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2006).

Anoma Pieris, ed.

Architecture on the Borderline: Boundary Politics and Built Space

London: Routledge, 2019, 288 pp., 96 b/w illus. \$155 (cloth), 9781138102811; \$46.95 (paper), ISBN 9781138102828

We live in a time when borders seem to be either crossed easily (by currencies, information, and disease) or almost impenetrable (for displaced persons and migrants). The establishment, reestablishment, reinforcement, violation, and control of borders are common factors underlying many of the most contentious contemporary issues, from Brexit and COVID-19 to the immigration policies of the European Union and the United States. Borders are sites of transience but also of construction, comprising checkpoints, temporary or quasi-permanent shelters, and fortified

barriers, among other structures. Given the importance of borders currently and historically, it is essential that our discipline account for the architecture at and of borders. As Anoma Pieris, editor of *Architecture on the Borderline*, argues in her introduction, the question is "how a discipline and practice deeply invested in nation building might address the violence implicit in territoriality" (1).

The essays in this volume acknowledge this implicit violence, and in doing so, they contribute to a deeper engagement with borderland architecture by taking on the wide variety of its forms and types. The thirteen texts here are arranged into three sections. "Frontier" addresses spaces and structures related to territorial expansion and control. "Boundary" takes on the practical realities of border maintenance, including both licit and illicit means of traversing borders. Finally, "Margin" considers efforts to preserve both tangible and intangible forms of cultural heritage, particularly in cases where clear lines of division—between group identities, for instance—cannot be drawn. The topics covered in these essays encompass a wonderfully broad span of examples from around the world. A map near the book's beginning locates twenty-four sites that are addressed in the pages that follow. The volume's scope is broadly contemporary, although several essays reference historical events, such as the U.S. internment of Japanese and Japanese American citizens during World War II, the Korean War, and an episode of compulsory population exchange between Greece and Turkey in 1923. Multiple disciplinary perspectives are represented, including anthropology and sociology as well as architectural history and urban planning. Accordingly, the sources referenced in the volume range from official reports from governmental and nongovernmental agencies to contemporary news accounts to works by theorists known for their work on space and its control, such as Eyal Weizman, Michel Foucault, and Doreen Massey.

Although the essays feature a variety of examples drawn from across the globe, several themes recur. The concept of visibility and invisibility, not only of borders but also of the various individuals and groups they seek to divide or contain, emerges as a key trope. Borders are sometimes clearly

visible—think of a line on a map—but they may also be edge spaces that are not always readily apparent. Pieris's essay on Japanese internment camps, Alessandro Petti's account of checkpoints between Jordan and Israel (in the "Frontier" section), and Irit Katz's chapter on migrant camps in northern France (in the "Boundary" section), for example, all bring much-needed attention to the kinds of impermanent and unseen spaces and structures often found at borders. These essays make clear that at issue in debates about migration is not only the control of space but also the control of its depiction. The contribution in "Frontier" from Sean Anderson and Jennifer Ferng, for example, considers how the European migration crisis of 2014–16 was visualized in the context of the New York Museum of Modern Art's 2016 exhibition *Insecurities: Tracing Displacement and Shelter*. Data visualizations such as those featured in this MoMA show are one way to materialize what can be difficult or even impossible to photograph, but, as Anderson and Ferng point out, there is also the danger of "desensitisation" (59): too much visual and textual information can generate a glut, whereby overabundance becomes absence. Through their thoughtful treatment of data visualization, these authors highlight its usefulness while also drawing attention to the lack of rigor and standards occasionally at work in its creation and interpretation.

As Anderson and Ferng note, the power of images to represent borders and the spaces and activities associated with them can be limited, with depictions often reduced to focusing on remnants of border-crossing events such as "boats, life vests, camps and deserts" (67) rather than the borders themselves. One reason for this is the fugitive nature of edge spaces and architectures. In her essay "Mapping the War: Everyday Survival during the Siege of Sarajevo," Dijana Alić describes how dividing lines changed quickly and unpredictably in wartime Sarajevo, writing that they were "invisible although present: the frontline defined the parameters of the city; the shelling from above made movement limited and local; and diverse modes of attack by snipers and artillery rendered the daily engagements uncharted and unpredictable" (142).

