

DESIGN

BOOK

REVIEW

SEPH RYKWERT:  
The Roots of  
Architectural Bibliophilia

AN PABLO BONTA:  
Reading and Writing  
about Architecture

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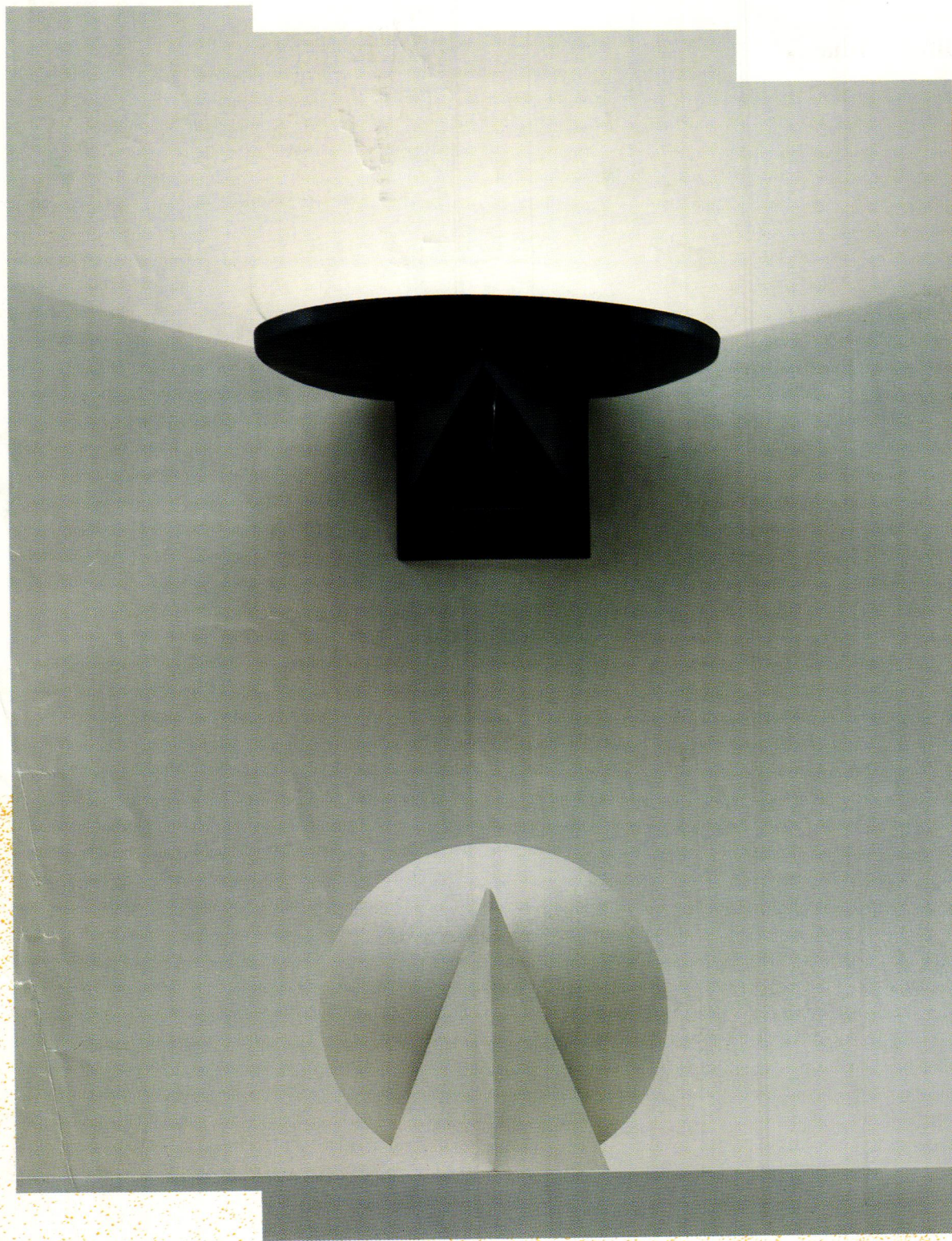
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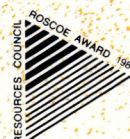
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# In this issue of Design Book Review . . .

9

Joseph Rykwert

## The Roots of Architectural Bibliophilia



61

Robert Twombly

## Word Glut: Marketing Frank Lloyd Wright



## Book Reviews:

Alberti's *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*

Semper's *The Four Elements of Architecture* and Wagner's *Modern Architecture*

The Mies van der Rohe Archive: An Illustrated Catalogue of the Mies van der Rohe Drawings in the Museum of Modern Art

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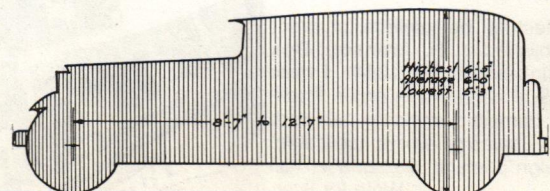
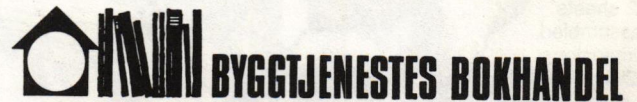
17

Liane Lefaivre

## Eros, Architecture, and the Hypnerotomachia Poliphili

49

## International Directory of Architectural Bookstores





## INDEX TO ADVERTISERS

|   |                    |
|---|--------------------|
| AIA Press   | 43                 |
| American Institute of<br>Architecture Students    | 4                  |
| Bay Wolf Restaurant                               | 72                 |
| Books Nippan                                      | 71                 |
| Boyd Lighting                                     | inside front cover |
| Cottage Tables                                    | 8                  |
| Michael Fagan Books                               | 56                 |
| Garland Publishing                                | 40                 |
| Nancy Sheiry Glaister<br>Fine & Rare Books        | 56                 |
| Harvard Architecture Review                       | 4                  |
| Hennessey & Ingalls<br>Art & Architecture Books   | 48                 |
| International Architecture Book Fair              | 6                  |
| LeBlanc & Company<br>Architectural Communications | 53                 |
| Metropolis Magazine                               | 35                 |
| MIT Press   | 24, 25, 51         |
| Nichols Publishing                                | 71                 |
| Nolli Plan of Rome                                | 2                  |
| Northwestern University Press                     | 2                  |
| Princeton Architectural Press                     | 29                 |
| Rizzoli Bookstores                                | 54                 |
| Rizzoli Publishers                                | 32, 33             |
| Ron Rezek Lighting                                | inside back cover  |
| South Park Cafe                                   | 66                 |
| William Stout Architectural Books                 | 50                 |
| University of Chicago Press                       | 45                 |
| Urban Center Books                                | 55                 |
| Wiley & Sons Publishers                           | 46                 |

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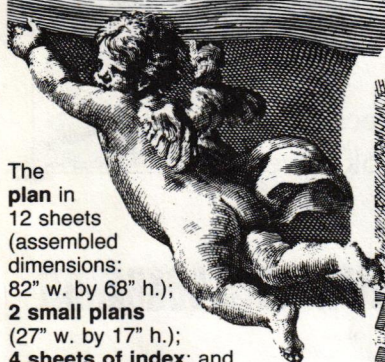
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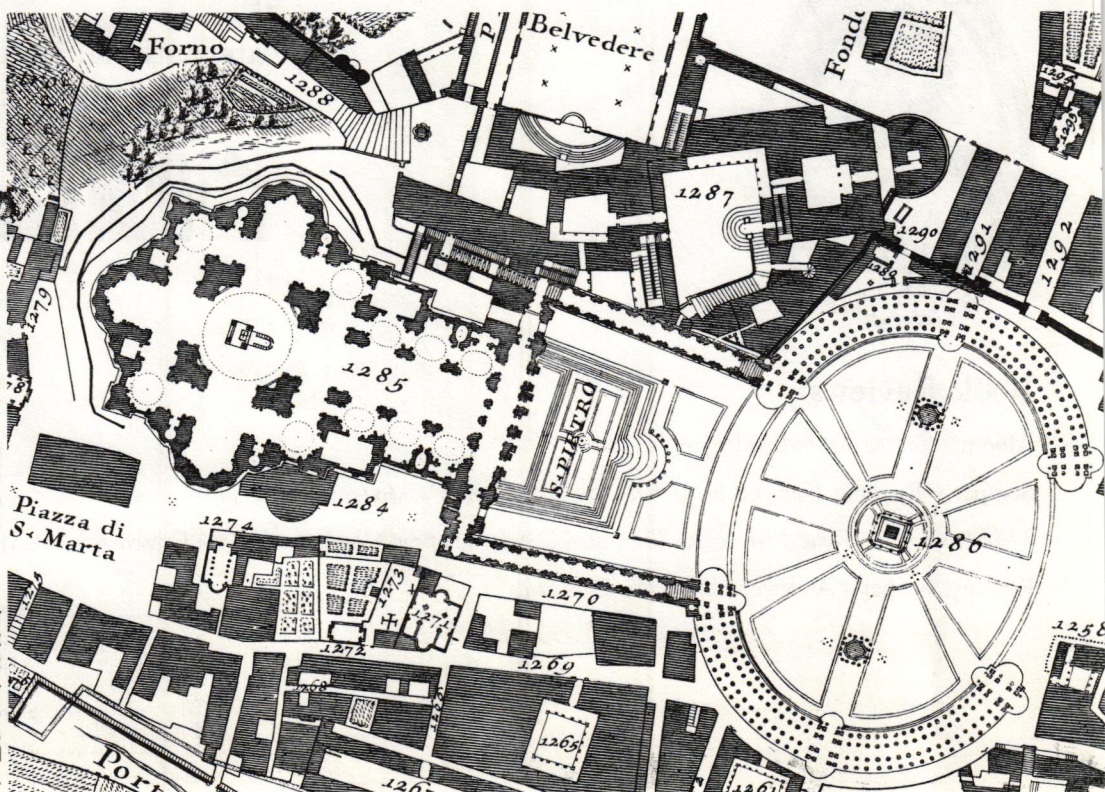
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## Building Writing Reading

Buildings would seem to be the most permanent of the world's artifacts. Their foundations, structure, and materials are the solid expression of a significant capital investment. Yet unless a building is written about, or reproduced in some visual medium—captured by a more ephemeral means—its very permanence as architecture becomes dubious. Without the complicity of books and photographs, architecture would merely smolder as a relatively private phenomenon. Being written and read about does not grant value to building in the way that haptic experience can, but it does give it validation. The clearest evidence of this privileging of architecture's media existence—as opposed to its actual existence—is the proliferation of the “tombstone” monograph on a living designer's work. The practice was made popular by Le Corbusier, starting with the first volume of his *Oeuvre Complète* in 1929, and is now, despite its recognized hubris, emulated by almost everyone, no matter how incomplete or unbuilt his or her work. While the crass promotionism of this genre might make us suspicious of a book's didactic or cultural mission, it should not distract us from the reality that architecture is so congenial with the media because much of the work of architecture relies on media. Between its conception and realization, a building only exists in various forms of media such as drawings and models. To borrow, out of context, a famous aphorism from Marx: “What distinguishes the worst of architects from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality.” Design books undoubtedly fit into the current wasteful system of commodification, and the media is just as useful to an architect as a means of legitimation as it is to a politician. But beyond these services, writing and reading provide the foundation for the collective imagination about building, spanning the most

conservative desires for continuity with the past and the most adventuresome attempts to break from the present. The act of writing and the act of reading thus become necessary conditions for the act of building.

• • •

In an earlier issue, DBR 8 (Winter 1986), we first considered the boom in architectural publishing in a dialogue with Kenneth Frampton, who suggested sardonically that Victor Hugo's prophecy “This will kill that” has in our times been brought to term: “How can we not sometimes see this profuse publication as some kind of consensus ‘compensation’ for the increasing brutalization of the actual physical environment: the revenge and triumph of the processal media . . . over the stoic and static mistress art!” In this vein, however, the recent expansion of design publishing does not so much displace architecture's power to communicate as it weakens its sacrificial agony.

To help frame the phenomenon, we have asked Joseph Rykwert to trace the history of the relationship between architecture and the printing press. Among the first printed architecture books is the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, as inscrutable as it is unpronounceable, in whose pages Liane Lefaivre identifies an erotic conception of architecture in the late 15th century that has an uncanny correspondence to the near pornographic use of glossy photography in the modern monograph. Juan Pablo Bonta, who has produced extensive computer analyses of the texts of American architectural history, completes our theoretical exploration, focusing on the interplay of texts that shapes the flow of historical information.

As a special service to our peripatetic readers, we have prepared an international directory of architectural bookstores. We hope it will serve both as a useful guide and as an illustration of how far-flung and diffuse this tiny community interested in design publications has become.

Richard Ingersoll

FRONT COVER: Opening page of Book Five, *Architettura di Sabastian Serlio* (Venice, 1663). (Courtesy Rare Book Collection, Environmental Design Library, College of Environmental Design, University of California at Berkeley.)

*This issue of the Design Book Review has been generously supported by a grant from the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts.*



## Harvard Architecture Review No.9

**A journal is an institute**

and yet we are faced with the impossibility of having an institute for architecture where any amount of social or artistic research will reveal the right way to study, make and explain architecture.\*

It's no longer convincing to push an ideology, but ideologues have brought us to this realization. Obviously, few people will abandon ideology, although this would be an appropriate reaction to the conclusion that knowledge is relative and a-directive. In a sense, we are in a worse position than the proverbial ostrich because post-modern theory buries our heads in the sand, again. What irony, enlightenment that advocates humility. Is it all we can do to deconstruct this situation, or is there a valid alternative structure for the discussion of architecture today?

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\*paraphrasing John Whiteman, Director, Chicago Institute of Architecture and Urbanism, *Design Book Review*, Fall, 1989

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# CONTENTS

|                                       |    |
|---------------------------------------|----|
| Index to Advertisers                  | 2  |
| Editorial: "Building Writing Reading" | 3  |
| About the Contributors                | 72 |

## ARCHITECTURAL PUBLISHING

|                  |   |    |
|------------------|---|----|
| Joseph Rykwert   | <b>The Roots of Architectural Bibliophilia</b>  | 9  |
| Juan Pablo Bonta | <b>Reading and Writing About Architecture (How it has changed to become what it has always been, and how it is likely to change once again)</b> | 13 |
| Liane Lefaivre   | <b>Eros, Architecture, and the Hypnerotomachia Poliphili</b>  | 17 |

## PUBLISHER PROFILES

|                  |                                      |    |
|------------------|--------------------------------------|----|
| Francesco Dal Co | <b>Electa</b>                        | 21 |
| Roger Conover    | <b>The MIT Press</b>                 | 23 |
| Kevin Lippert    | <b>Princeton Architectural Press</b> | 28 |
| David Morton     | <b>Rizzoli</b>                       | 31 |
| Alvin Boyarsky   | <b>Architectural Association</b>     | 36 |
| Alexander Tzonis | <b>Garland</b>                       | 38 |
| Gustavo Gili     | <b>Editorial Gustavo Gili, S. A.</b> | 41 |
|                  | <b>The AIA Press</b>                 | 42 |
|                  | <b>University of Chicago Press</b>   | 44 |
|                  | <b>Bertelsmann Publishers</b>        | 45 |
|                  | <b>John Wiley &amp; Sons</b>         | 47 |

## INTERNATIONAL DIRECTORY OF ARCHITECTURAL BOOKSTORES 49

## BOOK REVIEWS: HISTORY AND THEORY

|                          |   |    |
|--------------------------|---|----|
| Mark Jarzombek           | <b>On the Art of Building in Ten Books, by Leon Battista Alberti</b>  | 57 |
| Margaretta J. Darnall    | <b>Le Désert de Retz, by Diana Ketcham</b>  | 58 |
| J. Duncan Berry          | <b>The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings, by Gottfried Semper</b>  | 59 |
|                          | <b>Modern Architecture: A Guidebook for Students in the Field of Art, by Otto Wagner</b>  |    |
| Robert Twombly           | <b>"Word Glut: Marketing Frank Lloyd Wright"</b>  | 61 |
|                          | <b>The Nature of Frank Lloyd Wright, edited by Carol R. Bolon, Robert S. Nelson, and Linda Seidel</b>   |    |
|                          | <b>Frank Lloyd Wright in the Realm of Ideas, edited by Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer and Gerald Nordland</b>  |    |
|                          | <b>Modern Architecture: Being the Kahn Lectures for 1930, by Frank Lloyd Wright</b>   |    |
|                          | <b>Frank Lloyd Wright: His Living Voice, edited by Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer</b>  |    |
| Patrick Meehan           | <b>Frank Lloyd Wright: An Index to the Taliesin Correspondence, edited by Anthony Alofsin</b>   | 66 |
| Fritz Neumeyer           | <b>"Punished by the Archivist: Mies van der Rohe and His Drawings in the Museum of Modern Art"</b>  | 67 |
|                          | <b>The Mies van der Rohe Archive: An Illustrated Catalogue of the Mies van der Rohe Drawings in the Museum of Modern Art, Part I: 1907-1938, edited by Arthur Drexler</b> |    |
| Elizabeth Douthitt Byrne | <b>Ramsey/Sleeper Architectural Graphic Standards (8th Edition), edited by John Ray Hoke, Jr.</b>   | 69 |
|                          | <b>Architectural Graphic Standards (Facsimile Reprint of 1st Edition), by Charles George Ramsey and Harold Reeve Sleeper</b>  |    |
| Michael Lordi            | <b>The Architecture Library of the Future, edited by Peggy Ann Kusnerz</b>  | 70 |



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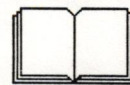
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Joseph Rykwert

## THE ROOTS OF ARCHITECTURAL BIBLIOPHILIA

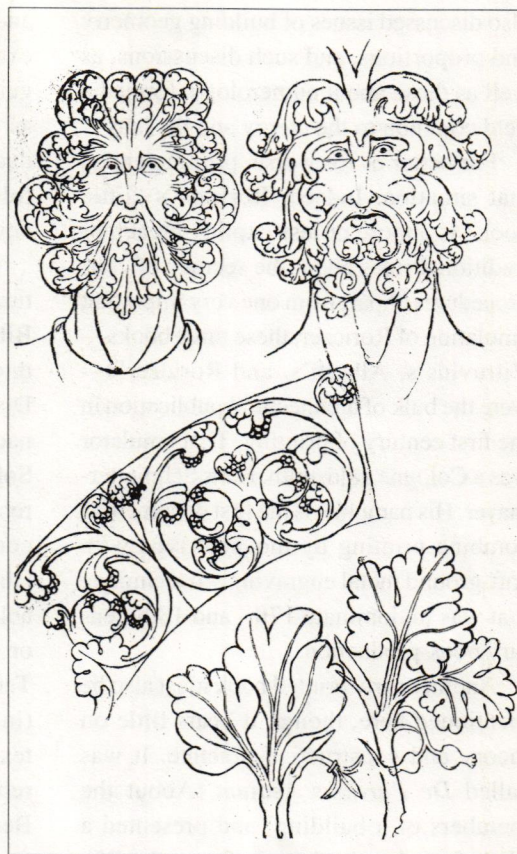
The relation between printing—or at any rate writing—and architecture is an old love. Pragmatic builders will tend to dismiss the writing of critics and even of theorists as “irrelevant” and apply their conformist approach to history to show that it has always been thus—theorists may talk, but when it comes to building they forget all their talk and “get on with the job.” The truth seems to me to be quite different—in the cases where their ideas and practice is known, the most important theorists have also been some of the best builders, and have worked their ideas very thoroughly in their buildings. Which is why we go on reading them.

As it happens, the first three books on architecture were all printed in the same year, 1486, which made 1986 an unobserved and uncelebrated half-millennium! The only surviving “ancient” treatise on architecture, the *De Architectura* of Marcus Pollio Vitruvius, was probably printed by Eucherius Silber, a German working in Rome (though others attribute it to another German printer, Georg Heroldt), a millennium and a half after it was written. Unusually, the book has neither date nor a printer’s name attached to it. The “modern” treatise, by Leon Battista Alberti (one of the great figures of the Renaissance), was printed in Florence by one of the city’s first printers, Niccolo di Lorenzo Alemani. He signed and dated it to the fourth day of the Kalends, that is, the 4th of January, 1485. Since the Florentines observed the year of the Incarnation (which begins on the feast of the Annunciation on March 25), rather than Anno Domini (which begins on January 1), the date is in fact 1486 by modern reckoning. The third was a pattern book, *Dz Puechlein der Fialen Gerechtigkeit* (The little book about setting out pinnacles), written by one of the master-masons of the cathedral of Ratisbon (or Regensburg),

Matthaeus Roriczer, and printed there at the end of June 1486. It is the only one of the three books to bear a date which is clearly recognizable to modern eyes. Hence, I suppose, the missed jubilee.

In 1486, the great invention of printing with movable type was just over thirty years old. Forgery and counterclaims make it impossible to determine exactly which was the first printed book, but it does seem that the first sheets so printed became publicly available in 1450–1451. The invention depended on the prior knowledge that greasy pigment applied to a wood surface would transfer easily to paper—a skill some thirty or forty years old in Europe, where it may have been invented independently, though the Chinese had already known about it for at least a thousand years.

As the mention of Vitruvius has already suggested, there had been some architectural writing in antiquity and more in the Middle Ages. A common form in the ancient world seems to have been the monograph in which an architect explained his working methods in the design of some specific building. Vitruvius enumerates a number of these monographs in a kind of bibliography included in the preface of his seventh book, but none have survived. In the Middle Ages, although building in Europe could almost be described as frenetic, writings about design and even about construction were very scarce. Parchment, on which writing and drawing were routinely done in Europe, was expensive stuff, and was often reused, while paper was not readily available until the late 14th century. Masons may have kept notebooks, either as memoranda for themselves or to instruct others. Villard d’Honnecourt, an itinerant French mason, achieved immortality precisely because his notebook, the only such to have survived, was discovered and published by an antiquarian in 1858. Although this is a body of documents which still requires (and is now receiving) further study and publication, no revelation to compare with Villard’s note-



Drawings of ornaments and leafy heads from the sketchbook of Villard d’Honnecourt (c. 13th century). (From facsimile edition of the manuscript in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

book has yet come to light—and perhaps never will.

What the trickle of medieval architectural literature (in contrast to the impressive bulk of medieval building) does show conclusively is that building, even building of the highest refinement and merit, went on even while writing and publication were very thin and the discussion of theory was limited to professional circles. Ideas about building technique—as well as theory—were developed in the closed and more or less reserved (even secret) environment of the workshops and the trade lodges of masons and carpenters. Meanwhile the clergy and intellectuals argued about the more abstruse and metaphoric aspects of architecture. They read Vitruvius, Pliny, and the other ancient writers who had written about these matters: Frontinus’s treatise on aqueducts or the writers on farming, Columella or Varro, whose texts were not always accessible to building workers, even the most learned ones. Medieval builders



also discussed issues of building geometry and proportions, and such discussions, as well as those about numerology, formed a field common to the clergy and the laity.

For better or for worse, printing ended that situation. Indeed, Roriczer's "little book" is a more or less explicit breach of traditional rules about the secrecy of craft procedures. Apart from one very important emulation of Roriczer, these three books—Vitruvius's, Alberti's, and Roriczer's—were the bulk of architectural publication in the first century of printing. That emulator was a Cologne goldsmith, Hans Schmuttermayer. His pamphlet is the first document to combine printing by movable type with soft-ground metal engraving—a technique that was to dominate 17th- and 18th-century book production.

Another early printed book must also be mentioned here, though it bears little on theory and constructive practice. It was called *De Partibus Aedium* (About the members of a building) and presented a kind of psycho-physiology of everyday life. Its author, the Parmesan humanist Francesco Maria Grapaldi, applied philological techniques, often eked out with imaginative (if not fantastic!) derivations, to all the objects that structure, furnish, and make up a house. First printed in 1494 in Parma, it remained in print throughout Western Europe until the 17th century, when it was replaced by many other publications. But in the meantime, *De Partibus Aedium* had familiarized builders and the whole literate public with the architectural terminology derived from ancient sources. It even helped to coin new terms, such as *architrave* for the lowest member of the entablature.

While guidebooks and travel books cannot be strictly considered "architectural," their influence on patrons and architects has been powerful. Two kinds of itineraries—the first to the Holy Land, the second to Rome—had been available since the Middle Ages. One particular Roman one, the *Mirabilia Urbis Romae*, was composed in the 13th century, diffused as a manuscript, and printed in the 15th century. Of course, it is primarily a guide to relics

and pieties, yet when Christian piety was extended to the ruins of antiquity, such guidebooks came to be written by architects as well. Palladio and Scamozzi each produced one—and in a sense Piranesi's great folios are the climax of three centuries of development.

Often forgotten in accounts of architectural literature is the influence of certain Bible commentaries. Scripture records three buildings which directly resulted from Divine command: Noah's Ark, the Tabernacle in the Desert, and the Temple King Solomon built (and the prophet Ezechiel rebuilt) on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem. The commands were recorded in dimensions whose proportions were easily ascertainable. There was no physical relic of the Ark or the Tabernacle, but in the case of the Temple, the assumption was readily made (in spite of small conflicts in the various texts) that each rebuilding was the exact replica of the divinely ordained original. Because its site was known, and because fragments from it (such as the choir screen of Old St. Peter's in Rome) had survived, the reconstructed Temple was often drawn and engraved with enormous curiosity and enthusiasm as a model for pious builders, and its example was made to harmonize with the precepts of Vitruvius.

In 1499 the great Venetian printer Aldo Manuzius, whose page layout and typefaces are the true prototype of modern book design, issued the most mysterious book to touch on building, the *Hypnerotomachia Polyphili*, (The dream-strife of love of Polyphilos), as the first English translator rendered it. This novel chronicles the hero's pursuit of his love, Polia, through a vast maze of ruined antiquities—caverns, pyramids, and temples—in which the descriptions of the architecture are much livelier and more impressive than the rather conventional plot about the lovers' trials. It is still uncertain who the author of the book was, though most authorities have identified him as a Dominican friar, Francesco Colonna. The author's style—his more or less Venetian Italian stiffened into a Latinizing grammar and peppered by the addition of a Greek word or two—was not alto-

gether palatable to his contemporaries, but the illustrations had a great appeal, and their influence on architecture and book illustration is easily traceable. The curious thing about the *Hypnerotomachia* is that it was preceded by another treatise in the form of a fable or a "novel"—Antonio Averlino's (a Florentine sculptor who called himself Filarete, "lover of virtue") account of the construction of the new town of Sforzinda for Lodovico Sforza, Duke of Milan. Like Polyphilos's quest, Filarete's account involved the discovery of an ancient city, but it was the location of the rules for the founding of the city as well as the description of its buildings, engraved on golden tablets in a splendid shrine, which provided the theme of his "novel," rather than the remains of actual buildings.

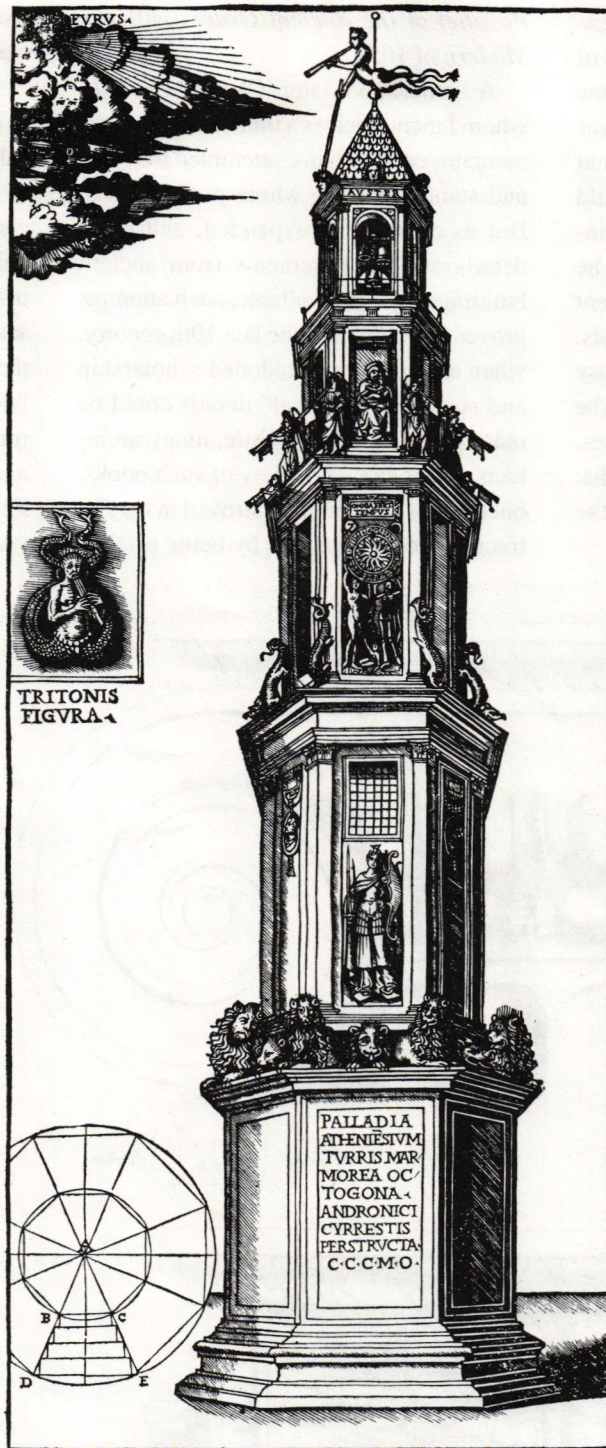
Although Filarete's book was not given a critical edition until some fifteen years ago, it did circulate in manuscript copies. The same is true of a more prosaic, but more beautifully illustrated treatise by Francesco di Giorgio Martini, the great Sienese military engineer-architect-painter. Again, the definitive edition had to wait until the late 20th century, though there had been an earlier, rather summary printing in 1841. It is curious that although those two highly influential architects had both written after the invention of printing, they nevertheless exercised their influence through manuscript copies of their works. In the case of Francesco, we know that he was read and annotated by Leonardo (who had met him in Milan at the very end of the 15th century) and that his book was prized in Spain—some of his ideas had appeared in print in an early Spanish digest. This demonstrates the worth of the old saying—*post hoc, non propter hoc* ("after it, not because of it"). The invention of printing happened to coincide with the explosion of architectural theory. The two events had some common roots, and were constantly enmeshed, but the very fact that two of the most important books had become well known in manuscript copies throughout the 16th and 17th century is itself a caution about assuming causality.

Only Vitruvius was an immediate and



continuing publishing success. His book was reprinted several times before 1500, and has continued to this day to be scholiated, annotated, and illustrated. The first Chinese translation was printed recently, and yet another English edition (the third in this century) is in preparation, or so it is said. A new French annotated version, with an extensive commentary, has reached the third volume, but the publishers have started at Book Ten and are working backwards.

Translations of Vitruvius began early. Raphael commissioned one, though it was not printed at the time. In 1521 a pupil of Bramante, Cesare Cesariano, published his. Although it was not the first version to be illustrated, it was certainly the most splendid. The clear, assertive typeface, and the lucid and opulent woodcuts make it one of the most beautiful architectural books ever published, a recognized masterpiece of the printer's art. It is accompanied by a learned and sometimes mysterious commentary. Commentary on Vitruvius became a kind of architectural industry. After Cesariano's, the most important is probably that published by Daniele Barbaro, Patriarch of Aquilea, first in Italian in 1556, then (in a more learned version) in Latin in 1567. Both versions were illustrated with wood engravings after drawings by Palladio, which were more sober and spare than Cesariano's. Barbaro's commentary, for all its scholastic background, is a summation of neo-Platonic teaching about the importance and implication of building. With his brother Marcantonio, Barbaro was one of Palladio's early and most influential clients; as the highest church official of the Venetian Republic and an active participant in the working of the Council of Trent, his commentary had enormous authority and became one of the most quoted architectural texts for a century or more, until another commentary marked yet another turn in the



"Tower of the Winds," woodcut by Cesare Cesariano (1521). (From Vitruvius, *De Architectura*; translated and illustrated by Cesare Cesariano, 1521; facsimile edition: Edizioni il Polifilo, Milan, 1981. Courtesy Nancy Sheiry Glaister Fine & Rare Books.)

history of architecture and ideas.

