

Books

Adrian Forty

Concrete and Culture: A Material History

London: Reaktion Books, 2012, 336 pp., 127 b/w illus. \$36 (cloth), ISBN 9781861898975

The ubiquitous use of concrete in modern infrastructure and architecture often symbolizes urbanity; it also connotes modernity, civilization, culture, and human pride in technology, alongside efficiency, industry, and progress. Concrete can also be quite ugly (many people find it aesthetically repellant) if not ecologically unsustainable. As Adrian Forty notes, concrete manufacturing accounts for up to 10 percent of all the world's CO₂ emissions, contributing to drastic changes in our planet's climate conditions.¹ With somewhere between 1.5 and 2.5 billion tons of cement manufactured each year, the unsustainability of our global concrete production is inarguably shocking; and since concrete often weathers badly in comparison to stone or other building materials, the ecological problem of its manufacture is compounded. With the demand for cement estimated to double by 2042, as Forty observes, we should be concerned that despite continued technological advancements, our apparently insatiable desire to build with concrete is becoming a serious problem.

Forty's concern about the sustainability of concrete as a building material is compelling, particularly coming from an author

who has written a 300-page book celebrating the rhetorical meaning of concrete in our recent history. This ambiguity about the value of concrete, if seemingly contradictory, reveals the challenges facing architecture and architectural historians today. Many building construction techniques developed in the modern era have initiated unsustainable practices that are consuming world resources at an alarming rate, permanently altering the physical makeup of our planet and not necessarily for the better. How are we to wrestle with such substantive human problems while maintaining our fetishistic love for industrial technologies and materials? This is a question that Forty's book challenges us to consider.

Structured into ten readable chapters that explore concrete from its roots in building structure to more recent uses as predominantly nonstructural interior surface treatments, Forty's book investigates a fascinating if problematic set of texts on the cultural politics of concrete. In the first several chapters, he outlines the political, cultural, and spiritual dimensions of the use of concrete in the modern era. Chapter 1, "Mud and Modernity," examines the material in terms of post-and-beam and bearing-wall reinforced structures, structures that appear to him at the same time both "modern" and "primitive." The work of Auguste Perret is featured in this chapter, as are the tilt-up, "low-skilled" constructions of Rudolph M. Schindler. Here Forty is interested in how concrete lends itself to the "self-built" and thus the recovery of pre-modern techniques within modern building. Le Corbusier's *Unité d'Habitation*, with its play between "crudity and finesse," as Le Corbusier had described, along with Louis Kahn's Salk Institute, further

exemplifies Forty's theme that concrete has the most to say when it appears to be both primitive (i.e., from mud) and modern (i.e., having industrial form). Forty builds on this idea in his next two chapters, arguing that although concrete consists of natural materials, in its synthetic manufacture it takes on a new quality that maintains a very particular relationship between the natural and man-made worlds.

Concrete does not have a predetermined form. With the inclusion of structural reinforcement material, it can appear seemingly formless, even in its permanent solid state, a characteristic the expressionists arguably sought to exploit. Many of its surface effects are constituted in response to formwork. As such the formwork not only plays a significant role in the sensibility of the final material quality but is also a significant limiting factor in the overall form that can be produced. It is the formwork—its material construction and lineaments—that in many ways defines the shape or figure of a concrete building. One of the chief virtues of Forty's book is that it recognizes both formal and material characteristics while extending its view far beyond the formed material itself, advancing a theory of the ways in which our reception of concrete is shaped by cultural, political, social, and economic parameters. One example he uses to illustrate this idea beautifully is the Lloyd's of London Building by Richard Rogers Partnership, where the building's concrete structure is constructed in the image and shape of a steel-and-cast-iron frame. Through various means of manipulation, the concrete appears to be something it is not. As this example shows, concrete is what we choose to make of it. It is legible, not in a technological materialist sense,

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but through the cultural rhetoric of its material effect.

The cultural legibility of concrete perhaps became most salient in the mid-twentieth century. As Forty discusses in chapter 5, “Politics,” in the postwar years, concrete was markedly associated with social progressiveness, whether in the context of social democracy or communism. In the early Soviet Union, the use of concrete was explicitly ideological. Lenin’s view of the “indissoluble unity” of the proletariat mimicked the organic, continuous nature of concrete. In Fyodor Gladkov’s 1925 socialist-realist novel *Cement*, the protagonist Gleb Chumalov takes as his slogan: “We produce cement. Cement is a firm bond. Cement is us, comrades—the working class” (Forty, 147). If, during the Cold War, the Soviet Union was seeking a model of architectural standardization to represent “a single system of construction for the whole country,” concrete, prefabricated in the factory by working-class laborers, proved to be the right material for the job.

Although these broader analyses are compelling and fairly convincing, *Concrete and Culture* is at its most successful when it concentrates on specific building projects, often reaching surprising conclusions through Forty’s thoughtful investigations: for example, in his analysis of João Batista Vilanova Artigas’s Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism Building in São Paulo, Brazil, wherein the structural concrete legs curiously seem to take the shape of two inverted pyramidal forms diminishing to a point. As Forty notes, the device of twisting the axis of a pier through 90 degrees was sampled from the work of Italian engineer Pier Luigi Nervi, making the building the result of a global discourse of engineering expertise meeting the particular context of not-yet-industrialized Brazil. In this case, he argues, the “crudeness of the execution” of the structure in São Paulo was a product of the “backwardness” of Brazilian building practices, which depended upon the abundance of “unskilled labour” (which, in this book, he refers to as women and immigrants) coupled with “human inventiveness” exhibited by the influence of Italian engineers. Whether the Latin Americans as a whole can be

characterized as both “primitive and sophisticated,” as Forty suggests based on this one example, remains unclear, and I would argue that broad-stroke stereotypes such as these are recurring challenges throughout this otherwise fascinating book.

A similar issue crops up in Forty’s discussion of Tadao Ando’s Rokko apartments in Kōbe, Japan. Here Forty points to the suppression of chamfered corners on concrete columns and walls, along with the extremely smooth, sharp, and carefully formed large expanses of concrete surfaces with their great attention to mass and detail, as an example of Japanese “perfectionism” (129–30). It might be acceptable to associate Japanese culture with the trope of perfectionism through the study of one example of Ando’s work, but with no mention here of Louis Kahn’s buildings as a foil to this discussion, the analogy rapidly appears specious. Kahn is recognized for inventing concrete details not dissimilar to those of Ando. When Kahn chamfered the corners of his concrete walls and columns at the Yale University Art Gallery, he recognized that such “trade standard” construction ruined the sharp lines of the building’s modern rectilinear form, diminishing the contrast of light and shadow. Kahn never chamfered the corners of his concrete again and always insisted that his concrete columns and walls be cast with perfect sharp-edged corners. In this case, perfectionism was not associated with being Japanese; it was a characteristic of a modern aesthetic more closely associated with internationalism than with any specific global region or cultural identity. Not to discuss the impact of Kahn’s work alongside Ando seems problematic and is perhaps a result of the mammoth task Forty has undertaken in his quest to cast such a wide net over his subject.

Unlike much of Forty’s past work, which is unassailably exhaustive and precise in its original research, bringing forward a cornucopia of nuanced detail about a new subject, this book on concrete is, as he admits, quite different. It is fluid and loose, moving quickly from example to example in a form similar to stream of consciousness. Each chapter offers a set of very reasonable interpretations within a general theme, but none delves for very long into

any sustained territory or proposition. As Forty notes in his introduction, there was no need to write an exhaustive research account on concrete—its building history and its architecture; this task has already been done. Instead, this book sets out to discuss the cultural history and ideology attributed to the material throughout the past century. In so doing, it will appeal to a wide audience since it does not get bogged down in excessively detailed scholarly research. Its scholarship is one of ideas and understanding attributable to a highly experienced writer who, as he explains, set out to write a book in a manner similar to Graham Greene’s description of an “‘entertainment,’ giving [Forty] reason to travel widely, and justifying a visit more or less anywhere” (Forty, 7). I am not certain, however, I agree that this approach is a valid basis for writing a book nor that it does justice to the topic addressed. Concrete is a ubiquitous material widely employed over vast global terrain; it can be found in every country, in every city, almost every place. We are linked together through its common visual and material language, one that changes little from one global locale to another. What is truly admirable about this book is its premise that building materials—even utilitarian ones such as concrete—can be legible, providing knowledge of the way we are in the world, our culture, hopes, visions, and deeper human concerns and interests. The rhetorical value of concrete in modern culture and society is at the heart of this book, but, in the end, Forty remains generally ambiguous as to that value in light of the ecological problems he acknowledges we face. Given the ubiquity of concrete and the common understanding we have of it, will we continue to use it despite its ecological challenges? Or will concrete, as a material symbol of modernist progress, become a thing of the past? My suspicion is that we will continue to use concrete universally (as Forty correctly notes is happening extensively in China at the moment), but we will begin relying more on technological innovations to achieve more acceptable levels of ecological sustainability within its manufacture. I do not believe humanity has any intention of reducing its material consumption

(using concrete or otherwise) nor of curtailing its desire to territorialize the space of this planet (or others). The human need to colonize the environment seems inherent to our nature and, I suppose for architects, the very basis of our profession.

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Note

1. Forty notes that in the manufacturing of cement, even the “greenest” of means” produces nearly 2,000 pounds of CO₂ per ton of cement (70).

William A. Gleason

Sites Unseen: Architecture, Race, and American Literature

New York: NYU Press, 2011, 288 pp., 37 b/w illus. \$23 (paper), ISBN 9780814732472

Dianne Harris

Little White Houses: How the Postwar Home Constructed Race in America

Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013, 366 pp., 148 b/w illus. \$39.95 (paper), ISBN 9780816654567

Mabel O. Wilson

Negro Building: Black Americans in the World of Fairs and Museums

Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012, 464 pp., 57 b/w illus. \$39.95 (cloth), ISBN 9780520268425

While scholarly interest in the critical intersections of race and architecture is by no means new within the humanities, there are hints of some new horizons in contemporary scholarship. Previous studies in North American architectural history that concern race and racism have primarily focused on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Sociological studies have tended to focus on the structural and institutional causes of racism or have presented ethnographic accounts of minority groups that proved their resilience under oppression.¹ More recent studies have built on these investigations with new

cross-cultural and transnational analyses, as well as brought the material environments produced by such processes under greater scrutiny. In the past ten years, scholarship in visual studies has isolated the hegemonic function of whiteness in visual contexts seemingly unmarked by the presence of white and nonwhite figures. Martin Berger’s *Site Unseen: Whiteness and American Visual Culture* is representative of such scholarship, and his work has paved the way for both William A. Gleason’s *Sites Unseen: Architecture, Race, and American Literature* and Dianne Harris’s *Little White Houses: How the Postwar Home Constructed Race in America*.² While Gleason most closely emulates Berger’s theoretical approach (as evidenced by the similar titles and methodologies of both works), Harris takes Berger’s conceptual focus on whiteness in American visual culture and extends it through a sustained archival study of material culture taken from everyday life. Also anchored by a deep analysis of historical archives, Mabel O. Wilson’s *Negro Building: Black Americans in the World of Fairs and Museums* will no doubt become a fundamental reference book for future studies of black self-representation in the field of architectural history. Her work follows that of American studies scholars who have used material culture to describe the historical transition of public debates between and within racial and ethnic groups in the United States.