Alić's essay, along with others in *Architecture on the Borderline*, reminds us that

borders do not always take the form of physical barriers and can change, multiply, and dissolve or disappear in response to a variety of conditions. Thus, while many well-known borders, such as the one that divided East Berlin from West Berlin and the border between India and Pakistan, might appear to be clear, solid, and almost immutable, the reality of borders is often one of intangibility and arbitrary fluctuation. Borders not only partition nations and geographic regions but can also establish and reinforce social, ethnic, and economic divisions. They often lie at the periphery, yet they sometimes crisscross through the center of a territory. They are also experienced differently by different people. As Petti notes of the Jordan–Israel border, "The border machine is interactive architecture: it changes depending on the citizenship of the person who crosses over it" (79). Shifting power relations and the influence of history on the present have profound effects on the locations of borders and the space and architecture around them. In his account of the redevelopment of Kowloon East in Hong Kong, Daniel P. S. Goh argues that the area "has become one of the new boundaries in Hong Kong's 'transborder' cultural politics of a colonial city reintegrating into a rising Chinese nation" (222). The negotiation of past and present through urban planning and architecture is a difficult challenge that will undoubtedly become even more fraught as mainland China continues its attempts to integrate the former protectorate through a gradual erasure of the border separating it from Hong Kong.

Together, the essays in this volume clearly demonstrate the need for and relevance of an architectural history of borders, one that knits together questions of space, planning, and design. Creating such a history is not an easy task. Architectural historians have typically examined buildings through theoretical lenses of cohesion, permanence, and presence, whereas border architecture requires an analytical approach that accounts for contingency and transience, informality and improvisation, materiality and immateriality. However, and as Natsuko Akagawa argues in her essay, "Where Do We Draw a Line? Heritage, Identity and Place in Global Heritage," "contrary to predictions that globalisation would contribute to international cooperation, today, despite

or because of greater mobility, uniformity and commodification of heritage, the desire for the demarcation of identity has, if anything, become stronger" (260). In this context, virtually any work of architecture can be thought of as existing at a border, making the need for volumes like this one all the more pressing.

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Joanna Merwood-Salisbury
Design for the Crowd: Patriotism and Protest in Union Square

Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019, 312 pp., 43 b/w illus. \$35 (cloth), ISBN 9780226604909

In the United States, questions about who most rightfully occupies public space and the political agendas attached to such occupation have long remained unsettled. Debates about who and what practices belong in the public square are as old as public space itself. In the past twenty years alone, the attacks of 11 September 2001, the protests following the Great Recession of 2008 (and the federal responses to it), the pandemic facing us now (and the responses to it), and the ongoing protests against police brutality have all spurred particular modes of occupying public space. The events of 2020 make it clear that American society remains divided and that public space continues to be a place where that division is powerfully expressed, peacefully or otherwise.

Joanna Merwood-Salisbury's *Design for the Crowd: Patriotism and Protest in Union Square* is an apt arrival in these unsettling times. It delves into the history of a landmark public park, one that has remained intact for nearly two hundred years in a city otherwise defined by the perpetual transformations of a restless capitalist real estate market. Further, the book provides significant insight into how a city might negotiate the next century of contestation over public space. For whom and to what ends should these spaces be preserved and maintained? The choice of Union Square, Merwood-Salisbury notes, may be surprising to some readers, as "it has never been an example of polemical or iconic urban design." Her critical history, therefore, is driven not by formal and aesthetic concerns but by the

more interesting fact that “Union Square, though apparently impervious to change, has borne and continues to bear a social and political meaning that is constantly being enacted, through both daily activity and the slower processes of design and construction” (3).

Merwood-Salisbury traces the history of Union Square from the impulses that generated its creation in the 1830s to its present condition, charting how it has over time “been a physical manifestation of the uniquely American enactment of democratic citizenship and a test case for ongoing debates about the freedom of speech and assembly guaranteed in the Constitution” (4). These are the same debates that have reemerged in 2020. While the temperature of today’s debates may seem unusually high, Merwood-Salisbury’s book, echoing the work of Rosalyn Deutsche, reminds us that conflict has long been a defining feature of public space in the United States.¹ The book’s eight chronologically arranged chapters fall into two major parts, the first examining the “role of public space within an emerging industrial metropolis,” the second discussing “the social life of the city in the wake of deindustrialization: as the metropolitan landscape became increasingly decentralized and new sub- and ex-urban hubs appeared to challenge the status of a once-vital urban center” (8). Throughout, the author’s emphasis is on demonstrating how the use and occupation of public space constitute an enactment of republican ideals.

Union Square, like so much else in New York City, and Manhattan in particular, was inexorably linked from the beginning to real estate development. The man behind its creation, Samuel Ruggles, was a lawyer and property speculator who championed public works and improvements, many of which stood adjacent to parcels he controlled and from whose attendant increase in value he stood to profit. The oval form of Union Square deviated from the grid established by the Commissioners’ Plan of 1811, which explicitly rejected “European-style urban planning elements such as ‘circles, ovals and stars’ ” (23). This lent the square a distinct formal character, evoking elite European-style town planning, that complemented the elegant residential buildings surrounding it. By 1845, this area was home to the “upper

ten” of Manhattan’s social elite, and questions arose about whether it was a “true public space” or “an exclusive amenity designed to be enjoyed only by a few” (44).