Claude Perrault, physician, experimental physicist, comparative anatomist, as well as prolific architect, published a French translation of Vitruvius (with commentary) in 1673. It was a large folio, and

like his other books (on anatomy and physics), was illustrated with splendid metal engravings. Still one of the best editions, it makes Vitruvius into a proponent of Perrault's own brand of Jansenist psychology and Cartesian philosophy. The edition was reprinted with some additions ten years later; but many builders to whom it would have been inaccessible were able to buy a digest of his ideas—a little book illustrated with coarsened miniatures of the engravings from the hefty folio—which was translated into most European languages and repeatedly printed.

Again, Perrault's was not the first French translation. Jean Martin, a man of letters in the circle of Cardinal du Bellay, had already, in 1547, done a very clear and literate translation—and though it had no commentary, it did have splendid illustrations by the greatest French sculptor of the time, Jean Goujon. Martin had also translated the *Hypnerotomachia Polyphili* and Alberti's treatise, which was Martin's last work, published posthumously and prefaced by a splendid elegy for the translator by Ronsard. Vitruvius, Alberti, Polyphilo—Martin's versions were virtually a whole architectural library, since he had also done a version of Serlio's book, which he published in 1545–47, only ten years after the first installment of the Italian text had been printed.

If "text" is quite the word. The Bolognese architect, Sebastiano Serlio, had virtually invented—or at least devised—a new kind of architectural book: not a continuous narrative or systematic treatise, but a picture book, in which the bulk of the writing consists of captions to engravings. That type of book was to become popular in the latter 16th century; but less than a couple of generations after Alberti, it already represented an approach to architectural literature as unlike his as possible. Alberti had taught a rational



method based on ancient precept and example. He had formulated the postulates of an architecture of the future, and had done so for princes and philosophers as much as for architects. That is why he did not want his book to be illustrated. Serlio could already draw on some contemporary instances, but what is more important, he was writing for a completely different public than Alberti: craftsmen and artists. He therefore needed a method that was easy to impart and to apply, and that could be learned by the uneducated from examples, even if it also implied a hidden doctrine that could be inferred by the learned and the initiated.

Serlio planned seven books, though only five appeared in his lifetime. Starting with the sublime generalities of geometry, he proceeded to perspective, and descended through sacred and secular architecture to the very particular matter of repair and materials. The first book he published was the fourth and central section, which dealt with the topic that—for the builders of his time—united the high doctrine of proportion with the practice of building: the business of columns and cornices, which he called orders, a term now in general use.

That independent fourth book became a model for a whole category of architectural literature: order books. Later in the 16th century, Serlio's was followed by that of another Bolognese working in Rome, Giacomo Barozzi da Vignola. Vignola's book was reprinted with various modifications into the 20th century. Greater archaeological precision about ancient examples and the proliferation of "classical" columns on modern buildings demanded a different treatment, and got it in the French diplomat-scholar Roland Freart de Chambray's

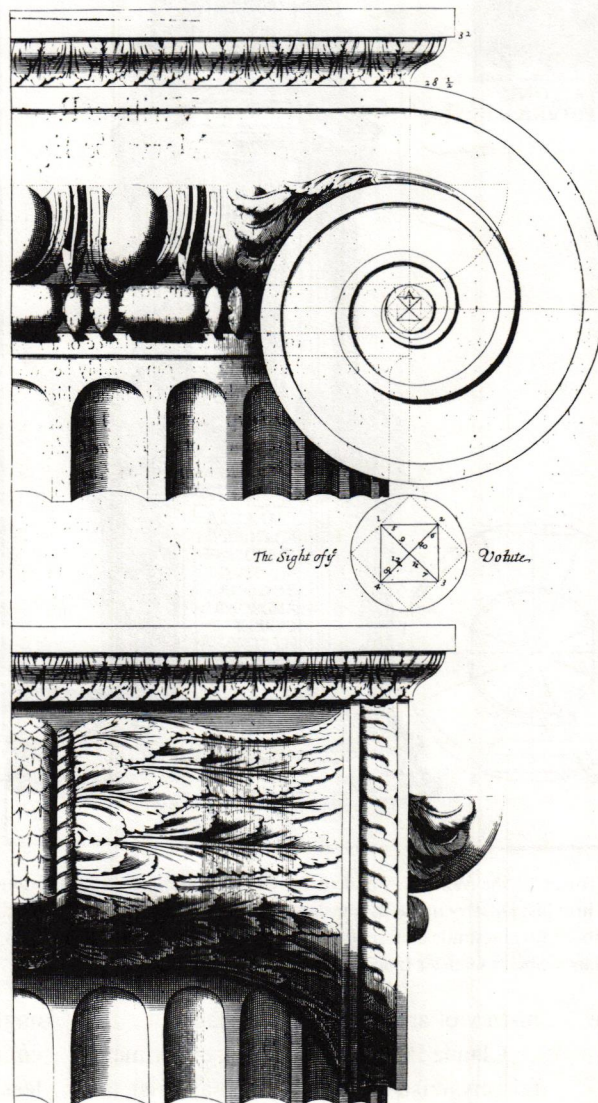
*Parallel of the Ancient Orders with the Modern* of 1650.

A generation later Claude Perrault, whom I mentioned as a translator and commentator on Vitruvius, attempted to revise and standardize the whole phenomenon. But as archeology expanded, and more details and measurements from ancient buildings became available, such attempts proved fruitless until the late 19th century, when architecture abandoned scholarship and standard "classical" details could be mass produced. Meanwhile, many architects would stock a variety of such books, but most of them were destroyed in use: by tracing and overtracing, by being pricked

with compasses for measurements, and marked with rulers.

Did architects buy many other books? On the whole, yes. The first example of culpable bibliophilia among architects was that of Francesco Borromini, about whom the clerk-of-works complained to Prince Pamphili, the patron of the Church of St. Agnese in Piazza Navona, that as he stood on the scaffolding he could see the Cavaliere—on the other side of the Piazza, browsing in the bookshops. And indeed in his will Borromini left some one thousand folio books, at that time a large number. Bernini and Perrault, Wren and Hawksmoor, Fischer von Erlach, Chambers and Adam, Soufflot and Ledoux all collected books. And all of them also wrote and published.

As the floodgates of publication opened in this century, so the number of collectors increased in proportion. The rapid fall in the quality of paper at the end of the 18th century has left collectors with a number of conservation problems. The multiplication of plaquettes and ephemera in the 20th has presented them with yet others, as well as with terrible headaches about organizing and maintaining their acquisitions. In fact, already in the 17th century, the custom of issuing engravings in portfolios and of binding odd sets of them led to some dissatisfaction. Even the types of book multiplied: the antiquarians of Britain and France rediscovered the architecture of the Middle Ages—and that required a new kind of topographical illustration. At any rate, the plain, unillustrated architectural book had virtually disappeared by 1500—Vitruvius himself had promised his readers diagrams to explain such matters as the volute of the Ionic column or the curve of entasis, but none of the surviving manuscripts, not even the ones



"Of the Contour or Turning of the Ionique Volute." (From *A Parallel of Architecture Both Ancient and Moderne*, Roland Freart de Chambray, 1663. Courtesy Nancy Sheiry Glaister Fine & Rare Books.)



with one or two figures, have them. Of course in the printed versions many of the commentators have satisfied the want, often by misunderstanding the text. An architectural book without any pictures (such as Sir Henry Wotton's *Elements of Building* of 1624, or the Abbé Laugier's *Essai* of 1753) was a precious rarity.

Renaissance architecture provided another kind of publication, the illustrated book *par excellence*, which became increasingly popular. It seemed also to revive the ancient architect's custom of justifying (or at any rate explaining) the motives for his work in a monograph, much as Vitruvius had done in his seventh book. One of the first, and perhaps the most famous, was Palladio's *Quattro Libri*. In our time, Le Corbusier's *Oeuvre Complète* started the rage for oblong folios in oatmeal cloth, which crowded and sagged the shelves of architectural students, to be followed by the works of Aalto, Neutra, and several others. These oblong books have been superseded in the students' affections by periodicals: students can no longer afford the lavish productions of elite offices, and the quarterly and monthly luxury magazines (mostly Japanese and Italian) supply that particular trade adequately.

The newest books are for libraries and coffee tables. Magazines will suffer the compasses and the rulers on drawing boards. But beside them there has grown a fashion for thinnish, unillustrated (or only tokenly so) and sometimes impenetrably obscure books, which provide a refuge from the over-lavish and the all-too-explicit color plates; they supply a little of that air of mystery the medieval masons had found so essential. And it may be a turning point: architectural publishing has, after all, almost always been at the cutting edge of printing techniques—since Schmuttermayer's introduction of soft-ground engraving. Perhaps, after half a millennium of printing, the impenetrable volumette is the architects' bid for true desktop publishing?

Juan Pablo Bonta

### READING AND WRITING ABOUT ARCHITECTURE (HOW IT HAS CHANGED TO BECOME AGAIN WHAT IT HAD ALWAYS BEEN, AND HOW IT IS LIKELY TO CHANGE ONCE AGAIN)

The ideology of the Modern Movement contained a strong antihistorical, antitextual, and perhaps even anti-intellectual component. Gropius's injunction against teaching architectural history at Harvard and Mies's dictum "Build—don't talk" illustrate the attitude convincingly. Yet, paradoxically, at the same time architectural historians-turned-quasi-critics such as Giedion and Pevsner played an important role in establishing the movement and its doctrine; in the battles waged first to defend, and then to consolidate the modern revolution, ink was as powerful a weapon as bricks, the typewriter as important as the camera, the microphone as essential as the slide projector.

How could a primarily antiverbal philosophy owe so much to verbal discourse? How could modern architects get away with ignoring their debt to the writers, let alone without paying it back? These are intriguing questions, not yet properly unraveled. They are keys for understanding both the Modern Movement and the present: for the polarities between building and text, the perceptual and the intellectual, beauty and reason, enjoyment and approval, design and criticism remain essential aspects of architectural practice and ideology today. The issue is at the core of the changes that have taken place in the architectural scene over the past twenty years; indeed, one of the clues to the conflict between modernism and postmodernism is the shifting nature of the relationship between architecture and architectural discourse.

Let us distinguish reality from fantasy. On the one hand is the role *really* played by

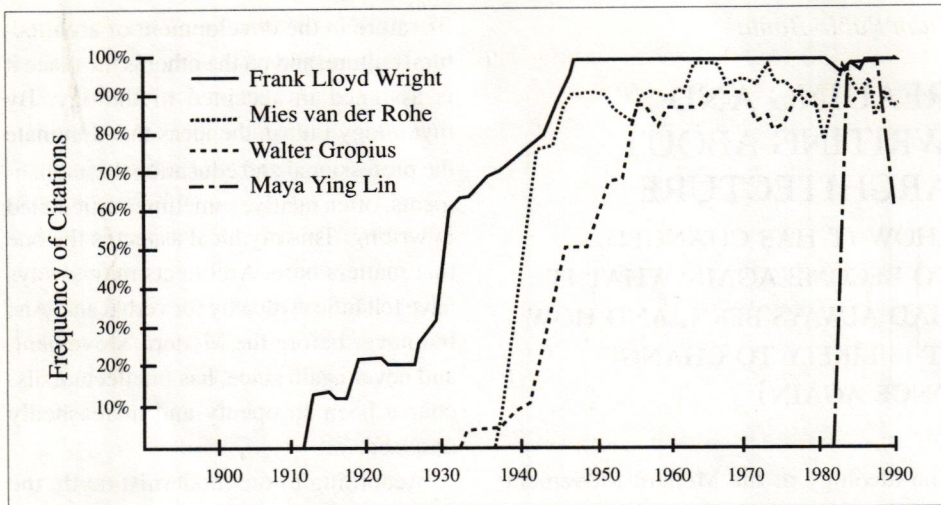
literature in the development of architectural culture, and on the other is the place it is assigned in accepted mythology. By mythology I mean the ideas that dominate the professional and educational establishments, often tacitly, sometimes articulated in writing. This mythical aspect is the one that matters here. Architects may always have felt little sympathy for verbal analysis; but never before the Modern Movement, and never again since, has intellectual discourse been so openly and unabashedly despised.

According to the modernist myth, the role of literature in the development of architecture can be characterized this way: people exposed to architecture are subject to sensorial and mental experiences, some of which they verbalize. A few of the verbalizations make their way into print, becoming literature. The role of literature is to educate the young and to inform the educated. Successful architects are ideally qualified to write the books to train the next generation of architects, perpetuating the cycle. Architectural literature is a means for social cohesion; it bridges the gap between people and between generations, but it does not affect, let alone change, architecture. Architectural thinking is the source of writing, but it is not—I mean, it is not expected to be—the result of reading. People exercise architectural judgment on the basis of exposure to architectural form, not because of trends picked up in the literature. Neither reading nor writing is rated highly in this paradigm. Texts convey people's perceptions about architecture, but they do not affect other people's perceptions—at least, not of people that matter.

In a less radical version of the myth, the persuasive power of literature is recognized. Proselytizing and propagandizing are legitimized, and the status of writing is raised, but not the status of reading. This leads to a two-tiered social structure—those who can respond to buildings directly and those who can do it only with the mediation of texts. Texts control public opinion, but, as in the previous view, they do not affect architecture.

These views were extraordinary, espe-





Frequency of citations of Frank Lloyd Wright, Walter Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, and Maya Ying Lin. (Based on computer graph by Juan Pablo Bonta; drawing by Catherine Hamlin.)

cially at a time when architecture was supposed to be a contextual endeavor, sensitive to social, historical, and cultural factors. Architects were presumed to be responsive to climate, topography, geography, the nature of materials, the physical and social environment, the evolution of taste, tradition, technology, economic constraints, energy conservation, preservation—to name just a few of the influencing factors recognized as legitimate. The more sensitive architects were to these forces, the better architects they were. Architecture was the mirror of reality; everything under the skies could legitimately influence it, but not, alas, architectural reading and writing. Textuality, like sexuality, was subject to a conspiracy of silence. To show oneself informed about the latest architectural writings was acceptable, even desirable, but to admit that literature was molding one's opinions or one's designs was not. I do not recall a single project that was defended on the grounds that it responded to tendencies prevalent in texts, or that was attacked because it failed to do so. Contrariwise, buildings were criticized for following literary trends, which supposedly turned them predictable and trite, or were praised for departing from them, which cast them under the favorable light of the unexpected, the innovative, the original. Architectural writers, in turn, were expected to focus on buildings, not books, lest they be guilty of derivative writing.

The situation may have been perplexing, even self-contradictory. But logic and epistemology (or merely soundness) never played a major role in the acceptance or rejection of architectural ideologies; the Marxian confidence in the power of inner contradictions to topple a system of beliefs seems naive in the light of actual historical experience. Ideological systems may tolerate contradiction if equipped with mechanisms to soften the areas of friction.

The Modern Movement had a powerful device to deal with an otherwise inconsistent stance about textuality: the notion of *zeitgeist*, a mysterious "spirit of the times" raised almost to the status of a deity. In its wisdom and benevolence, the *zeitgeist* made sure that the works of good architects and artists were congruent with the wider collective political, social, and intellectual ideals manifested in the agendas of scientists, social reformers, and philosophers. To question such congruence was a waste of time; it existed naturally, for anyone gifted enough to see. It was not necessary to make this congruence happen; good works would fit into the wider social and historical agendas spontaneously. Attempts to interfere with the divine plan were futile, if not dangerous; the architect was like a midwife, who could help but could not control the purpose and direction of historical events. In the same way that nature followed the rules of physics, history followed its own Hegelian rules. Architectural writers were

helpful, perhaps even necessary, as propagandizers to spread the good news for those unable to see for themselves. But they did not make things happen.

Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, published in 1966, shook the old system of beliefs in many ways, but not in terms of the role of literature in the generation of architectural form. From this angle, Venturi's book was the last cry of the old order, not the beginning of a new one. Written by an architect for his audience, the book explained how architecture was to be understood, not how it was to be made. Form originated from within the architectural experience itself; discourse was only a means for exegesis and dissemination.

A new type of architectural literature emerged around the same time, accompanied with a noticeable increase in writing and publishing. Journals which were primarily "professional" (which meant, revealingly enough, emphasizing illustration over text) gradually became more discursive, devoting more attention to criticism, theory, history, and analysis of texts. A number of theoretical journals sprung up on both sides of the Atlantic, some of them short-lived, small in readership but strong in impact. Much of the material printed originated beyond the traditional domain of architecture: from systems theory to semiotics, from phenomenology to deconstruction, and more. The direction of the flow of ideas was now reversed; architects found themselves at the receiving end of the process. After decades of denial, discourse was recognized again as a legitimate agent of architectural change; it could shape the views of lay audiences and architects alike. By influencing architects, literature could affect the next crop of buildings. Discourse could result from experiencing architecture, but architecture could emerge as a result of discourse.

Whether literature actually affected the architecture of the 1970s and 1980s is beside the point; I am talking fantasy, not reality. Much of the new literature was obscure, not to say incomprehensible; but it was socially and ideologically consequential anyway. During the 1950s, when litera-



ture was held in low esteem, reading had to offer a tangible payoff: the closeted reader expected clarity and understanding. If the text did not provide these there was little incentive to continue reading. Because of the renewed prestige of architectural discourse, however, merely to be an actor in the literary scene, either as a reader or a writer, started to carry a premium. The new type of text consumer could tolerate a considerable degree of ambiguity, even impenetrability.

The cult of esotericism was perhaps a necessary price to pay for the reemergence of intellectual discourse in architectural affairs. All indicators suggest that we have already passed the crest of the wave, and that the relationship between building and text is returning to what it has been for most of the Western tradition: one of intimate symbiosis.

The most important contributions to architectural discourse during the 1990s are likely to come from what has variously been called analytic criticism, meta-criticism, or text analysis; I prefer the last term. They are all based on recognizing that architectural writing, like architecture itself, is a cultural product, historically bound as well as artistically free. Just as a building need can be fulfilled with more than one building form, the theory, history, and criticism of building activities can be formulated in more than one way. Freedom of choice is essential for significance: in terms of information theory, if there is no choice, there is no meaning. Verbal discourse about architecture can now be subject to the type of analysis earlier reserved for architecture itself. This will entail a new disengagement between architecture and text, different from the one in mid-century.

Books are not to be believed, but to be subject to inquiry, wrote Umberto Eco in *The Name of the Rose*. An important semiotic distinction lurks beyond this admonition. When motorists read a sign left by the police along the highway warning them that they are approaching the scene of an accident, they partake in an act of *communication*: there is an emitter (the police), a signal (the roadside sign), a message

("there is an accident down the road"), and a receiver (the motorist). Upon reading the police sign, few motorists would respond by grabbing their cellular phones to report the accident to the police. Why not? Because they know that the police are already alerted. In addition to its meaning as a signal, the sign also conveys meaning as an *index*: it indicates that the police have intervened. This is *not* what the police intended to communicate, but the drivers infer it anyway. According to Buysse (1970), signals communicate *states of mind* of the emitter; indexes indicate *states of the world*. Indexes, like signals, may be misunderstood or misinterpreted. In the case of signals, there is, in addition, the risk of emitters being mistaken or of their deliberate attempts to deceive their audiences.

Architectural texts, like roadside police signs, can be read as signals or as indexes. As signals, they convey whatever the writers intended to communicate (their states of mind); beyond their literal meaning, texts may be used as indexes to support inferences about the state of architectural history or culture. Even mistaken, wrong, or silly architectural texts (of which there is no shortage) can become valuable evidence if "subject to inquiry" rather than "believed"—to return to Eco's wording.

An example will help. Garry Stevens (1988) reviewed two major architectural reference works—the *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects* (edited by Placzek, 1982) and the *Penguin Dictionary of Architecture* (Fleming et al., 1980). Because of their wide currency, the values and slants of these texts can be viewed as representative of larger social and cultural circles. After plotting the productive lives of the architects cited in either text, and the dates of commencement of their buildings, Stevens noted that the growth of both series was approximately exponential, in keeping with how science grows. Looking for deviations between exponential growth and growth as exhibited in his samples, the author found two major periods of divergence—one from 1455 to 1565, associated with the Renaissance and Mannerism, and the other from 1915 to 1925, associated with the

Modern Movement. The *Encyclopedia* or the *Dictionary* could have stated that the number of prominent architects and buildings during those peaks exceeded the norm; to the best of my knowledge, they did not. The insight was *obtained* from analyzing the texts, not from reading them.

My own work on American architectural literature (forthcoming) illustrates another dimension of text analysis. I collected a corpus of 280 historical, critical, and reference texts published since 1815 and tabulated the lists of architects cited in each work, for a total of more than five thousand architects. Computerized processing of the data allowed for a number of inferences about the texts, the architects, and the nature of literary and architectural developments themselves.

Some texts of the corpus deal with the entire duration of American architectural history; others are devoted to more limited spans. It is possible to assign automatically approximate starting and ending dates for the period covered in each text. This can be achieved by comparing the list of architects cited, sorted by birthdate, with the sorted list of *all* architects recognized in the literature at the time of the text's publication. The highest concentration of citations along the list of recognized names becomes a telltale sign to identify tentatively the period(s) covered in the text. Generally, the results match what transpires from book titles, prologues, or lists of contents; occasionally, however, misnamed texts have been identified—works that deliver less than what they promise. The United States Information Agency's *Architecture USA*, edited by Peter Blake and published in 1957, was assigned by the system to the period 1945–1955, suggesting that only the latest decade was properly represented. In a subsequent edition of the publication (1975), the title was changed to *Modern Architecture America*, implicitly recognizing that the earlier version had been misnamed.

Comparing the lists of architects cited in successive texts about the same subject matter, it is possible to discriminate between texts that tend to feature only previously recognized names, and those in which



new names are also granted space. By examining the ensuing citations of the newly incorporated names, one can distinguish between authors who can spot consequential newcomers, and those whose "discoveries" quickly fade.

Architects, in turn, can be ranked in terms of their "fame" (or, more precisely, their standing in the literature) as derived from their frequencies of citation. Such frequencies vary with time; the system can generate histograms for individual architects, reflecting their ups and downs year by year. These can be correlated with events in their careers, such as the completion dates of major projects, or favorable treatment in influential texts. Furthermore, certain general facts can be observed about changing trends in architectural literature. Today, Frank Lloyd Wright is an obligatory reference in any text about American architecture; but 31 years elapsed between his first citation in a text of national scope in 1912, and his achieving a position of absolute dominance (see graph above). Gropius and Mies van der Rohe climbed to stardom considerably faster; more recently, Maya Yin Ling went from no citations to 100 percent citations in one year! The response time of architectural literature to current events and shifts in mood has been continually shortening.

No two texts cite exactly the same list of architects; citation lists are as unique as fingerprints. There is, however, an important difference: two individuals with "similar" fingerprints would not be assumed to resemble each other in other ways as well, whereas writers who tend to feature the same architects can be presumed to share aesthetic preferences, or historiographical outlook, or methodological affiliation. Texts can be clustered by similar choices of architects. The resulting groupings can reveal relationships and contrasts between texts that would escape more traditional scholarly methods.

Similarly, no two architects are cited exactly in the same texts; yet there are architects who tend to be cited (and ignored) together. Typically this is the case with partners; but it also happens, more sig-

nificantly, with other architects, such as, for example, Paul Rudolph and Louis Kahn. They were not related stylistically, and often held adversarial positions. Yet by being cited (and ignored) in most cases jointly, they can be said to belong to *the same discourse* or, more briefly, to be *cotextual*. Again, this is a critical category beyond the reach of conventional historiographical methods.

The degree of cotextuality can be quantified, and the evolution of the proximity between pairs of architects can be followed year by year. For example, Gropius and Mies van der Rohe reached a peak of cotextuality around 1960. The total citations of Gropius and Mies did not necessarily dwindle in the following years, but with the declining influence of the Modern Movement, an increasing number of critics and historians found themselves citing one of the masters, or the other, but not both. No longer in a monolithic block, Gropius and Mies started drifting toward their respective corners in the textual stage.

As texts can be clustered into groups featuring the same architects, architects can be clustered into groups that tend to be cotextual. Furthermore, clusters of mutually related architects and texts can be generated. In the current version of my project, there are eleven such partially overlapping clusters. Jefferson, Richardson, Burnham, McKim Mead & White, Sullivan, Wright, Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, Johnson, and Saarinen are included in all of them; no survey of American architecture can conceivably ignore these names, except if they do not belong to the period covered in the oeuvre. The groupings differ in terms of the second layer of architects, and because of the representative texts. Certain architects and texts are unique to each grouping; others appear in two or more (overlapping) groups. As they involve both writers and architects, the groups can be considered to represent *regions* of American architectural culture.

In its present stage, my work is limited to the study of lists of American architects cited in the literature; it can easily be extended to other countries as well, and to

fields other than architecture. The next major advance in text analysis is likely to occur when texts become widely available in machine-readable form. At that time, it will be possible to look not only at who is cited, but also at *what* is being said. Histograms can reflect the frequency of usage of words such as functionalism, organicism, skyscrapers, environment, context, pollution, and so on. Proximity between names of buildings or architects and certain adjectives will also be measurable: When was Wright first branded a genius, or Fallingwater a masterpiece? When did these characteristics become obligatory clichés, and for how long?

With the help of computers capable of scanning large masses of texts at low cost and subjecting the results to a variety of statistical operations, text analysis could uncover a surprising wealth of information buried in the architectural literature, invisible to the naked eye. Under normal usage, texts are supposed to be *transparent*: they are like lenses that can be used to look at architecture. The text analyst's task is to reveal the *opacity* of texts; to show that they superimpose their own perspective on reality. Texts are cultural products, like buildings themselves; consequently there is a history of architectural texts just as there is a history of architecture. Architectural texts, even the outdated and the silly ones, will prove valuable not when believed, but when subjected to analysis. The next revolution in the relationship between architecture and architectural texts will come as we realize that in addition to reading and writing about architecture, we must also read and write *about* architectural texts.

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Liane Lefaivre

## EROS, ARCHITECTURE, AND THE HYPNEROTOMACHIA POLIPHILI

An architectural treatise and a love story. This is how the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, published in 1499, traditionally was read. When the book became the object of academic scholarship, however, roughly in the 1870s, its interpretation took a strange twist. Attention turned almost exclusively to the architectural treatise, and the love story was dismissed as a corollary of secondary importance. In fact, some of this century's most prominent Renaissance scholars have characterized the love story as a "dull unreadable romance," a "serious runner up for the most boring book in Italian literature," and "the ridiculous manifestation of a madman." In Benedetto Croce's opinion, "If this book had not been so serious and so long and boring, it might have been interpreted as a caricature of humanism." The plot has, at best, been reviled as an unimaginative derivative of the classics in the courtly romance by Petrarch, Boccaccio, and Dante. At worst, it has been denounced as a thinly disguised plagiarism of an obscure 14th-century poem entitled *Fimierodia* by the otherwise unknown author Iacopo da Monte Pulciano.

Scholars have had good reasons for holding the architectural treatise in the *Hypnerotomachia* in high regard. The work was completed in 1467, making it one of the first architectural treatises to be written. It was published in 1499, making it the second to appear in print. Furthermore, its many woodcut engravings make it the first illustrated architectural book ever to be published. The significance of this feature cannot be overstressed at a time when the architectural public had only verbal descriptions and very few paintings to rely on in order to visualize antique and Renais-

sance building types. Among those included in the book were a peripteral temple (a temple surrounded with columns), a pyramid, an obelisk, a *porta* (an ornamental gateway), an amphitheater, a *tholos* (round temple), a polygonic temple, a grotto, a colossus, and monumental ruins.

The *Hypnerotomachia* was printed at the press of Aldus Manutius of Venice, the most celebrated publisher of the Italian Renaissance, in the famed roman type font, which is generally viewed as the culmination of the efforts of the humanists, begin-

ning with Petrarch, to re-create the script of classical antiquity. This font, which appeared for the first time in Bembo's *De Aetna* and for the second time here in improved form, has survived in name and use up to our own times. The book also contains a prototypical Greek type, one of the first examples of Hebrew type, and what is possibly the first example of Arabic type in Europe.

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Poliphilo in love with architecture. (From *Hypnerotomachia*.)

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The engravings have attracted equal attention. The *Hypnerotomachia* is unique in being the only illustrated book published by Aldus, who is renowned for his scholarly editions, in particular the first complete edition of Aristotle. Although neither the inventor nor the cutter is known, the engravings have been associated with the names of the greatest contemporary artists: Fra Giocondo, Carpaccio, Bellini, Man-

tegn, and even the young Raphael. But its most significant typographical feature derives from the overall composition of image and type into a harmonious whole, leading to the widespread consensus that it is the best of all the illustrated masterpieces of early printing, known as *incunabula*. It is, to be sure, the most sought after. Ironically, as William Ivins points out, what has become the pride of any collector was originally one of the greatest fiascos in early publishing history. Ten years after it was published, its sponsor applied for a ten-year extension of

his copyright, arguing that the enterprise had cost him hundreds of ducats and that he had hardly sold any copies. The *Hypnerotomachia*, now an extremely rare work of art, may even have been "remaindered" at the time.

In spite of this unpromising start, the book became one of the most popular books of the 16th century. It was reprinted by the Aldine press in 1545 and published in an abridged English version under the title *The Strife of Love in a Dreame* in 1592. But France is where the book had its greatest success. After François I's mother, Louise de Savoie, gave him a manuscript version of the book as a wedding present, *Le Songe de Poliphile* went through many editions, the most beautiful being the first edition produced at the press of Jacques Kerver in Paris in 1546. The woodcuts and typography are attributed to the great engraver Jean Cousin and the exquisite translation to Jean Martin.

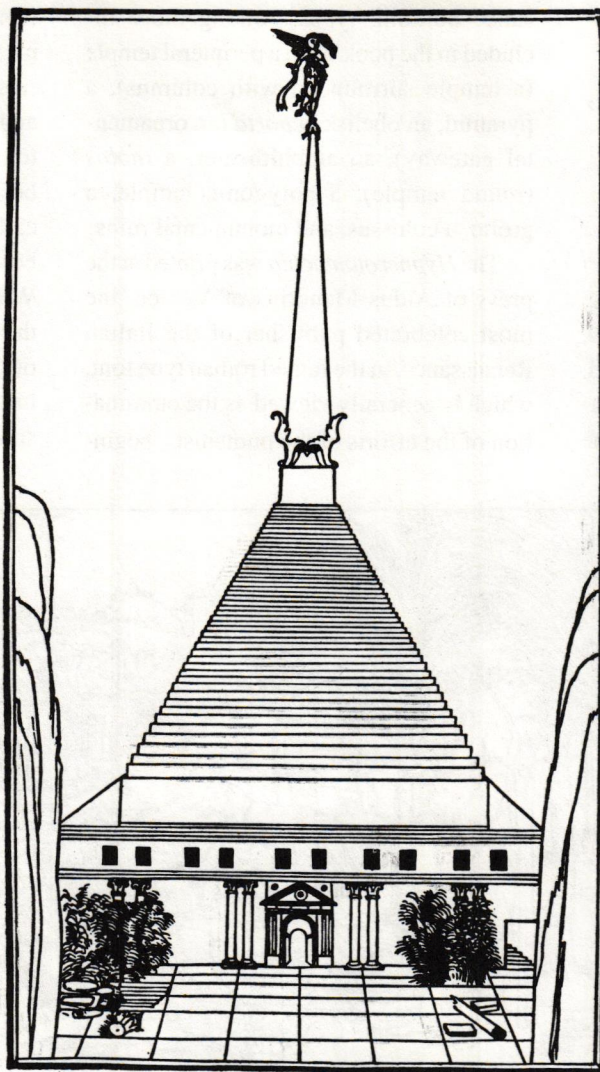
Finally, scholars looking at the *Hypnerotomachia* as a treatise have focused on the scholarly aspect of the book, on the mass of details the book supplies concerning the size, proportions, materials, colors, plan, elevation, and facade of buildings. These descriptions are often even richer than in Alberti's *De Re Aedificatoria* (1485). Julius Schlosser, in his great synthetic work on the artistic literature of the Renaissance, *Die Kunstliteratur* (1924), is probably the first to place it firmly within the canon of architectural treatises, ranking it alongside the works of Alberti, Filarete,



Fra Giocondo, and Cesariano. Other scholars have gone so far as to attribute the work to Alberti in collaboration with several other humanists. There have been detailed repertoires of the antiquarian, philological, and literary culture of the book (the antique sources include Vitruvius, Pliny, Herodotus, Diodorus, and Pomponio Mela, with Alberti, Perotti, and Ciriaco d'Ancona representing the modern ones), and several studies have concentrated on the archaeological basis of the book's erudition (based mostly on the antique Roman remains lying between the Orti Salustiani and the Via Appia, and between the Circus Maximus and the Roman Forum). Maurizio Calvesi has devoted almost an entire book to the thesis that the basis of all the buildings is the antique site of Preneste, today Palestrina, outside Rome, the seat of the Colonna dynasty. The high level of erudition in the *Hypnerotomachia* relates to other artifacts besides architecture. The book has been characterized as an "encyclopedia of all artistic, archaeological and technical knowledge of the fifteenth century." Finally, scholars have identified the *Hypnerotomachia*

not only as a design encyclopedia but also as an influential handbook for design practice.