Gleason’s *Sites Unseen* is a thematic exploration of the racial discourses perpetuated in houses, or what he calls “American vernacular forms,” created between 1850 and 1930. He concentrates on the representation of these architectural vernacular forms in literature, although he also includes other fragments of material culture that contain images of architectural space such as architectural pattern books. The central argument of *Sites Unseen* is that depictions of architectural space in literature and in architectural pattern books directly enabled readers to negotiate the set of racial identities that emerged in the post-Reconstruction period, the time Gleason associates with the “pattern book era.” This period began when the loss of black liberties forced racial lines to be redrawn in the American

South. While citizens struggled to consolidate new political identities in light of recent changes, architectural pattern books presented a concise visual summary of the social norms contained within domestic architecture. Gleason’s study is concerned with the construction of racial identity in the Americas, which include the United States, the Gulf of Mexico, and Hawaii, and other territories. In order to demonstrate the formative role of architecture in constructing racial identity, Gleason interprets both novels and architectural pattern books as social texts that clarify the racial content of everyday spaces. This textual approach encompasses the meaning of cottage houses for the white and nonwhite readers of Hannah Craft’s slave narratives; the racial nostalgia surrounding Charles W. Chesnut’s literary reconstruction of slavery and Reconstruction-era porch culture; the imperial politics evinced in the bungalows recorded by Richard Harding Davis and Olga Beatriz Torres in travelogues of trips taken from Central America to the United States; and the floating Oriental signifiers of the Hawaiian interior spaces depicted in Earl Biggers’s Charlie Chan novels and Frank Lloyd Wright’s turn-of-the-century Usonian houses.

Gleason’s focus on (mostly) familiar spaces is an effective strategy for recovering the architectural contributions of social minorities, who produced few commissioned projects and were routinely shut out of property ownership after Reconstruction. While buildings are expensive, architecture in the form of the social texts Gleason describes was almost equally accessible to the rich and poor, a fact that expands the potential for marginalized groups to make claims on membership in the American body politic. Chapter 1, in which Gleason studies the architectural settings depicted in Hannah Craft’s mid-nineteenth-century novel *The Bondswoman’s Narrative*, illustrates this situation beautifully. According to Gleason, Craft synthesized the central character’s desire for a quaint and safe cottage with the literary models of cottage life outlined in Charles Dickens’s *Bleak House* and Andrew Jackson Downing’s *The Architecture of Country Houses*, despite her status as a runaway slave. In

contrast to the intended white readership of these two latter sources, Craft's book establishes a rhetorical site for black cultural production that architectural historians have largely ignored. While it is possible to criticize Gleason for not offering a comprehensive overview of the racial discourses apparent in architectural pattern books, he is largely successful in preserving the richness of his material, despite a lack of historical exposition. In the end, *Sites Unseen* is an innovative set of literary case studies that inscribes the parameters of future research on race, literature, and architecture without exhausting its possibilities. Gleason is most comfortable treating material culture at a conceptual level, where the network of associations between his subject matter is most legible and suggestive. His approach recalls Nell Irvin Painter's observation that "race is an idea, not a fact, and its questions demand answers from the conceptual rather than the factual realm."³ *Sites Unseen* is less useful as a straightforward reference work on the racial content of domestic architecture in the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century—a fact that Gleason acknowledges in his introduction.

Dianne Harris's *Little White Houses* examines territory that many of us will likely feel we already know: the postwar American suburbs. Its scholarly contribution provides readers with a more detailed look at the architectural codes embedded in suburban landscapes, houses, and codes that performed the social function of defining the prevailing features of whiteness in postwar America. Most of the structural features of housing development in this time period are implicit in her reading: they include the rising demand for middle-class housing immediately after the war, the race to reuse wartime technologies and manufacturing processes in new segments of the commercial market, and the racial exclusion of nonwhite home buyers in the form of restrictive covenants and discriminatory mortgage-lending practices. Within this structural context, however, Harris delves deeply into the aesthetic regimes that structured the market's iconographic formulation of middle-class prosperity, focusing her attention on the domestic buildings and the representations

that trained and molded the modern consumer. Although *Little White Houses* examines images of architecture in the form of magazine advertisements, television programming, set design, trade journals, and architectural drawings and models, it does not lose sight of the physical sites themselves as primary source material. Harris's treatment of the physical form and placement of buildings, including the technologies for interior storage and the placement of interior furniture, is a refreshing change from the detached quality of previous studies. The accessibility of this material archive results in a far more extensive portrait of the mutually constitutive role of race, place, and visual culture than seen before.

Referencing the struggles of white ethnic minorities in concealing the social practices that fell outside the accepted visual codes embodied by postwar housing, Harris reveals precisely how exclusive the racial codes of suburban housing were in the mid-twentieth century. This is keenly illustrated by her visual analysis of such things as fencing appearing in advertisements for Ranger homes, which concealed exterior clotheslines, which were typically left out in the open in less affluent urban neighborhoods. Her analysis demonstrates that the cultural scenes presented in advertising and the popular press normalized a narrow band of representations of white nuclear family life. Advertising practices in magazines such as *Better Homes and Gardens* and *Popular Science* trained consumers to accept white normativity, preying upon middle-class social anxieties for acceptance and social mobility. Countering claims that the heteronormative, middle-class standards of whiteness embodied in postwar housing were invisible to American consumers, Harris claims that "white Americans of European descent" were "so committed to the national formation of whiteness that they saw it everywhere, acknowledged it only in exceptional instances, and participated in the privileges it conveyed largely without question" (12). Such a claim suggests that whiteness became a self-reinforcing ideology not only because it remained invisible to consumers, as is commonly claimed, but also by being universally understood yet unspoken

in everyday contexts. In this sense, the social construction of white aesthetic norms trained and disciplined (through economic penalties and the threat of loss of social acceptance) the public into conformity. In the end, *Little White Houses* compels readers to ask new questions of old material, perhaps even some that are not raised within its pages. What, for example, happens to our perception of whiteness when it is actively constructed in proximity to minority spaces or mastered by minority designers? Did alternative spheres of housing culture emerge during this time, ones in which nonwhite racial norms were encoded?

The issue of constructing a black counter-public sphere is central to Mabel O. Wilson's *Negro Building*. A productive way of interpreting the title of this book is to think of it as a literal description of a set of physical spaces that emerged after 1890 (primarily in fairs and expositions), and more broadly as an exploration of the social activities that were required to sustain public interest in the architectural expression of black culture from the nineteenth century to the present. In this sense, Wilson builds upon more familiar research in the field of African American studies and presents a legible chronology of the social and aesthetic strategies blacks have used to represent themselves to the American public. Wilson begins this journey by recalling Booker T. Washington's Atlanta Compromise speech of 1895. This speech, delivered at the opening of the Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta, outlined Washington's political program of vocational training for black Americans, which reinforced the informal ethos of "separate but equal" that would be legalized in a Supreme Court ruling just one year later. While the segregationists' response to Washington's ethos is probably not surprising, what is less known is the round of criticisms that began to circulate within the free black press, criticisms that roused protests and boycotts of the Negro Building exhibit constructed in Atlanta as part of the exposition. Detailing such public debates, Wilson reveals the diversity and strength of the black counter-public sphere. An official counternarrative to Washington's compromise appeared as

early as 1900 in the American Negro exhibit at the Exposition Universelle in Paris. While European expositions were by no means free of racial essentialisms, as Patricia Morton describes in her study of the Paris Colonial Exposition of 1931, the American Exhibit in 1900 situated black achievement squarely within the American body politic.⁴ During the same time period, W. E. B. Du Bois's Pan-African conception of black identity was on display in scientific and political studies documenting the ways in which racial laws limited black achievement in the United States. Considering Wilson's emphasis on the black counter-public sphere, it is hard not to think of Du Bois's sociological study of the Georgia Negro exhibit as an explicit critique of the Atlanta Cotton States and International Exposition and the beginning of his mature attempts to promote Pan-Africanism in world's fair venues.

A noteworthy aspect of Wilson's study is her demonstration of the range of material forms that were used to promote the black counter-public sphere in the twentieth century. After the popularity of Negro exposition buildings had begun to wane, Du Bois experimented with black pageants and plays. The display of black cultural history at these pageants combined African themes, including the use of Egyptian iconography on temporary pavilions, and plays such as *The Song of Ethiopia*, performed over a three-hour span. Wilson details the political implications of Du Bois's use of North African props that augmented the civilizational origins of Western European culture in the United States, which "hinted at racial assimilation" for African Americans "in the American melting pot" (158). This bid for acceptance was also counterbalanced by the promotion of Black Nationalism and protest within middle-class communities. As Wilson points out, the temporality of these early twentieth-century pageants were echoed in postwar plans for the International Afro-American Museum (IAM), which was deployed in a mobile home to disseminate oral histories of black leaders to the black diaspora spread across North America. In this way, her history resonates in the present, anticipating, for example, the Pan-African themes of David Adjaye's design for the

new Smithsonian Museum for African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C. The one thing this otherwise excellent volume lacks is an appendix listing all the buildings and spaces covered in its nearly 500 pages. As it stands, it requires readers to keep careful notes as they progress through its many pages.

These three books advance the presence and importance of race and ethnicity studies in architectural history in important ways. They fill obvious gaps in the field and invite scholars to reexamine existing archives with new eyes. One can only hope that we will take the invitation seriously, as more work is yet to be done on such a serious subject.

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Notes

1. See, for example, St. Claire Drake and Horace R. Clayton's *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City*, rev. ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), as an example of ethnographic research that attempts to present a sociological portrait of a people, with some indication of its architectural environs.
2. Martin Berger, *Site Unseen: Whiteness and American Visual Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).
3. Nell Irvin Painter, *The History of White People* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010), ix.
4. Patricia Morton, *Hybrid Modernities: Architecture and Representation at the 1931 Colonial Exposition, Paris* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003).

Diane Ghirardo

Italy: Modern Architectures in History

London: Reaktion Books, 2013, 336 pp., 207 b/w illus. \$29.95 (paper), ISBN 9781861898647

When we think of the history of modern architecture the story might revolve around the Germans and the Bauhaus, but Diane Ghirardo's *Italy: Modern Architectures in History* might give us pause, since it reminds us of a more fundamental driver of "the modern," namely, the rise of the nation-state. This was a significant aspect for the Prussians during the Enlightenment, and indeed some have argued that Friedrich

Schinkel was, in a sense, the first modern for the Germans. But the German unification as such took place only in 1871, and though there are many parallels, the Italian situation was considerably more stressed, for they not only had to build a nation-state after 1861 out the chaos of unification but also had to do so in the vortex of modern industrialization. Timing was everything; the Greeks won their independence in 1830, but the Greeks never accepted—or perhaps one can say embraced—"the crisis of modernity" in quite the same way as the Italians.

The task of creating Italy's image fell, of course, to the architects, city designers, and artists whose accomplishments gave visible definition to the question of what a national architecture should look like, especially in comparison with the architecture of countries far ahead in the modernization enterprise. The Italians were not alone in that general ambition. The Americas were equally concerned with developing a national style, as were many of the other European nations in the era of Romantic nationalism. But the Italian story remains unique, given the tension between that nation's deep history and its now-nationalized civilizational ambitions. Unique to the Italian perspective was the situation that the country was not a colonial power with access to far-flung resources. In 1861, it was largely a rural nation. The scale of the transformation should, therefore, not be underestimated. Between unification and the end of World War II, Italy's urban landscape was completely transformed. Almost everything that one might expect from a modern nation had to be built: monuments, schools, train stations, slaughterhouses, operas, markets, power plants, stock exchanges, and department stores, not to mention industrial quarters, harbors, and roads. Through a judicious selection of these projects, Ghirardo penetrates to the heart of Italy's social and political history.

Though the book's chapters are arranged more or less chronologically, it is designed as a series of essays that move us through various relevant themes. Chapter 2, for example, looks at the changing status of the metropolis from the 1860s to about 1925. Ghirardo's goal is not to spend too

much time on any single structure but to portray in large brushstrokes the dynamics of the times: to flesh out the consequence of choosing Rome as a capital; to point to the interconnected issues of finance, urban development, and demolition; to contextualize Rome's master plan of 1883; to describe the emerging housing problem; to discuss the rise of electrical, chemical, and metallurgical economies; to reach the threshold of the depopulation of villages for industrial cores. All this information could be quite formidable, but the pace of the writing and the rhythm of insights keep the reader moving along without getting lost in the minutiae.