Over subsequent decades, Union Square was transformed from an amenity for the wealthy into a vibrant civic arena. Several developments were behind this, among them the erection of statues honoring George Washington (1856) and Abraham Lincoln (1870) and major renovations undertaken by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux starting in 1872. Prior to Olmsted and Vaux’s work there, Washington’s statue had become a magnet for political rallies. Olmsted and Vaux remade the square into what Merwood-Salisbury calls “a democratic landscape . . . [one] designated to facilitate democracy as an ongoing and active process” (73). This transformation of Union Square coincided with the functional transformation of the surrounding blocks, from predominantly residential to predominantly commercial and institutional. Given these developments, and in contrast to their work on Central Park, Olmsted and Vaux’s renovations cemented the square’s status as an active urban space, not simply a place of rest and repose. Their design choices gave a physical shape to this reality, “creating a separate area specifically for public assembly” and securing the square’s status as a space of assembly and political activity (93).

Beginning in the final decades of the nineteenth century, the character of the politics on display at Union Square changed as political leadership in the city (and the nation) shifted. Labor Day and, later, May Day assemblies celebrating the working class became regular features, as did anarchist and socialist events. For some, the latter raised concerns about the limits of free speech and assembly, concerns that remain part of our political and social discourse today. Indeed, during the early decades of the twentieth century, many sought to align the square with the City Beautiful movement, seeing it as a safety valve against civil discontent rather than a venue for open political agitation. Later, commercial business owners in the surrounding neighborhood, in conjunction with the city Parks Department, worked to mitigate the square’s reputation as a stage for progressive politics. Outcomes of this effort included Flag Day parades and a

move to replace May Day events with others devoted to Loyalty Day. The final chapters of *Design for the Crowd* deal with urban decline and the now-ubiquitous “public-private” efforts to maintain and revitalize public space, as well as the square’s designation in 1998 as a National Historic Landmark.

Merwood-Salisbury introduces her book as one divided into equal halves, but the volume’s heart is its tracing of the life of Union Square in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The chapters on developments in the post-World War II era lack the detail and granular insights that characterize the first six chapters, which take the reader to 1933. The sections covering the square’s decline and the revitalization efforts of the 1970s and 1980s sometimes leave the reader wishing for a more compelling critique, beyond the author’s descriptions of the choices made and the opportunities missed during this era. Although the conclusion touches briefly on current events, the volume’s historical inquiry concludes in 1998, leaving the reader to wonder what Merwood-Salisbury thinks about the mayoralty of Michael Bloomberg and his era’s transformation of Manhattan into an elite playground with ever-shrinking public space and diminished opportunities for the middle and working classes. By addressing these years, she could have strengthened her arguments for the relevance to our present condition of historical analyses like this one.

With its pages’ coated stock and its forty-three black-and-white illustrations, *Design for the Crowd* embodies high production values. The book is thoroughly researched, its forty pages of footnotes attesting to the author’s meticulous investigations. This will be a welcome offering to readers interested in how and to what ends public space has been deployed in the United States, as well as how that process continues today, setting “a stage for, and representation of, our social world” (247).

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Note

1. Rosalyn Deutsche, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998).

Reto Geiser

Giedion and America: Repositioning the History of Modern Architecture

Zurich: gta Verlag, 2018, 400 pp., 72 color and 128 b/w illus. \$85 (cloth), ISBN 9783856763770

The Bohemian-born Swiss architectural historian Sigfried Giedion, subject of Reto Geiser's *Giedion and America*, is best known as the author of *Space, Time and Architecture*, an influential, yet exclusive, account of the history of modern architecture first published in 1941. Trained by art historian Heinrich Wölfflin in Munich during the 1920s, Giedion played a key role in the formation of the modern movement, defining and promoting it in dialogue with colleagues such as Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, and László Moholy-Nagy. From 1941 to 1962, his book sold 65,000 copies (86)—far from best-seller counts, but a substantial number for a book on architectural history.

Geiser's important biographical and historiographic study of Giedion is based, in part, on research the author conducted for his 2010 doctoral thesis at ETH Zurich, "Giedion in Between: A Study of Cultural Transfer and Transatlantic Exchange 1938–1968."¹ *Giedion and America* is rigorously researched and carefully documented, drawing on rich archival resources. It departs from the existing literature by focusing on Giedion's midcareer period during the years following World War II, when, as a mature scholar, he traveled to the United States to teach at Harvard and Yale. Geiser's account, with its transcontinental focus, deepens and enlarges upon the existing literature, notably Sokratis Georgiadis's intellectual biography of Giedion (1993).² Geiser's book also coincides with the publication of another intellectual biography, *The Giedion World*, by Almut Grunewald, which centers on Giedion and his wife, Carola Giedion-Welcker, an art historian who was influential in her own right.³ Giedion kept copious records of his personal contacts and his research, and his archive, housed at the gta Institute for the History and Theory of Architecture at ETH Zurich, is a treasure trove of handwritten notes, correspondence, photographs, and documents. In curating a graphically rich selection of illustrations, with color images on full-bleed page

spreads, Geiser offers an exciting glimpse into the visual character of this extensive archive.