Yet, both as an encyclopedia and handbook, the *Hypnerotomachia* is much less canonical than scholars have generally allowed. For all its fanatic cult of erudition, its spirit is not one of blind acceptance of antique authority, at least about architecture. On the contrary, the *Hypnerotomachia* takes great liberties, in particular with classical building types, and the book has a wild, almost iconoclastic side. If the building types it describes do belong to the great typological topoi, or commonplace figures, these are handled in most unconventional ways. An amphitheater is combined with a fountain, one temple with a catacomb,



The first architectural illustration published, depicting a unique hybrid that brings together a pyramid with a *porta*, a temple, an obelisk, and a labyrinth. (From *Hypnerotomachia*.)

another temple with therms. Two *tholoi* kiss at the vestibule. But the most extravagant of the book's architectural barbarisms is a strange hybrid whose description occupies thirty-nine of the first fifty pages. It is at once a peripteral temple, a *porta*, a pyramid, a labyrinth, and an obelisk. These are piled one on the top of the other, except for the *porta*, which is affixed to the temple facade, and the labyrinth the *porta* leads to, dug into the viscera of the pyramid. The temple is just over two-thirds of a mile long and almost equally high. The pyramid its columns support is six times the size of the great pyramid of Cheops at Giza, its flanks two-thirds of a mile long. An obelisk surmounts the pyramid, and is another two-thirds of a mile high. Finally, the bronze

statue perched at the pinnacle of this almost two-mile-high, transty-pological architectural monster is "proportionate" in height. The attitude of the *Hypnerotomachia* to architecture is clearly closer to a "modern" than "ancient" sensibility. "This construction exceeds the immensity of the Egyptians," the author boasts. "Be silent, works of Lemnos [famous for its 150 columns]. The tomb of Mausoleus does not even reach this building. Never before has such a building been seen or conceived." Interestingly, the engraving is more conventional and fails to do justice to the verbal description.

Equally libertine, and equally modern in its way, is the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* as a love story. Poliphilo is the youth, Polia the maiden. Both depart from the stereotypical protagonists of the *romanzo d'amore*, the courtly love story. Poliphilo is a *dolce stil nuovo*, postchivalric hero, but to an almost aberrant degree. He flees not only from a dragon but from a chameleon. When confronted, like Hercules at the crossroads, with the alternatives of the "active life," the "contemplative life," and the "voluptuous life," he chooses the latter,

simply because it is the most pleasurable. In addition, although like the heroes of Petrarch, Dante, and Boccaccio, Poliphilo loves his beloved for her beautiful spirit, unlike them he is basically interested in her "virginal and divine little body." His gaze is constantly drawn to it as her diaphanous garments flutter in breezes. Finally, as opposed to his more celebrated predecessors, Poliphilo is promiscuous. His gaze is constantly drawn to the bodies of other nymphs, and he has an orgy with five of them. As for Polia, she is even more of a nonconformist compared to her literary predecessors. Whereas Petrarch's Laura and Dante's Beatrice were chaste objects of desire, Polia is a carnal creature. No passive sex object, Polia picks up the story and



narrates it from her own point of view, opposing the principle of chastity and engaging in a polemical defense of the right to erotic pleasure for women that fills almost one-fifth of the book.

In this barely veiled parody of the 13th- and 14th-century tradition of courtly love literature, the quest for hedonism and mutual seduction takes hero and heroine through a series of mock heroic predicaments as preposterous as they are pleasurable. One such predicament occurs at a sumptuous feast, when Poliphilo tries to convince his hostess, the Queen of Freedom, that he is genuinely devoted to the ideal of love. In the Temple of Venus, he must undergo a solemn but basically titillating purification rite before he can be joined with Polia. Sometime later, Polia must revive her lover with a kiss after he has characteristically fainted from momentarily unrequited love. In the end the lovers are transported to the Island of Love by the little boatswain Cupid and six practically nude nymphs at the oars.

The name Poliphilo is Greek for "lover of Polia." But Polia, in turn, translates as "many things." And, indeed, besides Polia, Poliphilo loves many things: diaphanous garments, precious stones and gems, gold, fine linen, food, chandeliers, sculptures, epigrams, sweet fragrances, ballet, triumphal processions, hieroglyphs, mosaics, antique vases, and, not least, women's shoes—all the objects that make up the "total design" concept of the courtly humanist Renaissance lifestyle. But he loves architecture the most; he loves it as much as he loves Polia, and in the same carnal way. One after the other, the buildings described in the book become objects of desire, metaphors for Polia's solid body.

Poliphilo describes the marble of the portas as "virginal," the veinless marble of another surface as "flawless," which is the same term he uses to describe the skin of a certain nymph. Upon seeing the buildings, Poliphilo feels "extreme delight," "incredible joy," "frenetic pleasure and cupidinous frenzy." The buildings fill him with "the highest carnal pleasure" and with "burning lust." He loves them because they are beau-

tiful to behold, but also because they are fragrant and nice to touch. He partakes of architectural pleasures with all his senses. Before a frieze of a sleeping nymph he cannot keep from placing his hand on her knees and "fondling and squeezing" them, nor can he resist pressing his lips to her breasts, lasciviously sucking and nuzzling.

The sex of buildings Poliphilo loves is polymorphic. He describes the order of the columns in a certain temple as "hermaphroditic" because they combine male and female characteristics. The altar of Bacchus is made of a darkly veined marble especially selected to express the virility of that deity. A great phallus "rigidly rigorous" is carved onto it. Above the prone nude body of the sleeping nymph in the aforementioned frieze leers a naked satyr with a watchful eye and an erect penis.

This erotization of architecture comes to its logical conclusion. In three cases Poliphilo manages to locate the appropriate orifice through which he can engage in sexual congress with the building. The effect on him, always described at length and in much detail, is one of sheer coital ecstasy. In one case the effect on the building is mutual.

The carnality of the *Hypnerotomachia* extends to the illustrations, many of which have been censured as pornographic, surely a unique case in the history of architectural publishing. Among the objectionable images observed by Lamberto Donati to have been either erased or inked over in the collection of the Vatican Library are the emblem of a priapic Hermes, the leg of an elephant mistaken for the genital organ of his neighbor, Bacchus's phallus, the seduction of Leda by the swan, Polia kissing Poliphilo (who sits in her lap). A nymph's nudity is covered with a skirt.

How could the erotic side of the *Hypnerotomachia*, which is indissociable from the erudite one, have eluded the scrupulous gaze of so many scholarly readers? Among the factors is the book itself. The *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, one of the most enigmatic works ever published, is a succession of riddles. The reader is first confronted by a practically unpronounce-

able title, only to be lost in highly arcane prose, an idiosyncratic concoction of Tuscan, Latin, and Greek on the lexicographical and syntactic levels. Interpretation is frustrated at almost every level and the effect is clearly intentional. As if in a self-referential manner, the book repeatedly exploits the theme of hermeneutic impenetrability: Poliphilo spends about thirty pages of the book trying to decipher 88 epigrams in Latin and Greek, in addition to inscriptions in hieroglyphics, messages in Chaldean, sayings in Hebrew, and signs in Arabic. Sometimes he succeeds, but sometimes their meanings remain sealed. And although he meets Polia by the end of the first quarter of the story, he cannot be sure she is who she says she is until three-quarters of the way through the book. As a result he cannot express his love directly to her.

And who, for that matter, was Francesco Colonna, the author, whose name only cryptically appears in the acrostic made up of the first letters of each of the chapters? His identity is still hotly debated. Like many scholars, Giovanni Pozzi believes he was a Dominican monk attached to the convent of SS. Giovanni e Paolo in Venice, and others that he was the scion of the powerful Roman baronial dynasty of the Colonna, traditional foes of the papacy and with many ties to the first generation humanists. Maurizio Calvesi has argued most convincingly that Francesco Colonna and his father were patrons of Alberti, and Ludwig Heydenreich has called their villa at Palestrina, completed under the probable guidance of Alberti, the first of the Renaissance. But then why such anonymity for a book so expensive to produce, printed at the press of such an illustrious publisher, and written by a representative from such an elite political and cultural circle? Does the date of completion, May 1467, mentioned at the end of the book, have any symbolic significance? Why the paradoxical combination of unbridled eroticism with an often impenetrable secrecy?

It would appear that the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* is more than an artless manneristic experiment or the result of coincidence and chance. Its intricate composition



and plan reveal intention and forethought. Something is going on beneath the surface here, invisible to the uninitiated, undetectable to the innocent. The metaphor of the building as a body is part of a game being played on several levels at the same time. At one level, the game might be taken as nothing more than the frivolous and phantasmagoric effusion of an eccentric spirit. But at another, it is something like revolution.

Mikhail Bakhtin observed that any utterance, spoken or literary, is inevitably marked by its relation to another utterance, whether this relation is one of agreement or dissent. However powerful this "dialogical" relation, it is not always obvious. It can take place through a code, through "passwords," all the more effective for remaining unformulated and therefore irrefutable. If there is a work the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* is in dialogue with, it is Lorenzo Valla's notorious *De Voluptate* (1431), an outspoken defense of epicurian hedonism and free love. In his plea for the abolishment of all sexual constraints in society, Valla blames

Meneleaus (who was unable to tolerate the love between Helen, his wife, and Paris) for the Trojan War rather than blaming Helen, as was customary. Valla also wrote an equally notorious tract, *De Donatione Constantini*, denouncing as illegal the assumption of temporal power by the papacy. By the time of the writing of the *Hypnerotomachia* thirty years later, Valla's ideas were condemned not only as heretical, but as seditious, and his disciples (grouped together in the Accademia Romana under the leadership of Pomponio Leto) were arrested for conspiracy and tortured under Pope Paul II. This, and the heightening of the age-old rivalry between the papacy and the Colonna faction, which included Pomponio Leto and his academy, helps to explain the muted, guarded, elliptical form the dialogue takes.

The immediate cultural and political events surrounding the *Hypnerotomachia* do explain many aspects of the book. But the erotization of architecture should also be seen on a much broader horizon, which

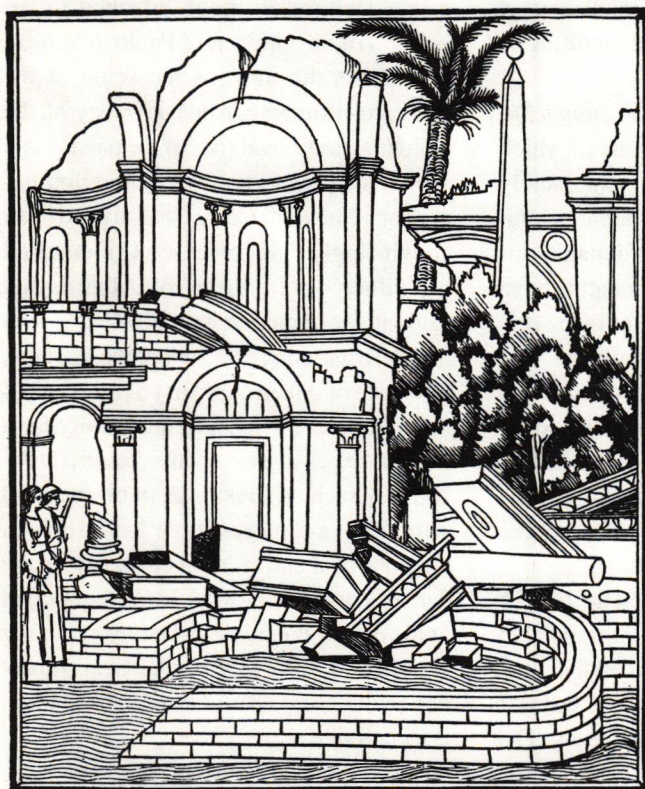
stretches from a world where it was forbidden to love architecture—the world of the Western Roman Empire after the collapse of its international economy, the rise of the Latin Church, and the development of autonomous, stagnant, household economies. The dominant official doctrine of the Latin Church, as professed by the patristic theologians, in relation to architecture as in relation to everything else, remains antifetishistic, governed by the imperative of asceticism. The body becomes a symbol for all that is sinful, a metaphor for evil. Sexual abstinence plays a key role in the enforcement of this imperative. In the doctrinal strictures, any attachment to

the things of this world, including buildings, is condemned as lust. For almost five hundred years the love of architecture in the world of the post-Roman Empire is condemned as a form of "lust for building" (*libido aedificandi*), of "voluptuousness," of "perverse delectation." With the *Hypnerotomachia* that world is "turned upside down," to borrow another term from Bakhtin. From being condemned as the ignominious "root of all evil," the body becomes the most important symbol of the "highest good."

Seen from this perspective, the erotic revolution that culminates in works like the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* is part of a sweeping attack against an older, more archaic social and cultural order. With its obsessive hammering home of the irrepressible libidinal spirit, it is also a manifesto for the new *ordo amoris* associated with the rise of our own "many loving," "poliphilic" consumer world to come.

#### Author's note:

This article summarizes some of the themes included in my forthcoming book, *Eros and Architecture*, a study of the hedonization of architecture in early court cultures of Europe, especially as it is expressed in the metaphor of the building as a body. Although the footnotes have been omitted from the present article, I would like to point to the three basic studies on the *Hypnerotomachia* (although their interpretations differ from the one presented here). These are G. Pozzi and L. A. Ciapponi, *Francesco Colonna. Hypnerotomachia Poliphili. Edizione critica e commento*, 2 vols. (Padova: Antenore, 1980); M. T. Casella and G. Pozzi, *Francesco Colonna. Biografia e opere* (Padova: Antenore, 1959); and M. Calvesi, *Il sogno di Polifilo Pre-nestino* (Rome: Officina, 1983). Among the many other shorter studies of particular interest are D. Gnoli, "Il sogno di Poliphilo," *La Bibliofilia* 1 (1899–1900), pp. 189–212, 266–83; Ch. Huelsen, "Le illustrazioni della Hypnerotomachia Poliphili e le antichità di Roma," *La Bibliofilia* 12 (1910), pp. 161–76; W. M. Ivins "The Aldine Hypnerotomachia Poliphili of 1499," *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* 18 (1923), pp. 249–52, 273–77. Of immense value are the unsurpassed philological notes to the *Hypnerotomachia* supplied by A. Popelin in his translation and critical edition of the book under the title *Le Songe de Poliphile* (Paris: 1883, reprinted 1981).



Poliphilo pursues Polia through a maze of Roman ruins. (From *Hypnerotomachia*.)



# PUBLISHER PROFILES

During the last decade, architectural publishing has expanded three-fold. Existing publishers have doubled their offerings, new publishers have stepped forward, and specialized bookstores have sprung up all over the world. Nor in this context should we forget the birth of *Design Book Review* in 1983, which grew out of this new community of producers and consumers of design publications. Unlike the trends in mass-marketed publishing, where the emphasis on best-sellers sold in franchise bookstores has discouraged the variety and number of titles, in the design press, there are no real best-sellers, excepting technical texts such as *Graphic Standards*.

Rizzoli's *Santa Fe Style*, the consummate coffee-table book, has sold 110,000 copies in the past five years, and this represents the top end of the market.

To learn their opinions about the boom in architectural publishing, *DBR* interviewed several publishers, whose publishing houses range in size from the largest operations, such as Electa and Rizzoli, to the more specialized houses such as MIT Press and Garland, to the smaller and newer ones such as Princeton Architectural Press and the Architectural Association. In addition, shorter profiles on four other publishers have been assembled to give an idea of the field's diversity.



**Electa**

Francesco Dal Co  
editor

relationship with Rizzoli in New York, and with Gili in Barcelona.

Another reason for our strength in architecture is linked to having a branch that produces architecture magazines: *Casabella* and *Lotus*, which in my opinion are the most important in Italy. Through these magazines we have partly succeeded in creating a large public for the architectural press.

The production of our books is organized mainly around three different collections: the first is what we call the masters of the classical age, and includes monographs devoted to architects including Brunelleschi, Giulio Romano, Borromini, and so on. A second collection is devoted to the great modern architects such as Carlo Scarpa, Berlage, and a new monograph on Theodor Fischer. The third collection is called "documents," a very large collection that had about forty-five titles this year alone. These are devoted both to presentations of the work of contemporary architects and critical or historical essays. An example of the latter would be a recent translation of the essays of Wolfgang Lotz on Italian Renaissance architecture, originally published by MIT Press. We try to produce paperback versions, usually after two or three years. My ambition is to have a continuously growing archive about the development of contemporary architecture, so that people

will be able to judge the works of the most famous and interesting architects in a more thorough way than what magazines can provide. With the essays, we hope to favor a critical attitude about this production and a critical attitude toward history. For several years we have published a series on the universal history of architecture, starting from the Greeks and extending to the present day. At the same time we are starting a new twelve-volume collection on the history of Italian architecture, and all the works will be absolutely original.

Personally, I think it becomes increasingly difficult to write the great comprehensive history. For instance, I don't think I would be able now to attempt a history of contemporary architecture because the knowledge and complexity of the problems are so huge they could not fit into one history. It seems better to work in the essay form.

**DBR:** Could there be a marketing reason for that as well? Will people always want to buy these big blockbuster histories?

**FDC:** Despite what I believe, there is great pressure from the market for these comprehensive histories. This is mostly because we have a very large market among students, and they want this kind of synthesis, or else these kinds of books serve as texts for their

**DBR:** What is Electa's position in Italian publishing?

**FDC:** Electa was founded in the 1950s and recently acquired Einaudi, and through Einaudi created a new consortium with Mondadori. Together we are Elimond, one of the largest publishers in Italy. The architectural book is now one of the most important parts of our production, but this emphasis on architecture has really only begun during the past five years or so.

**DBR:** How do you explain this growth?

**FDC:** I think because the collection of books that we proposed to our audience had a very good reception both in Italy and abroad. Many of our books are published simultaneously in different languages. For instance, in France we publish *Electa-Moniteur's* collection of many of the same titles in French, and we have a very good



courses. We want to cultivate student readers, so that they will remain our clients once they go into practice.

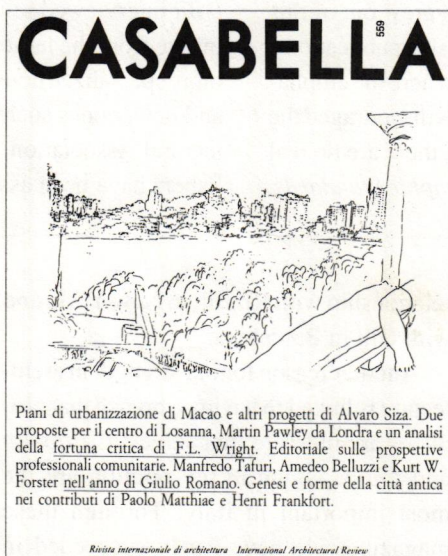
DBR: How can students afford these books, since nothing costs less than twenty dollars? There are more and more books produced and sold, and the books get more and more expensive. Why are people willing to spend much more money now on architecture books?

FDC: I think it's an interesting phenomenon. Our age is obsessed by the problem of the past on one hand and the possibility of understanding the quality of the natural and built environment on the other hand. You can't explain otherwise why during the past decade we've seen the appearance of a new museum every week. We are also trying to recognize the built environment. It was very easy in the past to conceive of a quiet relationship within the museum with a painting, because a painting is something very familiar to the audience. I think now that people have started to be interested in architecture in the same way that they are interested in painting. So they conceive of a work of architecture having beauty in the same way that a painting has beauty. If we are sure that architecture was never a thing that was understood by the masses, I'm also sure that they don't understand anything when there will be two million people waiting to see the van Gogh exhibition planned for Amsterdam this year. To go to these things is part of the rituals of our times—it's an intelligent way to be a tourist. But under all this consumer phenomenon there is this: people have started to get interested in the object, in the built environment, which has given these things new meanings.

We have to educate this growing interest in architecture. In some cases we need to propose that architecture is not just something that is linked to the fact that the human being is subject to needs, but that architecture is also something that is able to express. We all have a need for beauty, and one of the most beautiful expressions that we might have in our whole life is when we build carefully.

It's true that the growing production of architectural books could lead to many compromises of quality and scholarship. If the quantity obscures the quality, then there is a big problem. At this moment we need to find a balance.

DBR: Electa is the biggest architectural publisher in the world. What is the advantage of being so big?



FDC: It makes it possible for us to contact the largest number of authors to collaborate and to have an intelligent policy. For instance, we produce some books that we know will not be profitable but that we feel must be published. So the scale allows you to sustain these losses. Even in the case of a book that I know will lose money, I insist that it have the same standards of quality as more profitable books.

DBR: What's the process for selecting books to publish?

FDC: We have authors who have worked with us before, those who solicit to publish, and those who we commission to develop a text. We have an overall planning program that extends three years forward. During the next two years we will publish about sixty titles. In addition, we are also publishing about thirty catalogues per year, many of them devoted to architecture. I meet once a year with a group of friends to discuss our

policy, and the connection to Einaudi and Mondadori allows me to plan more wisely around what they are preparing.

DBR: Are there any disadvantages to being so large?

FDC: The process of decision making can sometimes be slow. Under the wing of the publishing house we have many independent groups, so the publishing house just provides general services: printing, photography, archives, secretarial support, and so forth, but our team is independent so we can work in the way we like. The magazines are likewise independent, under the authority of their respective editors. All of our editorial now is run by five people. But we have many people influencing us. I'm trying to organize the work so that it can be done by small teams. I now have a small group in Venice that is helping me plan volumes and my hope is that some day we can have these sorts of groups in foreign countries. Maybe now that we are approaching 1992, we can truly speak of a European generation; now students will be free to go to the universities of any country they want.

We just started publication on an *Almanac of Italian Architecture*, which will be published annually. The magazines publish only a small percentage of work and we are trying to get more work shown through this kind of publication. Eventually we are planning to do an *Almanac* for Europe.

DBR: Can you critique how publishing has affected architecture?

FDC: I'm not sure if publishing is replacing architecture. There is definitely a growing public interest in architecture as art. During the 1960s and 1970s lots of books were devoted to theory, town planning, sociology. Now there's more attention to architecture as objects. It's true that the environment seems to be deteriorating, but at the same time you'll have an operation such as the Giulio Romano exhibition in Mantua, for which Electa was an important patron. This is the first exhibition where the show is secondary to the restoration of the site.



## The MIT Press

Roger Conover  
architectural editor



DBR: The rise of books and exhibitions seems to belong to the crisis of authenticity. People need them to find out what real art and architecture should be. At the same time, the majority of culture is moving toward some form of simulation. How do you explain this divergence?

FDC: Start with the museum: it's the place for what remains after the sinking of time, the things that wash up on the beach are collected and exhibited as a value itself. This is immediately the falsification of the historical object. Fernand Braudel's statement that all historical documents lie first begins in the museum. We are offering these spectacles of the past which are spectacles of lies. All we can do is try to improve the opportunity offered to us in this condition.

DBR: Even if you have a small staff, economically you are part of a big multinational company. Won't Electa have the same problems as other media monopolies? Won't a certain form of censorship appear? One day the corporation could say, "We're not convinced of the sales of these culturally relevant books," and stop publication of them.

FDC: It is not the case here. I control the ideology of the publishing house. The small publishing house runs the same risk. I refused to come and work here if the books I was responsible for were going to be judged title by title by their sales. I am interested in producing a program. You hope all the time that the great books are going to sell, but you must have the freedom to publish them anyway. Wittgenstein's lessons sold only twelve copies when they were printed for the first time. The little publisher has a harder time absorbing the losses of a book that does not sell well, and usually must compromise quality on other projects in order to make up for the losses. The big structure can produce a lot of problems, but if the big structure is run with intelligence it can give you more freedom.

DBR: How do you explain the phenomenal growth of architectural publishing in the last decade (of which MIT Press is a significant part)? What drives this market?

RC: Architecture has never been only about buildings, any more than music has been only about performance. In other words, architecture has always been partly about money, about fame, about fashion, and so forth. But in the past decade or so we have witnessed a more powerful set of cultural forces operating on architecture and a more intense commercialization of every form of art than ever before. The growth of architectural publishing is one expression of this, but before one can even begin to answer this question one would have to consider the commodification and mediafication of all the arts as well as curatorial practices, educational trends, private investment, government policy, and presidential style. Architecture, like painting, has become a market-driven, fashion-driven, media-driven phenomenon.

But everyone knows all this; it's what defined the eighties. The more interesting question is, Will the trivialization of architecture by every means available in the marketplace continue? I think the answer is no. What people flaunted a few years ago is already beginning to seem crass, and architects are starting to talk about their role as social artists again—something we haven't heard for a while, especially at the fancy schools and in Paul Goldberger's columns. When architecture regains its social function, it will be more difficult for it to be manipulated for commercial or political or entertainment purposes. Precisely because of the intense commercialization of architecture—for which the architectural press is

largely responsible—new critical perspectives for viewing the production of architecture must be articulated. I think this is a very important part of what's "next." I don't think it will sell as many books, but I think it will make for some better ones, and blow off some of the froth.

I believe that the preoccupation with style which defined architecture in the 1980s will in ten years be seen as a primitive obsession. At this moment, the earth is closer to being perceived as an environmental and political whole than at any other time in modern history, and I believe that this fact will lead architecture back to its ancient concern with the perfectability of man and away from its recent concern with the perfectability of objects.

DBR: What is the scale of MIT Press's output?

RC: The MIT Press publishes about 150 books a year, and my list comprises about 30 of those. While architecture remains the centerpiece of my list, I also acquire titles on art, photography, design, and aesthetics as well as a number of exhibition catalogues and *sui generis* works. That's about three times the number of titles I was acquiring ten years ago.

A normal run is between three thousand and five thousand. But we've also done much larger, and we tend to reprint often. We have a good record of keeping books in print, and we don't have the same incentive to remainder titles that commercial publishers do. We can afford to sell a few dozen copies a year of some books we published ten years ago.

DBR: MIT Press has refined its offerings to mostly history and theory. How did this come about?

RC: By now most people seem to understand that MIT Press is not just publishing architecture books, but has embraced the whole area of contemporary aesthetics. Increasingly you will see the line blurred between our architecture list and the books we publish in literary theory, art criticism,



# From Ulm to the garden...

## New design works from MIT

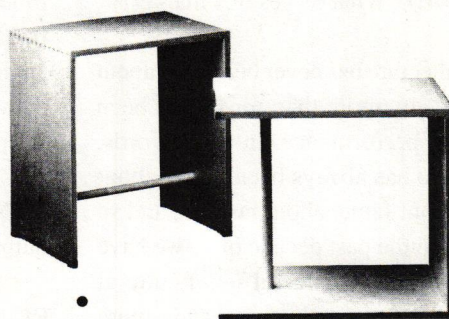
### Ulm Design The Morality of Objects

edited by  
**Herbert Lindinger**

translated by David Britt

*Ulm Design*, with nearly 600 illustrations, provides a definitive reference and source of the Ulm school, a school which exerted an influence that no one could have predicted, and is still considered the most important European school of design since the Bauhaus. The book contains a historical account of the school, a descriptive compendium of objects and designs produced there, an assessment of the school's curriculum, a profile of student life, and a roster of the faculty and guest instructors. This list includes some of the most able and talented people in the field of German design, among them Dieter Rams, Hans Gugelot, and Otl Aicher. The texts by Reyner Banham, Max Bill, Kenneth Frampton, Tomas Maldonado, and others reflect the always vigorous dialogue between theory and practice. The Ulm style—pearl gray with matte finish, adjustable legs, reduction of ornament to a fundamental and pure geometry of form—is embodied in the familiar Krups and Braun product lines and continues to define the look of today's electronic instruments.

288 pp., 566 illus., 166 in color  
\$45.00 (August)



### Blueprints for Modern Living History and Legacy of the Case Study Houses

*Exhibition organized by  
Elizabeth A. T. Smith*

Essays by Esther McCoy, Thomas S.

Hines, Helen Searing, Kevin Starr,

Elizabeth A. T. Smith, Thomas Hine,

Reyner Banham, and Dolores Hayden

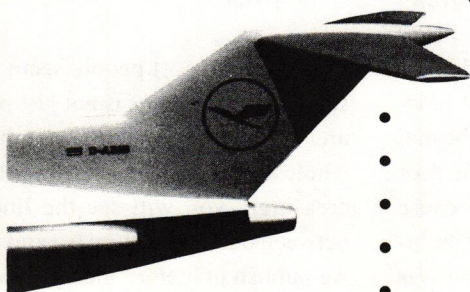
"The format... is lean and elegant, aligning text and illustrations in imaginative cadences that actually propel the arguments rather than merely illustrating them."

—*The New York Times Book Review*  
Copublished with The Museum of

Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

Distributed by The MIT  
Press.

256 pp., 384 illus.,  
9 in color \$50.00



### Flash Art Two Decades of History: XXI Years edited by

**Giancarlo Politi and  
Helena Kontova**

This fascinating anthology presents over two decades of the most memorable issues and events of contemporary art as seen through the pages of *Flash Art*, the controversial, contradictory art magazine that has influenced both cultural taste and artistic development for over 21 years. A *Flash Art Book*. Distributed by The MIT Press. 196 pp., 200 illus., 50 in color \$30.00

### The Theatergarden Bestiary The Garden as Theater as Museum

*Organized by  
Chris Dercon*

The pruned 17th century playground of Louis XIV's Versailles, the "theater garden," was a backdrop for fantasy and diversion, a central forum for public art. This book documents an extraordinary theater garden created in 1989 by thirteen international artists at the Institute for Contemporary Art, P.S. 1 Museum, including the artists' preliminary drawings, notes, and plans for the exhibition, as well as some 200 illustrations that amplify the cultural and historical ideas that inform the project. Copublished with The Institute of Contemporary Art, P.S. 1 Museum. Distributed by The MIT Press.