Chapter 3 brings us to the core of the emerging (or perhaps festering) problem of Italian nationalism. In the 1920s, the country was ruled by a king and an elite who were remote from the peasants who, when they returned from fighting in World War I, began to question the nature of their identity within the nation. Fascism addressed this discontent and built its strength upon the ideology of cross-class Italian solidarity. The question for Ghirardo is not about what is or is not fascist architecture but rather to address the massive modernization program of dams, highways, railways, and aqueducts as well as the politics of the Ministry of Public Works. Buildings, although more important to our particular disciplinary perspective, constituted only a small percentage of the overall expenditures. Nonetheless, architectural debates were now front and center to the national polemic. Was architecture to proclaim its functionality or was it to ally itself with historical precedent, and if so was it to translate that precedent into something abstract or was it to evoke Italy's classical past in a more literal way? The complex array of approaches has perplexed historians, who have labeled some more fascist and others more modernist. Ghirardo moves away from such an approach by looking less at the style than at the patronage system with its deep continuities to the previous regime. She walks us through a host of buildings, from schools and factories to operas, post offices, and party headquarters. No subsequent Italian government commissioned such a diverse group of buildings. This extraordinary output of inventive

design over the twenty years of fascist rule needs some historical explanation, and indeed the reasons for the diversity of approaches have less to do with a competitive desire to define a fascist aesthetic than with a deep-seated aristocratic culture in the field of architecture as well as with the engagement of architects with the other arts, graphic designers, actors, poets, and the like that opened the field to experimentation. If we remove the accusatory finger, we find a level of experimentation unparalleled anywhere else in Europe.

Chapter 4 deals with rise of postwar industrialization, labor unrest, and housing, once again focusing on the anxiety about what an Italian architecture should look like, given the general contamination after the war of both modernism and tradition. The result, with Le Corbusier serving as predictable referent, was the proliferation of large linear housing tracts that rarely survived the test of time, propagating (or at least representing) the growing problem of scale in the modern metropolis.

Chapter 5 studies the architecture of the 1950s and 1960s, when the Italian economy righted itself, and we see the emergence of a generation of talented designers such as Gino Valle, Vittorio Gregotti, and Luigi Moretti, not to mention those working for Olivetti and other industrialists. National architecture became something more akin to a national style, associated less with identity politics than with Italy's new industrial revolution. Here we see a range of office buildings, apartment houses, universities, and factories that are rarely discussed or analyzed. The chapter addresses the work of Renzo Piano and Aldo Rossi, who brought back Italy's history to bear on the discussion of architectural design. Chapter 6 looks at the larger question of preservation and restoration, which has a major history throughout this period. It is an important theme, since Italians have increasingly dominated the politics of renovation. Given their patrimony, architectural history was always an element of the national consciousness. We should, therefore, not forget that in Italy preservation was, in essence, born out of a nationalist-modernist trope, despite the illusions to the contrary. The Ferrara Town Hall, for example, as discussed by

Ghirardo, may look medieval to most observers but was rebuilt in its present form in 1923. Here the author also gives us a penetrating account of the commissioning of Aldo Rossi for the rebuilding of the fabled La Fenice, which had burned in 1991, and the role that Bruno Levi played in bringing architectural issues to a wider audience. She discusses the great don of modern preservation, Carlo Scarpa, as well as Richard Meier's building to house the Ara Pacis, a structure that encapsulates the shift in Italian architecture in the 1970s. The question was less about Italian style than about how Italian architects work in the increasingly large world of global practices dominated by star players.

And it is this theme that is picked up in the last chapter, wherein Italian architects now work abroad and have made prominent careers doing so—Renzo Piano being the best known. At the same time, global architects have moved into the Italian scene: Kenzō Tange, Richard Meier, Frank Gehry, Tadao Ando, Foster + Partners, Zaha Hadid, and Santiago Calatrava among others. It was a wave—sometimes called an invasion—that many in the United States can hardly appreciate but that caused a lot of anxiety among Europeans who were opening their borders, and not just to star architects.

The result was that the old national/nationalism project softened or disappeared outright as an aesthetic ideology in architecture—although most certainly not in politics. The issue at stake here, however, was an architecture that was in keeping with “the requirement of being—and appearing—modern” (291). But at the same time, Italian tradition was most certainly not being lost, although it was profoundly transformed. There are now more buildings preserved under UNESCO in Italy than in any other country in the world, leading to a kind of split between prestige imports and sanitized history. The result, for Ghirardo, is clearly a loss of the dynamic nature of modern architecture and its promise for a more open-ended search for meaning and form. But this is not exactly the end of the story, for despite the systemic problem of corruption, the difficulties for women to enter the field, not to mention the recent economic

meltdown, the author holds out a glimmer of hope for the younger generation, who now make their unique mark in smaller commissions. Arassociati (formerly the office of Aldo Rossi), the firm known as MARC (Michele Bonino and Subhash Mukerjee), and Elena Manferdini are among a group of firms that she feels hold the keys to the Italian spirit.

As the book moves from the nineteenth century to today, it becomes less historical and more on the order of criticism. In this shift, Ghirardo is sending a powerful message about the advantage of seeing current practice through a long lens. She emphasizes this in the subtitle, *Modern Architectures in History*, where the plural of the word *architecture* is critical. There is no one Italian modernism, just as there is no “right” or “wrong” modernism. But there is, nonetheless, in her writing that classical sense of precedent, where some buildings are better than others, and this is where the historian-critic plays a role different from the standard role of the architectural critic working for a newspaper or design magazine. In a sense, one could almost read the book backward, ending—or beginning—with the first great example of Italian modernism, Giuseppe Sacconi’s imposing monument to Vittorio Emanuele II in Rome, a structure that has often been scorned as a “wedding cake” but that set the tone for devotion to spectacle and the spectacular. That a book on modern architecture should open with this monument sends the message that we should not overdetermine what we understand by modern, for that particular devotion was still strong in the work of Paolo Portoghesi and even today resonates in the architecture of Renzo Piano. Other modernities that developed in the context of early nationalism (namely, those that tried to integrate rationalism with the historical) also survived, and now that the historical is no longer wrapped up in compulsions of class identity, patriotism, and antimodernism, the project of modernity opens itself up to the elasticity of experimentation, though under threat, as Ghirardo suggests, from the Italian anxiety about its role in the global economy.

Ghirardo has certainly earned her right to have opinions about contemporary practice. She has lived, breathed, Italian

architecture for decades and is by far one of the most accomplished scholars of architecture in that part of the world, and this book certainly proves it. There is a lot she is not telling us, and indeed she could have used the opportunity to present a more expansive and personal text. Instead, she gives a grand view and a powerful foundation from which we can work.

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Kimberly Elman Zarecor

**Manufacturing a Socialist
Modernity: Housing in
Czechoslovakia, 1945–1960**

Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press,
2011, 480 pp., 292 b/w illus. \$45 (cloth),
ISBN 9780822944041

Until very recently, almost every study of the history of the Communist period in Central Europe has shown evidence of the political and ideological views—or the personal life experiences—of those who lived through the era. Only rarely does one find works that are wholly free from the burden of such context. Kimberly Elman Zarecor is the first author to address the history of housing during the Communist period—the product of deliberate social engineering—in a fully dispassionate way.

Throughout her book, Zarecor challenges one of the standard myths of the era. “Architectural historians and the general public,” she writes, “have long assumed that Soviet architects forced panel technology on unwilling architects in the Eastern Bloc after they had mastered it at home” (266). She goes on to ask several related questions: To what extent was Czechoslovak postwar architecture an autonomous development? How was Czechoslovakia different from, or similar to, other countries of the Eastern Bloc and the Soviet Union? In posing these questions, Zarecor presents a far more complex view of an important chapter in the history of architecture—one that until now has not been the subject of deeper scholarly attention.

Zarecor’s approach—to study the process of change rather than the resulting aesthetic qualities of the works—led her to focus on two key points: the transformation

of architectural practice and the shift of the status of architects in society. Tracing these processes from the late nineteenth century through the end of the 1950s, she demonstrates a “shift from individual commissions to mass production” (5) at a time “when architects became technicians and industrial producers rather than artists or individual creators” (66).

The book is divided into five thematic chapters, each related in some way to the mass-produced residential architecture of the period. Zarecor points out the gaps in contemporary research and the “desire for something more than just a survey” in current discourse (3). In doing so, she exposes the main problems—especially the tendency toward oversimplification—inherent in most previous research on the subject.

The first chapter traces the continuity of the interwar period and the postwar years, arguing against the commonly held notion of “either 1938 or 1945” representing a “break between high modernism and what came later” (16). Rather, Zarecor maintains that it was the social and political engagement of the prewar avant-garde attempting to build a new society that played a crucial role in the postwar transformation of the profession. She points out that prewar Czechoslovakia was already heavily industrialized, and that there were examples of collective architecture and standardized building before the advent of the Communist building program, most notably in Zlín, the city of the future built by the Baťa Shoe Company, and in the works of some of the best interwar architects. Especially important for laying the intellectual foundation by the late 1920s for what came afterward were the ideas and writings of Karel Teige, the leading figure in prewar Czechoslovak architecture. His 1929 attack on Le Corbusier’s Mundaneum project challenged its monumentality and artistic pretensions and established the basis for similar discussions for the next half-century.

Zarecor briefly discusses Teige’s story, his falling out with the new Communist regime and his later theoretical legacy, but mostly she follows a different line of inquiry. It must be pointed out that her book is concerned almost exclusively with

those works that were officially approved by the totalitarian regime. This is not the only approach she could have taken; one could have written a book examining not only those projects that found favor and succeeded but also about the individuals or projects that for one reason or another failed to gain official sanction or fell by the wayside. This parallel reality is evident throughout the book; nevertheless, Zarecor, seemingly in an effort to remain fully dispassionate and to avoid the emotionality of Czech or Slovak scholars, ignores or downplays such cases. A case in point is that of Karel Hannauer. Zarecor cites his work as an example of “the high quality of built examples in (interwar) Czechoslovakia” (17). Hannauer was a close friend of Karel Teige; he was a member of the Left Front and a strong advocate for new forms of residential architecture. Despite the fact that Hannauer was a cofounder of the new school of architecture in Bratislava (along with Vladimír Karfík and other progressives), he had been persecuted from the early 1950s until his death in 1966, and he is largely absent from Zarecor’s account. On the other hand, some of the architects who followed Teige’s technocratic vision of architecture and who came to hold high positions in professional institutions in Socialist/Communist Czechoslovakia after World War II, including Jiří Štursa, Karel Janů, and Jiří Voženílek, do appear throughout the book.

Zarecor’s second chapter, on the centralization of power as well as architectural practice, traces developments after the Communist takeover in 1948 from the perspective of typification and standardization. Building on the long-praised ideal of serial production sought by the interwar avant-garde, Zarecor writes, “Czechoslovakia’s confidence in typification was unrivaled in Europe” (97). During the first Five-Year Plan, which ran from 1949 to 1954, the so-called T-series housing types were developed under the aegis of a national institute called Stavoprojekt. Zarecor sees the time from 1948 to 1950 as a “transitional period to define parameters and working methods for the socialist design sector,” but the real turning point, she argues, came in 1950 with the forced imposition of the Soviet style (72).

In the next two chapters, Zarecor analyzes the phenomenon of socialist realism. The style dominated Czechoslovak architectural production through the end of 1954, when Nikita Khrushchev finally repudiated it. Relying on Boris Groys’s and Catherine Cooke’s analyses, she regards socialist realism as essentially a superficial movement, one that was easily dispensed with in Czechoslovakia because it ran contrary to the country’s long experience with modernism and modern building methods.

The last chapter of the book focuses on new construction methods and the evolution of designing with prefabricated building elements. Here again, Zarecor singles out earlier research in new building technologies conducted by the Baťa Shoe Company in Zlín. Because Czechoslovak designers had already developed new prefabricated building technologies, they were in a position to meet the goals of a Communist planned economy. Prefabricated blocks had already been tested in Zlín during the 1940s, and the former Baťa engineers completed the first panel houses (which later became known as *paneláky*) in 1953. The new *paneláky* were produced independently of the research conducted in the Soviet Union and other countries, resulting in a technocratic approach to architecture, one that essentially dispensed with design aesthetics altogether. The endless rows of such buildings found throughout the Czech and Slovak lands bear witness to this particular approach.