Deftly intertwining biography and historiography, Geiser's book is replete with details that shed light on Giedion's oeuvre, beginning with brief biographies of the protagonists in Giedion's extensive network of colleagues. As secretary-general of CIAM (1928–59), Giedion made many important alliances, and these proved vital to his success in securing teaching positions in the United States. It is well known that Giedion, a Jew, left Switzerland to escape the rising tide of Nazism, but Geiser provides a deeper historical context for Giedion's departure and his years in the United States. In so doing, he offers important insights into Giedion's three most important English-language publications: *Space, Time and Architecture* (1941), *Mechanization Takes Command* (1948), and *The Eternal Present* (volume 1, 1962; volume 2, 1964). These insights are set out in four sections organized around themes corresponding to the two cultural and academic contexts Giedion straddled at midcentury: Europe and the United States. The section titles—"In Between Languages," "In Between Approaches," "In Between Academies," and "In Between Disciplines"—all speak to Geiser's claim that "the four 'in between' situations . . . reflect the ways in which [Giedion] strategically shaped his own approach and position precisely because of his operations at the intersection of different entities and forces" (8).

For example, in the first section, we learn that Giedion barely spoke English when he arrived in the United States in 1938, invited as the Charles Norton Professor in Poetry at Harvard University, beating out the acclaimed novelist Thomas Mann for that honor. Giedion's Norton Lectures were barely intelligible to his audience, not only because of his lack of proficiency in English but also because of his discipline-specific vocabulary and his Wölfflin-inspired presentational manner, which included dialogical images shown in juxtaposition and an emphasis on images over words. The difficulties this presented persisted when the lectures were transcribed and expanded in *Space, Time and Architecture*. Here we learn that the British urban planner, editor, and educator Jacqueline Tyrwhitt was instrumental in

translating Giedion's project for the 1957 A. W. Mellon Lectures, *The Eternal Present*. As Geiser illuminates, Tyrwhitt effectively synthesized the disparate fragments of Giedion's research into a coherent structure, thereby transcending her role as research assistant and translator and becoming a full collaborator. Giedion's trust in Tyrwhitt was so complete that "she became his exclusive translator of all his later works" (59).

In contrast to the first section, which is more biographical, the second section, "In Between Approaches," is historiographic in method, delving into nineteenth-century German aesthetics, particularly the idea of "spatial" perception (a variety of *Kunstwollen*) that animated the modern cultural and technological epoch, manifesting not only in art but also in everyday artifacts.⁴ Geiser productively distinguishes Giedion's selective history of the modern movement from those of other noted historians of the era, namely, Lewis Mumford and Henry-Russell Hitchcock, then the leading authorities on modern architecture in the United States. The third section, "In Between Academies," chronicles Giedion's efforts to set up an exchange between American and Swiss students and teachers, his failed attempt to secure a tenured position at ETH Zurich after World War II, his study of prehistory through the lens of modern art, and other related topics.

Whereas the first three sections of *Giedion and America* focus on a rich tapestry of people, events, and ideas that help to sharpen our understanding of Giedion's work as a whole, the final section, "In Between Disciplines," examines the impact Giedion's cross-disciplinary research had on others, particularly the Canadian cultural theorist Marshall McLuhan. This is, arguably, the book's most interesting section, and Geiser presents here a surprising and provocative discovery. As he explains, Giedion's thesis of a dominant perception underlying all cultural production provided McLuhan with an epistemological model for his "notion that every medium shapes the perception of the people who use it—summed up most concisely in his iconic phrase 'the medium is the message' " (380). This common understanding of the past's significance for the present (and vice versa) united these two men. Indeed, Giedion's ideas about transdisciplinary

research, as Geiser demonstrates, likely influenced McLuhan's proposal, with anthropologist Edmund Snow Carpenter, for what would become "one of the first interdisciplinary research groups in the American academy," the think tank Explorations, which produced the eponymous journal, founded in Toronto in 1953 (381). Many research centers now champion interdisciplinary collaborative efforts as a means for solving complex problems, and Geiser offers an early historical case study showing the challenges these efforts pose for higher education today. Geiser's book, in short, provides a comprehensive account of the impact of Giedion's thought on American intellectual life, both within the discipline of architectural history and beyond.