176 pp., 300 illus. \$40.00



## • **Gio Ponti** • **The Complete** • **Work**

• *Lisa Licitra Ponti*

• *Foreword by Germano Celant*

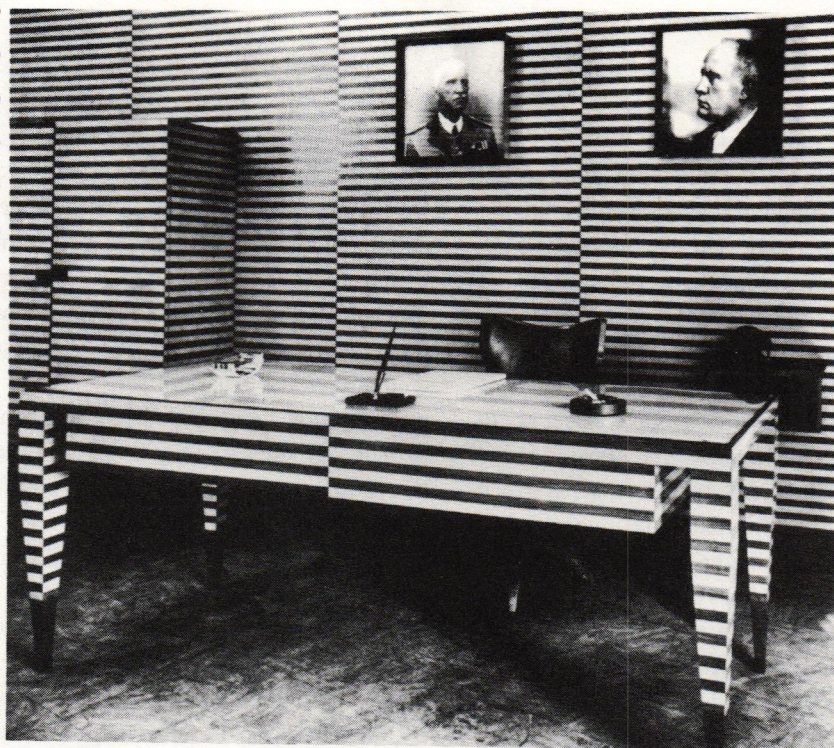
• Gio Ponti was not only an architect but a poet, painter, polemicist, and designer of exhibitions, theater costumes, Venini glassware, Arthur Krupp tableware, Cassina furniture, lighting fixtures, and ocean liner interiors. He is perhaps best known as the architect of Milan's Pirelli tower, and for his "Super-leggera" chair, first manufactured in the '50s and now a classic because of its almost universal use in Italian restaurants. Above all, Ponti was responsible for the renewal of Italian architecture and decorative arts.  
• 300 pp., 810 illus., 110 in color  
• \$65.00 (July)

## • **The Details** • **of Modern** • **Architecture** • *Edward R. Ford*

• *The Details of Modern Architecture* provides the first comprehensive analysis of both the technical and the aesthetic importance of details in the development of architecture. The more than 500 illustrations are a major contribution in their own right, providing a valuable collective resource and presenting the details of notable architectural works drawn in similar styles and formats, allowing comparisons between works of different scales, periods, and styles.  
• 368 pp., 532 illus. \$55.00 (July)

## • **Claude-Nicolas** • **Ledoux** • **Architecture and** • **Social Reform at** • **the End of the** • **Ancien Régime** • *Anthony Vidler*

• A product of detailed research into late-eighteenth-century cultural and social history, this book examines the controversial architect's life and work in the context of the Revolutionary period. It discusses Ledoux's education, early career, and the development of his personal idiom as a domestic architect.  
• 464 pp., 382 illus. \$50.00 (July)



## • **The Meaning** • **of Gardens**

• *edited by*  
• *Mark Francis and*  
• *Randolph T. Hester, Jr.*

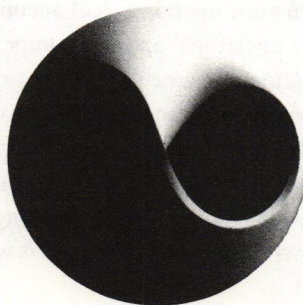
• Designers and scholars Garrett Eckbo, Rachel and Stephen Kaplan, Clare Cooper Marcus, Ian McHarg, Charles Lewis, Dean MacCannell, Paul Shepard, Michael Van Valkenberg and Peter Walker, among others, bring years of garden making and critical reflection to the question of what the garden means. Their search provides a rich discourse on the art of garden design and the future practice of landscape architecture.  
• 288 pp., 202 illus., 13 in color  
• \$35.00 (July)

## • **Reading the** • **French Garden** • **Story and History** • *Denise Le Dantec and* • *Jean-Pierre Le Dantec*

• *translated by Jessica Levine*

• "Reading the French Garden focuses on ideas that are essential to garden history: how gardens were perceived rather than simply laid out, how gardens of the past may be viewed differently by contemporaries and by later historians; the cultural determination of garden style—its social and intellectual uses; the tensions, indeed, between forms and style and garden ideology."—John Dixon Hunt  
• 288 pp., 19 illus. \$24.95

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and philosophy—which in itself is a conscious choice and a judgment about where the interesting ideas about architecture are being generated. This is an area which commercial publishers were ignoring, but in which many of the most interesting thinkers in certain intellectual circles we follow were involved. Our publication of the journal *Oppositions* gave us access to writers whose orientation was heavily theoretical, as did the journal *October*, in which we are still more than ever involved (we have recently begun an October Books series, along the lines of the old *Oppositions* Books series). The more recent journals *Zone* and *Assemblage* are also important editorial sources and influences. So this is a case of noticing the development of, and the critical response to, some of our own resources—particularly our leading journals—and taking critical advantage of what we were seeing and of contacts we had.

DBR: What can or will MIT do that others won't? Do you have a program? What sort of books won't you publish? Are there books you know will fail commercially but that you publish anyway?

RC: I favor the meritorious unknown over the "name-brand" writer, and that's quite opposite the commercial publishing bias. If I can obtain outstanding work from an unknown writer, my hope is that it will repay us financially as well as critically, but I won't regret having published the book if it only establishes itself critically. Nor would I avoid that author's next book. In fact, it's precisely this kind of investment in someone the second time around that often justifies the first acquisition. The large commercial publishers will only accept a writer or subject if it's thought to be, or can be made to be, profitable. Thus commercial publishers are by definition slow to credit new ideas and talent except as trends, and this means they are more identified with popular, conservative taste than are smaller, independent publishers.

Of course, there's no point in publishing books that don't sell, but that's not the same thing as publishing books that don't make a

lot of money. If we do better than break even, that's good enough for most books. On some we'll cut more slack for ourselves, and the more often that happens, the more financially "marginal" books we can afford. So I am very interested in sales, but it's not the only criterion that I look at. A guaranteed strong sale isn't in itself a reason to publish, nor is a suspected weak sale sufficient grounds for rejection. The bottom line is always that a book should pay for itself.

Another distinction between MIT and our competitors is that we're more likely to publish books which require close textual reading, and we're more willing to take on books originating in foreign languages that require translation. I want to emphasize that we exist to serve our readers and writers, not to make a profit for our directors.

DBR: How do you select books and what are the mechanisms for quality control?

RC: The process is much too fluid to quantify, and has more to do with bias and common sense than with outside readers and editorial boards. My job is to know what's going on in the field, and I do this in a number of unmythical ways: visiting bookstores, reading magazines and journals, talking to people who know things that I don't, staying in touch with foreign publishers, attending symposia and exhibitions, maintaining contact with authors of past books. Basically I try to stay in the thick of the most interesting architectural traffic I can find and have as many simultaneous conversations and exposures as possible. It helps to visit Europe once or twice a year, and to talk often to people who never talk to each other. It is also necessary to be able to reject as well as to take advice. That way you own your mistakes, feel accountable for your decisions, and are compelled to take positions. I learned a long time ago that there is no such thing as a perfect book or an infallible editor. The important thing is that you have a good idea of what you want before you see it, and then go looking for it. The worst thing an editor can do is wait for the mail.

A more interesting question, I think, concerns editorial intentions: What am I looking for and what is the overall plan? To this I would say that I'm interested in finding authors who can articulate architectural ideas in literary form, and in books which advance an awareness of architecture and the design arts as forms of intellectual and cultural expression. I believe MIT's list should be identified with many names and ideas that are not fashionable or predictable, and we should continue to publish work which creates its public rather than works which adapt to public taste. Most of what we publish will never be "hot" in the Rizzoli sense; there is often a time lapse between publication and critical appreciation of our books. I am interested in books that are meant to be read, and that encourage an active participation when reading rather than merely supplying retinal satisfaction. Book design is something else; it's very important to us and to our authors, but that's for another discussion. Here I'm merely implying that stunning pictures aren't always enough to justify a publication. (Though they sometimes are, as in the case of Hilla and Bernd Becher's *Water Towers*, 1988. But that's really a photography book, whose subject happens to be industrial structures.)

While we are sometimes accused of publishing books whose language is "difficult," I think the general range of comprehension has been greatly underestimated in the past and that our readers can and have acquired a taste for erstwhile "difficult" writers like Colin Rowe and Manfredo Tafuri. I say "our readers" because I am conscious that we have attracted over the years a devoted following in the architectural community who buy our imprint in much the way that some people buy Vintage or Knopf fiction.

Because the MIT list is well established, I think it is all the more important that we publish books which are outside the accepted curriculum, which push in new directions. And this means being willing to publish books which are not always "definitive," but which in some cases are highly speculative or tendentious or provisional in nature—bringing new and unor-



hodox theories and practice into view, or informing on activities or figures outside the Rizzoli pantheon. Lars Lerup, for example. If we can lend visibility to interesting experimental or theoretical work that does not interest commercial publishers, we should. Ironically, these books often prove to be of great immediate interest, but are sometimes too flawed by their contemporary perspectives to endure. Not everything should become a classic, and not everything should bear the smell of midnight oil burning in scholars' dens to sustain the torch of learning. I realize that by some art historians' definition of "university press," this is treason.

Although we have a strong following among students and professors in the architecture schools, I do not think of the books I sign as existing to validate the university environment, but rather to reflect the much broader range of professional and intellectual and artistic contexts from which they originate. Certainly they do not reflect the preoccupations of the MIT School of Architecture, although there is alignment with the History, Theory and Criticism section of the school through Benjamin Buchloh and Stanford Anderson. So I have trouble when the monastic label "academic press" is applied to MIT, since so many of the books we publish challenge the idea that architecture exists in academic isolation and run afoul of the standards of the guardians of so-called "good taste" and "fine scholarship." I am drawn to books which do not run along well-beaten institutional tracks and which some university presses would consider "unsafe." MIT Press is broadly tolerant of offbeat and experimental material.

DBR: What is your background and what are your personal interests in architectural publishing?

RC: Architectural publishing has dominated my professional life for the past thirteen years, but nothing in my background prepared me for this work. Or at least nothing that you would find on my resumé. On the other hand, I can scan my pre-editorial life and find some revealing snapshots in

the topography of chance: a childhood spent in cluttered rooms in Levittown, New York; an older brother who as a teenager worshiped Howard Roark (and is now an architect with I.M. Pei & Partners); and a preoccupation with reading and writing that has been central to my life as far back as I can remember. And book collecting: I had a fetishistic relationship with books long before I realized that many of the architects I most admire also share this tendency. The lives of writers and editors have always fascinated me—especially at times and in presses where they were considered to be joint partners in a common enterprise and where visual and literary artists joined forces in the pages of the same magazine.

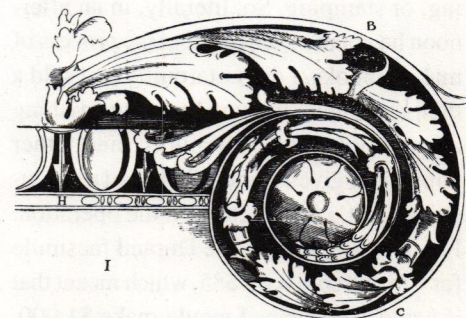
After college, I headed off to Europe for a couple of years armed with an American Academy of Poets prize and a writing fellowship. When the money ran out, I came back to the States and worked in theaters and on fishing boats for a couple of years to support my writing habit. When that got old, I went to graduate school and got a master's degree in English, but I was too disillusioned by my professors' hostility toward contemporary writing to stick around for the doctorate. Besides, I had my first offer for a book contract from a publisher, and that meant more to me than another degree. That summer (1976)—motivated in part by curiosity to know more about the process my own book was about to enter—I attended the Harvard/Radcliffe publishing procedures course. Implausibly, that led to a job in the graphic-design department at the Architects Collaborative in Cambridge, where the first week I arrived, there was something going on called the Grope-Fest. I thought it was some kind of lascivious interoffice sport. I had never heard of Walter Gropius. That's where I was when I saw the ad for the MIT job in the Boston Globe.

In the beginning, entering the world of architecture was like learning a new mythology. There were all of these supposed gods, and my job was to figure out which ones were real. Since I didn't know the names, I wasn't impressed by any of them. The only thing I could go by was the work.

And so I read.

Although I have learned how to use my eyes, I was never trained to know what makes a great piece of architecture. But I was trained to know something about good writing, and I believed then, as I do now, that most buildings earn their significance by what can be said about them. Although I might have had an easier time, in a certain sense, if I'd had an architectural education, I'm glad I was forced to pick up that knowledge as I went. There was no getting around having to read the unsolicited manuscripts I was sent in massive doses, a task your readers may be surprised to learn some editors never do. That is probably why such a large percentage of the three hundred or so books I have signed are by first-time authors. As an outsider coming to the field of architecture without an established network of relations in the profession, I identified more with the unknown, unproven innovators than with the first rank of established names. Books like Alberto Pérez-Gómez's *Architecture and the Crisis of Modern Science* (1985) were simply too good to pass up. So what if he was thirty years old, living in Mexico, and couldn't get Rizzoli's attention? That was all the more reason to publish him.

It would be disingenuous of me to claim that same naiveté now, but I still think my nonarchitectural, literary background gives me a certain advantage. I can ask dumb questions, take extreme positions, and hear out "the enemy" in a way that those who are indebted to their mentors or obliged by the expectations of their profession cannot.





## Princeton Architectural Press

Kevin Lippert  
publisher



DBR: The Princeton Architectural Press is a relatively new publishing house, begun in 1981. How did this come about?

KL: I was a student at Princeton at the height of postmodern fever (1980–1983). We were encouraged to look at past architectural delineators, Letarouilly, in particular. Tony Vidler told us the first day of class that if we studied every plan in Letarouilly's compendium on Rome and every plan in Le Corbusier's *Oeuvre Complète*, we'd grow up to be great architects; so of course everybody went to the library to haul out Letarouilly. But this book was physically enormous and locked up with the rare books, making it essentially inaccessible. A student edition of Letarouilly was published in the 1920s, which had some of the plates in a nine-by-twelve-inch format, although terribly printed. So I had the idea to put all three volumes into one, making it really useful for students. Certainly my classmates and I would buy it. However, I knew nothing about printing or publishing. I looked up "Printers" in the yellow pages, and found one who explained the whole process to me. I went down to his plant and it all seemed like magic—I had had no idea how books were made, nor about paper, printing, binding, or stamping. So, literally, in an afternoon he got me excited about the process of making books. I did Letarouilly and sold a thousand copies without knowing anything about bookstores, discounts, and other publishing givens. I definitely had a graduate student's perspective on the operation. For instance, I made the Durand facsimile for \$75 and sold it for \$85, which meant that if I sold 100 copies I would make \$1,000, which as a graduate student seemed like a lot, but as a business is totally ridiculous! If

I'd known then what I know now about bookstore discounts and pricing, I would have had to offer Durand at \$300 a copy, and probably sold very few. So I think I benefited from my ignorance, because if I had made a business plan, calculating revenues, costs, and overhead, I'd never in a million years have become involved in such an enterprise!

DBR: Did you have any partners?

KL: No; actually I was on a scholarship at Princeton and had a guaranteed student loan for \$5,000, and that's what I used to get started. Ever since then the operating capital has always come from profits. We don't have backers and unfortunately I'm not independently wealthy.

DBR: And after Letarouilly and Durand, did you finish architecture school?

KL: Yes, I did, but publishing was more fun. When I graduated, I already had this little business on my hands. I'd gone to architectural school out of interest, but it wasn't my lifelong dream to become an architect. The prospect of putting together a portfolio and drafting details for some awful firm didn't exactly thrill me, and since I had this other thing going, I just slid into it. It was a decision by default, but I really enjoy doing it.

The first non-facsimile publication was the *Princeton Journal*, which was starting up about the time that I was beginning. Then Tom Schumacher approached me with his *Danteum* and the Revisions Group with *Architecture, Criticism, Ideology*, which were really the first books we produced with living authors.

DBR: So you generally wait for people to approach you?

KL: I had no track record and no credentials; whoever published with us at that time was doing us a favor. Tom Schumacher, for instance, believed that he could get a better-looking book by publishing with us than if he published elsewhere. That was the ap-

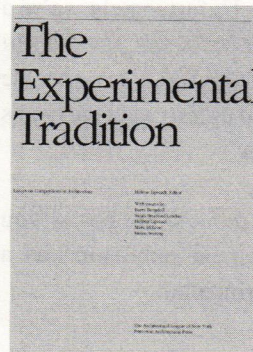
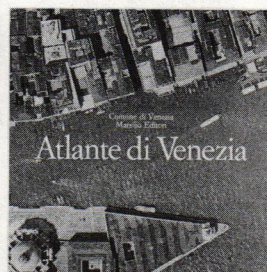
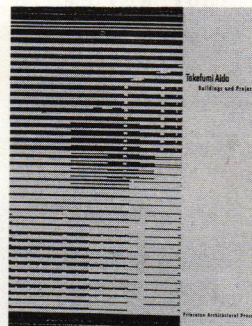
peal at this time: the author could have more control over the final product. And it's still generally true that authors have more input into the design of their books and in editorial decisions. Also, things move much more quickly because we're a smaller operation. Steven Holl's book *Anchoring*, for instance, was submitted on November 26 and we had it out by February 13; that must be some kind of record. Authors still approach us, but lately we've started to initiate titles, such as our guidebook series, which began with Caroline Constant's *Palladio Guide*, followed by the *Le Corbusier Guide*. We're continuing the series with guides on other architects such as Aalto and Scarpa.

DBR: Up until now it seems to have been a pretty parochial selection of authors, all coming from the stables of Princeton. Now that you've built up a reputation, how do you see your niche for the future?

KL: I think we have two advantages; the first is that we produce high-quality books. Book-making has replaced architecture for me in terms of making objects that involve design, materials (paper), and the like. I feel that in the last three books—Steven Holl's, Dennis Doordan's book on modern Italy, and Bernard Tschumi's book on la Villette—we've come into our own in terms of book design and production. These books also demonstrate our second advantage, I think, which is an independence largely due to size. We can take on books that would be dangerous for other publishers; for example, Lebbeus Woods *One Five Four*, which Rizzoli decided against. Similarly, I was interested in working with the Revisions Group, because they are young critics just at the beginnings of their careers. The success of their book was icing on the cake, but it wasn't at all my motive for publishing it. I think these two advantages—quality and independence—will let our niche be that of the press for a new generation of architects and architectural writers.

DBR: Do you worry much about whether





Kenneth T. Jackson and Camilo Vergara, **Silent Cities: The Evolution of the American Cemetery**. Through more than 350 beautiful color photographs and text, this book traces the development of the American cemetery, analyzing the effects of race, religion, class, and fashion on our architecture for the dead. *Silent Cities* is a compelling portrait of the American cemetery and ultimately of its people. \$29.95, paper.

Lebbeus Woods, **OneFiveFour**. *OneFiveFour* presents Lebbeus Woods's projects from 1985 to the present in an innovative format combining text, drawings, and a continuous play of numerical and geometrical figures in a visual synthesis of architecture, mathematics, and physics. \$19.95, paper.

Tony Garnier, **Une Cité Industrielle**. First published in 1918, *Une Cité Industrielle* is one of the most influential books in the history of early modernism and urban design. The book details Garnier's utopia for 35,000 inhabitants, with buildings for industry, transport, sport, housing, and government. \$60.00, cloth.

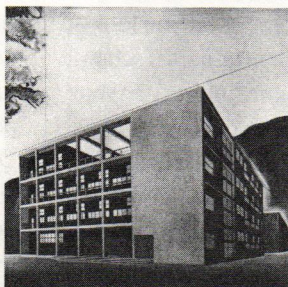
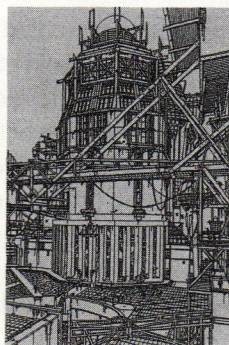
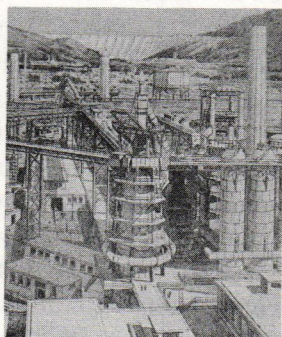
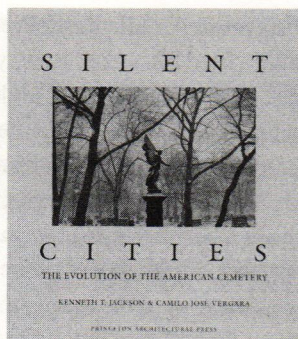
Thomas Schumacher, **Surface and Symbol: Giuseppe Terragni and the Architecture of Italian Rationalism**. This monograph fills the void of substantive critiques and historical analyses on Terragni, generally considered to be the most talented and important architect between the wars. This extensively researched and in-depth critical study of Terragni is heavily illustrated including never-before published drawings. \$34.95 cloth, \$24.95 paper.

Takefumi Aida, **Buildings and Projects**. The work of Japanese architect Takefumi Aida spans cultures both East and West—from shoji screens to semiology, from Noh drama to deconstructivism. With introductory essays by Steven Holl and Botond Bogнар, this book examines, for the first time in English, the work of one of Japan's most important and interesting contemporary architects. \$24.95, paper.

Edoardo Salzano, editor, **An Atlas of Venice**. This stunning book documents in minute detail one of the most remarkable cities in the world through a new cartographic system of color aerial photomaps and corresponding computer-generated street plans, projected at ground level. The scale of the maps is 1:1000. \$175.00, cloth, boxed.

Erich Mendelsohn: **The Complete Works of the Architect**. This reprint of a monograph first published in the 1930s on Mendelsohn's works fills the void of material on this important Expressionist architect. The book is extensively illustrated with photographs, drawings, plans, and sketches. \$40.00, cloth.

Hélène Lipstadt, editor, **The Experimental Tradition: Essays on Competitions in Architecture**. Six essays on the history of competitions in the United States and Europe from the Renaissance to the present. Contributors include Barry Bergdoll, Sarah Bradford Landau, Hélène Lipstadt, Mary McLeod, and Helen Searing. Indispensable for all those involved in the process of architecture competitions. \$34.95, cloth, \$24.95, paper.



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books are going to sell?

KL: I've started worrying more about that than I used to. If I think a book absolutely won't sell then I won't do it. Unfortunately we're a commercial press and have to sell books, although I think most people who come to us also want the books to sell.

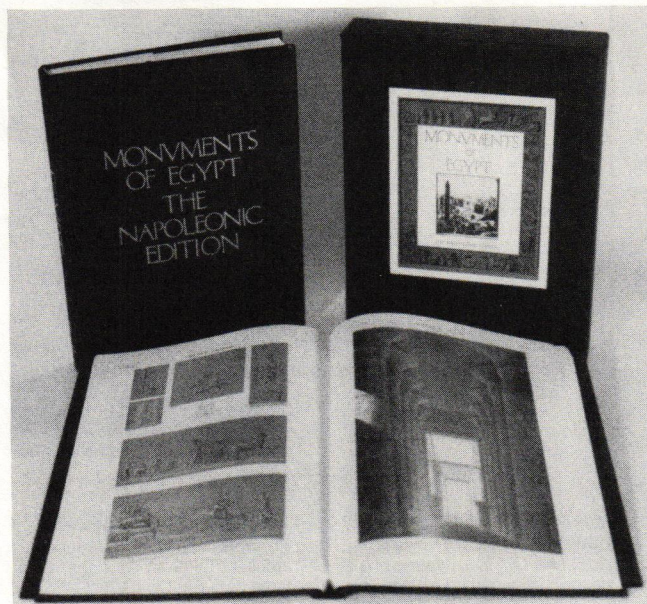
DBR: Are there some books you would insist on publishing as a matter of principle?

KL: Yes. Steven Holl, for instance. Although I knew it would sell, I would have published it in any case. Or take the Pamphlet Architecture series, which we picked up from William Stout and Steven Holl. You cannot make money on these sorts of inexpensive books; they're a break-even proposition at best. However, because we're small, that break-even point is a lot lower than for other publishers. We can break even selling 750 copies, whereas Rizzoli would probably have to sell two thousand.

DBR: Are you planning other history books such as Vidler's *Writing of the Walls*?

KL: Such books require a lot of editorial time—Vidler's took two years—and so we will probably only do one per year, leaving this area to MIT and other university presses. It's also a marketing choice: for every five thousand architects that want to look at Steven Holl's book there are only two thousand architects willing to sit down and read Vidler's. It's that commercial pressure again; I think our efforts in this area will be selective.

As for the facsimile editions, we are continuing; we just did Hegemann and Peets's *Civic Art: The American Vitruvius*. These facsimiles have done well and have helped subsidize other projects. As to my method of selecting books to reprint, I keep a list on my computer of things suggested to me by scholars, architects, and friends, and when



a certain title reaches a critical mass I begin to think seriously about it.

DBR: What about architectural pornography, those glossy picture books with limited texts. Do you ever consider doing those?

KL: I think our reputation has been gained from not following that alternative. One could probably make more money from that sort of book, but I wouldn't know how to sell it—I wouldn't know how to pick it out or market it. We are about to publish a monograph on Michael Graves, but we're trying to avoid the image-maker monograph.

DBR: Do you think your public is only architects?

KL: We've sold some of the facsimiles on New York's upper East Side, presumably to coffee-table book buyers, but if you look at our list . . . a book about Bernard Tschumi is probably not going to interest anyone who doesn't already know who he is. Vidler's *Writing of the Walls* sells well to those in the intellectual history crowd, but otherwise our market is very specialized. It's not like Rizzoli, which is clearly crossing over into the mass market.

DBR: Do you find yourself in competition with the bigger houses? For instance, your facsimile editions must make other companies envious.

KL: I'm surprised they haven't tried to move in on that market. MIT just published a new translation of Alberti's *Ten Books*, which was something on my list; the Getty's edition of Otto Wagner's *Modern Architecture* is another example of good competition. One of the criticisms of our editions, Letarouilly, in particular, coming from your magazine, in fact, was that it was presented with no explanation. We have remedied that in successive editions by providing scholarly introductions. These

facsimiles really were just picture books at the start for me as a student; only in retrospect did the scholarly apparatus become important.

DBR: Do you ever stop and philosophize about your role in architecture: apropos of the "this will kill that" syndrome [Victor Hugo's prophecy that the book will kill the building]?

KL: Princeton Architectural Press would not have existed fifteen or twenty years ago. It's part of the explosion of architectural publishing and the book as architectural artifact; there is much more writing and thinking now about architecture, and clearly we have been a beneficiary of that audience. I wonder, though, if it hasn't gone a bit far. This was clearest to me during the Deconstructivist show. There is now this architectural star-making machine. With the Decon show it became clear that here was this machine, and it was looking for something to publish, having cranked out as many postmodern books as it could. So when the Decon show opened, all eyes turned rapaciously toward it. In a way it was like those books about Baby M: you go to the supermarket the day it's over, and there are all the books about the Baby M story. Similarly,



Academy Editions sponsored a symposium about the Decon show just to gather material for a big coffee-table book on Deconstructivism. In this case the architectural star-making apparatus was searching for something to make a star. I think that's extremely dangerous. In this respect, "this will kill that." I don't think, however, that the book is killing the building; not any more than in the past one hundred years. If anything we're trying to rescue a little of the concern not only for the quality of building but also of the book and the way it is made. For instance, all the books we produce are on acid-free paper, so if we're still around in three hundred years, the books will be too.

DBR: A few years ago we spoke to Kenneth Frampton, the editorial advisor to Rizzoli, on the phenomenon of architectural publishing. He suggested that the order and beauty found in the book were a strange kind of compensation for the increasing chaos and brutality of the environment.

KL: It's true. Publishing also glamorizes some of the negative impact on the environment. Much of the damage in the cities is being caused by architects, yet the glossy treatment of the work, such as Kohn Pedersen Fox, for instance, gives a glamorous veneer to a sometimes upsetting reality—this is hardly compensation. I think it's part of the danger of what you termed architectural pornography: the gloss of coated paper tends to dazzle people's eyes.

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Rizzoli

David Morton  
architectural editor

DBR: To what do you attribute the rise in architectural publishing?

DM: It started with the development of an audience through the writings of critics like Ada Louise Huxtable and now Paul Goldberger in New York, and in other cities having critics in their daily newspapers. This raised the interest. The largest audience is architects, but there is a lot of general interest in architecture.

DBR: Rizzoli is capable of selling 35,000 to 50,000 copies of some of its books—who buys them?

DM: That many copies would be sold over a long period of time. For architecture books you would rarely print that many. At 110,000 copies, our largest seller ever was *Santa Fe Style* (which was not an architecture book). Of our monographs, some get translated into foreign languages, such as Graves, Meier, Stern, and Moore. Those books continue to sell, for the same reason that architects buy the magazines: they learn from them. In one sense, it is therefore a service to publish the work of "good" architects.

DBR: Who decides if they are good architects? Certainly some of this is decided by marketability, and it often seems interest has been generated by architects promoting themselves.

DM: I'm not sure if it's the press that decides who's good or not. If they're not interesting you certainly can't sell the books. We have had some monographs that didn't do as well as we expected. For example, the book on Pietila: a great architect, but not great in book sales. There are other books that we think would be successful but refuse to publish because we don't respect the architect's work. In these cases they're usually very successful firms that practically pay you to publish them, but we're not in business to do that. One of the things that they want is the Rizzoli label, but if you begin eroding that label it's not going to be worth anything anymore.

We do a lot of copublishing, but here also there are certain associations you don't want because it's very easy to damage your reputation. It's very easy to become a standard, commercial house that will publish anything, including practical manuals. They sell many more books. But we're not interested in those types of books.

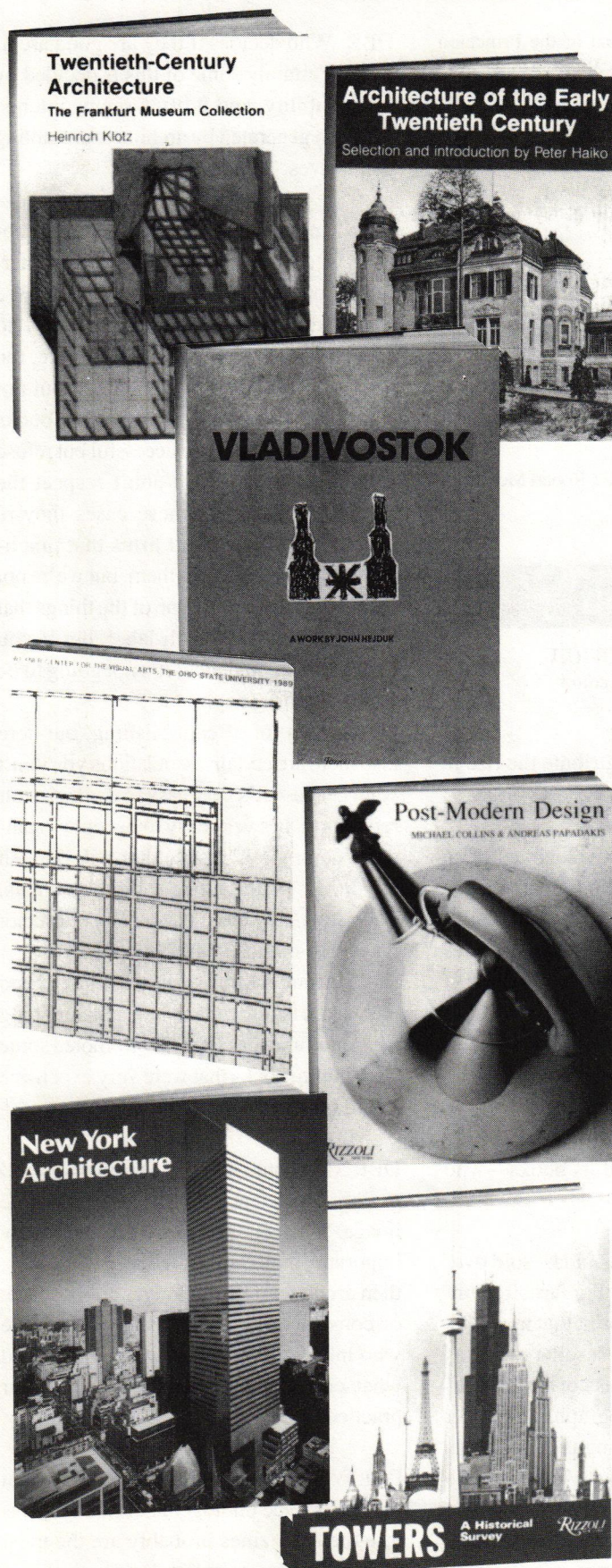
Gianfranco Monacelli, who is the head of Rizzoli, is truly interested in maintaining a high cultural level and has promoted some challenging books that were very expensive to produce with no clear market.

DBR: One could identify a trend of Rizzoli giving precedence to the photographic image. When photography becomes overly important, buildings get reduced to facades; then architecture is no longer about space, or construction, or details, or the people who inhabit it. Is the image the goal, and what consequences might that have for practice?