Zarecor traces the shift in architectural practice from a process of artistic creation to the technical practices of industrial production. She views this as a general characteristic of modern architecture, one that persists to the present day. Indeed, she compares the contemporary design practices of the large design studios of Rem Koolhaas, Frank Gehry, or Zaha Hadid, which are based on interdisciplinary and collective work, to the industrialized production of Stavoprojekt. I find this comparison problematic, especially if one considers the appearance of these new buildings. I do not believe that a direct comparison can be made with the highly aestheticized buildings coming out of contemporary studios. Here appearances matter.

But Zarecor’s approach, which avoids such aesthetic judgments, fits her subject well. As she states in her introduction, “The objects of study here are not the buildings themselves but rather how they were constitutive of the political, organizational, and professional systems within which they were conceived and built” (7). In imposing such goals, Zarecor’s book meets its objectives in revealing the continuity of Czechoslovak interwar and postwar modernism as well as the country’s specific approach in responding to the directives of the Soviet Union. Typification and standardization, she contends, evolved in Czechoslovakia, with no explicit import from the Soviet Union.

Even if one accepts Zarecor’s argument about the continuity of the development in the interwar and postwar periods, it is necessary to take a broader view. How would Czechoslovak modernism have developed in a society freed from a totalitarian regime? Would larger aesthetic questions still have been ignored? Zarecor purposefully omits these questions in order to offer a detailed analysis of what actually was built. Nonetheless, her book represents a huge step forward. It overcomes the idealization of the interwar period and offers an entirely new picture of postwar developments in Czechoslovakia, one that overturns previously held assumptions.

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Alexandrina Buchanan
Robert Willis and the Foundation of Architectural History

Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2013,
452 pp., 82 b/w illus. \$99 (cloth), ISBN
9781843838005

When, in 1818, Johann Maelzel put his mechanical “Chess-Playing Turk” on display in the Assembly Rooms in London, he might well have anticipated the excitement it would generate. Ever since its invention by Baron von Kempelen in 1770, this wondrous automaton had been captivating and baffling onlookers in equal measure. After the operator wound a large clockwork-like handle, the “Turk” miraculously sprang to life, playing chess against a real opponent

drawn from the audience, usually announcing its victory by uttering the word “*échee*.”

On 6 June 1820, one curious onlooker recorded having seen it: his name was Robert Willis. At the time, Willis had only recently finished his homeschooling and had not yet embarked upon his university career. As someone who was “an eager examiner of every piece of machinery and ancient building that came his way” (15), and had a particular enthusiasm for clocks and their mechanism, Willis was ideally suited to make an examination of the Turk. With his well-developed knowledge of mechanisms and machinery, Willis decided that the supposed automaton must be a fake.

As Alexandrina Buchanan’s intriguing new book *Robert Willis and the Foundation of Architectural History* reveals, Willis immediately set himself to work making observations of the device at a distance, by which he was able to approximate measurements and devise a crude reconstruction. His initial skepticism was based on his observation that the winding of the handle, which generated the machine’s power, rarely corresponded to the amount of work undertaken—with one turn sometimes equating to as many as sixty-three moves! Willis’s in-depth knowledge of clockwork assured him that this was impossible. He was convinced that a person occupied the cupboard space behind which the automaton sat, moving its arm to a designated position when prompted. In order to determine this, Willis employed his sister to operate his model, considering, in a very logical and systematic fashion, the different scenarios that would work. He had not been the only one to suggest that a person was probably concealed within the Turk’s cupboard, but he was the first to propose that it need not be a dwarf or small child. The results of these investigations appeared in print anonymously in January 1821 as *An Attempt to Analyse the Automaton Chess Player of Mr De Kempelen with an Easy Method of Imitating the Movements of that Celebrated Figure*. At the time, Willis was twenty years of age.

This episode tells us a lot, not only about Willis and his analytical acuity but also about the nature of the study of

architecture in early nineteenth-century Britain. To us, Willis is in many respects the “father” of architectural history as we know it. Indeed, he was the first to employ the term in its modern sense and was recognized by his peers and those who followed him as one of the giants in the advancement and eventual professionalization of the discipline. He wrote numerous books and articles on the subject as well as giving countless public lectures and tours, ranging from general studies, such as his *Remarks on the Architecture of the Middle Ages* (1835), to specialist investigations on individual buildings and their details, such as his important work on English cathedrals. He was also a leader in the development of the “science” of architectural archaeology. But until now and rather unjustifiably, Willis has occupied a somewhat marginal if not obscure place in the history of our discipline, despite his fundamental contributions.

This is why Buchanan’s comprehensive new study of Willis and his career in the world of British architecture is both welcome and essential. It is a superbly written and researched book, which, in eight chapters, traces Willis’s interest in architecture from his earliest days, through his Jacksonian Professorship at Cambridge, until his death in 1875. In this respect, it is more a biography than a critical account of the state of architectural history and theory at the time. Nevertheless, all the major figures in the British scene necessarily appear in relation to Willis and his innovations, among them Thomas Rickman, John Britton, John Lewis Petit, William Whewell, George Ayliffe Poole, and the Ecclesiologists. Indeed, what is both remarkable and important about this book is the way Buchanan thoroughly situates Willis’s architectural thinking within the wider context of his diverse interests.

It must be remembered that Willis occupied a world in which “architectural history” had yet to develop into a designated field of study let alone be recognized as any kind of profession. The detailed investigation of buildings and their historical significance was at best an amateur pastime, usually undertaken by the leisured classes who had both the time and

resources to do it. But this is where Willis was instrumental. It could be argued that he not only raised the profile of architectural history through his many public lectures and tours of ancient buildings but, through the auspices of his chair professorship at Cambridge, also brought a new degree of respectability and professionalism to it. As Jacksonian Professor of Natural and Experimental Philosophy, Willis’s concerns and energies were focused largely on contributing to the evolving academic profession of science; but it is precisely this scientific bent—which came very naturally to Willis—that gave his analysis of buildings their hitherto unparalleled technical character and precision.

As the above description of Willis’s encounter with the Chess-Playing Turk perfectly illustrates, the analytical purview of “science” was central to understanding the wider world in all its complexity, both natural and man-made. Buchanan is of course not the first to highlight the connections between the evolving disciplines of science and architectural history in early nineteenth-century Britain,¹ but few if any have covered it in such depth and with such acuity. Indeed, few have demonstrated just how crucial the developments in modern science were to the advent of architectural history as we now practice it, particularly with respect to the foregrounding of method (chapters 3 and 4 are particularly illuminating in this regard). Making substantive and meaningful associations between these intersecting worlds of evidence-based inquiry and scholarship is really the great strength of Buchanan’s account, leaving the reader in little doubt as to the origins, scope, and character of the discipline of architectural history in its infancy through the innovations and insights of one of its greatest exponents. *Robert Willis* is as much a history of early nineteenth-century science as it is of architectural history, inasmuch as Willis saw the study of architecture as a particular branch of science. Appreciating this notion helps us to understand why later approaches such as ecclesiology were presented as a science; or, indeed, why other historians, such as E. A. Freeman, wished to distinguish themselves from the scientific method, preferring the label “philosophical.”

It was precisely this overly “mechanical” approach, as one contemporary described it, that attracted criticism—what was seen in some quarters as rather more a type of “scientific antiquarianism” than proper historical explanation. As Willis’s writings on architecture were not concerned with meaning, iconography, or style per se, they provided very little guidance to debates over the development of contemporary architecture. Indeed, Willis repudiated the study of history as any practical guide to modern architectural design—something that limited his influence in the world of British architecture. We also discover here that it was Willis, not the now better-known German architect and archaeologist Karl Bötticher, who first proposed a division between structural and decorative aspects of architectural construction (what Willis referred to as “mechanical” versus “decorative” construction—what Bötticher later termed *Kernform* and *Kunstform*), predating Bötticher’s theories by nearly a decade (88).

The book is long, perhaps a little too long. For some readers it goes into too much detail about the scientific side of Willis as a Cambridge academic and student of architecture—indeed, there are some parts that, as interesting as they may be in themselves, could well have benefited from some editorial pruning without losing their point. In this respect, one gets the sense that Buchanan was aiming her account at a history of science audience as much as an architectural history one. Overall, Buchanan’s account is lively, erudite, and readable. The book is also nicely produced with clear and pertinent illustrations. Chapter 7, which deals with Willis’s impact upon the world of contemporary architectural design, however, seemed—to me at least—somewhat strained and unnecessary, mainly because he had none. His greatest impact was in the world of restoration, which was a significant movement during the Victorian period. The introduction is also a little over-egged in its justifications and therefore rather too dissertation-like. Despite these minor flaws, there is no question that Buchanan has produced a fascinating, authoritative, and most necessary study—one that is essential for anyone either teaching or researching

in this area. As she rightly points out, Willis has been conspicuous by his absence in recent accounts of the discipline of architectural history (358). This can no longer remain so—Buchanan has put Willis firmly back at the center.

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Note

1. For example, see Paul Frankl, *The Gothic: Literary Sources and Interpretations through Eight Centuries* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1960), 491–539; Carla Yanni, “On Nature and Nomenclature: William Whewell and the Production of Architectural Knowledge in Early Victorian Britain,” *Architectural History* 40 (1997), 204–21.

Tim Benton

LC Foto: Le Corbusier Secret Photographer

Zürich: Lars Müller Publishers, 2013, 416 pp., 103 color and 628 b/w illus. \$65 (cloth), ISBN 9783037783443

Tim Benton is an extraordinary historian of Le Corbusier. Thirty years ago, he published *Villas of Le Corbusier, 1920–1930*; in 1987, the prized catalogue to the London centennial exhibition *Le Corbusier: Architect of the Century*; and, in 2007, *Rhetoric of Modernism: Le Corbusier as a Lecturer*. In *LC Foto: Le Corbusier Secret Photographer*, Benton combines his knowledge of the architect with a remarkable understanding of architectural photography to reveal Le Corbusier’s personal activity as a photographer during the only two periods of the architect’s life when he took pictures: 1907–17 and 1936–38.

Benton divides his book into two distinct parts, presenting the photographs and films chronologically in thirteen albums. The first part comprises four albums and examines photographs made by the young Charles-Édouard Jeanneret—before he adopted the pseudonym “Le Corbusier”—at a time when, as Benton notes, “he was uncertain in his vocation between art and architecture” (43). Made with different cameras mostly on extensive tours of Europe in 1907 and 1911, these photographs are

housed in the city library of Jeanneret’s hometown La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland, and were the subject of Giuliano Gresleri’s 1985 *Le Corbusier, viaggio in Oriente: Gli inediti di Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, fotografo e scrittore*, which reproduced 600 of them. Benton describes the young Jeanneret’s three cameras, elaborating on the properties of each instrument and explaining in detail the physics of the camera and the manner in which it sees. By aligning the cameras Jeanneret owned with the photographs he made, Benton determines which images were made when, as well as how the images were affected by the limitations of the photography equipment employed. Using this knowledge, he gently corrects Gresleri’s earlier findings.

The second and much longer part of the book, “Le Corbusier, the Cinema, and Cinematographic Photography, 1936–38,” introduces photographs and films that Le Corbusier—the great publicist—never published. Benton discovered this work at the Fondation Le Corbusier in Paris, a find one imagines to have been the genesis of the book. Ingeniously, he determines that both still photographs and films were made with the same camera, a Siemens B 16 mm movie camera equipped with a stop-frame feature. Some of the films that Benton found were left undeveloped by the architect; others were featured in film director Jacques Barsac’s three-part documentary on Le Corbusier made for French television in 1987. In *Le Corbusier Secret Photographer*, Benton provides “QR patches” behind which are “seven montages of film sequences shot by Le Corbusier on his Siemens camera” (4) while reproducing many strips of these films as stills for us to study.

The nine albums show photographs of subjects that are for the most part very different from those pictured by the young Jeanneret. Some, although of little relevance to Le Corbusier’s public concerns, reveal a private persona of unexpected warmth: photographs of his mother, his wife, his dog. Others are vacation photos taken with the eye of an architect, often reveling in forms and shapes that did and would populate Le Corbusier’s paintings and architecture: a month in Brazil; a transatlantic crossing and the ocean liner’s deck;

the beach at Le Piquey; Vézelay; the rocky coast of Plougrescant, Brittany; Algeria; and even E1027, the Roquebrune house designed by Eileen Gray for herself and Jean Badovici.