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Notes

1. Reto Geiser, "Giedion in Between: A Study of Cultural Transfer and Transatlantic Exchange 1938–1968" (PhD diss., ETH Zurich, 2010), <https://www.research-collection.ethz.ch/handle/20.500.11850/152519> (accessed 10 July 2020).
2. Sokratis Georgiadis, *Sigfried Giedion: An Intellectual Biography* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993).
3. Almut Grunewald, *The Giedion World: Sigfried Giedion and Carola Giedion-Welcker in Dialogue* (Zurich: Scheidegger and Spiess, 2019).
4. It is possibly for this reason that Geiser refers to Giedion as an art historian, rather than an architectural historian. Giedion's first degree was in mechanical engineering.

Andrea Vesentini

Indoor America: The Interior Landscape of Postwar Suburbia

Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2018, 344 pp., 56 color and 36 b/w illus. \$49.50, ISBN 9780813941585

A book exploring suburban living as a form of self-isolation from the city's real or perceived dangers has particular resonance today. As the social and political connotations of quarantine play out in the news daily, a history of architecture's role in Americans' flight from proximity seems prescient. While the U.S. suburb and its architecture have been covered almost exhaustively, *Indoor America* is the first book to view this subject through the lens of interiority.

Drawing on a wide range of sources, from architectural and urban history, sociology, and media studies, Andrea Vesentini argues that the process of postwar suburbanization depended on deliberate strategies of encapsulation, introversion, and interiorization.

Containing seven briskly paced chapters, this lively and engaging book begins with the proliferation of private car ownership in the early twentieth century and the construction of the Interstate Highway System after World War II. Building on the work of Dianne Harris and others, chapter 1 is compelling in its exploration of the racial subtext of postwar planning.¹ The title of chapter 2, "The House of Anxiety: Introversion in Domestic Design," reveals the book's dominant themes: anxiety about social status, racial mixing, and the nuclear threat. In this way, the book extends recent scholarship on the relationships among architecture, suburban development, and wartime defense strategies.² These themes are explored further in chapters 3 and 5, which deal with the prophylactic effects of the fallout shelter, the television, and the picture window. As Vesentini argues, these devices not only offered protection from foreign contaminants in the environmental sense, but they also insulated the occupants of suburban homes from contact with "un-American" people and ideas.

No book on American suburbia would be complete without an analysis of the shopping mall, and chapter 6 accordingly discusses Victor Gruen's Southdale Center in Minnesota (1956). Vesentini describes this complex, with its magnificent interior Garden Court, as "the ultimate monument to interiority" (170). He might also have considered the industrial park and the office park, as he indicates in his epilogue, building on existing scholarship on the deurbanization of white-collar work.³ He does not, however, nor does he discuss more urbanized forms of suburban architecture such as apartment complexes and condominiums.⁴ Including these might have complicated the book's neat division of the built landscape into suburb and city, a division that is assumed throughout but not explicitly interrogated.

Beyond considering familiar suburban typologies, the book's strength lies in its discussion of less well-traversed topics.

Chapter 4, "It's Cool Inside," explores the ideological themes associated with domestic air-conditioning. To the growing literature on the "conditioned" modern interior, Vesentini adds a close reading of images from midcentury air-conditioning advertisements.⁵ Adeptly unpacking what he calls the "social dynamics" embedded within these images, he reveals the contrast they draw between the overheated outside world of sweaty labor and the cool interior world of leisure and repose. An absorbing final chapter explores experimental domed-city proposals of the 1960s and 1970s, including the Minnesota Experimental City of 1966 and Disney's EPCOT. Attention to these projects underscores the book's premise that the fantasy of retreat to the safety of a totalizing interior has been, at times, all-encompassing.

Indoor America is part of a broader scholarly discourse in which the term *interiorization* denotes the gradual but inexorable process of segregating the built environment, accompanied by attendant privatization of what was once public space. While the gated community and the shopping mall continue to be primary examples within this discourse, withdrawal from public life into a series of protected interiors is no longer identified solely with the suburb. Other scholars have explored strategies of introversion and fortification in hotels, office buildings, and public spaces in general.⁶ Common to all these studies is an ideological argument in which strategies of architectural introversion are contrasted negatively with the presumed openness, diversity, and inclusivity of the city in its prewar form. *Indoor America* makes a good case for the suburb and suburban living as early expressions of this broader social and cultural phenomenon. Although suburbs today are no longer segregated enclaves for affluent whites, as Vesentini acknowledges, they might still be seen as incubators for segregation strategies to be deployed elsewhere at some later point.