DM: Well, I don't know if architects design buildings to be photogenic or not. If this is true the magazines probably are the most responsible for this, but do I think this is bad? I'd say in terms of the effect it has, if it encourages the general level of architec-



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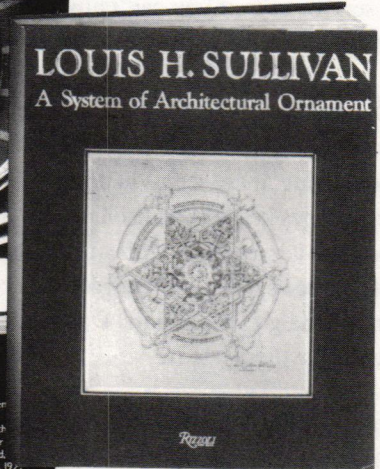
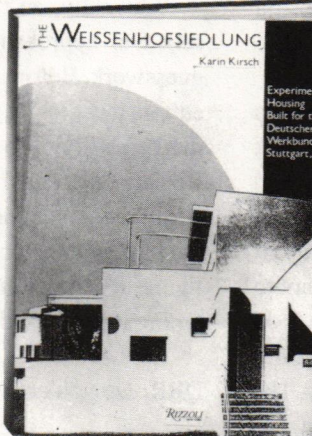
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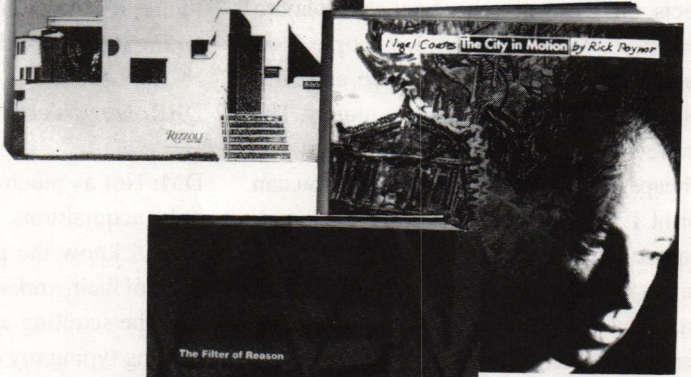


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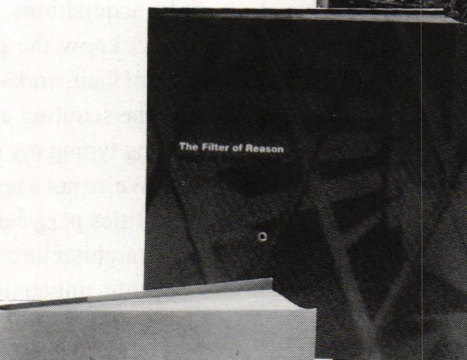
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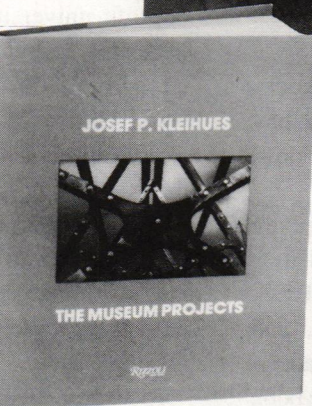
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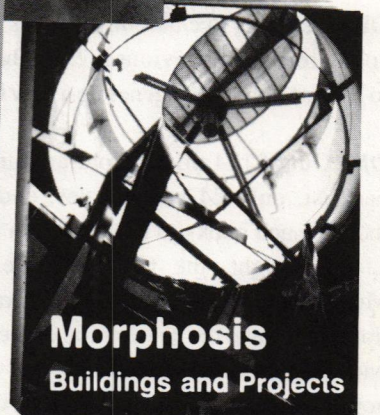
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ture to be worse, we should be concerned; but if it is otherwise, then what's the problem? I would encourage people to look and learn about good architecture. Publishing is a service even if you can't always publish things as thoroughly as you would like.

DBR: When you take an architect like Sigurd Lewerentz, who wasn't interested in publishing, there seems to be a lesson. The magazines keep drawing on the same work because it is available to the media, and a lot of architects like Lewerentz get lost because the media go for the stars. Doesn't Rizzoli reinforce this system?

DM: I think you're right that the media should do better to find out, and I think you'll see Rizzoli participating more and more in this direction. We'll continue to do the monograph series of established architects, but there are other books we want to do on younger, lesser-known people. You have to stay in business, of course, and can't publish books that won't make money. The more copies of a book you can print, the cheaper you can print per copy. If you can print 12,000 instead of 3,000 copies, you can sell the book for a lot less, but you might end up remaindering it. You have to make a markup on books—ours is much less than other publishers. Our books are generally very expensive to produce, and if we put the same markup that a normal publisher takes, some would be priced out of the market.

DBR: It seems like half of Rizzoli's books come from some previous life. Is it healthy to do that rather than generate a new book?

DM: Out of 144 titles on our architecture backlist, only 24 are reissues, and they include such books as the Wasmuth Frank Lloyd Wright, the Camillo Sitte, and Muthesius's *The English House*. Translations also make the distribution of the book wider and make things available that would not be otherwise. Take *Raumplan versus Plan Libre*, originally published in Holland for an exhibition on Loos and Le Corbusier. We made a commitment to publish a certain

number of copies, which made the production of the English-language edition possible. That was a very risky book to print as many copies as we did; we didn't know if we could sell them, but it has now gone into a second printing. The great benefits of copublishing are that you're able to do things cheaper due to the greater number of copies. Of course translation is another problem. It's very hard to find good translators for architecture books because they have to know the subject, the languages, and the proper terminology and style.

You really can't predict what's going to sell. Our approach to the market is total guesswork. Before a contract is signed, the editors have to get some sense of a book's marketability. We contact people in the Rizzoli sales department who are familiar with the market and with what has sold in the past, and they come up with a working figure. We then estimate the book's cost by taking it to bid with printers.

DBR: Do you actively cultivate authors?

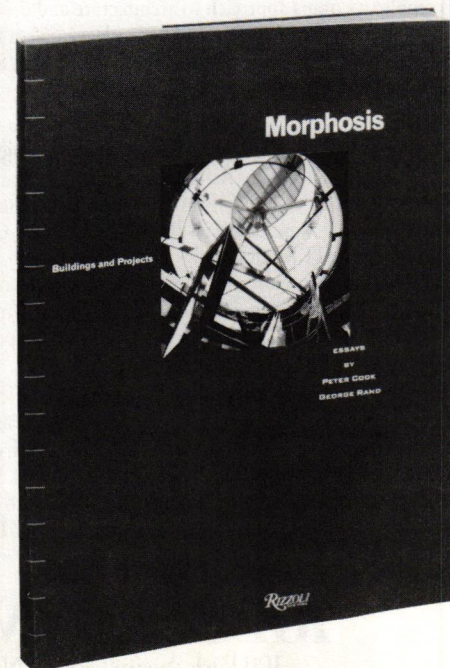
DM: Not as much as an editor who does only acquisitions, because I don't have time. I know the people in the field and learn of their work in conferences and such. I do the scouting and everything else, including typing my own letters, so I'm limited. We're not a really big publisher—130 or so titles per year, with less than half of those architecture books. Rizzoli is not a nonprofit university press. We do some serious books, but we're basically a commercial press for high-quality illustrated books. University presses have a completely different market and system that allow them to do things that we can't do. We have to move books out of the warehouse fast; we can't keep them in print for many years unless they're selling relatively well—warehouse space in New York is quite expensive.

There are a lot of things I want to do. I'd like to see more published on young architects and American classicist architects. We are going to do a series on criticism. Rizzoli is growing very rapidly and there will be a chance to diversify more in the future.

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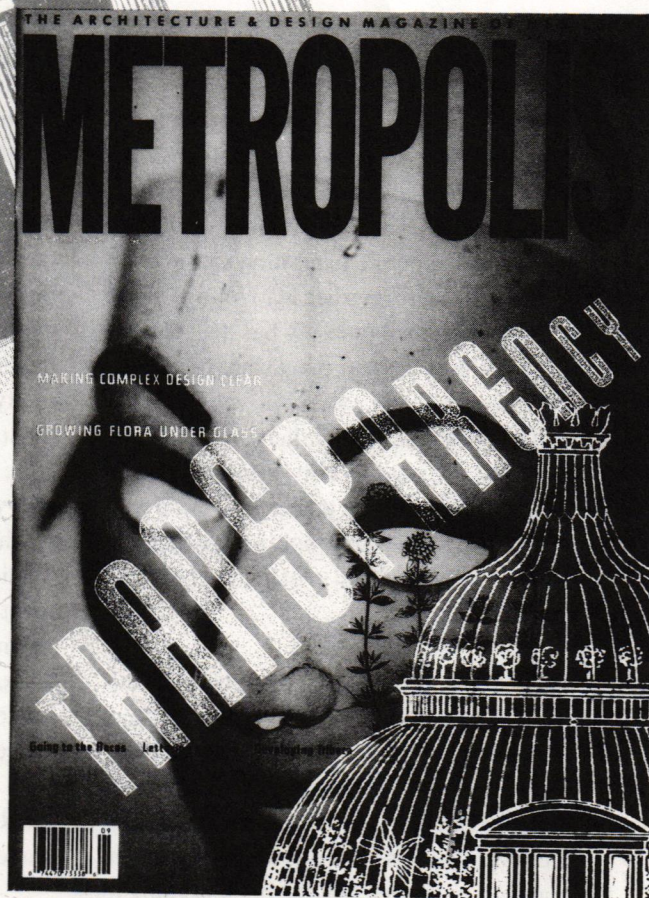
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## Architectural Association

Alvin Boyarsky  
publisher

DBR: The Architectural Association (AA) can distinguish itself from other publishing houses because all of its publishing activity is connected with what's going on at the school. This approach could be interpreted as a critique of architectural publishing. What do you think is wrong with architectural publishing?

AB: I was at the Frankfurt Book Fair last October, and visited most of the architectural publishers' stalls. They were all well-stocked. A bit of this and a bit of that. With one or two exceptions it was impossible to discern any particular interest or direction. Just another year's miscellany. They all buy each other's books—so you see the same book in French, in Italian, and then again, on an English publisher's shelf. That sums up what I don't like about the architectural publishing world: publishers are not necessarily interested in the content or quality of the book itself. It's become a mass-market game with all the associated wheeling and dealing. My critique is that the major publishing houses seem to treat their output with great indifference.

DBR: What are you doing to remedy this? You commit yourself to do a certain number of publications per year, and you have a budget to fulfill the same way that a big publishing house does.

AB: The AA's history and tradition has to do with initiating discussions and propositions which on occasion have been influential throughout the world. Our publications reflect this. We are a small and frenetic institution, very much involved with the creative act and if we can capture this in an appropriate format, it could be of some importance to others. Perhaps it is a vanity, but we do sell a lot of books in a lot of places, and discussion about what we do

does take place. A relatively small group of people at one point on the map, working hard and intensely, and with a comprehensive view of what's going on in the rest of the world, can actually make a great difference to the history of ideas. I suppose that's what we're doing. We're listening to ourselves with one ear and watching ourselves with one eye.

DBR: Has the AA always been such an active publisher?

AB: There is a history of journals and one-off student publications. However, it is only since we renovated our building in 1979–80 and made a public exhibition space available that catalogues began to follow. Nothing is published unless it has happened in the building. So our magazine *AA Files* is based on lectures, symposia, or exhibitions that have taken place here, or staff and student projects. We're scrupulous about that; even the books that are reviewed usually have to do with people and themes that are somehow related to or generated by the architecture school.

DBR: There is a big difference between this almost spontaneous publishing activity and that of a publisher like MIT, which would have to go through long editorial periods and a lengthy production schedule. But considering this less rigid situation, can you always guarantee that the book is going to be at the highest level of quality?

AB: We have a rapid schedule of, say, twelve books per year. As a result we take advantage of friends, enemies, and those with an interest in a subject. Material is always forthcoming. We tend to highlight a subject. We're never dependent on someone writing the definitive story; our publications are more critical than documentary. Most publishers must be dependent on who walks through the front door or on "market research" as to what will sell. Our publications are almost handmade. A small group of us are involved in all of them. Aside from selecting the exhibition material and the contributors, I'm also involved in the de-

sign, the writing or interviewing, selecting the paper, and so on, so it becomes very intimate. Obviously, there must be room in this world for contributions that are intense close up, and heartfelt. This goes back to my original criticism of the booths at the Frankfurt Book Fair: you can't always tell the difference between publishers.

DBR: But you can't deny that there are different categories of books, books geared for consumers, books geared for academics. Do these other books have no reason to exist?

AB: There's nothing wrong with another book on art nouveau or on Aldo Rossi, for that matter. But there's nothing worse, however, than having cold coffee and yesterday's toast for breakfast. Sometimes a perfectly good subject is dealt with at a moment in time when it's really too late for it to be significant. This helps define the territory that we tend to occupy. We've reached the point too where on occasion the publication we've made becomes the document, as opposed to the fragments of original material. Peter Eisenman's *Moving Arrows, Eros, and Other Errors*, which turned out to be a transparent acrylic box, permitting endless readings, is a good example.

DBR: Why does publishing something make it more real?

AB: If a vivid idea can be realized in the form of a publication, one has achieved something.

DBR: A major critique has been lodged at American schools who feel obliged to publish something but rely on the same legitimating cast of characters. Do you rely on these same characters, or how do you maintain your originality?

AB: First of all, given the one hundred or so publications we've done in the past ten years, probably 25 percent are student work. We do an annual catalogue—the Projects Review series. We've done perhaps a half dozen catalogues of Diploma



School design units' work and a series of Diploma School manifestos in magazine format. We've been fortunate to have many experiments take place within the school. There are perhaps twenty-five exhibition catalogues of the likes of Ron Herron, Peter Cook, Nigel Coates, Rem Koolhaas, Bernard Tschumi, and so on. They've all been part of our milieu and at critical moments in their careers we've put together catalogues of their work before they became famous. It has created a literature. For example, MOMA's exhibition on Deconstructivism had to be in some way based on our publications. We've also been blessed with friends, contributors to the life of the school, and allies whose work we admire and project—such as James Wines, Coop Himmelblau, Mike Webb, John Hejduk.

DBR: But the catalogues you produce often seem more ephemeral, whereas when they come out of an institution like MOMA, they seem more like a reference tool. If you think of students ten years from now looking up Deconstructivism, chances are they will probably go to the MOMA catalogue and not to the AA offerings.

AB: They'll go to that catalogue and they won't understand a word. They'll be looking at a series of projects that were already five years old with an apologetic essay up front. But if they're interested, they'll probably find that these characters had an AA background and that there's an immense literature, things that can be first located in *AA Files* magazine and then in the original documents.

DBR: AA has such a rapid turnaround time compared to other publishers. Does this seem to keep things from getting stale?

AB: We budget things in such a way that we have a highly equipped print room that does everything except the actual printing itself. Selling is a personal

thing. You go and talk to the three or four places in every big city that will have clients for our books. It's all on a small and modest scale. The other end of it is survival. The printing activity stimulates the cycle of students who are attracted to our school. Since we now sell a lot more of our books in Japan, we're starting to get more Japanese students. Without the publications I don't think this would happen. In any case, it's not the rapidity of delivery that's important, it's our objectives and the pleasure we get in making the publications that keeps things fresh.

DBR: There's been an incredible boom in architectural publications and you're part of that. Is the book a good substitute for architecture, or is it leading to a new form of consumerism because of its overemphasis on photography?

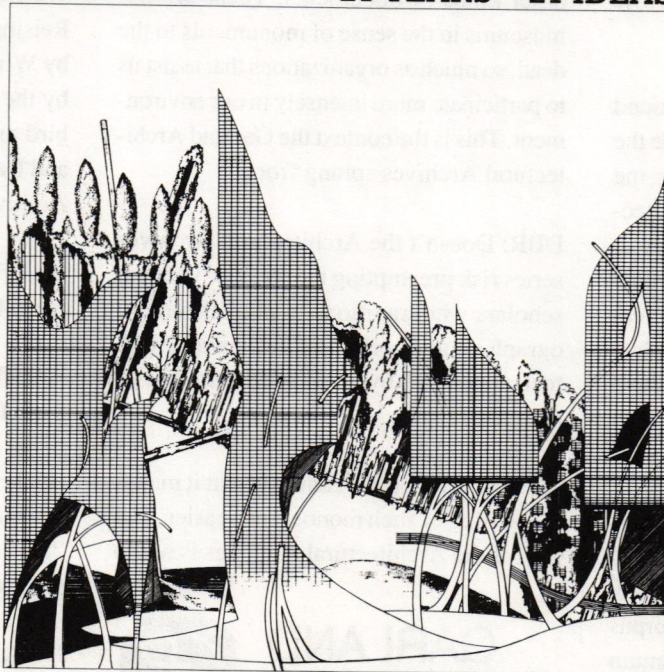
AB: Our publications state a case for important ideas people are working on that we believe will become eminently relevant. So that it's not just a way of creating more noise or photographic substitutes for architecture. We're actually engaged in a battle. While England is subject to the same degree

as America to postmodernism, it is an unwritten law now that if a project doesn't aspire to English Baroque or Lutyens, it is not going to get backing—so one gets a little frenetic about broadcasting a different belief in the future, as opposed to simply dealing with what is fresh and new and interesting. Hail to the Prince!

DBR: One area you don't seem to deal with much is architectural history. Does the catalogue of an exhibit have more value to designers than a full-blown history?

AB: The recent Lewerentz catalogue might stand as an example. Some very dull Swede wrote a book about the mysterious and reclusive Lewerentz. MIT press picked up what had been an expensively produced original and translated it. I was incensed at this poor treatment. We put together a show of Lewerentz's drawings and furniture, but most importantly we rephotographed the work, showing the details and the advent of the Brutalist aesthetic. This is history writ large. We showed what needed to be shown. This sort of publication feeds back to designers, unlike a book that just deals with the period.

## PETER COOK 21 YEARS – 21 IDEAS



FOLIO VI  
1985

FOREWORD BY REYNER BANHAM

NARRATIVE BY CHRISTINE HAWLEY  
ARCHITECTURAL ASSOCIATION

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## Garland

Alexander Tzonis  
architectural editor

DBR: Did Garland have an architectural publication program before it published the *Le Corbusier Archive*?

AT: Yes. During the 1970s Garland reprinted hard-to-find material useful for researchers: outstanding dissertations (for example, Leo Steinberg's on Borromini, Paul Turner's on Le Corbusier, and David de Long's on Bruce Goff), key essays (James Ackerman was on the editorial committee), and books. A series on literary sources of the English landscape garden was edited by John Dixon Hunt. But at the same time there were discussions and planning for a large-scale publishing program. I was still at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, and one of the projects we were working on was the comprehensive *Harvard Encyclopedia of Architecture*. Finally, the Architectural Archives emerged out of this period of thinking.

DBR: The idea for an Architectural Archives series was novel when Garland first published the *Le Corbusier Archive*. How did the idea occur to you?

AT: There were two precedents that I found particularly inspiring. Both were outside the architectural domain and both made me dream of a publication related to architecture and, more specifically, of starting with a project based on the work of Le Corbusier. The first was the monumental publication by Christian Zervos of the complete catalogue of Picasso's oeuvre in thirty-three volumes. The second was a unique project Garland undertook in the 1970s—the publication of James Joyce's archive in sixty-three volumes that included notebooks, manuscripts, and typescripts.

The concept of the Architectural Archives was to present the totality of a corpus of documents, ordered and with a minimum of assisting information, without any editorial preselection of documents according to

which would be the “most significant” or the “most appealing” for reproduction. Architectural documents were seen to be as significant as painters' sketches and poets' notes, and no longer just as poor relatives. The idea was to offer the researcher maximum access with the least bias to these documents.

DBR: The boom in architectural publishing has helped turn architecture into a more consumable item. Does the Garland series fit into this boom?

AT: Every publication reflects the needs and world views of its times. The Architectural Archives express certain changes that are occurring. Architecture is beginning to rival the other visual arts and literature for scholarly attention and there is a growing desire to understand the meaning of buildings as objects of knowledge, to interact with them as partners in a dialogue, rather than just use them or hedonistically stare at them. Hence the interest in everything that helps this understanding, and the fascination with documents that offer relevant clues. Hence also the emergence of major documentation centers of architecture around the world that collect drawings and other kinds of documents. These are not museums in the sense of monuments to the dead, so much as organizations that assist us to participate more intensely in our environment. This is the context the Garland Architectural Archives sprang from.

DBR: Doesn't the Architectural Archives series risk preempting the work of younger scholars who traditionally publish a monograph on the work of an individual architect appended by illustrated *catalogues raisonnés*?

AT: I believe, on the contrary, that it makes the writing of such monographs easier. The role of the Architectural Archives is not to

replace such monographs but to assist them. The case of the *Le Corbusier Archive* has already proven this point. In the few years since its publication, it has stimulated rather than frustrated researchers. We should also keep in mind that the character of these monographs is changing in time: there is a new accent on design hermeneutics and interpretation, or rather, interpretations, I would say, and a growing need to comprehend architecture rather than simply identify, list, and describe its products.

DBR: The *Le Corbusier Archive* must be the largest architectural publication ever undertaken on a single architect. If I'm not mistaken, it was followed by the publication of the Mies Archive, and then the Kahn. What other projects are coming up?

AT: We are completing the Mies Archive of the Museum of Modern Art. The first part of the archive, which covers the 1907–1938 period, is being supplemented by two more volumes. The second part, which covers the 1938–1969 period, will be published in sixteen more volumes. Stuart Wrede has joined the editorial group as the new director of MOMA's department of architecture. Another project coming up in 1990 is the Walter Gropius Archive of the Busch-Reisinger Museum in four volumes, edited by Winfried Nerdinger. It will be followed by the archives of Louis Sullivan, Holla-bird and Roche, and Hollabird and Root; and David Gebhard is editing the Schindler Archive.

DBR: What are the criteria for the quality of reproduction?

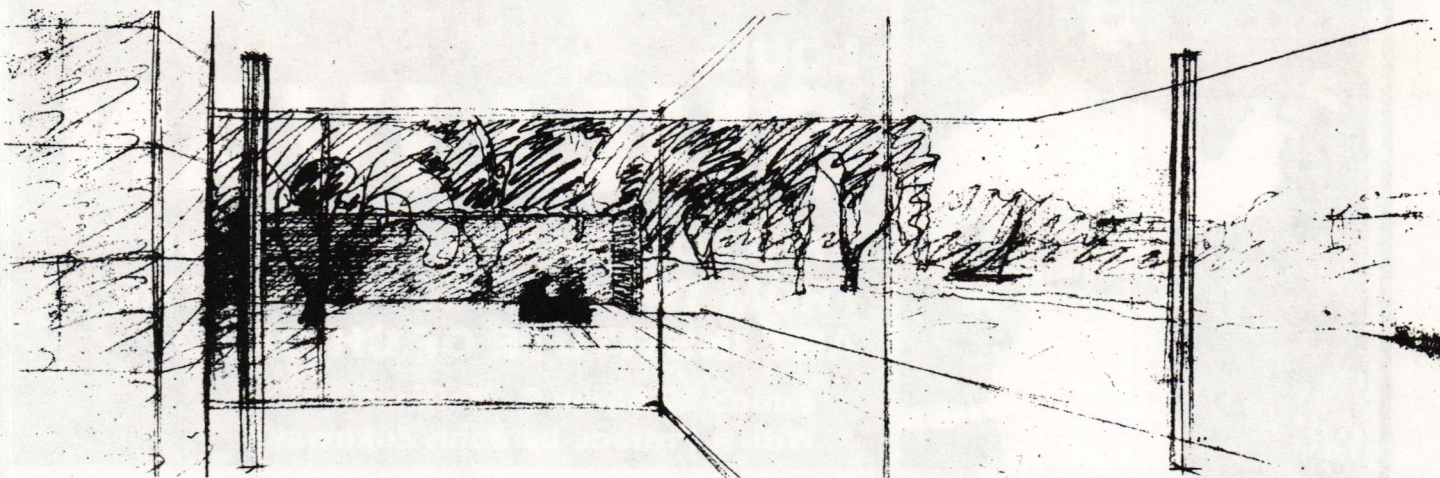
AT: The Garland projects are conceived as tools for scholars. For this reason the publisher opted for information rather than aesthetics, for the highest-quality library-standard bindings and printing on acid-free 250-year-life paper, rather than the visual pleasure of the so-called coffee-table books.

DBR: Wouldn't color have been necessary in this case? I believe you publish only black and white.

**GARLAND  
PUBLISHING**







Interior perspective of living room and terrace with Elbe River, Hubbe House; Mies van der Rohe (1935). (Collection, Museum of Modern Art, New York.)

AT: With very few exceptions, the reproductions in the Garland Archive are black and white simply to keep the price of the book reasonable. Color reproduction would increase the costs of publication disproportionately. We do not believe the effectiveness of the Architectural Archives for researchers has been diminished. The verbal description of the drawing informs researchers that a document contains certain colors. Ultimately a researcher might have to visit a collection and look at the actual documents. The Garland Archives series is not a substitute for such a study but instead prepares and helps organize such a study.

DBR: A common complaint about the Garland Archives is that they are presented without explanation. Obviously it would have been impossible to supply comments on each item in the thirty-two volumes of the *Le Corbusier Archive*, but it might have been helpful to know about groups and number systems. For instance, the items were not numbered chronologically but in the order in which they were found. Is anything being done to better guide the reader through the archival material?

AT: Our Corbu Archive groups documents by building project, as the Fondation Le Corbusier had grouped them when we started discussing the project with them. Due to the colossal scale of the work the Fondation had already carried out, we compromised and Garland accepted the

Fondation's own system. In contrast, our other archives are more "user-friendly" and explicit in their organization. They also include notes for each building project.

DBR: The first three publications of the Architectural Archive series included only drawings. Is this a general policy?

AT: No. The concept of the Architectural Archives is broader. It covers any type of document whose study can contribute to the understanding of the generative process of architectural creation—three-dimensional models, paintings, photographs, writings, correspondence, professional-legal documents. Certainly, drawings are the key documents. We have already published a five-volume index to the Taliesin correspondence of Frank Lloyd Wright edited by Anthony Alofsin, together with a complete list of FLW projects compiled with Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer. And I hope we will soon begin other projects that contain such diverse kinds of documentary material.

DBR: Are there any other architectural publications by Garland besides the Architectural Archives?

AT: Garland publishes other tools for architectural researchers. These include annotated bibliographies—on individual architects such as Le Corbusier, Kahn, Aalto, or on specialized research topics such as architectural preservation and

renovation, congressional documents, or architecture and women, or indexes, like the Burnham Index to architectural literature of the Art Institute of Chicago. Other more unusual reference publications are being prepared, such as *The Synergetics Dictionary: The Mind of Buckminster Fuller*.

DBR: What impact might the Architectural Archive series have on the practice or understanding of architecture?

AT: It makes easier the understanding of architectural creation as a complex process of conflict resolution and compromise, reconciling existing constraints, rather than a mystifying, so-called "creative" process in a tabula rasa, freewheeling world.

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## Editorial Gustavo Gili, S. A.

Gustavo Gili  
publisher

DBR: What are the origins of your publishing house?

GG: It dates back to the beginning of the century and is family owned. My grandfather started publishing all sorts of mechanical engineering and technical books, and then he published fiction and anything that he might have been interested in. Little by little we began to specialize. We are not just a publisher of architecture books but have offerings in many categories. We no longer handle fiction but have lots of technical books, art books, and architecture, which is our strongest section of the catalogue.

DBR: What are your best-sellers?

GG: We now publish mostly monographs, but the best-selling book is the *Manual of Architecture*, written by E. Neufert in the 1940s (now in its thirteenth revised and enlarged edition), which is used as a general textbook for architects. It's a very practical book that is useful to all professionals. The monographs have a shorter period of interest—their sales are linked to fashions. Probably the best-selling of these has been our monograph on Richard Meier (originally published by Rizzoli in 1985), which in two Spanish editions has sold nearly 10,000 copies. We have initiated a series of less expensive monographs entitled *Current Architecture Catalogues*, which are more accessible to students. (The price is about twenty dollars.) These are selling very well both here and abroad. They are bilingual in Spanish and English. The first one, with introductions by Christian Norberg-Schulz and J. C. Vigato, is on Livio Vacchini and came out in 1987. We have a general editor who organizes the subject of the monograph and locates the author. He is assisted by several advisors who teach in the architectural schools. For

this series we're trying to focus on architects who are not in the architectural hit parade, but who probably will be in the future. These are designers who are about forty to fifty years old and have a substantial body of work. These monographs are small and affordable, because a big part of our public is students, and in Spain students will not buy books that cost fifty dollars.

We were quite strong on theory and history in the 1970s, but we found that demand for these books in the 1980s was decreasing—it's probably a question of fashion. We published translations of works that have become classics, such as Wittkower, Tafuri, Benevolo, Rykwert, but these books sell very slowly. So we've limited the pro-

# GG

Editorial Gustavo Gili, S. A.

duction of this kind of book to about one a year. One thing that is very frustrating about producing theory books is the tremendous diffusion of photocopies. Very few of our theory titles originated in Spain, because up until now we have had very few people producing history and theory. Only a few books, such as the one by Josep Muntanola, another by Ignasi de Solà-Morales, and one by Helio Piñon, come from Spain. Oriol Bohigas has published with someone else, but we are now discussing publishing his collected writings.

DBR: Do you sell many books abroad? Spanish is the second most spoken language in the world.

GG: In the past our sales were between 50 to 60 percent export—which meant Latin and South America, but this has changed a lot in the past ten years and especially in the past five years because the economic situation there is so terrible. Latin American booksellers are forced to mark up their stock incredibly to cover their losses due to the exchange rate and inflation. So our sales

to other Spanish-speaking countries have declined to 20 percent of our total sales.

DBR: Has that been compensated for by an English-speaking audience?

GG: Well, it is part of our current strategy to deal with a new market by producing editions in other languages (mainly English, but also French in some cases) or bilingual editions (usually Spanish and English). So far we only have about thirty titles in English, but it is our aim to develop intensively these non-Spanish editions in the near future. We don't know yet if it has been profitable, but the demand is increasing and if we are able to improve our distribution network in non-Spanish-speaking countries, we are convinced that we can compete successfully.

DBR: What would you say is the most unique thing about Gili publications?

GG: I don't think you could single us out as being unique in that we publish the same kind of books as Electa, Rizzoli, and MIT, and now frequently in cooperation with them. Perhaps we could point out that we have about four hundred architecture titles in print at this moment, which means that we not only have the largest catalogue in this speciality in the Spanish-speaking area, but probably one of the largest in the world.

DBR: Is there room for more marginal, experimental publications in Spain?

GG: These sorts of things are usually sponsored by the Colegios of Architects (the Spanish equivalent of the AIA). Larger publishers and more commercial publishers can sometimes publish avant-garde books, but we cannot base much of our production on these kinds of enterprises. We usually produce between two and four thousand copies of our monograph series.

DBR: These monographs on architects seem to have limitations as far as dealing with a discourse on architecture because they are dealing with a single author and



images. The issues of typology or urbanism or more general topics tend to get excluded.

GG: We've had and still have books on such subjects, but I am sorry to say that architects and students tend not to like to read—they like to look.

DBR: Would you say then that it's like pornography?

GG: That is perhaps too strong a metaphor, but in a certain sense, yes. A monograph is, however, valid information, a collection of projects that otherwise might not have been published in one volume, so it's a good source of information.

Among our recent series are the guide-books initiated by Princeton Architectural Press, to which we are contributing the Gaudí guide. We often end up copublishing books; sometimes there are three or more publishers involved. Ten years ago we could only buy the rights to reproduce books initiated by other publishers, but now we have quite a lot to exchange. This had a lot to do with the political situation in Spain, because during the Franco regime our country was culturally and economically isolated. For instance, now we are producing an important book on new worldwide museums which will appear not only in Spain but also in the United Kingdom, the United States, France, Germany, and Japan. It is an original GG book, written by a Spanish author and printed in Spain, but it will appear in every country under the imprint of each partner. Due to our small Spanish print runs, we can only plan books like this if we get foreign partners.

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## The AIA Press

The AIA Press was established in 1920 as the Press of the American Institute of Architects. Instrumental in its founding was Charles Whitaker, then editor of the *AIA Journal* (now *Architecture*), who felt that the AIA needed to publish books as well as a magazine. One of its first publications was Louis Sullivan's *A System of Architectural Ornament*. The AIA Press was terminated by the board of directors in 1927, but the AIA continued to copublish with Wiley, McGraw Hill, and the University of Chicago. In 1981, the AIA ventured into book publishing once again, specializing in books about architectural practice management, and in 1985, it expanded to publish more books for a general market. In 1987 the AIA Press produced its first trade book,

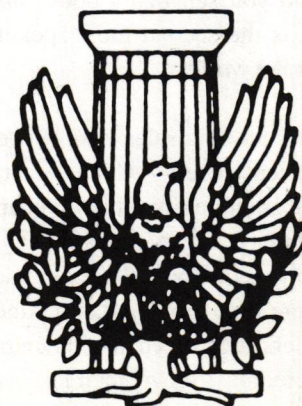
Roger K. Lewis's *Shaping the City*. The AIA Press considers its primary market to be practicing architects, including the fifty-six thousand members of the AIA, but believes that architects are also well served by books that educate the general public about their work.