Many of the images from this period show little concern for technical exactness. They tend to be underexposed and slightly blurred, and as noted above, are sometimes presented as small frames in a strip of film. At other times, they are enlarged and isolated. The best of them use darkness and blur to great effect, creating a silhouetted frame that renders the scene as layered space. Some of these are shown as full-page reproductions: Le Corbusier's mother writing; pottery in front of a veiled window; Madame Le Corbusier in profile echoed in a Léger painting; a foregrounded hand and bottle with the horizon line of the beach; the mountains of Rio behind swaying palms. In addition, there are wonderful images of amorphous shapes of zeppelins, rocks, boats, and ship-deck machinations. Most memorably, there is a photograph of Le Corbusier himself, headless and in full frontal nudity, a much-welcomed alternative to the rear-view image of Le Corbusier outside his Cap Martin *cabanon*, painting with his pants off.

Occasionally, the photographs seem indebted artistically to contemporary European photography and films. Some photographs—of stacked building materials, for example, or of beaches and sand—follow themes set out earlier in the photographs selected and assembled by Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret for the 1933 Pavillon Suisse photomural in Paris. Still others are similar to works made by André Kertész in Paris in the late 1920s, while film shot on the deck of the SS *Conte Biancamano* is reminiscent in subject matter and montage technique of *Battleship Potemkin* made by Le Corbusier's friend Sergei Eisenstein in 1925.

Although stills made with a movie camera dominate the second part of the book—and, presented as photographs, complete the definitive survey of photographic activities begun in the book's first part—the “movies” that Benton found in the Paris archive are a great treasure. In a way very different from still photography, and of a form that does not lend itself

to book reproduction, movies parallel Le Corbusier's approach to architecture. Filmmaking permitted him to experiment in a spontaneous, playful manner with the presentation of visual forms in space and light over time. It offered a way of seeing time through sequence—time being central to Le Corbusier's concept of architecture as promenade, an environment that comes into being only as one walks through it. Famously, twenty years after making these films, in the Philips Pavilion for Expo '58 in Brussels, Le Corbusier made architecture of the film experience.

The book's title, *Le Corbusier Secret Photographer*, implies that Le Corbusier was a photographer and that his photographic activities were covert. Both implications are questionable. Certainly, Le Corbusier purchased cameras, took a lot of pictures, and in the early years made a concerted effort to become technically proficient in photography. But there is little indication that he pursued the medium beyond this. He left much film undeveloped, published few of his photographs, and seems not to have engaged in dark-room work at all. His filmmaking activity in the mid-1930s was never pursued with the seriousness of intention with which he pursued painting and later sculpture and seemed more like a hobby than an engagement in a disciplined art. He was known to talk against photography, and as Benton points out, he objected to being photographed with a camera in his hand. In announcing Le Corbusier a *secret* photographer, the book's title suggests the exposition of something once hidden. But Le Corbusier never hid his engagement with photography; he simply did not publicize it as he had so often announced much of his creative activity.

The title scarcely diminishes the magnificent achievement of this book, however. *Le Corbusier Secret Photographer* is an invaluable addition to the considerable literature on Le Corbusier and photography. With the exception of Gresleri's 1985 book, most writing on the subject to date has addressed the architect's appropriation and reworking of the photography of others in the making of illustrative text for his early books. Benton's book is different. A complete account of the personal

photographic activity of Le Corbusier, it shows us how the architect visualized the world in which he lived through the logic and limitations of mechanical means. It intimately portrays his family and friends; reveals his special interests and unique way of seeing; and illuminates certain previously unknown times in the architect's life. Even more than this, in *Le Corbusier Secret Photographer*, Benton explains with great storytelling talent the workings of the camera itself, the physics of photo making, and how this affected Le Corbusier. By detailing the impact of technology on the medium—the methods and means of popular photography in the first third of the twentieth century as the medium moved from big format to small and the resultant less-challenging cameras that encouraged image making of greater personal expression—he constructs a fascinating history of everyday photography. Benton does all of this with authority and verve and with great sensitivity to the photographer and his times. Comprehensive but never exhausting, intelligently written and always wonderfully visual, *Le Corbusier Secret Photographer* is already a classic in Corbuology. It will be valued not only by scholars of architecture and modernism but also by scholars of photography, technology, and filmmaking.

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Christy Anderson

Renaissance Architecture

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013,
258 pp., 151 color illus. \$29.95 (paper),
ISBN 9780192842275

We are all familiar with the narrative of Italian Renaissance architecture: Filippo Brunelleschi produced a series of technically and stylistically innovative structures in Florence in the first half of the fifteenth century that are taken as the starting point of a new kind of architecture. This foundation gave way to Leon Battista Alberti's buildings and writings in the next generation, then in turn to Giuliano da Sangallo, Donato Bramante, Raphael, Michelangelo, Vignola, and Palladio. Other architects are usually included, as are excursions to

Urbino, Milan, Mantua, and Venice. This progression has served as the spine of a series of important surveys by Peter Murray, Ludwig Heinrich Heydenreich and Wolfgang Lotz, and Christoph Luitpold Frommel, which has introduced two generations of undergraduate students to Renaissance architecture, forming their view of the material.¹

In Anglophone architectural history, this account of Italian Renaissance architecture has often represented the development of building in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries more generally. In *Renaissance Architecture*, published in a series on world architecture, Peter Murray expands this narrative by appending a short closing section on buildings in France, Spain, the Low Countries, Germany, and England.² A relatively small group of scholars have championed architecture elsewhere, but even these accounts have often been presented as something of an adjunct to the Italian Renaissance. For example, Anthony Blunt's essential survey of French art and architecture in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries opens with an account of King Charles VIII's invasion of Italy in 1494, and its cultural effects. Much of his discussion of French architecture is in various ways dependent on comparisons with an Italian standard.³

Recent interest in transregional and global art has made this restricted view of Renaissance architecture seem untenable. In a new volume in the Oxford History of Art series, Christy Anderson presents European architecture of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in a more inclusive way that "embraces it in all its diversity and wonder" (vii). It is indeed a fundamental revision. In eight chapters, Anderson abandons both monographic and geographical categories for a series of more elastic themes that allow her to include examples from every corner of Europe.

Chapter 1, "The Voluptuous Pleasure of Building," introduces Anderson's approach. Distancing herself from the dry, often pedantic, and fundamentally normative architecture presented in Renaissance treatises, which are frequently used as interpretive keys, she points to the quite different reality evident in built works. Every region had its own traditions, and even its

own antiquities, and these fused with Roman classicism in countless ways. Materials, too, were locally specific and added to the rich variety of forms, textures, and meanings across a wide geographical expanse. Chapter 2, "The House of God," likewise takes account of a great variety of traditions in religious architecture. Here we encounter some quite familiar buildings, such as Palladio's Il Redentore in Venice and Bramante's Tempietto in Rome, in the context of a discussion that also includes Protestant temples in northern Europe, the Old Synagogue in Kazimierz, Poland, and the Friday mosque complex at Kadrgalimani in Istanbul. Chapter 3, "Theories and Practices," takes up the emergence of architecture as a subject appropriate for discussion and study by the educated classes. The published treatise was one aspect of this as was the rise of a new kind of more literate architect. Anderson traces the development of new practices to suit this concept, using St. Peter's Basilica as a case study. Increased reliance on drawings ensured that the architect retained control over all aspects of the building. Moreover, some of the drafting methods employed—such as the plan, section, and elevation—were not only conceptual in nature but were also valuable for other intellectual pursuits such as anatomical study, for example.

Chapter 4 investigates the political dimensions of architecture, mostly discussing palaces but also ephemeral works of various kinds. Chapter 5 explores different kinds of corporate structures, from schools and universities to hospitals and confraternities. Chapter 6, one of Anderson's finest, addresses the relationship of architecture to the natural environment in which it is situated, with examples from Italy, France, England, and elsewhere. The short final chapter offers a glimpse beyond Europe and hints at ways in which the arguments presented in the book could be expanded to encompass a global scope. It also presents a brief discussion of later engagements with the Renaissance from nineteenth-century restoration practices that made earlier buildings conform to preconceived notions of how they should appear to modernist understandings of Palladio.

Anderson thus presents an enormous range of material within a few elastic

categories encompassing aspects that cumulatively characterize Renaissance architecture. Some of these characteristics, such as emphasis on urban planning and on architectural draftsmanship, have long been associated with the Renaissance. Others, such as devotional architecture, are not specific to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, although of course they encompass many of the major monuments of this period. Fascination with the distant past, which was broadly shared in this period, does not receive a separate discussion. Rather, aspects of this subject are interwoven throughout.

This thematic approach offers some important advantages. Because the discussion does not revolve around a Tuscan-Roman core, we are allowed to encounter each building on its own terms, rather than in relation to a normative canon. This allows us to see quite clearly that architecture throughout Europe was the result of a synthesis of a classical ideal with the local traditions and materials. This was no less true in central Italy than in England, France, Spain, or Poland. The book thus moves decisively away from a long-standing inclination to evaluate buildings on the degree to which they approximate models in Rome, leaving them in the bind of seeming either derivative or out of step and provincial. In this respect, Anderson's presentation levels the field very effectively.

To some degree, Anderson downplays the architectural treatises and other humanistic writings produced in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. This allows the buildings to speak for themselves instead of as manifestations of an abstract conception of an ideal architecture. The structures thus emerge as aesthetic objects rather than as assemblages of columns, portals, and other elements studied from antique models and transmitted through treatises and books, Sebastiano Serlio's among others. This, too, allows greater freedom to recognize inventions outside the parameters set by these treatises and a handful of architects.

The restrictions imposed by the Oxford series posed a challenge in introducing so much material in just over 200 pages of text. Although the monuments are presented effectively and generally illustrate a

larger point, the text often moves rather abruptly from one topic to the next, and one senses that Anderson was frustrated by the lack of space. Although the book is written as an introductory text for students and interested nonspecialists, those more familiar with the material will be able to expand the underlying linkages and arguments. This is an important and timely book presenting Renaissance architecture for a generation less inclined to accept the reductive narrative established long ago. The study of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century art and architecture has been enlivened by an expansion of the field in recent years, but the earlier periods have lagged somewhat behind. Anderson's book provides an important step forward.

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Notes

1. Peter Murray, *The Architecture of the Italian Renaissance* (New York: Schocken Books, 1963); Ludwig Heinrich Heydenreich and Wolfgang Lotz, *Architecture in Italy, 1400–1600* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1974); Christoph Luitpold Frommel, *The Architecture of the Italian Renaissance* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2007).
2. Peter Murray, *Architecture of the Renaissance* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1971).
3. Anthony Blunt, *Art and Architecture in France, 1500–1700* (London: Penguin, 1953).

Aloisio Antinori, ed.

Studio d'Architettura Civile: Gli atlanti di architettura moderna e la diffusione dei modelli romani nell'Europa del Settecento

Rome: Edizioni Quasar, 2013, 320 pp., 55 color and 232 b/w illus. €40 (paper), €25 (e-book), ISBN 9788871404967

The *Studio d'Architettura Civile*, published in three volumes by Domenico de' Rossi (Rome, 1702–21), is one of the most beautifully produced architecture books of its time. It also constituted an essential reference and source of inspiration for patrons, architects, and amateurs in eighteenth-century Europe as well as comprising a powerful instrument of the promotion of Roman baroque aesthetics and vocabulary.

