An analysis of the New York professional milieu between the Wall Street Crash of 1929 and the aftermath of WWII reveals an unexpected scenario in which diverse branches of biocultural culture and professional and institutional spheres often overlap, and initiatives in the field of architecture are characterized by tensions between design and technology, which paved the way for an era of architectural autonomy, responsibility, and social role in the New Deal.

From an initial portrayal of William Lescaze (1894–1969) as an unconventional figure "straddling two continents," this book challenges a long-established interpretation that sees Lescaze exclusively as a proponent of the International Style, restricted to the United States. Moving beyond this book focuses on the role that the Swiss architect played in defining the unique features of New York's social housing and in the evolution that marks the conjunction between European modernity and an American social scene that was profoundly tied to local conventions. From an initially difficult status as an immigrant, his involvement in decisional processes and bureaucratic organizations, Lescaze's professional career culminates with the gradual acceptance of European forms and models. In the 1930s, his project became part of the institutional agenda related to public housing which would remain prevalent in New York City until the end of WWII. Drawing from yet-unpublished archival sources and juxtaposing its two disciplines - housing and architecture - this book sheds light on many crucial issues in a branch of architecture that is particularly relevant today.

Architect and historian Gaia Caramellino obtained her PhD in History of Architecture and Town Planning from the Politecnico di Milano. Her research focuses on the history of housing forms, culture, politics and practices and on the circulation of architectural and urban discourses between Europe and the Americas during the 20th century. She teaches architecture history and theory at the Politecnico di Milano, and she is the coordinator of the national research project "Architectures for the Middle-Class in Italy, 1890–1970s," funded by the Italian government. She has lectured in Europe, the United States, Canada and Japan, and was visiting scholar at the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal in 2011 and visiting professor at Ritsumeikan University in 2018. She has received several grants and fellowships for her research, including from the Graham Foundation, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, and the Rockefeller Foundation. She is the author of William Lescaze: Un architetto europeo nel Nuovo Rinascimento (2010) and Housing the 60,000: Reformers and the Restructuring of the Middle-Class City, 1918–1940 (2011). De Font and C. Romani, 2015). She has served as guest editor of several journal issues and co-edited Post-War Middle-Class Housing Models, Construction and Change (2010) and Storia di una Atlante (Lattes del 2012).

Europe Meets America
William Lescaze, Architect of Modern Housing

Gaia Caramellino
With a preface by Jean-Louis Cohen

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