The AIA Press focuses its list on design practice, technology, and architectural history. In addition, it produces books generated by AIA programs and policies (such as housing and health care). The AIA Press also works with the United States government, including the Historic American Buildings Survey and the Department of Energy. Since 1964, it has edited *Architectural Graphic Standards* (published by Wiley). Another venture is the republication of works from the AIA Archives collection, which contains more than 130,000 photographs, material on over 100,000 individual architects, and as many as one million items ranging from architectural correspondence to unpublished manuscripts to architects' papers.

The AIA Press stays away from fiction textbooks (although it would publish a historical survey), design theory, and guide books (which AIA local chapters publish). Nevertheless, the AIA Press is acutely interested in sales to general readers interested in architecture and has a commissioned sales force of eighteen who sell to bookstores, libraries, and book clubs. The AIA Press is currently working to expand into the international market, and has begun copublishing with foreign publishers. It is interested in translating and copublishing books in Japanese, German, Italian, French, and Spanish, as well as buying the rights to bilingual editions.

The AIA Press searches for authors who develop its own concepts, and reviews unsolicited manuscripts. In total, the Press sees 100 to 125 possible titles per year, of which 8 to 12 are published. The initial print run is usually three to six thousand copies per title. The minimum is two thousand, but can go as high as ten thousand.

Manuscript proposals are evaluated by two to six reviewers. The AIA Press maintains a pool of reviewers; some are on staff





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at the AIA, while others are in related professions (such as landscape architecture, engineering, and photography). After a proposal is accepted, it undergoes a stringent internal review; an editorial plan and a business plan are then developed. In many cases, the proposal still needs to be developed into a manuscript, which can take one to two years. The AIA Press is currently establishing an advisory board, which will meet twice a year to set editorial direction.

The AIA Press wants to promote what architecture is all about—namely, the idea that “architects are in the business to support civilization.” It tries to do this by publishing books that excite the public about architecture. The publisher, John Ray Hoke, Jr., believes Rizzoli has done an excellent job at this—its books are visually stimulating and exciting.

The AIA Press foresees greater use of automated production methods. It also anticipates changes in the architectural book market. Hoke expects the foreign market to increase as global markets become more accessible. The United States now provides 20–25 percent of the market for foreign publishers, but foreign sales account for only 5 percent of the U.S. market. Hoke foresees more bilingual publications, but expects that language will become less of a barrier, and that publishers will be able to produce more copies in English. Hoke thinks that American architects will eventually switch to the metric system, which will make the international distribution of technical books possible. And he also points out that we need to consider the Eastern bloc as a new market: “They have a desperate need for current information.” A new venture for will be the Annual International Architecture Book Fair to be held for the first time at the AIA National Convention and Design Exposition in Houston (May 18–22, 1990).

The AIA Press is as unique and diversified as the AIA, a mature organization that has led the practice of architecture for the last 133 years. We pride ourselves on a quality product. We want to be the first choice when somebody decides to publish in the field of architecture.

— John Ray Hoke, Jr.  
Publisher

### AIA BESTSELLERS:

***Architects Handbook of Professional Practice***

David Haviland, editor, 1988

***Guidelines for Construction and Equipment of Hospital and Medical Facilities***

***Hugh Newell Jacobsen, Architect***

Massimo Vignelli, editor, 1989

***Problem Seeking***

William Pena, 1987

## University of Chicago Press

The University of Chicago Press originated in 1892 as one of the University of Chicago's original divisions, along with teaching and research. The Press perceives its market to be specialists in all disciplines as well as educated general readers and tries to reach this audience with books a commercial publishing house might deem unprofitable. In architecture, they encourage titles that set buildings and architects in the context of social, cultural, or political history, and generally avoid technical titles for a professional audience and “appreciation” studies.

An acquiring editor is responsible for building the list through various networks of contacts, backlist authors, press advisers, promising junior scholars, and so forth. All manuscripts under serious consideration require two outside evaluations and the approval of the University Board of Publications. Quality control is maintained through these outside evaluations. In-house designers handle book format and design. The University of Chicago Press produces ten to fifteen titles per year in architectural

history and criticism. Books are not allowed to go out of print, but join an actively promoted backlist.

The University of Chicago Press had an extensive list of architecture books prior to the recent boom in architectural publishing, and therefore has not been directly affected by this boom. In the future, they foresee a need for more books on the relationship between politics, society, and architecture.

Chicago's lists are very broad. In architectural history, we have concentrated on regional studies, American and European material, and some Third World architecture, especially as it appears in the larger cultural and social context.

— Karen Wilson  
Architectural Editor

### UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS BESTSELLERS:

***American Building: Materials and Techniques from the Beginnings of the Colonial Settlements to the Present***

Carl W. Condit, 1983

***Chicago's Famous Buildings***

Ira J. Bach, 1980 (3rd edition)

***Chicago: Growth of a Metropolis***

Harold M. Mayer and  
Richard C. Wade, 1973

***The Chicago School of Architecture: A History of Commercial and Public Building in the Chicago Area 1875–1925***

Carl W. Condit, 1973

***John Soane:***

***The Making of an Architect***

Pierre de la Ruffinière du Prey, 1982

***Mies van der Rohe: A Critical Biography***

Franz Schulze, 1985

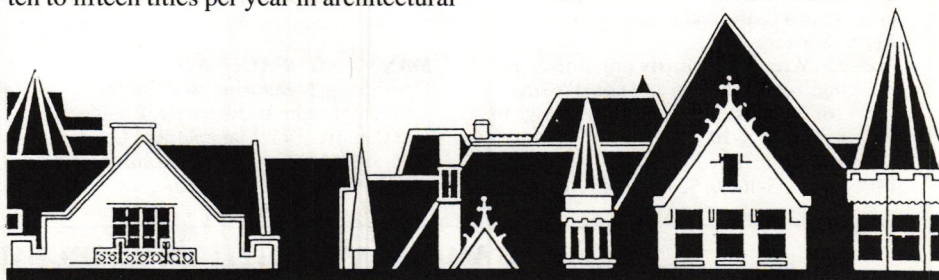
***Pueblo: Mountain, Village, Dance***

Vincent Scully, 1989 (2nd edition)

***The Robie House of***

***Frank Lloyd Wright***

Joseph Connors, 1984





## Bertelsmann Publishers

Berlin-based Bertelsmann Publishers produces the series *Bauwelt Fundamente*, documents and texts on 20th-century architecture and town planning. The 100th volume of this series will be published soon. They also publish the quarterly *Daidalos: Architektur/Kunst/Kultur*, and *Bauwelt*, the only architectural weekly published in a German-speaking country. The architectural editor is Ulrich Conrads.

Bertelsmann looks for authors but also accepts existing manuscripts. Professional experts such as structural designers or linguists help to judge these manuscripts. Conrads comments,

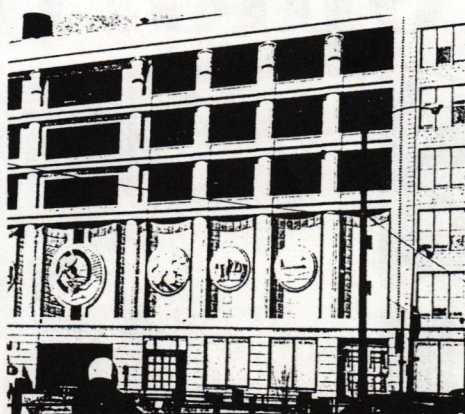
We have so far resisted publishing mere "picture books" and thus adding to the inflation of effects and optical betrayal. The uncritically produced flood of images is tending to cause uncritical imitation. Criticism is not being digested; that which does not fit in with current trends is not being read. We try to keep a certain continuity within our publications and to fight against rapid oblivion.

Bertelsmann accepts publications from foreign publishers and manuscripts by foreign authors. For the past decade, however, Conrads notes, "There have been very few translations of architectural books from German into English."

The actual boom in architectural publications surely is a reaction to the decline of architecture and town planning since 1960. But in contrast to the 1960s, when critical publications on architecture were best-sellers, such as Jane Jacobs's *Death and Life of Great American Cities*, today trendy publications or pleasing pseudo-theoretical volumes of compiled works as well as monographs on star architects appeal more to the reader's interest. (In former days it was considered naughty for architects to publish their collected works.) Books on the real problems of building in our times—town planning in the megaconurbations, housing for the masses, ecologically oriented building—find only a small, yet committed, public. Color photographs blur the urban misery.

—Ulrich Conrads  
Architectural Editor

# Design Frontiers



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This book gathers together for the first time a body of new writing in the emerging field of design studies. The essays assembled here address such topics as the relations among design, technology, and social organization; the historiography of design; and the application of rhetoric, semiotics, and phenomenology in interpreting and analyzing design.

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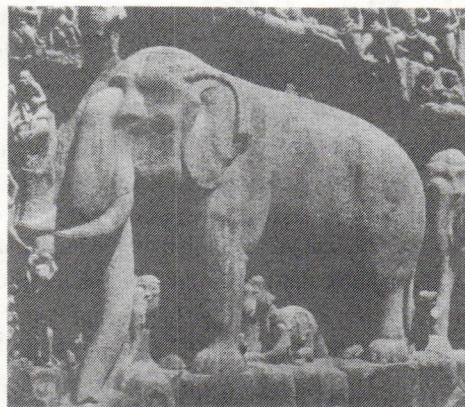
**Otto Wagner**

*Introduction and Translation by Harry Francis Mallgrave*

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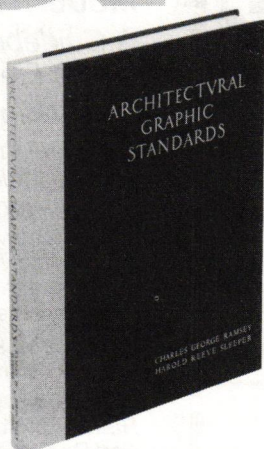
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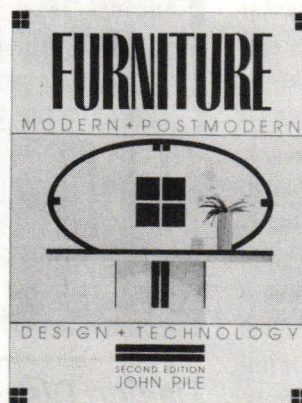
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## John Wiley & Sons

Founded in 1807, John Wiley & Sons is one of the oldest publishers in the United States. Wiley published works of literature and art criticism from 1814 until 1880, when they began to produce the technical books and textbooks for which they are now known. The architectural division of Wiley & Sons perceives its market to be architects in practice and students in architecture schools; builders, developers, engineering and other consultants, and students in those fields; libraries; and serious laypeople. Wiley concentrates on books that deal with the technical and business managerial needs of the practicing professional, and the requirements of college courses in design, drafting, and the technical aspects of practice (such as structures, mechanical and electrical engineering, lighting, acoustics, building economics, landscape and interior design). Wiley usually stays away from monographs and books in history, theory, and aesthetics.

Wiley selects books for publication in several ways. In some cases an editor identifies a concept or idea and solicits book proposals from likely authors; in other cases they produce spinoffs or repackaged titles derived from existing Wiley titles. They also receive unsolicited proposals. To ensure high-quality publications, proposals are reviewed by outside experts, and Wiley appoints an editorial board to review unsolicited materials. Manuscripts are scrutinized for conformance to initial proposal reviews, and may undergo an occasional second review by a new set of reviewers. Wiley produces twenty to twenty-five titles per year in architecture, with initial print runs averaging 2,000. Life press runs on some best-selling titles can run from 50,000 to as high as 150,000.

As for future changes, architectural editor Stephen Kliment predicts the growing computerization of the design firm, not only in such obvious areas as generating text, databases, and spreadsheets, but also in manipulating drawings

for design and drafting production (CADD). Accordingly, aside from publishing books about CADD, Wiley is working to eventually make the contents of some of its key references, such as *Architectural Graphic Standards*, available in an electronic format. They are currently converting the existing contents (as well as new material being created for the forthcoming *Architectural Graphic Standards* Subscription Update Service) to an electronic database. This stored database will then serve to simplify updating and as a basis for distribution to the market in floppy, CD-ROM, or other electronic medium. For the next two or three years, Wiley publications will continue to be in the format of the printed page only, but thereafter they hope to offer designers a choice of ordering *Architectural Graphic Standards* and its derivative products either as hard copy or in an electronic format.



Similarly, Wiley is working with consultants to develop standards for electronically storing the elements of drawings using a common "language" of levels, symbol management, and programming language (such as "LISP"), conventions to which everyone in the field, from designers to product manufacturers, will be free to conform.

"As these new publishing forms and formats evolve," states Kliment, "we see ourselves less and less as publishers of books, and more and more as suppliers of technical and management information to the profession and the schools, using whatever medium best meets the needs of that marketplace."

You have to see the boom in architectural publishing in context. The context is the prosperity of architectural and engineering firms during the building construction boom of the 1980s combined, oddly enough, with an even greater increase in the number of architects and architectural firms in practice. This has sharply increased competition among firms, which in turn has forced firms to sharpen their skills in such areas as construction materials and techniques, drafting speed and quality control, project and business management.

These demands have benefited publishers with lists in those areas. That is why updated classic titles such as *Architectural Graphic Standards* and the Parker/Ambrose series of simplified design guides continue to sell so well.

—Stephen Kliment  
Architectural Editor

### WILEY BESTSELLERS

*Architectural Graphic Standards*  
Charles Ramsey and Harold Sleeper,  
1988 (8th edition)

*Architectural Graphic Standards*  
(student edition)  
Charles Ramsey and  
Harold Sleeper, 1989

*Architectural Working Drawings*  
Ralph Liebing, 1990 (3rd edition)

*Fundamentals of Building Construction:  
Materials and Methods*  
Edward Allen, 1990 (2nd edition)

*Mechanical and Electrical  
Equipment for Buildings*  
Benjamin Stein and John Reynolds,  
1986 (7th edition)

*Simplified Engineering for  
Architects and Builders*  
Harry Parker and James Ambrose,  
1989 (7th edition)

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Cat = publish a catalogue  
A = carry antique books

P = publish own books  
est = date established

F = carry foreign books  
Arch = designer

## AUSTRALIA

**Adelaide University Union Bookshop**  
Union Building, University of Adelaide  
Adelaide 5000  
South Australia

80,000; F, est 1970, Arch: Robert Dickson.

**Architext**  
176 Bouverie Street  
Carlton, Victoria 3053

6,000; Cat, P, F, est 1981. Sponsored by the Royal Australian Institute of Architects.

**The Arts Bookshop**  
1067 High Street  
Armada, Melbourne 3143

20,000; Cat, F, est 1981, Arch: Lyon Lyon & Hilbert. Carry an extensive range including theory & criticism, film, & contemporary art.

## AUSTRIA

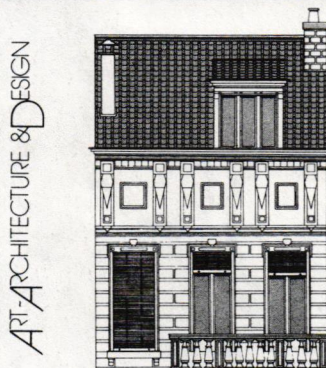
**Georg Prachner KG**  
Kärtner Strasse 30  
Vienna A1010

25,000; P, F, est 1931, Arch: Carl Mang. Sponsor exhibits.

**Kunstbuchhandlung Judith Ordner**  
Sonnenfelsgasse 8  
Vienna A1010

F, est 1982. Specialize in architecture, art, design, & photography of the 20th century.

## BELGIUM



**Copyright**  
**Art & Architecture Bookshop**  
Jakobijnenstraat 8  
Gent B-9000

7,500; Cat, F, est 1981, Arch: Patrick van Caekenberg. Renovated 19th-century house. Sponsor exhibits related to recent publications.

**Bramante Boekenhuis**  
Koepoortbrug 4  
Antwerp B-2000

20,000; F, est 1973. Renovated 16th-century house in the center of Antwerp. Sponsor lectures & exhibits. Postcards & scale models.

## CANADA

### ALBERTA

**Greenwood's Bookshoppe**  
10355 Whyte Avenue  
Edmonton T6E 1Z9

Cat, F, A, est 1970s. Located in a renovated historic district. A general bookstore featuring a selection of fine design publications.

**Audrey's Books**  
10702 Jasper Avenue  
Edmonton T5J 3J5

Cat, F, A, est 1960s. Renovated 3-story brick office building.

### ONTARIO

**The Architecture Bookstore**  
116 Third Avenue  
Ottawa K1S 2K1

2,000; Cat, F, est 1981, Arch: Robert Froom & Anthony Leaniry. Renovated house. Postcards, posters, & T-shirts.

**Ballenford Architectural Books**  
98 Scollard Street  
Toronto M5R 1G2

2,500; Cat, F, est 1979. Renovated house. Sponsor lectures & exhibits. Etchings & drawings.



## QUEBEC

**CCA Bookstore**  
1920 Rue Baile  
Montreal H3H 2S6

3,000; Cat, F, est 1989, Arch: Peter Rose. Located in the recently opened Canadian Centre for Architecture; carry a wide selection of French language books. Postcards, posters, & model kits.

## DENMARK

**The Student Bookshop**  
Arkitektskolen i Aarhus  
Nørreport 20  
Aarhus DK 8000

500; F, A, est 1984. Located adjacent to the cafeteria in the center of the school.

## ENGLAND

**The Art Book Company**  
18 Endell Street  
Covent Garden  
London WC2

300; Cat, O, F, A, est 1974, Arch: Hugh Pinkington Design Co. A small, personal store offering individual attention.

**The Design Council Bookshop**  
The Design Centre  
28 Haymarket  
London SW1Y 4SU

5,000; Cat, P, F.

**RIBA Bookshop**  
Finsbury Mission  
39 Moreland Street  
London EC1V 8BB

20,000; Cat, P, F, est 1966, Arch: Frederick Burn-Smith & Partners. Located within the Royal Institute of British Architects, a major

location for architectural exhibitions with a fine architectural library. Cafe on the 6th floor of the Institute (for members only). Postcards & posters. (RIBA also has branch bookshops in Bristol, Manchester, Nottingham, & Birmingham.)

**Shipley**  
**Specialist Art Booksellers**  
70 Charing Cross Road  
London WC2H 0BB

12,500 (including 2,000 architecture); Cat, F, A, est 1976. Located near Leicester Square in a building which has continuously housed a bookshop since 1889. Host book signings; provide title search services; display posters for current London exhibitions; publish monthly newsletter.

**The Triangle Bookshop**  
**at the Architectural Association**  
36 Bedford Square  
London WC1B 3EG

4,000; Cat, F, A, est 1978, Arch: Rick Mather. The Triangle Bookshop is a self-contained unit within the Architectural Association, which is located in a renovated house. Cafe. The AA sponsors a variety of lectures, films, & exhibits.

**A. Zwemmer Ltd.**  
24 Litchfield Street  
London WC2H 9NJ

30,000; Cat, P, F, A, est 1920s, Arch: Bill Latham (1987 redesign). Offer a wide selection of titles on the arts & architecture.

## FINLAND

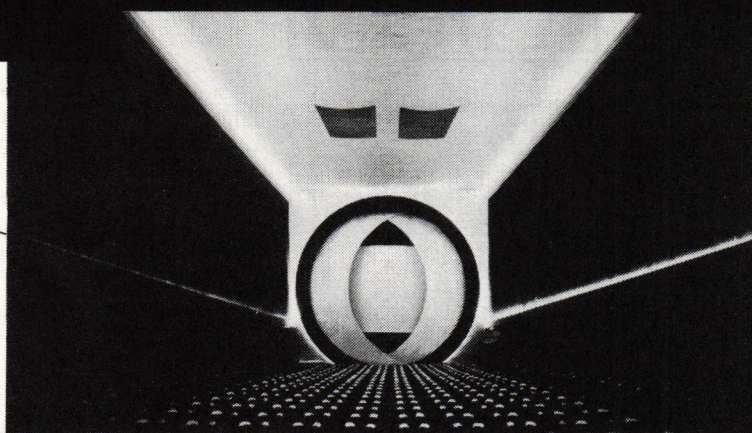
**Akateeminen Kirjakauppa**  
**(The Academic Bookstore)**  
Keskuskatu 1  
Pohjoisesplanadi 39  
Helsinki 00100

150,000; Cat, F, est 1893, Arch: Alvar Aalto (1969). Located in downtown Helsinki and home to the Café Alvar. One of the largest bookstores in Europe, with a wide selection of foreign books and architecture-related titles. Sponsor exhibits & readings. Postcards, posters, stationery, & newspapers.

**Rakennus Kirjakauppa**  
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The catalogue raisonné contains more than 1,000 images, documenting the enormous breadth and imagination of Oppenheim's oeuvre that included not only painting, drawing, and sculpture, but jewelry and clothing design as well. Copublished with PARKETT Publishers. Distributed by The MIT Press. 275 pp., 1,455 illus., 55 in color \$50.00



## WRITING ARCHITECTURE

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## FRANCE

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30,000; F, est 1945, Arch: Pierre Farcheux. Paris townhouse. "Still a center for any Paris bibliophile."

**Librairie Internationale Picard**

82 rue Bonaparte  
Paris 75006

10,000; Cat, P (Editions A. et J. Picard), F, A, est 1869. Postcards & posters.

**Librairie du Moniteur**

7 Place de l'Odeon  
Paris 75006

Cat, P, F. The only complete architectural bookstore in Paris. Postcards & posters.

## HOLLAND

**Art Book**

Prinsengracht 645  
Amsterdam 1016 HV

3,000; Cat, P, F, est 1978, Arch: Peter Sas. Located in a canal building; only bookshop in Amsterdam to specialize in architecture, art, & design titles.

**Opbouw Architectural  
& Antiquarian Booksellers**

Bergweg 60a  
Rotterdam 3036 BC

2,500; Cat, F, A, est 1987. Located in a private house (open Saturdays & by appointment); emphasize 20th-century titles in architecture and allied fields; provide title search services.

## ISRAEL

**Tolaat Sefarim  
(The Book Worm)**

30 Bazel Street  
Tel-Aviv 62744

1,500; F, est 1984, Arch: Uri Shaviv. Cafe, sponsor exhibits.



# ITALY

**Gius. Laterza & Figli**  
via Sparano 136  
Bari I-70121

7,000; Cat, P, A, est 1896, Arch: Antonio Cirielli. Laterza & Figli is an important publishing house in southern Italy featuring a large number of architecture, design, & urbanism titles; their offices are in the same building. Sponsor lectures. Postcards.

**Centro Di**  
1, Piazza dei Mozzi  
Florence

16,000; Cat, P, F, est 1968. Sponsor exhibits.

**Libreria Dedalo**  
viale G. Rossini, 20  
Rome 00198

3,000; Cat, F, A, est 1944. Renovated *palazzo*. Feature a highly specialized stock. Sponsor films & exhibits. Postcards & posters.

**L'Archivoltò**  
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Milan 20144

6,000; Cat, P, F, est 1970, Arch: Antonio Mone-stioli. Combination bookstore, warehouse, & gallery with an excellent selection of international books on the visual arts. Sponsor lectures & exhibits. Postcards & posters.

# JAPAN

**GA Gallery**  
3-12-14 Sendagaya Shibuya-ku  
Tokyo 181

1,000; P, F, est 1983, Arch: Makoto Suzuki. Bookstore and gallery.

**Nanyo-do Bookstore**  
1-21 Kanda Jimbo-cho, Chiyoda-ku  
Tokyo 101

10,000; Cat, P, F, A, est 1932, Arch: Shim Toki.

**Tokyo Book Center**  
3-12-14 Sendagaya, Shibuya-ku  
Tokyo 151

2,000; Cat, F, est 1965, Arch: Yukio Futagawa & Makoto Suzuki. Affiliated with A.D.A. Edita Tokyo, the publisher of GA, they are located on the first and second floors of the GA Gallery. Sponsor exhibits. Notecards, postcards, posters, & calendars.

# NEW ZEALAND

**Technical Books Ltd.**  
6 Morrow Street  
Auckland

300, F, A, est 1950. Renovated warehouse.

**Technical Books Ltd.**  
313 Barton Street  
Hamilton

150, F, A, est 1989, Arch: Avery & Leushke.

# NORWAY

**Erik Quist Bokhandel**  
Drammensun 16  
Oslo 0255

20,000; F, A, est 1905, Arch: Wilhelm Kreft. Postcards & stationery.

**Norsk Byggtjeneste, Bokhandelen**  
Haakon VII's Gate 5B  
Oslo 1, Vika

1,500; Cat, F, est 1968. One of the few specialty bookshops in Norway for architecture, building, & construction.

**Olaf Norlis Bokhandel**  
Universitets gt. 18-24  
Oslo 0162

70,000; F, A, est 1889. Located in the center of Oslo, opposite the National Gallery and near the National Theatre. A general bookstore with an excellent selection of art, film, & photography titles, as well as a used bookstore. Postcards, stationery, & office supplies.

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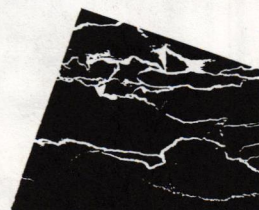
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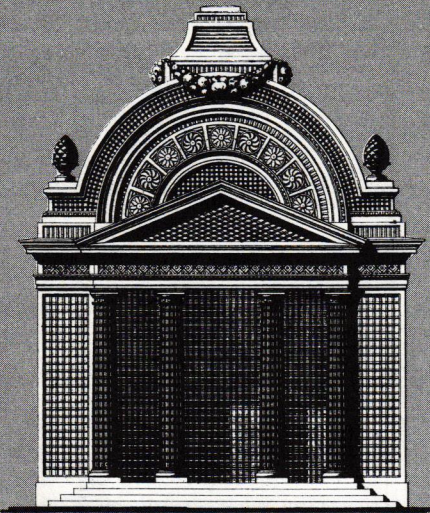
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Mark Jarzombek

## ON THE ART OF BUILDING IN TEN BOOKS

LEON BATTISTA ALBERTI

At long last a new translation of Leon Battista Alberti's *De re aedificatoria*! Whereas updated translations have been available in Italian, German, and Polish, the 1755 English translation by James Leoni has by now lost much of its serviceability. The excellent new translation by the team of Joseph Rykwert, Neil Leach, and Robert Tavernor is therefore most welcome.

Nor could they have devoted their time and effort to a more worthwhile cause. Not since Vitruvius had a work of such scale been devoted exclusively to the subject of architectural and urban theory. Alberti, drawing on both his wide-ranging humanist erudition and on practical experiences, deals with issues ranging from the mundane to the esoteric and from the practical to the theoretical, for example, choosing building materials, digging cisterns, constructing stairways, laying out cities, and designing houses, palaces, and public buildings. The importance of Alberti's treatise was immediately recognized. When the printing press was introduced in Italy in the 1480s, it was one of the first books to go through the machine; by mid-16th century, it had been translated into Italian, French, and Spanish.

Though *De re aedificatoria* was inspired by Vitruvius's *Ten Books on Architecture*, a full manuscript version of which had only been discovered in 1415 languishing in a monastery in St. Gallen, it should by no means be viewed as merely a Renaissance update of Vitruvius. *De re aedificatoria* is very much a product of Alberti's own mind. Whereas Vitruvius, for example, envisioned a type of architect-hero in the service of the emperor, Alberti saw the architect as a cautious player in a complex social and patronal system. Buildings can bring the architect "praise, remuneration, thanks and even fame," but they can also be "a testimony to his folly." *De re aedificatoria*,

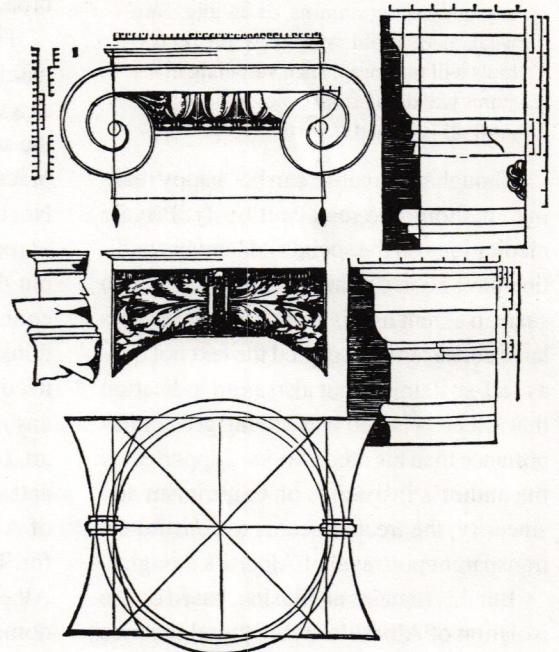
however, is not merely a textbook on the proper theory and practice of architecture; Alberti moves beyond the notion of an architect as a provider of services to the notion of architecture as a *speculum* into the inner workings of society. In Alberti's eyes, architecture assumes this role because its pretense at permanence hides an underlying fragility in the social fabric, which both natural and human forces threaten to destroy. Not only are there the obvious storms that "tear away and thrust out huge rocks from the highest cliff," but there are also the more insidious and less visible actions of water, mice, and vermin that can "mar and upset even the most carefully conceived plan of an architect." These perils, which can be studied and enumerated, are less dangerous than the one thing against which there is no defense, the ominous "negligence of man," the bane of architecture and ultimately, of society. Confronted by such destructive forces, the architect's thankless task is to represent and make visible society's ongoing struggle against these sinister forces. Architecture and architectural theory thereby gain a symbolic prominence in society that had never been so consciously expressed before.

The text of *De re aedificatoria* went through several versions, but one of the more complete manuscripts, owned by Lorenzo de' Medici, was probably the basis for the 1486 *editio princeps*, or first printing. Since the Rykwert, Leach, Tavernor translation does not include the Latin text, it does not deal with manuscript variations; for these, scholars must refer to the recent publication of the text edited by Giovanni Orlandi, whose critical edition of the work is unsurpassed. This aside, the new translation, which is meticulous and thorough, and closely follows the original phraseology, was well worth the wait.

The translation acquaints the reader with some of the esoteric but important philological debates surrounding Alberti's terms. Take, for example, the word *liniamenta*,

which is the subject of Book One of the treatise and appears in the first sentence, but whose precise meaning is not clear. Some scholars have defined it as "design," others as "measured drawing." Here it is translated as "lineaments." The translators allow the word to stand by itself with all its connotations rather than truncate its range of meaning. A suggested definition of the term is reserved for the book's glossary, where important words and concepts are discussed.

Though the translation follows the original closely, the text remains surprisingly readable. Indeed, the translators suggest the text was specifically written to be read aloud. The phrase *lege feliciter* (happy



Ionic capital—front, side, and plan; illustration from Italian translation of Alberti by Cosimo Bartoli (1550). (From *On the Art of Building*.)

reading), which is part of the title of the preface, indicates Alberti's intentions. The new translation thus enables English readers for the first time to actually enjoy Alberti's exposition, which occasionally verges on reverie. For example, in Book One, Alberti discusses the various qualities of a good site—its climate, location, and exposure to sun and air:

What of air? I might almost say that it takes pleasure in movement. For it is my view that movement dissipates the vapors that rise from the earth, and movement



consumes them. I would prefer, however, that these winds reach me broken down by intervening woods and mountains or exhausted by the length of their journey, and I would ensure that they do not pass over land where they might pick anything up and bring us anything harmful.

But there is no site less suitable for any building whatsoever than one that is hidden away in some valley; for (to pass over such obvious reason as that, being out of sight, it can enjoy no honor, while being denied the delights of view, it can have no charm) it will inevitably suffer the ruinous torrents of rain and swirling floods; by absorbing too much damp, it will always rot; and it will constantly exhale earthly mists so damaging to man's health. In such a place no man could retain any strength, as the spirit wilts, nor any body show stamina, as its joints are weakened; mold will grow on books; tools will rust away, and everything in the stores will decay from excess of moisture, until all is ruined.

Though this treatise can be "happy reading" it should be read cautiously. Private meditations on the social and human condition have been sublimated and disguised to such an extent in this work that interpreters have consistently accepted the text not only as self-sustaining, but also as an indication that Alberti viewed it as having greater importance than his other works. Supported by the author's insistence on empiricism and sincerity, the treatise seems to constitute a transparent portrayal of Alberti's thoughts.