De' Rossi's *Studio*—a facsimile of which was published in 1972—contains 287 folio plates organized into three volumes according to three thematic areas: doors and windows; chapels, altars, and tombs; and plans, elevations, and cross sections of both sacred and secular buildings.¹ Roman buildings largely dominate the plates of the *Studio*, but some Florentine and Neapolitan examples are also included. As for architects, Michelangelo, Borromini, and Bernini are the best represented, but much space is also dedicated to later generations, including Camillo Arcucci, Giovanni Antonio, Matteo de' Rossi, and Carlo Fontana. The plates, of excellent quality, were produced after drawings made by Alessandro Specchi himself, which were orthographic representations in line with the practice of the Accademia di San Luca. Engravers of the caliber of Specchi, Francesco Aquila, Vincenzo Franceschini, Antonio Barbey, and Filippo Vasconi executed these plates. Yet this extraordinary work of art has so far received little attention; although an abundant literature is available on the engravers involved in its making, the *Studio* itself and the workshop of de' Rossi have remained long ignored by historians.²

The volume edited by Aloisio Antinori is dedicated to the production of the *Studio d'Architettura* and to its reception in eighteenth-century Europe, and it is the final output of an international collaborative research project carried out since 2008, the first results of which were presented as conference papers in Parma in 2012 (“Libri, incisioni e immagini di architettura come fonti per il progetto in Italia, XV–XX secolo,” 17–18 September 2012). The volume contains a brief preface, eight essays, and an appendix section, followed by a generous bibliography and a helpful index including names of people and places. The texts are in Italian except for the three essays written in English by Christiane Salge, Martin Olin, and Terry Friedman. The volume is carefully edited and its abundant illustrations are, for the most part, of excellent quality (a few pictures are blurred and some of the color ones would have benefited from postproduction color editing).

In the first essay, Antinori focuses on the production of the *Studio di Architettura*, which the author contextualizes within the

practice of the de' Rossi family press as well as within the broader artistic and cultural milieu of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Rome. Antinori traces the history of the de' Rossi workshop from its foundation by Giuseppe the Elder in 1629 to its establishment in the 1650s as one of the most successful presses of Rome under the direction of Giacomo's son, Giovanni Giacomo, and finally to its rise to dominance over the same market in the 1680s under the direction of Giovanni's son, Domenico de' Rossi, from 1691 to 1729. While exploring the diversified output of the de' Rossi shop over the span of a century in its technical and artistic aspects, the essay also emphasizes the commercial strategies that secured its success, including the ability to secure the services of first-rate draftsmen and engravers such as Falda and Specchi; the choice of targeting a broad audience that included architecture professionals as well as amateurs and print collectors; the efforts to ingratiate important patrons, within the papacy in particular; and the sensitivity to the trends of the cultural market in its revivals of Michelangelesque and Borrominesque architecture as well as in its successive pro- and anti-French turns.

The second and third essays both deal with architecture books inspired by the *Studio* and produced shortly after its publication: Oronzo Brunetti focuses on Ferdinando Ruggieri's *Studio d'Architettura Civile* (Florence, 1722–28) while Tommaso Manfredi analyzes Vasconi's *Studio d'Architettura Civile* (Rome, n.d. [1724–30]) and Filippo Juvarra's homonymous work, which remained in manuscript form (MS, Turin, Fondazione Antonio Maria e Mariella Marocco, 1725). Ruggieri spent two years in Rome from 1712 to 1714, and Brunetti highlights the architect-engraver's connections with Fontana, Ludovico Sergardi, Juvarra, and the Accademia di San Luca, as well as the debt of his Florentine *Studio* toward de' Rossi's. But the author's main focus is the previously neglected Florentine precedents to Ruggieri's publication such as the albums of drawings by Giorgio Vasari the Younger and Giovanni Battista Nelli. He also examines the cultural and political significance of Ruggieri's project, mostly dedicated to Michelangelesque

sixteenth-century buildings, within the context of the declining Medici dynasty and the related debates concerning the notion of *florentinitas* as a marker of identity. Manfredi's essay follows the intellectual and professional development of Juvarra and Vasconi: their training, their relationships with Fontana's workshop in Rome and with the Accademia di San Luca, and their later careers. The focus is on how de' Rossi's *Studio*, and the Accademia methods it illustrated and promoted, informed the architects-engravers' work, not only with regard to their choice of subject for their books (Vasconi's is a collection of Borrominesque creations and motives, Juvarra's a collection of exemplary buildings based on his lecture plans at the Accademia) but also with regard to their understanding of the relation between print and built architecture.

Each of the remaining essays analyzes the impact of de' Rossi's *Studio* on the production of both print and built architecture in eighteenth-century Spain, Portugal, Germany and Austria, Sweden, and England. All the authors grapple with the complex issue of isolating the specific contribution of de' Rossi's volumes to artistic contexts in which, due to travels or training, both patrons and artists often were already under the spell of Roman architecture. Delfín Rodríguez Ruiz explores the variety of channels through which the *Studio* became an "enormous influence" (115) in eighteenth-century Spain, including the illustrious patrons who acquired it for their libraries, such as Queen Isabella Farnese and King Philip V; the Italian architects who worked on royal projects such as the Granja de San Ildefonso palace in Segovia; the local architects for whom the *Studio* substituted for a sojourn in Rome such as Ventura Rodríguez; and the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando and the erudite circles that orbited around it. Giuseppina Raggi's essay on Portugal focuses on the enthusiastic promotion of Roman architectural models during the reign of King John V (1706–50), who not only launched a "program of systematic acquisition" of architecture books, prints, and drawings available on the Roman market (143) but also hired architects trained in Rome, such as Juvarra, Johann

Friedrich Ludwig, and Antonio Canevari, to work on the royal palaces in Lisbon and Mafra. The case of Mafra, in particular, shows the central role the *Studio* played in the transfer of architectural models across geographical boundaries and also from paper into built architecture. Similarly, Salge points out a number of instances in which the doors and windows illustrated in the *Studio* seem to have been directly translated into stone in eighteenth-century Germany and Austria. Salge underlines that this was partially due to the fact that they could be applied "without any great effort to existing façades and thus afford buildings a fresh look swiftly and cost effectively" (180); she also provides a compelling picture of how significant a model the *Studio* became for architectural books produced in the German-speaking world since the 1710s. Olin's essay focuses on the impact the *Studio* had on the works of Nicodemus Tessin in Sweden, especially for the Royal Palace of Stockholm. While the palace has been traditionally considered a generic "undigested compendium of Roman architecture" (190), Olin shows that it was de' Rossi's *Studio* that informed much of its design. The author also explores the significance Tessin attributed to the publications of de' Rossi—not only the *Studio* but also the *Insignium Romæ Templorum Prospectus* (1683) and the *Disegni di vari Altari e Cappelle* (1688–89?)—in the promotion of Roman baroque models that could counterbalance the dominance of the French Academy and the "normative publications it supported" such as François Blondel's *Cours d'Architecture* (1675–83) (200). Friedman looks at the "climax of European Baroque in Great Britain" (225) that took place during the first three decades of the eighteenth century mainly through the works of Thomas Archer and William and Francis Smith and through the volumes of de' Rossi's *Studio*, which became the "most influential contemporary Italian architectural pattern book of the age" (213). Focusing on three case studies—Heythrop House, Oxfordshire (1707–10); Beningbrough Hall, near York (1710–16); and Sudbrook House at Petersham (1715–19)—Friedman shows that the *Studio* did not simply serve as a catalogue of interchangeable decorative motives but

that English architects used it to "create an unequivocally holistic, blocky Roman Baroque palazzo form . . . which penetrated beyond mere façade-ism into a correspondingly sympathetic treatment of the interiors" (216).

The appendix to the volume consists of three essays dedicated to the most important architecture books published by the de' Rossi shop: the *Insignium Romæ Templorum Prospectus*, the *Disegni di vari Altari e Cappelle*, and the *Studio d'Architettura* itself. Written by Paola Piacentino (for the *Prospectus* and the *Studio*) and by Antinori (for the *Disegni*), the essays read like catalogue entries focused on these books' content and the artists who participated in their production. Accompanying synoptic tables helpfully detail the fact and location of preparatory drawings and other drawings related to or derived from de' Rossi's volumes, as well as the reuse of certain plates from previous publications.

Antinori's edited volume is an important and original contribution of excellent quality to the interwoven histories of architecture, architecture books, and prints. Its presentation of the most up-to-date research on the production and eighteenth-century European circulation and reception of architecture books by the de' Rossi shop renders it an indispensable reference for scholars as well as anyone interested in the dissemination and cultural relevance of architecture books in the early modern era. It is curious, however, that the volume lacks an essay focused on the circulation of the *Studio* in France, particularly in view of the many connections and rivalries between the Parisian and Roman cultural, artistic, and academic milieus during the reign of Louis XIV. Hopefully this lacuna will help to stimulate similar research among historians of French art and architecture.

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Notes

1. *Studio d'Architettura Civile di Roma, Rome, 1702, 1711, 1721—Disegni di vari Altari e Cappelle, Rome* [1713], with an introduction by Anthony Blunt (Farnborough: Gregg International, 1972).

2. Among the few studies dedicated to the de' Rossi workshop and its output, see José Manuel Barbito, "Giovanni Giacomo de' Rossi: El poder de la estampa," in *Insignium Romae Templorum Prospectus* (1684), ed. Giovanni Giacomo de' Rossi (Madrid: Instituto Juan de Herrera, 2004), 1–27; Alexander Grönert, "Domenico de' Rossi," in *Architekturtheorie von der Renaissance bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Bernd Evers and Christoph Thoenes (Cologne: Taschen Verlag, 2003), 148–55; Simona Ciofetta, "Alcune edizioni di architettura di Gian Giacomo e Domenico de' Rossi: Fasi preparatorie e finalità dell'opera," in *'700 Disegnatore: Incisioni, progetti, caricature*, ed. Elisa Debenedetti (Rome: Bonsignori, 1997), 65–82; Francesca Consagra, "De' Rossi and Falda: A Successful Collaboration in the Print Industry of Seventeenth-Century Rome," in *The Craft of Art: Originality and Industry in the Italian Renaissance and Baroque Workshop* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 187–203; Francesca Consagra, "The De' Rossi Family Print Publishing Shop: A Study in the History of the Print Industry in Seventeenth-Century Rome," PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1992; Simona Ciofetta, "Lo Studio d'Architettura Civile edito da Domenico de' Rossi (1702, 1711, 1721)," in *In Urbe Architectus: Modelli, disegni, misure; La professione dell'architetto, Roma 1680–1750*. Catalogue of the exhibition held in Rome, 12 Dec. 1991–29 Feb. 1992, ed. Bruno Contardi and Giovanna Curcio (Rome: Argos, 1991), 214–28; Massimo Ceresa, "Giovanni Giacomo de' Rossi," in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (Rome: Istituto del Enciclopedia Italiana, 1988), 39:218–20.

John A. Pinto

Speaking Ruins: Piranesi, Architects, and Antiquity in Eighteenth-Century Rome

Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012, 352 pp., 192 b/w illus. \$65 (cloth), ISBN 9780472118212

John Wilton-Ely

Piranesi, Paestum & Soane

Munich: Prestel, 2013, 120 pp., 58 color illus. \$39.95 (cloth), ISBN 9783791348063

A letter of 1774 from William Chambers to a former student living in Rome draws attention to that city's seminal importance in architectural education. "Converse much with Artists of All Countrys particularly foreigners," Chambers wrote. "Seek for

those who have most reputation. ... Amongst which forget not Piranesi, who you may See in my name, he is full of Matter, extravagant 'tis true, often Absurd, but from his overflowings You may gather much information. ... Form if you can a style of Your own," he urged, "in which endeavour to avoid the faults and blend the Perfections of all."¹ Thus Chambers advocated an eclectic design process for which the Rome of Giovanni Battista Piranesi furnished the crucible. Both books discussed in this review reinforce the wisdom of Chambers's remarks and elucidate the role played by publications of new archaeological finds.

Prestel's handsome second edition of John Wilton-Ely's *Piranesi, Paestum & Soane* of 2002 definitely improves upon the original softbound version published by Azimuth Editions. Larger format, more durable binding, and higher quality color reproductions enhance the contents, notably the illustrations featured in the central section: Piranesi's seventeen magnificent drawings of the three antique Doric temples at Paestum (Greek Poseidonia) in southern Italy. In most other respects, the editions are identical except that noted Piranesi specialist Wilton-Ely updates notes 48–74 and the bibliography to reflect advances in scholarship. Puzzlingly, nowhere except in the acknowledgments does any mention of the Azimuth first edition occur. And the dust jacket blurb describes Soane as Piranesi's "contemporary, friend, and colleague," belying the scant evidence of any such close personal relationship presented inside the covers. This caveat and bibliographic questions aside, the second edition makes an insightful and visually appealing contribution to the literature.