This intellectual framework explains the book's focus on the image and idea of suburban interiority rather than on the analysis of particular interiors or interior design practices. The book examines this sprawling landscape of the postwar United States almost entirely through the lenses of commercial and (to a lesser extent) fine art photography, film, graphic illustration, and

exhibitions. Richly illustrated with color reproductions of midcentury magazine advertisements and film stills, the book is indebted to the work of Beatriz Colomina and others who have studied the relationship between media and modern architecture, particularly in regard to the modern house.⁷ Vesentini is especially interested in film, exploring representations of suburban life in several movies, including *Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House* (1948), *All That Heaven Allows* (1955), and *Safe* (1995). *Indoor America* also contributes to the recent scholarly fascination with exhibitions, discussing the image of the suburban house within architecture culture through various display houses, including ideal homes designed by Edward Durell Stone and others for the 1964–65 New York World’s Fair. Although it includes an obligatory reference to Levittown, the book focuses on iconic and familiar projects such as Ludwig Mies van der Rohe’s Farnsworth House, Philip Johnson’s Glass House, and Richard Neutra and Cliff May’s California houses rather than on less exceptional and therefore more representative examples.

Despite its title, *Indoor America* has little overlap with the rapidly growing literature on interior design history and theory. The book dwells on the role of advertising in promoting suburban living but does not delve into the specialized practices of designing, producing, and marketing the postwar interior world. These are topics that Penny Sparke, Paula Lupkin, and other historians of interior design have studied in detail.⁸ Nor is Vesentini particularly concerned with the local political processes and economic conditions that made suburbs and suburban architecture possible. If his book has a limitation, it is that it does not bridge the distance between the media images of suburban living, idealized exhibition houses, and utopian projects and the actual suburban constructions that inspired them, or that they inspired. However, the book has value in another respect: as a thoughtful analysis of the cultural significance of suburban living in the postwar popular imagination and, in particular, of the meanings of the newly important phenomenon of interiority.

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Notes

1. Dianne Harris, *Little White Houses: How the Postwar Home Constructed Race in America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).
2. Reinhold Martin, *The Organizational Complex: Architecture, Media, and Corporate Space* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005); Beatriz Colomina, *Domesticity at War* (Barcelona: Actar, 2006); Andrew M. Shanken, *194X: Architecture, Planning, and Consumer Culture on the American Home Front* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009); Greg Castillo, *Cold War on the Home Front: The Soft Power of Midcentury Design* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010); Robin Schuldenfrei, *Atomic Dwelling: Anxiety, Domesticity, and Postwar Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2012).
3. Louise A. Mazingo, *A Pastoral Capitalism: A History of Suburban Corporate Landscapes* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2011).
4. Matthew G. Lasner, *High Life: Condo Living in the Suburban Century* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2012).
5. See Michael Osman, “The Thermostatic Interior and Household Management,” in *Modernism’s Visible Hand: Architecture and Regulation in America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018).
6. Michael Sorkin, ed., *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992); Margaret Kohn, *Brave New Neighborhoods: The Privatization of Public Space* (London: Routledge, 2004); Sharon Zukin, *Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Mark Pimlott, *The Public Interior as Idea and Project* (Prinsenbeek, Netherlands: Jap Sam Books, 2016); Charles Rice, *Interior Urbanism: Architecture, John Portman and Downtown America* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).
7. Beatriz Colomina, Annmarie Brennan, and Jeannie Kim, eds., *Cold War Hotboxes: Inventing Postwar Culture, from Cockpit to Playboy* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004).
8. Penny Sparke, *The Modern Interior* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008); Paula Lupkin and Penny Sparke, eds., *Shaping the American Interior: Structures, Contexts, and Practices* (London: Routledge, 2018). See also Lucinda Kaukas Havenhand, *Mid-century Modern Interiors: The Ideas That Shaped Interior Design in America* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019).

Wendy Kaplan, ed.

Found in Translation: Design in California and Mexico 1915–1985

Munich: DelMonico Books/Prestel and Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2017, 360 pp., 243 color and 104 b/w illus. \$65 (cloth), ISBN 9783791356709

In the popular imagination, California has long occupied a distinctive place, one conjured through an alchemical fusion of facts,

fantasies, and mythologies. The enduring allure of the state, like that of so many imagined places, attests to the power of architecture and the allied arts to awaken and manipulate associations in order to differentiate and entice. The same is true of Mexico, which has fascinated foreigners and resident intellectuals for an even longer time than California. The two places also share history, language, and a border, and each is home to many people with personal, economic, and cultural connections to the other.

In 2017–18, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art mounted an exhibition of more than 250 twentieth-century works—including architectural drawings and photographs, furniture, clothing, jewelry, sculptures, textiles, and posters—that reflected cultural exchange between California and Mexico. The show, *Found in Translation: Design in California and Mexico 1915–1985*, was one of five that LACMA mounted as part of the Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA (Los Angeles/Latin America) project organized by the Getty Foundation. This review focuses on the exhibition catalogue, which comprises an introduction by curator Wendy Kaplan, eight panoramic essays, four shorter ones, and sixteen tightly focused vignettes, each devoted to a single work, person, or phenomenon. Four of the long essays focus on architecture, while it is referenced in many others. The eighteen contributors are among the leading scholars in their fields, and the texts are detailed, meticulously researched accounts of the historical processes of formal evolution and exchange among architects, artists, patrons, and tastemakers mostly in Southern California and Mexico City.