But this remains an illusion, based on the isolation of Alberti's architectural theories from the larger context of his cultural philosophy, which can only be understood by studying all of his writings without giving preferential treatment to the treatises. I will mention only one example of how investigations can be misguided without a larger focus. It is an important example because it demonstrates Alberti's unexpected ambivalence toward architecture and its role in society. In the preface of *The Art of Building in Ten Books*, Alberti points out that the activities of the architect include such tasks as "cutting through rock, tunneling through mountains, filling valleys, restraining the waters of the sea and lake, and altering the course of rivers." But when we turn to the

neglected and untranslated dialogue *Theogenius*, Alberti interprets the same activities of "boring into mountains, building ships, rebuilding valleys and suspending granite from ceilings" as manifestations of mankind's folly, greed, and stupidity. *Theogenius*, like some other Albertian writings, fits uneasily into the expected mold of Renaissance thought. In the past, such texts—when discussed at all—were characterized in such discrediting terms as "irrational," "jocular," or "humanistic." *De re aedificatoria* certainly has an acknowledged important place in Alberti's oeuvre, but the nature of this importance cannot be properly assessed until the work finds its place within the context of Alberti's broader literary system.

The reading of *De re aedificatoria* remains incomplete, therefore, if we interpret as a whole what is only a part. But to avoid the seductions of the "happy reading" and practice a critical reading is no easy task. Not only does Alberti's work contain built-in roadblocks to a synthetic interpretation, but the nature of scholarly discourse runs counterproductive to Alberti's way of thinking. The tendency in the past has been to compartmentalize. Architectural historians read *De re aedificatoria*, historians of art, *De pictura*, sociologists, *Della famiglia*, and so forth. Within this system 70 percent of Alberti's writing remains unaccounted for. The most difficult part of understanding Alberti in a wider context is to give each domain its due, and at the same time to stress the ambiguities and paradoxes that characterize his thought.

I hope that this translation will awaken a new scholarly interest in Alberti and provide a starting point for more comprehensively conceived approaches to his writings. Only in that context will this translation reveal insights into Alberti's thought, which was viewed for so long as a "closed book."

ON THE ART OF BUILDING IN TEN BOOKS, Leon Battista Alberti, translated by Joseph Rykwert with Neil Leach and Robert Tavernor, MIT Press, 1988, 500 pp., illus., \$45.00.

Margaretta J. Darnall

## LE DÉSERT DE RETZ

DIANA KETCHAM

The Désert de Retz is among the most intriguing 18th-century French houses and gardens. The house, in the guise of a gigantic broken column, has inspired artists since its completion in 1781 and has been the subject of scholarly speculation since the 19th century. Only twelve miles from Paris, it was a country retreat of the stylish and eccentric Monsieur Racine de Monville (1734–1797). Monville was at the center of prerevolutionary artistic patronage—Etienne-Louis Boullée designed his Paris hotel in the Rue d'Anjou in the 1760s, he was an accomplished harpist, and Gluck and Monsigny sang their latest operas at his dinner parties.

In his preface to *Le Désert de Retz*, Olivier Choppin de Janvry, the French architect responsible for restoring the house and garden, recounts his thirty-year involvement with the magical Désert. In her excellent historical essay, Diana Ketcham portrays the decadent life and entertainment at the Désert de Retz before the Revolution and Monville's arrest in 1793. Ketcham also explains the garden as "Monville's personal encyclopedia of eighteenth-century learning," encompassing natural science, architecture, and history, and representing the cultures and flora of Europe, Africa, Asia, and America. The twenty garden follies—which included a habitable Chinese house, a gothic ruin, a Tartar tent, a pyramid, and a classical temple—were part of the encyclopedia and typical of late 18th-century French gardens. Little attention, however, is given to Monville's collection of rare and exotic plants, which were appropriated and sold or placed in state collections (along with his furnishings and art) by the revolutionary government in 1792.

Ketcham's essay is followed by Monville's sketches for the column and garden structures, the complete set of engravings originally published by Georges Le Rouge in 1785, and other historical drawings and



photographs that give a sense of the original context. The final section of the book features thirty-two recent photographs by British landscape photographer Michael Kenna. These photographs transcend the place itself and become works of art in their own right. The essay, together with the complete collection of historical images of the Désert de Retz and the newly commissioned photographs, creates an elegant publication, which is valuable both for its scholarship and sheer artistic delight.

The book's publisher, Arion Press in San Francisco, is renowned for its beautifully designed and well-made books. *Le Désert de Retz*, Arion Press's first foray into the field of architecture and landscape, comes

at the time when the house and garden are being restored and transformed into a center for landscape studies along the lines of Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, D.C. Although the \$375 price for the book is out of reach for many who are interested in the subject, most of the material will appear in a traveling exhibition planned in collaboration with the Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor in San Francisco.

LE DÉSERT DE RETZ, Diana Ketcham, Arion Press, 1990, 120 pp., illus., \$375.00, limited edition of 400 copies.

J. Duncan Berry

## THE FOUR ELEMENTS OF ARCHITECTURE

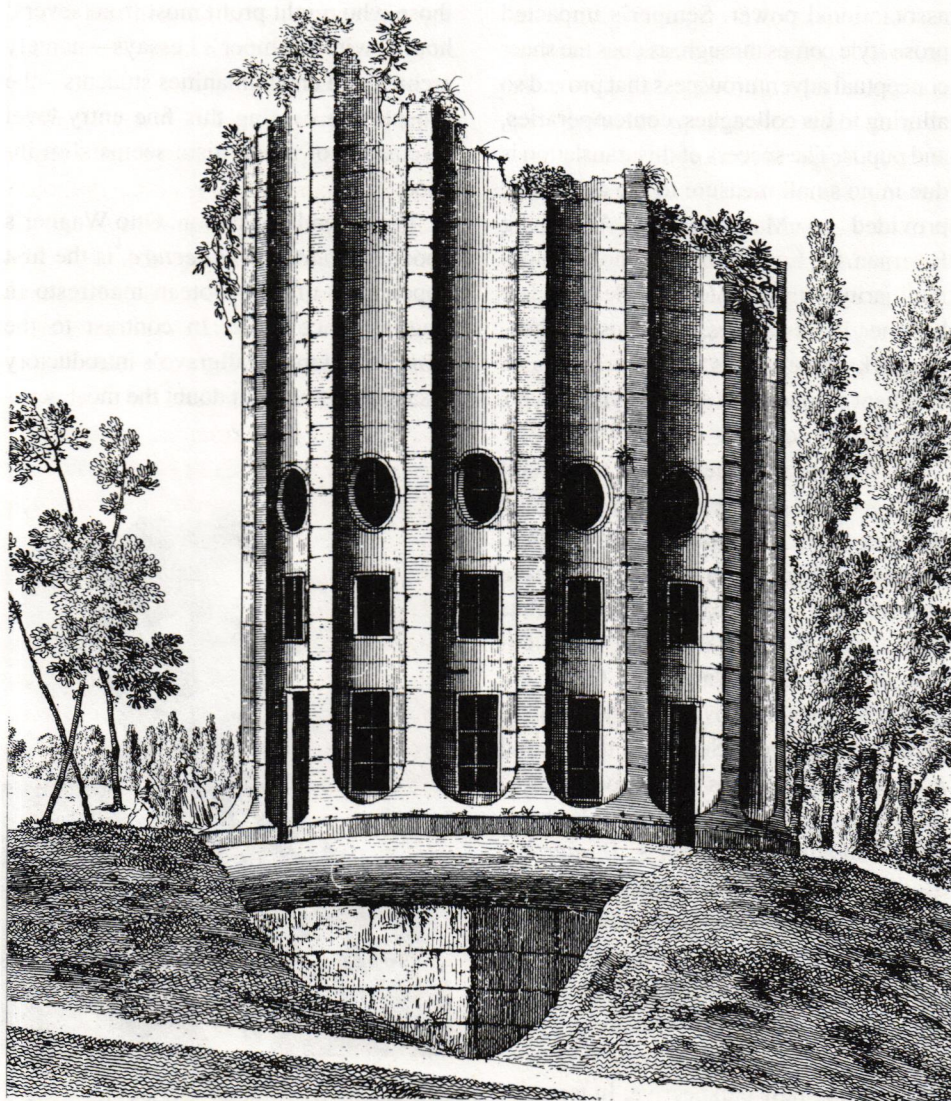
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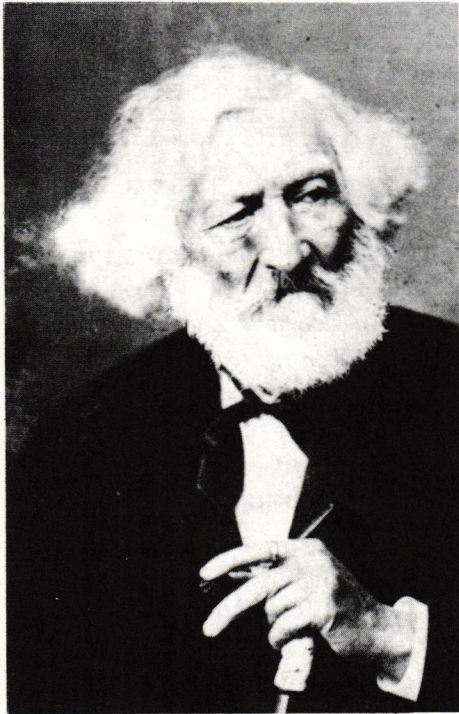
The independent release of these two fine translations of 19th-century Germanic architectural theory marks a milestone in architectural publishing and education. The newly available writings of Gottfried Semper (1803–1879) and Otto Wagner (1841–1918), each a towering presence in his generation, should do much to stimulate a higher, more responsible level of discussion about modernism. Each man profoundly influenced his contemporaries and bestowed upon the next generation an enriched world of forms and ideas. Now that their writings have been translated into English, a new generation can look afresh at many of the key values and concepts of the modernist sensibility. Today's readers will find much to admire and much that is retroactively explained about architectural thinking during the past century. Harry Francis Mallgrave, the main translator and scholar for each project, has breathed life into these writings, which, it is now clear, deserve more sustained attention.

The first volume, Semper's *The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings*, is a compilation and translation of his most perspicacious writings on architecture and culture published between 1834 and 1869. This publication is especially important because, except for a relatively brief Anglo-American interest in Semper about a century ago (which resulted in only two obscure, mediocre translations) and an occasional passage in the secondary literature, Semper's ideas have remained inaccessible to the English-reading world. To illuminate Semper's contributions and their significance, the reader is furnished with a brief essay by Joseph Rykwert and a more comprehensive introduction by Mallgrave.



Perspective of the Broken Column, centerpiece of Monville's garden; detail of engraving by Georges Le Rouge (1785). (From *Le Désert de Retz*.)





Gottfried Semper, 1878. (From *The Four Elements of Architecture*; Courtesy Institut für Geschichte und Theorie der Architektur, ETH-Hönggerberg.)

Among Semper's many essays, the following were chosen for inclusion: (1) Semper's first, and arguably his most passionate, publication dedicated to the study and interpretation of antique polychromy; (2) his subsequent (1851) extension of these arguments entitled *The Four Elements of Architecture*; (3) his engaging review of the Great Exhibition of 1851 entitled *Science, Industry and Art*; (4) preliminary ideas for and selected passages from his two-volume, unfinished magnum opus, *Der Stil*; (5) and his final publication—which his sons considered to contain the spine of the unwritten last volume—the 1869 lecture *On Architectural Styles*.

These essays, together with Mallgrave's introduction, compose the most effective introduction to the scope and relevance of Semper's architectural theory currently available. An ideal entrée for the uninitiated and the scholar alike, this publication is sure to demonstrate what has long been recognized in the German-speaking world: that Semper's penetrating reading of historicist culture was pivotal for the emergence of the many sensibilities we recognize as "modern." For the generation that unraveled the

knot of historicism before World War I, as well as for the generation that sliced right through it immediately thereafter, Semper's message has not faded for those interested in understanding the nature and meaning of the artistic act and its historical significance.

Semper's writing is notoriously resistant to the convenient paraphrase, and it is almost impossible to quote him in any kind of context. In a word, Semper's arguments are uniformly "circumloquacious." Mallgrave's superb translation is clearly the result of hundreds of hours of mordant metalinguistic labor; it is a compliment to say that it uniformly achieves that uncanny imbalance in Semper's own idiosyncratic German between a latent frustration with the written word and a potent, wide-ranging associational power. Semper's impacted prose style comes through, as does the sheer conceptual adventurousness that proved so alluring to his colleagues, contemporaries, and pupils. The success of this translation is due in no small measure to the assistance provided to Mallgrave by Wolfgang Herrman, the London-based scholar whose familiarity with and interest in Semper date back nearly six decades, and whose elemental work on Semper's theory provides an excellent second-level study to Mallgrave's introductory account.

In such an overwhelmingly successful effort, it might seem petty to point out small flaws or offer suggestions after the fact. However, the reader should be aware that a new standard of Semper scholarship has been forged in Central Europe—particularly in Switzerland and East Germany. This scholarship has overcome the implicit dichotomy between Semper's theory and practice that weakens Mallgrave's introductory account. Peter Wegmann's excellent analysis of Semper's *Winterthur Stadthaus* and Heidrun Laudel's engaging study of his theoretical activity have effectively redefined the nature and role of theory in Semper's contribution, seeking a "holistic" solution. Unfortunately, Mallgrave appears not to have benefited from this exciting new perspective. In terms of the selections offered, one can only say that not enough was translated. Because a trans-

lation of "all" of *Der Stil* is unlikely, it is especially lamentable that a more wide-ranging selection of passages from that work was not chosen. Although the passages leading up to his famous *Bekleidungstheorie* are included, missing are his exquisite discussions of the origins of the handicrafts, his poetic passages concerning the legibility of an entire culture in its pottery, and his account of the "natural" treatment of stone—a key facet of his theory that elucidates his practice as well as his *Kritik* of the orders. Also disturbing in a book of this price (\$49.50) is the poor paper quality and resulting lack of definition in the illustrations; it is unfortunate to have to pay as much for a basically nonvisual book as for a more lavish coffee-table volume. For those who might profit most from several hours with Semper's essays—namely architecture and humanities students—the prospect of owning this fine entry-level discussion of modernism seems slim indeed.

The second translation, Otto Wagner's epochal *Modern Architecture*, is the first appearance of this protean manifesto in English since 1902. In contrast to the Semper volume, Mallgrave's introductory essay here is without doubt the most pene-



Otto Wagner, portrait by Gottlieb Kempf-Hartenkamp, 1896. (From *Modern Architecture*; Collection, Historisches Museum der Stadt Wien.)



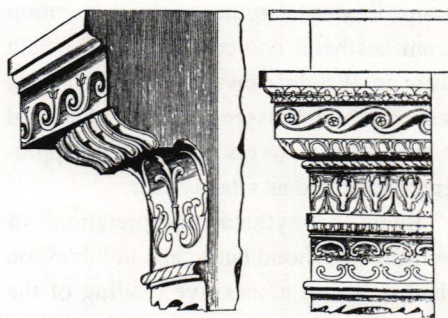
trating discussion of the subject available. In addition, great attention has been lavished upon both the design and execution of this book, endowing it with exquisite ornamental period details and a handsome typeface. Such a well-crafted book, regardless of its contents, is rare; but it is precisely the marriage of form and content here that both delights and instructs. Even the choice of papers of different colors (a warm creamy paper denotes the "historical" text, while a whiter one indicates the "contemporary" introduction) testifies to the sensitivity of the editors and the designer, Laurie Haycock.

Beyond the physical differences, the Wagner book also displays a more overtly scholarly approach to the text. For instance, throughout the Semper translation, original illustrations are interspersed with additions selected by the editor without much sensitivity to the autonomy of the original publication, whereas in the Wagner translation the text is primary, and ancillary material follows in appendices. This is a welcome approach for those interested in undertaking a close reading of the text and its evolution, as the variations from edition to edition are bracketed and provided conveniently in footnotes. In terms of the success of the book as a manifesto and its ultimate impact on such later classics in theory as Le Corbusier's *Towards a New Architecture*, the removal of the visual material from each page effectively lessens the potency and immediacy of Wagner's message and is a negative feature of this editorial tidiness. The most unfortunate editorial decision was the consistent use of "the Modern Movement" instead of Wagner's own "the Moderns"; in choosing this particular locution, the editors have opted for an outdated conventionalism, reading retroactively the full weight of a later generation's "Movement" into Wagner's temperate polemics.

But despite these relatively minor problems, both texts are superbly conceived for many levels of readership. In this respect, the significance each book holds for future architectural publication deserves special mention. *The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings* marks the second

installment in a new series titled *Res Monographs in Anthropology and Aesthetics*, issued by the venerable Cambridge University Press. Edited by Francesco Pellizzi, this series will undoubtedly share the same adventurous spirit and meticulous research that marks the absorbing interdisciplinary activity of the parent publication, the magazine *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics*.

The Otto Wagner translation is a pathfinder publication in a new series the Getty Center is preparing. Entitled *Texts and Documents* and edited by Julia Bloomfield, Kurt Forster, and Thomas Reese, this series promises to be a timely and important contribution to architectural education and history. The dust jacket lists several books currently in preparation, all epochal works in the history of architectural theory, each to be translated and given a scholarly introduction. The Getty Center is to be lauded for seeking to unite the most accomplished contemporary scholars with important documents in their areas of specialization. The result will no doubt enable humanists and architectural educators alike to assign students readings from books that have exercised a palpable impact on the built environment.



THE FOUR ELEMENTS OF ARCHITECTURE AND OTHER WRITINGS, Gottfried Semper; Harry Francis Mallgrave and Wolfgang Hermann, translators; Cambridge University Press, 1989, 314 pp., illus., \$49.50.

MODERN ARCHITECTURE: A GUIDE-BOOK FOR STUDENTS IN THE FIELD OF ART, Otto Wagner; Harry Francis Mallgrave, translator; Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities (distributed by University of Chicago Press), 1989, 185 pp., illus., \$29.95, cloth; \$14.95, paper.

Robert Twombly

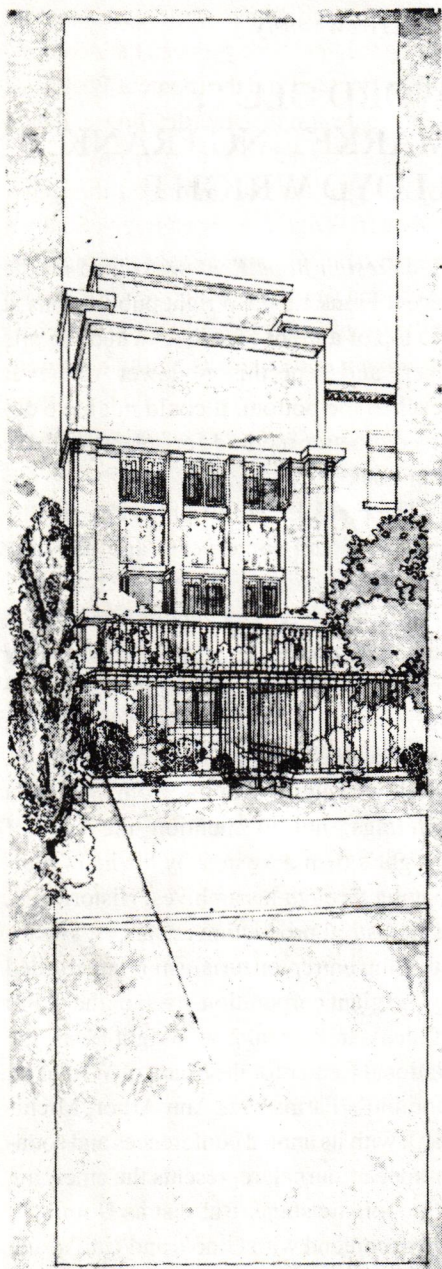
## WORD GLUT: MARKETING FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT

Had *Design Book Review* stacked all the recent Frank Lloyd Wright publications at the top of a flight of stairs, kicked the pile over, and sent this reviewer whatever reached the bottom, it could not have devised a better method for selecting these four books.

The Frank Lloyd Wright cottage industry that began some years ago has now become an assembly-line production, generating not only books, but also T-shirts, tableware, posters, and rugs—among many endearing collectibles. In addition, there are the numerous high-finance transactions based on the pilfering for profit of lamps, windows, and furniture from Wright's buildings, not to mention the sale of Wright's own drawings by his heirs rummaging through his archives. Historically, as industrial production advances, swash-buckling entrepreneurialism is superseded by the giant corporation, even in the realm of ideas. In the realm of Wright ideas, the National Center for the Study of Wright (at Domino's Farms near Ann Arbor, Michigan), with its annual conferences and soon-to-appear journal, represents the emerging oligopolistic stage. But just as Domino's has to contend with Gino's and Uno's, and the Pizza King himself with Barbra Streisand, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the other wealthy collectors, so does the National Center for the Study of Frank Lloyd Wright still have its scholarly competitors. Monopoly does not yet control the board; cottage producers are still in the game. Although the four books under review are part of the mad scurry to slurp at the Wright publishing trough before the market runs dry, they nevertheless have their virtue as artifacts, revealing trends in scholarship and academic entrepreneurialism that now characterize Wright studies.

To those of us at the bottom of the stairs, which books reach ground floor hardly





Perspective, project for his own house, Goethe Street, Chicago; Frank Lloyd Wright (1911). (From *The Nature of Frank Lloyd Wright*; Courtesy of The Frank Lloyd Wright Memorial Foundation.)

matter, because in addition to specific content, it is packaging strategy and career building that captures our attention.

A more disparate assortment of books is difficult to imagine. Two are collections of essays: one the partial proceedings of a University of Chicago conference commemorating the Robie House's 75th anniversary (give or take a year) in 1984; the second the exhibition catalogue for "Frank Lloyd Wright In the Realm of Ideas," organized by the Scottsdale (Arizona) Arts

Center Association and the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation (herein known as "the cult") for a 1988–1990 six-city tour. The third book is a facsimile edition of Wright's *Modern Architecture* (1931), and the fourth reproduces the texts of 72 of 289 Wright talks taped at the Taliesin Fellowship between 1948 and 1959, accompanied by two cassettes containing 13 of the 72, plus one not printed.

The only one of these four publications not totally or partially indebted to "the cult" is *The Nature of Frank Lloyd Wright*, eight revised papers from the Chicago conference, of which essays by Neil Levine and Thomas Beeby stand out. In a brilliant discussion of the eight homes Wright built or projected for himself from 1889 to 1937, Levine discovers the "changing concept of architecture as an art of representation." Wright's conventional image of shelter, stated at Oak Park in traditional design language, was transformed into a more personal image of shelter conceived at Taliesin West as an earthenware pot, that is, as a union of natural and historical representations, which Levine maintains characterized in varying ways *all* of Wright's post-war work. By focusing on the *content* as opposed to the *quality* of the late commissions, Levine's argument shifts attention from aesthetic choices—some of which were not Wright's anyway—that have been summarily dismissed as proof of an old man's failings, to his *ideas*, which apparently remained as vital as ever.

Beeby's "mythical interpretation" of Wright's boyhood landscape involves, on the one hand, a sensitive reading of the embodiment of "home," "shelter," and "place" in prairie houses, somewhat akin to Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*, and, on the other hand, a beautifully lyrical evocation of the Wisconsin countryside near Spring Green. On the level of myth and suggestion, the connections between the two remain undemonstrated, but this does not diminish the sheer loveliness of Beeby's presentation.

Joseph Connors's useful summary of Wright's views on nature and machinery does not expand our knowledge, while Julia

Meech-Pekarik's detailed look at the importance of Japan and its prints is long on information, but short on ideas. In contrast Gwendolyn Wright discusses Wright's relation to the "public realm," breaking interpretive ground by ably demonstrating both his grasp of contemporary cultural and social issues and his attempts to address them through design. She helps demolish myths of Wright as an "isolated theorist" and a bulldozing egomaniac, but errs in suggesting that his public commitment waned in the 1930s.

Disappointing are the essays by David Van Zanten and Donald Hoffman. Van Zanten's subtitle, "Wright's Early Style as a Communicable System," refers to modular assembly. But in stressing how it was not well enough understood by other architects rather than its integral properties, we are left to judge the system by the failures of others, not according to its inherent strengths and weaknesses. Hoffman's romantic view of the inspirational potential of nature echoing in Wright (and in Sullivan, Emerson, and Thoreau) rephrases ancient homilies.

Weak essays from longtime Wright scholars with good track records can be shrugged off as lapses, but should not excuse the more insalubrious aspects of this publication. Larzar Ziff is eloquent—insofar as this nonliterary reviewer can judge—on "The Prairie Style in Literary Culture," which, as Caroline Donovan Professor of English Literature at Johns Hopkins and author of the highly regarded *American 1890s*, he is more than qualified to discuss. But when he comes to "and the Prairie Style of Frank Lloyd Wright," he is tongue-tied, giving the theme only half a page in his twelve-page essay. Having sketched what "prairie" had come to mean and how it had been used in American literary history, he poses two very good questions: Did the "prairie" style grow from previous meanings, and did it validly attach itself to its locale? His answer, simply put, is yes, never mind the proof.

His few lines on Wright end by noting that whereas Ziff formerly thought that writers had led artists into the "American Renaissance," he now believes the opposite



because "Wright showed them [the writers] the way." But how would Ziff know? Nothing in his essay suggests familiarity with Wright beyond recognition that he is currently "hot." If Ziff did not previously know that Wright had led writers into the "American Renaissance," how did he find out? Has he been reading architectural history, which, as we say, is not his field? No evidence of that. Or has he done research on this important issue? Ziff does not say; his sources remain secret. Even though he was evidently unprepared to reveal his sources, he was nonetheless invited to the conference (allegedly an occasion for sharing) and was published in the book. Would it be too cynical to suggest that his inclusion adds clutter, "dimension," and sales potential (though not, as it turns out, insight)? Ziff's acceptance of the assignment despite being unqualified to broaden our knowledge illustrates the lure of Wright's coattails.

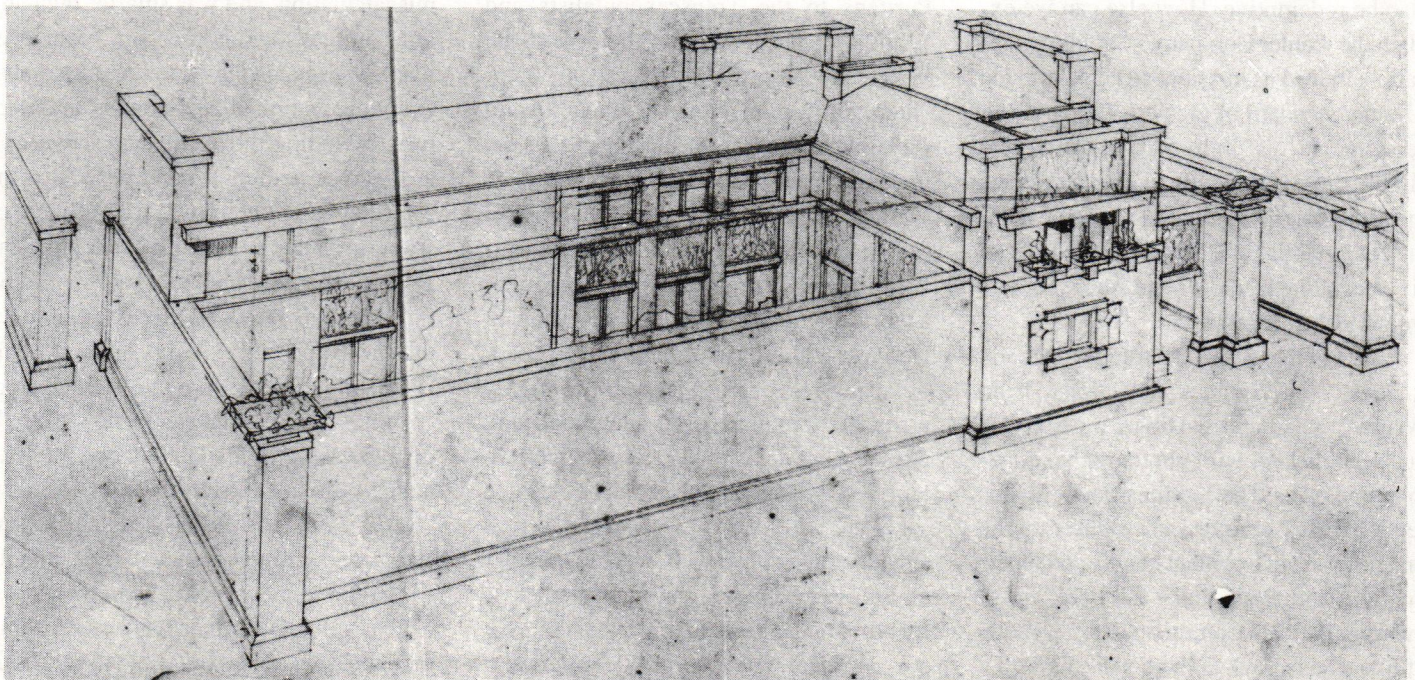
And then there is Vincent Scully, dragged out again to write yet another introduction. Scully first summarizes the essays, in case we should be too dense to grasp their true import for ourselves. He then treats us to Olympian, but tired, observations on the

mediocrity of Wright's cult and another plug for that "younger architect" Robert Venturi. Scully resorts to the usual gooey prose—"The Robie House rises, heavy as a mountain, buoyant as an airplane, [in which] we are at the heart of a mystery: giants, children, and free"—and, of course, lets us in on THE FLAW in the book—none of the authors paid attention to Wright's many borrowings from other architects and civilizations. But not to worry. Scully offers, "as a complement to the other essays . . . a stenographic outline of Wright's marvelous condensations," a listing of twenty-three times Wright borrowed.

The real flaw here, however, is Scully's assumption that his vision was Wright's vision. How can we be sure that Wright actually "grafted" the mask of the Mayan rain god Tlaloc on the entrance of the Charnley house, or that in the 1902 Huertley residence he "adapted" Lutyens's one-year-old Deanery Gardens, or that the Guggenheim Museum "recalls Mono's stairway in the Vatican"? Similarity in form or detail is not proof of historical influence. Until it is demonstrated that reproductions of Deanery Gardens, for example, appeared

in the United States architectural press during the brief time between their completion in England and the moment Wright sat down to design the Huertley house, it cannot be said—and even then only tentatively—that the one informed the other. Although Wright borrowed freely, Scully's "stenographic outline" is only assertion, not proof, and it is an all-too-common example of the way architectural history is written. If anything it demonstrates Scully's immodesty in presuming to rescue the book from failure (is this the proper function for an introduction?) by flaunting his knowledge, and in his self-boosterism, claiming that his thirty-year-old *Frank Lloyd Wright*, written for the Braziller series on masters of modern architecture, had developed the stenography "in detail." Nothing in that book is developed in detail, nor did it ever contribute substantially to scholarship, and it is hardly the font of all Wright wisdom, as Scully has more than once implied. Although much has been written since 1960 on the matter of influences on Wright, Scully cites no one but himself. Fortunately, active scholars continue this investigation.

The presence of Ziff and Scully in *The*



Aerial perspective, project for his own house, Fiesole, Italy; Frank Lloyd Wright (1910). (From *The Nature of Frank Lloyd Wright*; Courtesy of The Frank Lloyd Wright Memorial Foundation.)



*Nature of Frank Lloyd Wright*, the one with no, the other with no new, ideas on Wright, works to the mutual advantage of author and publisher. Big names sell books and lend prestige; and big names, especially from outside a field or inactive on its sidelines, can easily maintain professional visibility these days by climbing on the Wright bandwagon. Association with academic stars can also speed mobility for less celestial scholars: Did it actually require three assistant and associate professors to edit a book with fewer than two hundred pages, no bibliography, an index restricted to proper names, and an introduction written by someone else? Of the thirteen people named on the title pages, five are getting a free ride.

The second essay collection, *Frank Lloyd Wright In the Realm of Ideas*, excepting Narciso Menocal's and Jack Quinan's contributions, illustrates different but equally dreary aspects of today's Wright literature. This book catalogues an exhibition sponsored by the Kohler Company and the Whirlpool Corporation, whose chief executive officers plug their firms in the opening pages. Association with culture is more than commercially valuable—it can also be redemptive. How else can we explain the Kohler Company's "abiding obligation, indeed its mission" to help "provide a higher standard of gracious living for all economic levels" in light of its thirty-year (1934–1964), frequently violent resistance to unionization, which was condemned by the National Labor Relations Board after a six-year strike by the United Auto Workers from 1954 to 1960?