Wilton-Ely's nine chapters start with one titled "Piranesi, Paestum & Soane," in which the Chambers letter just quoted provides the keynote for the whole book. It happens that prior to his departure for Rome in March 1778, Soane received from Chambers a copy of the letter. Quick as always to follow up on any promising introduction to a possible mentor, the young Englishman heeded Chambers's advice and approached the ailing Piranesi. It is a good thing that he did because their acquaintance was perforce brief. Soane

arrived on 2 May and the Italian died on 9 November of that year (not 1777 as mistakenly printed on page 72). Yet in a typical act of Piranesi's generosity to foreigners, he presented Soane with four of his prints of Rome, a kindness the grateful Soane never forgot.

The Chambers letter sets the stage for a masterful chapter that investigates Soane's initial artistic debts to Piranesi. Wilton-Ely begins with Piranesi's *Bridge of Magnificence* (1743), etched shortly after the artist's arrival in Rome from Venice, which almost certainly influenced Soane even before he left England. Similarly, Soane admired the *Carceri d'Invenzione* prints (1745, revised 1761). Appropriately enough, they inspired George Dance's Newgate Prison in London, a building on which Soane worked for his revered first master in the early 1770s. As Wilton-Ely points out, Dance had previously known Piranesi well in Rome.

Wilton-Ely skillfully interweaves two radically different careers: Soane's with a string of notable buildings to his credit; Piranesi constantly thwarted in that regard except for his hidden-away jewel on Rome's Aventine Hill, S. Maria del Priorato. Soane collected preparatory drawings of the design that show its "sophisticated linear collage of antique motifs" (17). I believe that the entrance façade of Soane's own country house, Pitzhanger Manor, subtly adopted Piranesi's collage approach. Beneath side windows, Soane imbedded a copy of the antique bas-relief of a spread eagle that Piranesi had etched on the title page of the second volume of his *Vasi, Candelabri, Cippi ...* (1778). Wilton-Ely's highly informative notes remark that one of the sepulchral objects illustrated in this publication ended up in Soane's possession. He enshrined it inside Pitzhanger, I would speculate, as yet another acknowledgment of his allegiance to Piranesi!

The next two chapters constitute the core of Wilton-Ely's book, in which he sets out the history of Paestum, the circumstances of its mid-eighteenth-century rediscovery, and the shock this event caused in artistic circles. Three ancient temples of mid-fifth-century date, in as good a state of preservation as anything surviving from that period in Greece, sat side by side

south of Naples—a point in Paestum’s favor according to the Italophile Piranesi. Others’ opinions sharply varied on the temples’ merits. French explorers tended to see them as embodying a primitive phase of the Doric order—somewhere between a canonical baseless column and a rugged tree trunk in the forest. Other travelers to the Paestum site, notably Englishmen quoted by Wilton-Ely, saw the temples as rough and untutored, like some guttural dialect. Nevertheless, drawings, engravings, souvenir scale models in cork, and entire archaeological publications proliferated. Piranesi, sensing a good economic opportunity, was not far behind.

In 1777, the already ill Piranesi embarked on an arduous expedition to record the three Paestum temples in preparation for the twenty-one plates he devoted to them, posthumously published in 1778. Piranesi arrived with a party of assistants, principal among them his son Francesco. For a considerable period of time they must have encamped with drawing materials and measuring equipment. This hive of activity and deep familiarity with the monuments come across in the amazing series of full-size preparatory drawings in pen, ink, and wash over chalk produced on-site. Extensive preparatory drawings rarely survive in Piranesi’s oeuvre, Wilton-Ely explains, partly because the artist preferred the freedom to work out details with etching tools directly on the plate. In 1777, however, he keenly sensed his impending death and wanted to leave a graphic record behind for others to follow. Soane may well have witnessed Piranesi’s work on the Paestum drawings and plates in the studio back in Rome. Whatever the case, when the opportunity arose in 1817, Soane purchased fifteen of the surviving drawings at auction. (Another two are divided between the Bibliothèque Nationale de France and the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.) In this way, after thirty-nine years, he repaid the Italian’s kindness by preserving in the Soane Museum, London, a record of Piranesi’s genial design process.

Three short chapters deal with the fraught question of the various “hands” at work in Piranesi’s Paestum drawings. Given his impending demise, there can be little doubt that they are a collaborative affair.

Wilton-Ely tackles the problem and shows the degree to which artistic attribution constitutes no perfect science. He authoritatively musters information from a proof etching in the British Museum and drawings in Modena and Berlin. On this basis he clearly differentiates Giovanni Battista’s late figure style from that of the teenage Francesco. The former’s is “angular, lithe”; the latter’s “more stocky” (72).

Like a refrain, the last two chapters of the book return to the opening theme of Soane and Piranesi. The soundness of the discussion stands despite an incorrect dating of Soane’s two recorded visits to Paestum. Soane found the Doric order there “exceedingly rude.”²² This did not make him any less impressed with Paestum’s somber grandeur or its notoriety. Wilton-Ely reproduces Soane’s baseless Doric design for a classical dog kennel (1779) and also for a triumphal bridge, which four years earlier, in 1776, had employed the Corinthian order. Nor did such ideas remain only on paper. In 1798, Soane built a “barn à la Paestum” in Warwickshire to commemorate the Italian rambles he and his client had taken undertaken twenty-one years before. But the book’s conclusion, titled “Soane and the Sublime Dreams of Piranesi,” to my mind, clinches the contention that the two men shared a similar romantic vision. As proof of this, Wilton-Ely arrays a stunning sequence of Joseph Michael Gandy’s watercolors of Soane buildings and dream schemes. In those sublime Soane compositions, in those slightly spooky vistas of ruins and tottering Piranesian heaps of sculpted fragments, one grasps how truly kindred were the spirits of these great artists.

Compared with Wilton-Ely’s double portrait, John Pinto’s *Speaking Ruins* stretches over a century and includes a large cast of sitters, so to speak. His five informative, thought-provoking chapters covering the period from 1680 until the death of Piranesi in 1778 lend themselves better to discussion collectively than individually. I have therefore chosen to review three themes that underlie and weave in and out of the entire text: varied voices of antiquity; antiquity and innovation; and strata in archaeology and in the print medium. Let me begin with the first.

By the phrase “speaking ruins,” which Pinto adopts for his book title from Piranesi’s *Prima Parte ...* (1743), the artist implies that the bare ruins of antiquity spoke more eloquently to him than any measured survey or imaginary reconstruction, however accurate. Herein lies a central duality in the approach of Piranesi’s predecessors and contemporaries in Rome; they wanted methodically to fathom the design secrets of the ancients through measurement and excavation; yet they wanted to heed antiquity’s emotional appeal. I personally think that this dual tendency reaches back to imaginary reconstructions by such pioneering sixteenth-century architect-dreamer-archaeologists as Étienne Dupérac, Antonio Labacco, Pirro Ligorio, and perhaps most of all Giovanni Battista Montano. Pinto only briefly alludes to some of them by way of background discussion for such well-known eighteenth-century figures as Carlo Fontana, Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach, and the historian-antiquarian Francesco Bianchini. All indulged in a penchant for imagining the once-perfect state of lost or partially buried antique Roman monuments. In this pursuit, alluring literary accounts helped as much as surviving physical fragments.

Pinto persuasively argues that Piranesi learned a good deal from Fischer and Bianchini, but his taste was more omnivorous than theirs. He listened with equal delight to ruins that “spoke” Etruscan, Latin, Italo-Greek, even Egyptian. But I disagree when Pinto extends his linguistic analogy from Piranesi’s “speaking architecture” to the *architecture parlante* that later sought to convey a building’s function as if it had the power of speech. Pinto puts it better when he writes that Piranesi “succeeded in giving the ruins their own distinctive voice with unprecedented range and timbre, capable at once of staccato precision and highly expressive coloratura passages” (155).

In the process of measuring, excavating, drawing, and etching ancient architecture, Piranesi learned an important lesson that perhaps no one else before him had fully understood. In his prints, and in the theoretical writings that Pinto admirably explains, the artist interpreted antiquity’s varied “voices.” He took these not as signs

of cacophonous confusion but of regenerative vitality. To him, they called for innovative responses to the classical tradition, the second of the three themes I am considering.

As far back as Montano, the variety of the orders had sparked awareness of the ceaseless vitality of antiquity—its “complexity and contradiction,” as Pinto writes, deliberately quoting Robert Venturi et al.’s famous book title (197). The uncanonical quality of certain examples from the past prompted numerous Piranesi prints in his *Della magnificenza* (1761), largely intended to debunk the superiority of Greek over Roman orders as asserted in Julien-David Leroy’s *Les plus beaux ruines de la Grèce* (1758). To some extent, this debate put Piranesi at odds with the explorers and architects who form the subject of Pinto’s last chapter, one that veers away from the previous four centered on Rome. He selects for discussion pioneering travel books and archaeological publications devoted to classical sites outside Italy. He takes pains to link the methodology behind these expeditions to Rome, where many of them started out. This approach works better with his excellent discussion of James Stuart’s *De obelisco ...* (1750) than with Robert Adam’s book on Diocletian’s palace (1764) or those by Robert Wood and James Dawkins on Palmyra (1753) and Baalbec (1757).

In light of his contemporaries’ archaeological investigations, Piranesi exerted a final burst of energy that he could ill afford by preparing a rival publication on the Greek Doric temples at Paestum. Its rugged setting and the down-to-earth appearance of the columns, no less than the local inhabitants, all united to inspire Piranesi. (Pinto knew the first edition of Wilton-Ely’s book and refrains from illustrating the Paestum drawings.) Any prejudice Piranesi harbored against the baseless Doric quickly vanished once in its powerful and primitive presence. From his perspective, moreover, early Doric columns on Italian soil validated his chauvinism. He saw them as evidence of antiquity’s boundless creativity and essential modernity, the same qualities he strove for in his magnificent unexecuted designs for the tribune of S. Giovanni in Lateran and that

had spilled over earlier into Nicola Salvi’s Trevi Fountain, which Pinto evokes with deep knowledge and affection.

Let me mention in conclusion the third, particularly stimulating theme that recurs throughout Pinto’s wide-ranging discussion: the notion of strata. The word naturally brings archaeology to mind. The fact that Piranesi knew all about excavations—as graffiti prove—may have instilled the effect of multiple layering in the artist’s plates, which Pinto perceptively detects and provocatively analogizes to modern “hypertext and Windows environments” (174). Seen another way, the strata in an archaeological dig may have reminded Piranesi of his etcher’s needle scraping the “ground” off a copper plate.

In analyzing the late archaeological prints by Giovanni Battista and Francesco, like the *Dimostrazioni dell’Emissario di Lago Fucino* (1779), Pinto redresses their unwarranted neglect. The etching of Lake Fucino’s ancient drainage tunnel looks like a densely packed collage, to echo Wilton-Ely, or a webpage with multiple pop-ups, to paraphrase Pinto. Twelve images of the Emissario, on what resemble torn and curled-up pieces of paper, overlap a raised panel showing the cross section. The images include *vedute*, maps, construction “shots,” a plan, and so forth. If that is not density enough, there is more to come in the 1781 plan of Hadrian’s Villa at Tivoli by the Piranesi team. But to appreciate it fully, more reproductions are needed. (*Speaking Ruins* generally abounds with illustrations: 192 black-and-whites, thirty-one of them selected for additional color reproduction.) The Villa Adriana plan, printed on six folio-sized sheets, constitutes a graphic tour de force. In this case, the archaeological topography seems to be inscribed on a gigantic flat stone, rough around the edges. Metal clamps appear to affix it to a neutral background. This illusionistic technique goes back to Piranesi’s magisterial plan of the ancient Campus Martius (1762) and, Pinto suggests, to the form of the ancient marble map of Rome. Its surviving fragments, moreover, were imbedded in the side walls up the stair hall of the Capitoline Museum by the mid-eighteenth century. Piranesi took inspiration from such pioneering museological display methods.

The topic deserves further scholarly attention in my view.