Experts in modern Mexican art and architecture will find nothing that changes the arc of the story they already know. But they will discover, in the authors’ consistent, careful tracing of historical lines and attention to a wide range of primary texts, new knowledge about the activities and networks of the people who drove and profited from cross-border contact. These include the Mexican developer Francisco Serrano; the artists Francisco Cornejo and Ruth Asawa; writers Verna Cook, Warren Shipway, and Esther McCoy; and patrons Walter and Leonore Annenberg. The serious attention devoted here to the

California colonial style, the relationship of Francisco Artigas's work to the Case Study House Program, and the complexity of artistic engagement with folk art into the 1970s, to name just a few examples, is most welcome.

One of the main achievements of the book is its bundling of scholarship on a wide range of related topics in twentieth-century Mexican art. While this is useful to Mexicanists, it will surely be even more helpful for those new to the field. The scholarship here belongs solidly under the heading of what might be called "image of" studies, which have proliferated in scholarship on modern Latin American art; such studies document the ways in which art and architecture have shaped or been shaped by beliefs about national or cultural specificity. What is new and not new in the book reflects the growth and strength of scholarship on Mexican art in the past twenty years and the lasting influence of scholarly attention, beginning in the early 1990s, to cross-border interactions. Following the publication of historian Helen Delpar's *The Enormous Vogue of Things Mexican* (1992), the Yale University Art Gallery exhibition and accompanying catalogue *South of the Border: Mexico in the American Imagination, 1914–1947* (1993) placed U.S.–Mexican cultural exchange squarely in the scholarly discourse on modern Mexican and U.S. art.¹ Both texts made explicit what had been implicit for decades: U.S. artists and patrons had long relied on Mexican sources and expertise to shape their art, collections, and self-presentation. (The curator and chief author of *South of the Border*, James Oles, also wrote one of the essays in *Found in Translation*.) The LACMA catalogue's cross-media gaze reflects a pattern in recent scholarship on twentieth-century Mexican architecture of analyzing buildings and urbanism with many other kinds of art, such as photography, film, literature, and graphic design. Notable examples are monographs by Luis Carranza, Mauricio Ténorio-Trillo, Luis M. Castañeda, and George F. Flaherty, none of whom contributed directly to this volume, but whose perspectives would have enriched it.²

Although there is still much to be said about Californian architecture, and especially about the buildings and urban patterns shaped by Mexicans and Mexican

Americans in the state, architectural historians have documented the connections between Mexico and California since Rexford Newcomb began writing about the California missions in 1916.³ Scholarship on the late colonial period, its immediate aftermath, and the various revival styles includes articles by David Gebhard in this journal and elsewhere and Karen J. Weitze's unsurpassed account of the mission revival style.⁴ Thomas S. Hines describes multiple modes of engagement with Mexican architecture in his titanic history of Los Angeles modernism.⁵ *Found in Translation*'s contribution to the architectural history of Southern California is much like its contribution to Mexican art in that it adds helpful details to a narrative whose central currents architectural historians have long been investigating.

Following the structure of the exhibition, the catalogue is organized into four nonparallel sections. These roughly resemble the formalist way Mexican art began to be categorized in the late nineteenth century: "Spanish Colonial Inspiration," "Pre-Hispanic Revivals," "Folk Art and Craft Traditions," and "Modernism." Within these frameworks, objects are interpreted under the broad label of "design" (although "design" is not defined) and under the conceptual heading of "translation." To be sure, the task of presenting so many and such varied works to a museumgoing public was considerable; further, one hesitates to be critical of any effort to present Mexican culture positively to a wide audience, especially given the U.S. government's draconian policies toward Mexican immigrants. Nevertheless, in some respects, *Found in Translation* feels like a missed opportunity. For example, it is surprising to see modern architecture implicitly defined in terms of the formalist language of the International Style, when the reader might instead have been encouraged to view the buildings here as expressions of a diverse and multidimensional modernity.