Part 1 of the catalogue, titled "Ideas and Images," intersperses selections from Wright's talks and writings, most previously published, with photographs, drawings, and plans. The 115 illustrations in this section (many in color and available for the first time) are of excellent quality and reproduction, and alone make the book worth owning. Part 2, "Commentaries," consists of five essays. Jack Quinan's discusses the 1893 Chicago context in which Wright opened his practice and selects industrialization, the question of style, and character-

istics of the architectural profession as important factors influencing the neophyte. As a complement to Gwendolyn Wright's essay discussed above, it illustrates the careful attention now being paid to a broader environmental context, a useful corrective to earlier behaviorist approaches in which Wright evolved in a class by himself, and to determinist interpretations that treated him as the inevitable culmination of a line of development conditioned only by architecture itself. Quinan's work is a useful building block in reconstructing that emerging contextual edifice.

However helpful the essay, it is overshadowed by the sheer virtuosity of Menocal's analysis of "Wright's Concept of Democracy: An American Architectural Jeremiad." Menocal defines "concept" as "an idea that is basic, indwelling, and elemental to the point of lacking in parts"; "jeremiad" is the sense of signifying "a covenant with a higher order—divine or natural—for the purposes of attaining to perfection, or to the utopia." Together the two emerge as Wright's fundamental personal stirring and his architectural goal, a motivating/beckoning force that Menocal traces through American history from the Puritans to the Transcendentalists and Whitman. This tradition helped shape Wright and helped him understand Victor Hugo, Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, Edward Bellamy, Silvio Gesell, and Henry George, the principal conceptual contributors to Wright's personal jeremiad. He attempted to give form to this jeremiad in the Taliesin Fellowship and Broadacre City, the former a literal manifestation of utopian social objectives, the latter a utopian political approach to real designs for real clients. By using the jeremiad as an analytical tool, Menocal has developed a holistic interpretation in which actual projects, utopian schemes, and literary work are woven as strands in a seamless web. As with his work on Sullivan, Menocal has uncovered those rock-bottom existential truths that unite the metaphysical with the material essence of the man into an organic whole. There is no finer American architectural historian practicing today.

It is a shame that Menocal and Quinan are so badly served by the three remaining essays, all written by associates of the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation (the Scottsdale-based heirs to Wright's practice, home, archives, and legend: the institutional locus of "the cult"). Aaron Greene, formerly a Taliesin Fellow and Wright's 1950s West Coast representative, discusses principles of organic architecture. He illustrates these principles, which appear to be "nature's logic," the grid system, the priority of plan, and a personal "grammar," with commissions he worked on or knows about. E. T. Casey, board member of the foundation and education director at the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture, writes on structural engineering and construction technology. And Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, foundation archivist, provides a personal sketch of Wright from 1924 until he died in 1959.

Aside from some semiamusing anecdotes and a few tidbits on design, the only reason to bother with Pfeiffer's essay—the other two can be disregarded—is to peek at the current state of the cult. Wright is still regarded as the harassed genius, who never made a mistake, a bad design or a technical miscalculation, and was smarter than any other architect—indeed person—who ever lived. Wright also invented or anticipated every innovation in 20th-century architecture (including those still undiscovered), and learned nothing from anyone but himself (maybe a little from Louis Sullivan) or from anything but nature (and Japanese prints), yet he was hounded all his life by those bureaucratic and professional dummies who opposed his every move. All this is old hat—myths Wright himself created.

What is new is the canonization of Ol-givanna Wright, his late widow. Pfeiffer never calls his master "Wright," always "Mr. Wright," indicating his holier-than-us status, and until recently it was absolutely forbidden to mention his human frailties. But now that Ol-givanna has written about them herself, it is permissible to recall his jealousy, anger, impatience, and, indeed, downright meanness on occasion. (No negative story can be told, however, unless



he told it first.) Over the years Olgivanna cured him, eliminated his flaws, so that in the end Wright regained his original state of perfection. His negative characteristics had developed during the tough days from the 1914 destruction of Taliesin (his "mistress," Mamah Borthwick, is still never mentioned) until some time in the early 1930s after he met Olgivanna. But Olgivanna was not content merely with therapy; she was actually responsible for his genius.

Pfeiffer attributes Wright's creative outburst of 1935 to 1939—the Usonian House, Fallingwater, Johnson Wax, Taliesin West, Wingspread—solely to "the marriage and the Taliesin Fellowship," which, of course, was basically Olgivanna's show. "Like Mrs. Wright they [select fellows] served as full partners in aspects of his work." Far from Wright making her someone, she actually made *him* someone. He saved him from himself, got him on his feet, and did much of his designing. Clearly he deserves her new, godlike status, which Wright himself recognized. Pfeiffer quotes Wright (in one of those myriad, undocumented statements that have always peppered the cult's writings), "We blend, Olgivanna. We are one." Now that she—always Mrs. Wright—is dead, the cult has elevated her to the godhead, wrapped in that insipid hagiography that was once reserved only for her husband. Frank Lloyd Wright's cult is alive and well and living in Arizona.

The two remaining books are also cult products and can be treated quickly. *Modern Architecture: Being the Kahn Lectures for 1930* (1931) was one of Wright's last, reasonably jargon-free publications. It is the most coherent statement of his philosophy available in his own words, a book well worth reading and keeping. A measure of this is that *Modern Architecture* has been continuously in print since 1953, when Wright republished it (along with *Two Lectures on Architecture* [1931], *Organic Architecture* [1939], and four short pieces) as *The Future of Architecture*, the best ensemble of his mature writing. So great is the clamor for instant, even ersatz, Wright artifacts, however, that a respectable university press can release something that

differs from what is already available only in its Wright-designed cover (no dust jacket provided), permitting Pfeiffer to claim in an introductory note that it has been "long out of print." Technically this may be true, but *Modern Architecture*, contained within *The Future of Architecture*, has been around for the past thirty-seven years.

Although edited by Pfeiffer, *Frank Lloyd Wright: His Living Voice* has its moments. Even in his eighties, Wright could get off good one-liners and show flashes of brilliance, like his wonderful 1955 explanation of the Usonian Automatic House. His comments on architecture—especially his own architecture—are often insightful, but his views on other subjects (such as socialized medicine, ancient Roman haircuts, women artists, and Sarah Bernhardt's dietary practices), although perhaps useful to a biographer, are not so useful to the rest of us. Some of his opinions are charming, but many are uninformed, naive, and silly: "I doubt if you could find a thing in France before . . . Baron Haussmann's mansard that was not Italian"; "Communism is the antithesis of anarchy. And of course, communism is for child-like individuals"; "this is an *American* proceeding, building [your] own house." Being a great architect apparently qualified Wright to discuss anything, so Pfeiffer edits nothing out: every word is sacred. Even reasonable passages add little to our knowledge and understanding of Wright in large part because he published so much himself, leaving these little dribbles to lose themselves in the eddies of his own, huge, literary stream.

And that is one of the new problems facing Wright scholars these days. *His Living Voice* is at least the sixth cult anthology of Wright's verbal snippets published in the 1980s (and frankly, I've now stopped counting). Others outside Taliesin have added even more. In addition, there is an unending stream of new volumes of his drawings. Whatever is valuable is virtually buried in this avalanche of words and pictures. In the 1960s the Taliesin cult tried to keep Wright to itself by denying access to his archives and refusing permission to publish anything to which it held copyright,

naively attempting to censor interpretations contrary to its own. That having failed, it sold the archives (copies of everything, we are assured) to the Getty Museum, put Wright's original drawings on the auction block, secured copyright to whatever of his it could, and today floods the market with trivia, selling for profit what it once withheld from nonprofiteering scholars.

And, in contrast to the 1960s, when few historians were interested in Wright, the profession today is enamored. Intrinsically, this is not bad, but in the proliferation of exhibitions, conferences, picture books, and monographs, little of merit has surfaced. Except for a few excellent additions to the literature, like Levine's, Menocal's, and others mentioned here, professors of university courses on Wright assign the same material they used years ago: Hitchcock, Manson, Smith, Twombly, and of course, The Man himself. Perhaps when the speculative bubble bursts—as eventually it will—scholars in their pursuit of understanding Wright can return to sorting wheat from chaff, and essence from trivia, although that task will have been made more difficult by the accumulation of what is not important.

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THE NATURE OF FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT, Carol R. Bolon, Robert S. Nelson, and Linda Seidel, editors, University of Chicago Press, 1988, 194 pp., illus., \$29.95.

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT IN THE REALM OF IDEAS, Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer and Gerald Nordland, editors, Southern Illinois University Press, 1988, 192 pp., illus., \$24.95 paper; \$42.50 cloth.

MODERN ARCHITECTURE: BEING THE KAHN LECTURES FOR 1930 (facsimile edition), Frank Lloyd Wright, Southern Illinois University Press, 1987 [first published 1931, Princeton University Press], 114 pp., illus., \$29.95.

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT: HIS LIVING VOICE, Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, editor, California State University Press, 1987, 207 pp., illus., \$25.95; includes two cassette tapes.



Patrick Meehan

## FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT: AN INDEX TO THE TALIESIN CORRESPONDENCE

ANTHONY ALOFSIN, EDITOR

The publication of *Frank Lloyd Wright: An Index to the Taliesin Correspondence* responds in part to the continually growing interest in Frank Lloyd Wright since his death in 1959. This five-volume set is a major contribution to the recent outpouring of books on Wright and his architecture, as well as the first published index to Wright's letters housed in the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives at Taliesin West in Scottsdale, Arizona. (This index can also be augmented with my own *Frank Lloyd Wright: A Research Guide to Archival Sources* [New York, Garland, 1983], which lists in detail both Wright's letters housed outside of the archive and other Wright-related artifacts in other institutions.)

The introduction to the index states: "The plan for the index . . . was adopted in 1985 by the Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities as part of a far-reaching collaboration with the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, in which the Center would provide access to copies of each principal series in the Frank Lloyd Wright Archives," of which Wright's correspondence collection is a part. Researchers using this index can actually order copies of any of the correspondence documents from the Getty Center, and thus scholarly access to Frank Lloyd Wright has reached an unprecedented level.

The index covers almost all of Wright's correspondence for his over seventy-one-year-career in architecture. Unfortunately, however, the fire at Taliesin at Spring Green, Wisconsin, in 1914, destroyed much of Wright's early correspondence, so examples from his early days are somewhat sparse and fragmented compared to the later years.

Due to the mass of material to which this set holds the key (over one hundred thousand pieces of correspondence), the set is

organized into seven indexes: a chronological index (volumes 1 and 2); an author index (volume 3); an addressee index (volume 4); and affiliation, general subject, proper name, and project-number indices (all contained in volume 5). Despite their bulk, the volumes do not contain any illustrations and none of Wright's letters are reproduced. Instead we have page after page of lists, with each item identified by its Getty Center microfiche number.

Volume 1, "Chronological Index, 1885-1946," serves as the introduction to the entire set. It begins with a short paper by Anthony Alofsin, titled "Frank Lloyd Wright As A Man of Letters," which places the indexes and the letters within the proper context for scholarly research. This is followed by "A Guide to the Indices and Archives," an explanation of the twenty-two subject codes used to describe the contents of the indexed correspondence. The volume also includes the most comprehensive and up-to-date listing of Wright's known projects—over one thousand executed buildings and unexecuted projects. These are listed by their Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation assigned numbers as well as in alphabetical order by project name. This listing is invaluable for the study of Wright's buildings and their relation to one another. Also included in volume 1 is a paper by Nicholas Olsberg, Getty Center archivist, titled "A Guide to the Archives of the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation," which generally describes other holdings of the archives. Volume 1 concludes with a complete chronological listing of Wright's correspondence from 1885 to 1946, indicating the date of the correspondence, the Getty Center microfiche number, from or to whom the correspondence is addressed, affiliation, general subject, proper name, project number, miscellaneous notes, and the total pages of each document.

This work has only a few shortcomings. Some of the redundancies seem unnecessary, such as Alofsin's "Guide to the Indices and the Archives," which is reprinted in each volume, and the listing of all of Wright's known projects reprinted in volumes 1, 2, and 5. The five volumes are not

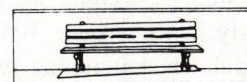
sold separately (nor should they be) and probably will not be used separately from one another.

The overall quality of the publication is excellent. Like other Garland publications of this nature, the text is printed on 250-year-life acid-free paper, thus assuring the longevity of the printed page. Unfortunately, based on its current price of \$800, I would suspect that the distribution of this work, and therefore good access to these materials, may be limited. Garland may want to consider republishing this index on microfiche or as a computerized database file for better dissemination at a more realistic price.

Since the set provides an almost complete guide to the everyday correspondence of Wright's office, researchers will gain new insights into his many and varied activities. Price notwithstanding, this set should facilitate continued scholarly research of America's most studied architect and his work.

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT: AN INDEX TO THE TALIESIN CORRESPONDENCE, Anthony Alofsin, editor, Garland Publishing, 1988. 5 volumes, 4,572 pp., \$800.

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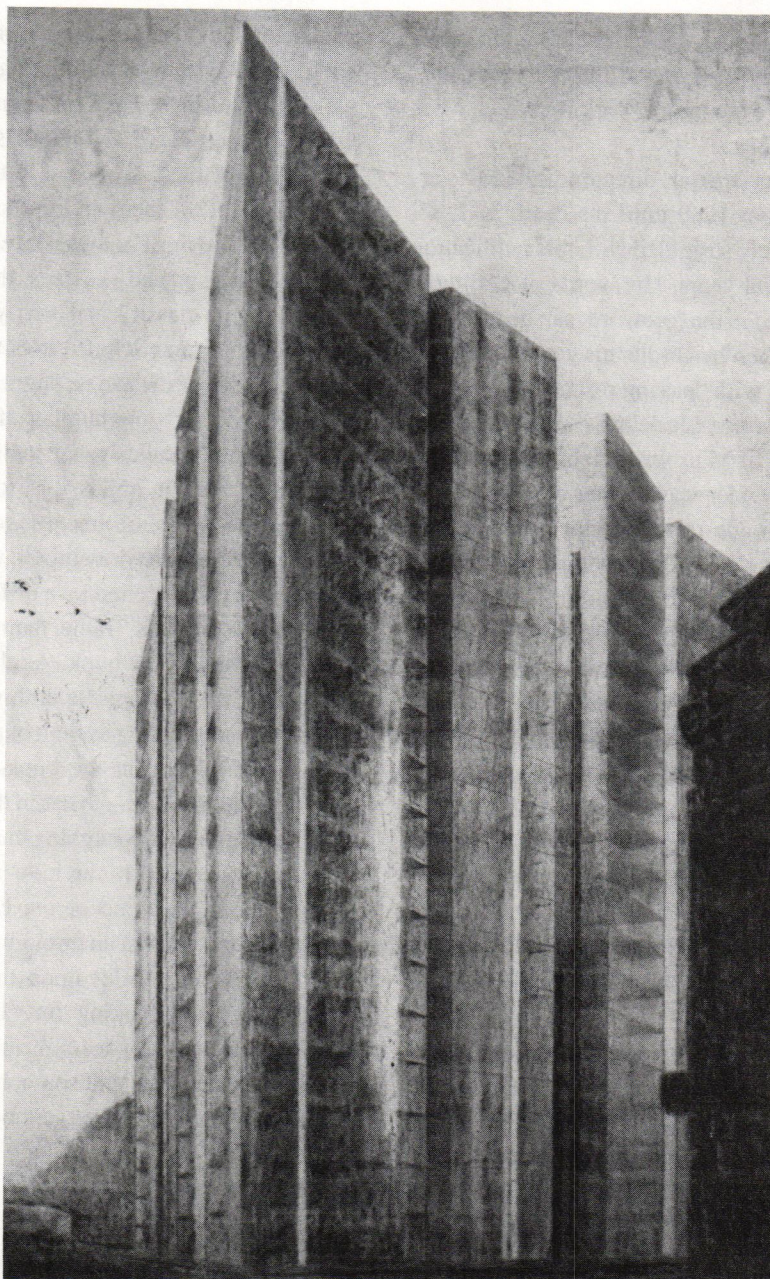


Fritz Neumeyer

## PUNISHED BY THE ARCHIVIST: MIES VAN DER ROHE AND HIS DRAWINGS IN THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Mies van der Rohe, one of the key figures of modern architecture in our century, was still alive in 1968 when the Museum of Modern Art in New York established the Mies van der Rohe Archive. By this time, Mies the master builder had himself become an institution. Having obtained international recognition, Mies was celebrated with a handful of monographs and showered with a warm rain of gold medals honoring him in the last years of his life. The creation of the Mies van der Rohe Archive therefore appeared to be the natural corollary at the time. A relationship of long duration with MOMA had prepared the ground for such an initiative: Philip Johnson's 1941 Mies retrospective at MOMA for the first time focused the attention of a larger American public on the work of this German architect, who had come to the United States in 1938. In return, Mies donated to the museum the forty-five architectural drawings Johnson had assembled, generously extending his gratitude into the future by offering the museum any material that seemed of interest to them.

Mies was obviously interested in preserving the entire body of his work intact. But MOMA, at that time preoccupied with "significant" material that would be "attractive" for exhibition, was hesitant to accept materials such as working drawings and blueprints. Compared to the stack of presentation drawings, these others seemed of little aesthetic interest in the development of Mies's architecture. In 1968, MOMA finally agreed to allocate space and funds for the entire Mies archive, so that the transfer of the bulk of material from the Chicago office to New York could begin, along with the immense task of preserving



Perspective, north and east sides, Friedrichstrasse office building; Mies van der Rohe, charcoal and pencil on brown paper (1921). (Collection, Museum of Modern Art, New York: Mies van der Rohe Archive.)

and cataloguing more than twenty thousand items.

Almost twenty years after the institution of the archive, the first part of the catalogue raisonné was finally published. Edited by Arthur Drexler as *An Illustrated Catalogue of the Mies van der Rohe Drawings in the Museum of Modern Art*, the four volumes cover the period of Mies's German career from 1910 to 1937.

Experiencing the rather unwieldy bulk of these bricklike volumes, the reader no-

tices at once other obstacles. The oblong format seems more appropriate to a coffee-table book than to a reference tool. In addition, the heavy-weight, acid-free 250-year-life paper causes the volumes to spread like fans when opened. One wonders why the publisher did not stay with the more efficient and much easier to handle—not to mention, less space-consuming—format selected for the parallel publication of the drawings of the *Le Corbusier Archive* (also published by Garland). The builders of the Mies cata-



logue obviously lacked the sense of stability, clarity, order, and the notorious diligence in executing a work for which Mies was famous.

Arthur Drexler, director of the Mies archive from 1980 until his death in 1987, desperately struggled with this publication for several years. His words of gratitude, expressed in the foreword, can be taken literally when he credits his coauthor, Franz Schulze, with "having rescued this project from interminable delays." When the 100th birthday of Mies was celebrated in March 1986, Drexler was neither able to present his catalogue raisonné, nor the catalogue everyone expected to accompany MOMA's centennial Mies exhibition, a show that traveled around the world. Mies was not a favorite of Drexler's, who was more attracted to the Beaux-Arts tradition and postmodernism than to the kind of modernism Mies represented. The lack of concern becomes evident in Drexler's explanatory texts for the catalogue. Aside from the introduction, Drexler prepared only fourteen text entries for the first volume. All others are by Schulze, who in 1985 was asked to assist, thereby "rescuing" the whole project.

Whereas Schulze delivers his introductions of each building project in a concise and competent way, Drexler cannot refrain from dressing the minimal information about a project with his own dislikes—an expression of personal judgment surprising to find in the strict atmosphere of a catalogue raisonné. The Werner House from 1913 serves as an apt example. In recent scholarship this project has attained a certain importance in Mies's early work because it demonstrates a remarkable dual influence of the architects Alfred Messel and Peter Behrens. In his brief remarks, Drexler neither refers to recent scholarship, nor does he even try to explain the genesis of the project. Instead, he completely discounts the building, attributing to the young Mies "a surprisingly clumsy composition, as awkward on the garden side as on the street."

The lack of care for the "architectural details" of the catalogue should prepare

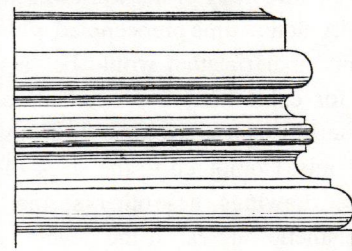
readers for other kinds of discomfort. There is no single system of numbering for the book's illustrations. Take for example the Hubbe House: 291 drawings exist in the archive; all of these are listed in the catalogue, and 252 of them are reproduced in the book. Since most of these drawings are unsigned and undated sketches, the material is hard to classify and verify. In his introduction, Franz Schulze tries to structure the cache of drawings, suggesting an order for "the dizzying number of stages" through which the design of the building went. It is almost impossible to follow visually the logic of his explanations, however, because the drawings to which he refers in his text are cited by a different set of "Archive Numbers," rather than the catalogue numbers in the book. As the editor did not bother to adapt the archive references to the numbering system of the illustrations reproduced in the book, readers must do so themselves—that is, if they have not already given up. Searching through the irregular sequences of archive numbers printed on the last line of the catalogue entries, readers must scan through the lines and pages hoping to hit upon the actual number they are looking for. This is a tedious procedure for a publication conceived as a catalogue and sourcebook that presumably is meant to serve, not punish, the Mies scholar.

Similarly, the rather spartan editorial inventory condemns the reader to flip the pages, back and forth, forth and back, because except for a page number and a headline printed at the top of each page, there is no further information about the featured illustration. But even these essential data cannot be trusted, as the chapter on the "Barcelona Exhibits" in volume 2 proves. A full twenty pages are mislabeled (page 255 to page 275), as the headline suddenly switches from "Barcelona Exhibits" to "Berlin Building Exposition," while the flow of Barcelona drawings continues uninterrupted.

Although only 1,722 of the total 3,070 catalogued drawings are illustrated in this four-volume set, the editor does not give criteria for the selection of these drawings.

In some cases, such as the Friedrichstrasse Skyscraper of 1921 or the Glass Skyscraper of 1922, where only seven drawings of each of these canonical projects exist, one would definitely like to see them all, and is left to wonder why the preliminary floor plans had to be excluded from reproduction. Similar questions arise at several other places in the book. Why is it that the "exterior perspective," which might have given a significant representation of the relatively unknown Friedrichstrasse Office Building II of 1929 was the only one of eleven existing drawings of this project to be excluded from reproduction?

Notwithstanding these frustrations, this encounter with the published portion of Mies drawings in the archive is simply overwhelming. Even though the selection of reproduced drawings represents only a fraction of the rich material available—ranging from preliminary sketches to execution plans and blueprints—it nevertheless gives an impressive demonstration of how tirelessly Mies explored a design idea before arriving at a solution. Experiencing the journey through the four volumes of this catalogue raisonné and viewing its 1,722 illustrations, readers slowly feel as if they are being turned into voyeurs invited to enter the invisible world of ideas and share in the intimacy of the process of artistic creation. No other Mies publication available can provide this unique experience and excitement. For these reasons, the publication is indispensable, despite all of the difficulties and impediments it presents to the scholar.



THE MIES VAN DER ROHE ARCHIVE: AN ILLUSTRATED CATALOGUE OF THE MIES VANDER ROHE DRAWINGS IN THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, PART I: 1907–1938, Arthur Drexler, editor, Garland Publishing, 1986, 4 volumes, 2,033 pp., illus. \$800.00.



Elizabeth Douthitt Byrne

## RAMSEY/SLEEPER ARCHITECTURAL GRAPHIC STANDARDS (8TH EDITION)

JOHN RAY HOKE, JR., EDITOR

## ARCHITECTURAL GRAPHIC STANDARDS (FACSIMILE EDITION)

CHARLES GEORGE RAMSEY AND  
HAROLD REEVE SLEEPER

The "Betty Crocker Cookbook of Architecture," "the architect's bible," and "the old standby" are just a few of the nicknames for *Architectural Graphic Standards*. Originally sold for six dollars in 1932, it has become a classic. Architects Ramsey and Sleeper were the first to compile in graphic detail, and in one place, the standards and data architects needed for working drawings. Including everything from foundations to furniture, the authors ransacked existing standards, codes, specifications, plus the publications just beginning to inundate the building industry at the time. Their compilation of this essential information into 213 pages of detailed, scaled, hand-lettered pen-and-ink drawings and a few charts was a breakthrough, saving enormous amounts of time for the draftsman and designer and ensuring that builders would understand and carry out details, and that specifications used were those in customary practice, if not actual codified standards.

In 1932, architects, engineers, decorators, builders, and draftsmen were entering a complicated world of new-fangled gadgets and spaces—telephones and telephone booths, parking garages and driveways, beauty parlors, bowling alleys—and they needed to know the requirements for all of them.

For the last fifty-seven years, *Architectural Graphic Standards* has answered that need so well that it has sold hundreds of thousands of copies and been revised seven

times. Successive editions included textual data and focused on commercial and institutional buildings, reflecting the latest technology—fluorescent lighting, air conditioning, and acoustical ceilings in the 1950s, increasingly complex structural, mechanical, and electrical engineering details in the 1970s, and energy efficiency, accessibility, anthropometric design data, and safety in the 1980s.

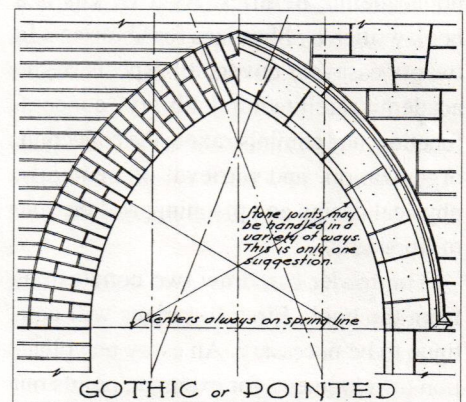
In its eighth edition, *Architectural Graphic Standards* has grown to 864 pages and remains the construction industry's encyclopedic reference guide for graphic detailing. Added or expanded chapters on "smart buildings," "clean rooms," solar optics, historic preservation, safety, and sports-facility design make this newest version—organized around the Construction Specifications Institute's Master Format (an industrywide standard for organizing specifications and building product information)—worth its very expensive price tag. An extensive index also provides easy access to the contents. More than half of the volume is new or has been revised since the previous edition (1981), and many of the nearly ten thousand illustrations have been redrawn. Concise text in tiny print provides essential definitions and techniques, alongside detailed drawings. Sources, whether individual experts, organizations, or publications, are cited for each section, and a separate listing of sources with page references is included at the end of the book. Because the cost of the new edition is prohibitive for students, the publishers have concurrently produced a concise student edition at a substantially lower price (499 pp., \$49.95, paper; abridged from the 7th edition, edited by Stephen Kliment).

A year after the release of the eighth edition, John Wiley & Sons celebrated the long-standing success of *Architectural Graphic Standards* by publishing a facsimile edition of their classic first edition. Now a valuable tool for historical information, the first edition provides details of old methods of stone work, arch building, gutters and drainpipe installation, window design, lath and plaster construction, and miscellaneous other hard-to-locate techni-

cal data useful in historic preservation, conservation, and reconstruction of old buildings. In addition to its value as a repository of construction techniques of the time, it is also a historical guide to stylistic and building trends and a guide to codes and standards of that era.

Working with the American Institute of Architects (under whose auspices the last three editions were prepared), the publishers of *Architectural Graphic Standards* are already planning for the future. Annual updates will soon be available on a subscription basis to keep the volume up-to-date between editions, and to provide even more specialized information that cannot be included in the book itself because of space limitations.

The writers in the *Engineering News-Record* could not have known how right they were in their review of the first edition, which they acclaimed as "a time and money saver to thousands." The eighth edition still merits that same acclaim.



Detail of construction standards for masonry arches. (From *Architectural Graphic Standards* facsimile edition.)

RAMSEY/SLEEPER ARCHITECTURAL GRAPHIC STANDARDS, 8th edition, John Ray Hoke, Jr., editor, John Wiley & Sons, 1988, 854 pp., illus., \$150.00.

ARCHITECTURAL GRAPHIC STANDARDS, facsimile reprint of 1st edition (1932), Charles George Ramsey and Harold Reeve Sleeper, John Wiley & Sons, 1990, 233 pp., illus., \$75.00; limited, numbered edition, \$135.00.



Michael Lordi

## THE ARCHITECTURE LIBRARY OF THE FUTURE

PEGGY ANN KUSNERZ, EDITOR

*The Architecture Library of the Future* is the somewhat misleading title of this collection of essays that grew out of a symposium held in 1987 at the University of Michigan. The essays are meant to "envision the ideal academic architecture library of the future," but aside from some speculation about what the future may hold, the book is, more accurately, a survey of existing conditions and problems in architectural libraries.

Since the subject is already highly specialized, I would have liked to see the book broaden its focus, rather than tilting toward librarians and excluding consideration of nonacademic libraries. As it is, this is a book written by librarians for librarians. In twenty essays it covers all aspects of the academic architectural library: concept, function, and administration; the collection, organization, and retrieval of materials; physical design and planning; and the role of librarians.

The reader can draw two conclusions from the book. First, librarians will continue to be necessary. An essay on collection development, for example, points out that there will always be a need for subject expertise and familiarity with the bibliography of the literature. This is very reassuring for those of us who are working librarians. Second, computers will have an expanded, though still nebulous, role in architectural libraries. Library users familiar with on-line catalogues and circulation systems might be unaware of new technologies already being used in areas such as the management of slide collections and the preservation of architectural drawings and photographs. Computers offer architectural libraries new ways of making their collections available to the visually oriented user; we can now

call up images in the same way that we call up texts.

The discussions of new technologies raise a question that the book fails to answer or even acknowledge. Clearly, computers will allow libraries to offer new and enhanced services, and will affect the ways in which libraries acquire, store, and organize materials. However, computers will not eliminate the need for such activities, nor will they save money. Who then is going to pay for the expensive new world of computerization we are entering? The contributing authors tend to be from large and well established libraries; yet even in such libraries budgets must surely be considered. One contributor approvingly quotes a writer who maintains that a lack of foresight and determination, rather than cost, will prevent architecture libraries from achieving their goals. I wonder.

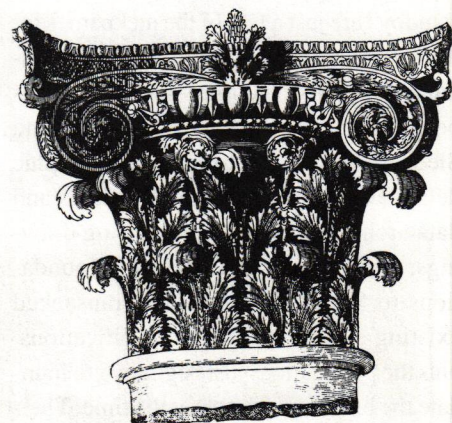
Libraries are expensive to run even without the additional costs of automation. The price of architecture books and journals continues to escalate. A single volume of the new multivolume facsimile edition of Frank Lloyd Wright's architectural drawings can cost \$250. The originals of these drawings have become collectibles and are beyond the reach of all but the most deep-pocketed libraries. I find it mildly ironic that Thomas Monaghan, who founded Domino's Pizza and who underwrote this symposium, collects Frank Lloyd Wright material and is therefore partly responsible for creating a market for architectural artifacts.

How can we continue to build our collections and still take advantage of the new technology? This book has little to say on the matter. The needs of libraries have traditionally outstripped their budgets; none of the essays suggest this condition is likely to change. One essay describes the various projects of the Getty Trust that benefit architecture libraries. That the vast resources of the Trust support a variety of worthwhile activities is reassuring; the fact remains that individual libraries must find new sources of income if they are to have access to the new technologies.

As with any book that began life as a symposium, not all of the essays dovetail.

Some may have worked well as speeches but are fatuous in print. Does the reader really need to be told, for example, that library positions should be filled with the best-qualified people available? More helpful would have been suggestions for attracting and retaining such people. As the most detailed survey of architectural libraries we are likely to have for some time, whatever its faults, this book will be of interest to architectural librarians, but for the general reader, it is too narrow.

THE ARCHITECTURE LIBRARY OF THE FUTURE: COMPLEXITY AND CONTRADICTION, Peggy Ann Kusnerz, editor, University of Michigan Press, 1989, 197 pp., \$27.95.



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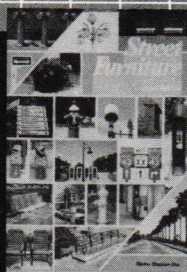
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