A final posthumous publication, the map of the excavations carried out at Pompeii up to 1780, came out eight years later according to Pinto. I can modify that chronology slightly. The version of the etching I found long ago in the British Museum is inscribed 1785.³ Records from the Italian travels of Soane provide additional revealing documentation. The verso of a December 1779 letter to him lists “La Pianta di Pompeio,” as if to suggest Francesco Piranesi was planning it that soon. A direct connection to Francesco can be inferred because the Labruzzi who signed the letter was either Carlo or his elder brother Pietro, Giovanni Battista’s portraitist. An expanded form of the same list makes mention of the Paestum prints and occurs in a Soane notebook of 1779–80.⁴

Like the earlier collaborative projects, the Pompeii map is multilayered. The *topografia* occupies the flat surface of a fictive stone on top of which two *vedute*, copied from those of the ruins by Louis-Jean Desprez, cover up “a zone as yet undisturbed by the archaeologist’s spade” (176). Pinto uses the map to preface a section he devotes to Pompeii, which I found most illuminating. In it he overlaps, in much the way the map does, disparate yet mutually reinforcing pieces of information: the Piranesi’s activities at the site; those of contemporaries like Desprez, who worked there at around the same time. Alongside illustrations of Piranesi’s extraordinarily vibrant sketches, Pinto contrasts the engravings produced by the Frenchman. Out of this meshing of data emerges a picture of Pompeii in the 1770s so lively as to transport the modern reader back in time. Pinto achieves for the Pompeii of Piranesi what Wilton-Ely did for Paestum. Thanks to these two authors you feel the artistic pulse of those bygone days still coursing with antiquity’s vitality and creativity.

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Notes

1. For the full text and idiosyncratic capitalization of this 5 August 1774 letter from Chambers to Edward Stevens, now preserved in Sir John

Soane's Museum, London, see Pierre du Prey, *John Soane's Architectural Education, 1753–80* (New York: Garland, 1977), appendix F, 370–73.

2. Soane's trips to Paestum in January and February 1779, his reactions to the temples, and the parties of Grand Tourists he traveled with are related in Pierre du Prey, *John Soane: The Making of an Architect* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 137–38. See also entries A5 and 38 in the exhibition catalogue *Soane: Connoisseur & Collector* (London: Sir John Soane's Museum, 1995).

3. Du Prey, *Soane's Architectural Education*, 167; see also fig. 163. The map may easily be accessed by going to the presentation "All Roads Lead to Rome" in my website *Architecture in the Classical Tradition* (<http://act.art.queensu.ca>).

4. Du Prey, *Soane's Architectural Education*, 282, 526–27n42. Jill Lever's online transcription of Soane's "Notes Italy and Italian Language" suggests that the list is in Labruzzi's handwriting. This may be so because, atypically, it is spelled in block letters, not script. The list on the back of the letter, however, I maintain, is in Soane's hand.

Todd Longstaffe-Gowan

The London Square: Gardens in the Midst of Town

New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2012, 348 pp., 88 color and 202 b/w illus. \$65 (cloth), ISBN 9780300152012

In the illuminated distance of Elias Martin's 1769 *View of Hanover Square*, Trinity Chapel sits on the horizon line. A Protestant edifice situated at the end of a long axial view across this new London square, it is a counterpoint to the imposing façade of St. George's Church. This painting suggests that streets were designed to converge perspectively on this diminutive chapel, a fact borne out by contemporary maps. Trinity Chapel was a recent addition to London's cityscape and was made to replace a temporary wooden chapel on wheels. The wooden structure was replaced by a "chapel of ease," shown in Martin's image, and was designated as such by the Parish of St. Martin's in the Fields. Its parish church was overflowing with new members after the construction of sophisticated London squares in the West End.¹ Trinity Chapel was hence a product of the city's expanding population and the new geography of parish life responding to the construction of London's ubiquitous squares.

Martin's image serves as the cover for Todd Longstaffe-Gowan's *The London Square: Gardens in the Midst of Town*, and although the image is briefly described for its representation of the new Hanover Square, Trinity Chapel is nowhere mentioned in the text. Longstaffe-Gowan's book is not about painting, nor is it about London's myriad churches, and yet not discussing a central aspect of the book's cover image—a chapel so implicitly woven into the narrative of landscape, urban development, and the outcomes of London's rampant square-building—is the sort of omission that occurs too often in this large and well-illustrated text. For many images, the author provides little interpretation, and there are contradictions, especially in the early chapters, between images and text. Within the text itself, each chapter has its own host of loose threads: topics never fully explained, terms left undefined, or historiographical issues unchallenged.

The London Square synthesizes much published work on these unique urban spaces, and it outlines a useful chronological development for them. While the ambition of such an undertaking is admirable, the author routinely avoids the larger contexts that shaped London's squares. He offers little historical, social, economic, or political analysis that would clarify and enliven his narrative about the motives and operations of London's elite, nor does he provide information regarding the urban context that would serve as a backdrop to this development. Furthermore, Longstaffe-Gowan does not question his own sources and allows vague definitions to run rampant throughout his work, such as his use of *rus in urbe*, a term that first appears in his preface, hinting that it will be a recurring critical concept, as indeed it is from chapter 3 onward. However, *rus in urbe* is explained only as "the visual encroachment of nature and rural associations into the urban fabric" (2) and remains unexamined beyond Henry Lawrence's definition of the square as a specific kind of urban form that aims to "introduce rural landscape values into the urban fabric" (11–12).²

In his preface, Longstaffe-Gowan warns that his book could be viewed as "haphazard" because of his selection of themes and his reporting of issues that may

or may not have been more commonly recorded at specific points in time. In short, he absolves himself of trying to write a "comprehensive guide" while also acknowledging that his book cannot possibly chronicle all London squares, which it certainly cannot do. Yet this statement highlights his lack of methodology by rationalizing: "I have generally followed a practice of mentioning specific squares when they illustrate a point in the narrative" (13). This narrative is constructed by terms or methods that he never reveals and on evidence he has surmised from "issues" that have cropped up in his historical sources, which are by no means exhaustive. An ambitious topic still needs a critical framework clearly defined.

Chapter 1 begins in the seventeenth century and concerns the early development of London's squares. Longstaffe-Gowan explores two initial phenomena in the urban landscape: the enclosure of waste fields, with an aim to keep them public, and the establishment of visually unified residential areas. Both of these early ideals expressed the desire for municipal-scale magnificence for London. Urban magnificence was a common feature in the cities and the emergent states of early modern Europe, and the qualities, conditions, and references for magnificence varied from place to place. The idea of magnificence is not parsed out here or in successive chapters. It is never particularized within an English context nor explained how it is activated in the public space of the square. In this chapter, Longstaffe-Gowan introduces the competing stakeholders who will determine the aesthetics and diffusion of London squares: the monarch, citizens of the city, and urban speculators. However, the author jumps too quickly to the aims of the sovereign in this regard and only returns to discuss the other groups in later chapters. A brief introduction to the stakeholders and the general mechanisms of power, use, and influence that defined the establishment of London's squares would have been helpful. Rather, these relationships remain shadowy elements for readers unfamiliar with the vagaries of English landowning policy and its unique qualities for the City of London.

Chapters 1 and 2 highlight earlier prototypes. There are notable precedents

such as the Place des Vosges for the development of the square typology. Bernini's Fountain of the Four Rivers influenced a specific proposed fountain in King's Square as well as characterized the general feature of the centralized fountain that became a seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century commonplace. The Place des Victoires served as a counterpoint to challenge size, scale, and grandeur. Direct links between specific built references and London squares are only tentatively demonstrated, however, and are offered by quick visual perusal and affirmation that evade direct historical evidence. This would be fine if the aesthetic ideals that London's squares were made to espouse were more definitively elaborated here. Likewise, there is a vast literature on aesthetic developments in early modern Europe that Longstaffe-Gowan could have fruitfully mined. While many of these sources deal with other art forms, even those that demonstrate specific historiographical precedents for garden history are largely absent here. For example, the author's description of the design and planning for Grosvenor Square—one that opted for an elongated and dynamic oval—elicits no mention of baroque design. Rather, Longstaffe-Gowan accepts Steen Eiler Rasmussen's dictate that London squares offer a different kind of form to the baroque spaces of the Continent (9). The author never critiques this stance nor underlines how his findings suggest that Rasmussen's assertion is indeed true. Is it possible to discuss magnificence and its display adequately while ignoring the larger European context?

The ideals of landscape aesthetics imported from Europe and their adoption into the unique context of London are persistent omissions in the text. Longstaffe-Gowan's exploration of St. James's Square offers an early instance of this. This square plays a recurring role through the entire book as an exemplar of comprehensive design, incorporating side streets for contingent staff, the location of a church, and allowance for varying façades on the square. Two illustrations undermine this conclusion and highlight one of the ways the author overlooks the gap created through the relationship between prototype and object. The author surmises that

the cohesiveness of the square responds to European types that often incorporate regularized forms and axial entranceways. To support this, one aerial perspective renders St. James's Square as an ideal iteration of this symmetrical, regular form, with a street in perfect alignment with a doorway of St. James's Church. The opposite illustration, a map view, shows in minute detail the reality that this doorway is off-center. Then, as today, as one walks up York Street from St. James's Square to the church, one is confronted not with a centrally placed doorway but with a heavy stone wall. This adaptation reveals a different texture to the streetscape of London—one that goes unremarked by Longstaffe-Gowan.

Chapter 3 explores the expanding types of squares and begins to summarize how they were actually constructed and overseen. To this end, the author offers a synopsis of the changing relationships of landowners, builders, and designers. Unfortunately, he leaves the boundaries between these sectors vague and selective. Chronologically, chapter 3 engages the critical late eighteenth century, a period in which controversies over landscape and garden aesthetics were profound in England. Longstaffe-Gowan reintroduces the generalized term *rus in urbe* here but engages picturesque rhetoric only briefly. He conflates the naturalistic visions of John Claudius Loudon and Humphry Repton, neglecting their different approaches to design, instead emphasizing their respective appeals for more open access to exclusive garden squares. This chapter explores a progressive introduction of more varied features and materials, from the use of more plants to hedges, walls, and fences, though it does not mention the impact on the market for these materials affected by overseas trade. There is some discussion of the fear of illicit behavior in garden spaces, the rule-breaking exchange of householders' garden keys, and the few spontaneous riots taking place in squares, but without critically examining these documentarily.

The second half of the book turns to the multiplicity of forms of squares as well as the challenges to their uses from the early nineteenth century into the early twentieth century and is more successful in its aims.

This period of development was marked most profoundly by the gradual opening of various squares to larger user groups and the ways that appropriate behaviors, and to some degree aesthetics, were prescribed to accommodate the public access that increasingly mark the squares. Chapter 7 considers the challenges of modernity and summarizes the ways in which squares cross over into the realm of aspirational, industrially produced epicenters. This theme is carried into an epilogue that considers how London squares will fare in the future, the recent efforts to assess what they offer as London embraces new values such as ecology in landscapes, and the advent of new gated communities that adopt the appearance of historic squares. Chapter 7 especially offers valuable information on postwar landscape in London and the tensions that arise from the prevalence of garden squares in the context of modernity. The relevance of squares came into question after the bombing campaigns of World War II dramatically remapped open spaces in the city. Longstaffe-Gowan describes preservation movements, and adoptions of the square's role in urban development. These manifestations are outcomes of the need for high-density housing, the nostalgia for a quintessentially English landscape, and the codified language of urban redevelopment. The smaller amount of material in this second half provides Longstaffe-Gowan the opportunity to focus more critically on the issues at hand. There are still gaps in the explanation of economic and political change incumbent to the study of urban systems, but the expansion of design vocabularies in these chapters seems more fitting to the author's fluid style.

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Notes

1. George Laurence Gomme, *Topographical History of London: A Classified Collection of the Chief Contents of the Gentleman's Magazine, from 1731–1868* (London: Elliot Stock, 1905), 2:283–84.
2. Henry W. Lawrence, "The Greening of the Squares of London: Transformation of Urban Landscapes and Ideals," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 83, no. 1 (Mar. 1993), 90–118.