Style—that tricky and unfashionable concept—is the unacknowledged theme of *Found in Translation*. What is unsatisfying about the volume is the way in which the essays, in examining works in historical and ideological contexts, resist formalist interpretations of buildings and objects, and thus slam up against the conceptual

organization of the catalogue, given that it presents style as the framework through which the reader is meant to understand the objects. Presumably because they had to integrate the works in the show into their analyses, many contributors had to navigate the treacherous terrain between fashion and art. Often, but not always, what was art in Mexico became fashion for affluent Anglos in California. At a few points this tension is explicitly acknowledged, as when Oles contrasts the "haphazard pastiche" of pre-Hispanic revival-style buildings in Los Angeles that "sought to dazzle as much as to establish a regional identity" with Mexican architects' "quot[ing] with clear purpose" from ancient Mexican buildings to create "a carefully considered gesture of national unification" (158).⁶ The matter was reversed at midcentury, as Keith Eggener and Jennifer Josten show, when the political elite in Mexico City consciously fashioned themselves and their buildings after California examples. That Irving Gill and Frank Lloyd Wright—whose buildings complicate any stylistic narrative, and yet who had deep engagements with Mexican precedents—appear only fleetingly suggests the limitations of such a framework. The important counterpoint is Chicano art, which is discussed in three essays and interrupts the narrative of appropriation by the elite. As Jesse Lerner notes here, even after indigenist imagery had become passé in Mexican art, Chicano artists used it as "part of a strategy of resistance and affirmation, countering institutionalized racism with images of a heroic past that connected with the politics of the present" (168).⁷

The structure of the catalogue resurrects the way of understanding architecture—as style—that predominated in the United States in the 1910s and 1920s, when Anglos from the East and Midwest shaped the image and idea of California according to the principles of eclecticism. This framework may be useful in "translating" to general audiences the complicated formal parallels and intersections the objects reveal, but it reinscribes the imperialist dynamics that undergirded some of the "translation" the essays expose. The reader wishes for one more long essay that grapples with the questions about regionalism, modernism, appropriation, and the conceptual and ideological uses of "style,"

historically and today, that the essays collectively present. Given the ambition of the catalogue, the quality and diversity of the objects in it, and the depth of the research presented, the absence of a detailed reflection on the scholarly and political stakes of the project is pronounced.

Finally, *Found in Translation* is a big, stylish book, designed to lure audiences who are also drawn to Southern California and Mexico. These days, such readers, if they travel, might well stay in the district of Polanco, home to Mexico City's greatest concentration of California colonial-style buildings. A photograph of an Artigas house (with a swimming pool) and Lance Wyman's interpretation of the endlessly commodified image of the Aztec Sun Stone appear on the front cover, bathed in a pink plane that meets an orange one, in the manner of Luis Barragán's walls. The catalogue's other predominant colors are meant to read as Mexican, too: yellow, bright green, blue, and purple.⁸ In replicating historical modes of making Mexico fashionable to foreign audiences, the

design of this book about design reproduces the pattern it seeks to examine.

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Notes

1. Helen Delpar, *The Enormous Vogue of Things Mexican: Cultural Relations between Mexico and the United States, 1920–1935* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1992); James Oles and Marta Ferragut, *South of the Border: Mexico in the American Imagination, 1914–1947* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993). The *South of the Border* exhibition traveled to the Phoenix Art Museum, the New Orleans Museum of Art, and the Museo de Monterrey.

2. Luis E. Carranza, *Architecture as Revolution: Episodes in the History of Modern Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010); Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo, *"I Speak of the City": Mexico City 1880–1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Luis M. Castañeda, *Spectacular Mexico: Design, Propaganda, and the 1968 Olympics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014); George F. Flaherty, *Hotel Mexico: Dwelling on the '68 Movement* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016).

3. On architecture on the border, see Lawrence Herzog, *From Aztec to High Tech: Architecture and Landscape across the Mexico–United States Border*

(Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); Rexford Newcomb, *The Franciscan Mission Architecture of Alta California* (New York: Architectural Book Publishing, 1916); Rexford Newcomb, *The Old Mission Churches and Historic Houses of California* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1925).

4. David Gebhard, "The Spanish Colonial Revival in Southern California (1895–1930)," *JSAH* 26, no. 2 (May 1967), 131–47; David Gebhard, "Some Additional Observations on California's Monterey Tradition," *JSAH* 46, no. 2 (June 1987), 157–70; David Gebhard, *Robert Stacy-Judd: Maya Architecture and the Creation of a New Style* (Santa Barbara: Capra Press, 1993); Karen J. Weitze, *California's Mission Revival* (Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, 1984).

5. Thomas S. Hines, *Architecture of the Sun: Los Angeles Modernism, 1900–1970* (New York: Rizzoli, 2010).

6. I use *pre-Hispanic* for consistency with the language of the text.

7. Long before the Chicano movement, privileged cosmopolitan Mexican artists had themselves appropriated imagery from indigenous works. I use *Chicano*, rather than the now more common *Chicanx*, for consistency with the language of the text.

8. On the problematics and endurance of the idea of color as "Mexican," see James Oles, *Superficies coloreadas/Colored Surfaces* (Mexico City: Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, 2002).