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N° 1/11

COLOPHON

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FRONT COVER

The Doric temple of Hera II (‘Temple of Neptune’) seen from the Temple of Hera I (‘Basilica’), Paestum.
Photograph: Sigrid de Jong;
b&w elaboration: EAHN

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NAi advertisement for the Urban Augmented Reality application for cell phones, 2010.

Lessons of the Past: Colin Rowe between History and Design

Colin Rowe is a name that is familiar to most American architectural historians but less known in Europe. English born and trained, Rowe studied architecture at the Liverpool School of Architecture and earned his master's degree at the Warburg Institute under the direction of Rudolf Wittkower. Subsequently, Rowe emigrated to the United States, where he spent the bulk of his career. Rowe is best known through two of his books: *The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa and Other Essays* (1976) and *Collage City* (1978).

It was Rowe's training as an architect that I believe influenced the direction he would take as an historian. History for Rowe was to be viewed not just as a record of past events to be approached conventionally, but also as a palette for new ideas and combinatory possibilities. By liberating history from a synchronic reading in which only coeval events could be justifiably compared, Rowe used history as a creative medium to explore works of architecture separated in time. He operated upon the fabric of history as a designer, establishing connections between events that were compelling to him, regardless of provenance, a collage if you will. For Rowe, history is actualized when it is juxtaposed with the present.

Notably in his essay, 'The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa,' Rowe sought to demonstrate the compositional similarities between the works of Palladio and Le Corbusier, specifically in two case studies in which Palladio's Villa Foscari and Le Corbusier's Villa Stein are compared, and also the equally famous and iconic villas Rotonda and Savoye. Rowe posited fundamental analogies between the villas Foscari and Stein at the level of diagrammatic and volumetric similarities. The argument is, from a strictly historical perspective, interesting and perhaps plausible, but certainly not conclusive.

Rowe was deeply critical of Modernism, particularly at the urban scale. His book, *Collage City*, was written to provide an alternative strategy for city planning. The theoretical basis for his planning methodology was Contextualism, developed at Cornell during Rowe's tenure there. Contextualism posits the existence of legible binary patterns, such as solid and void, which give the city a structure (recall the Nolli map of Rome). *Collage City* tackled the organization of all these urban

dualities with a completely a-historicist approach: ideas of the Enlightenment are tossed into an intellectual blender with a dash of Renaissance Florence, a few grinds of Disneyland, and so on. But most importantly for the future direction of architecture and urban planning, it was an a-historical historicism. By that I mean that it combined historical elements without in any way remaining true to the historical context in which the element was situated. It was history imaginatively conceived, but non-referential: the architectural image was freed from its historical roots, so that it could be inserted into the urban fabric wherever one desired. For Rowe, the sensitive culling of significant 'set pieces' from history brings meaning to the fragmented city of the modernists.

There are many historians who are troubled by Rowe's apparent disregard for the conventions of advanced scholarship. But Rowe's work was stimulating and rich in expressive and combinatory possibilities (in part laying the conceptual groundwork for the development of Post-Modernism). The power of his ideas is also revealed in the legacy of his teaching: many students influenced by Rowe would go on to have distinguished careers as designers and academicians. This group includes the architects Peter Eisenman, Michael Graves, Charles Gwathmey, John Hejduk, Richard Meier, and James Frazer Stirling.

Rowe's influence in the United States was substantial and his willingness to engage history as a canvas for architectural expression was of great appeal to a generation of architects who had seen the damage wrought upon cities by modernist planning. As we in this *Newsletter* currently debate the relevance of architectural history (Mario Carpo in 1/10) and recognize the need for collaborative research (Adrian Forty in 4/10) it is useful to remember Rowe's somewhat prescient methods.

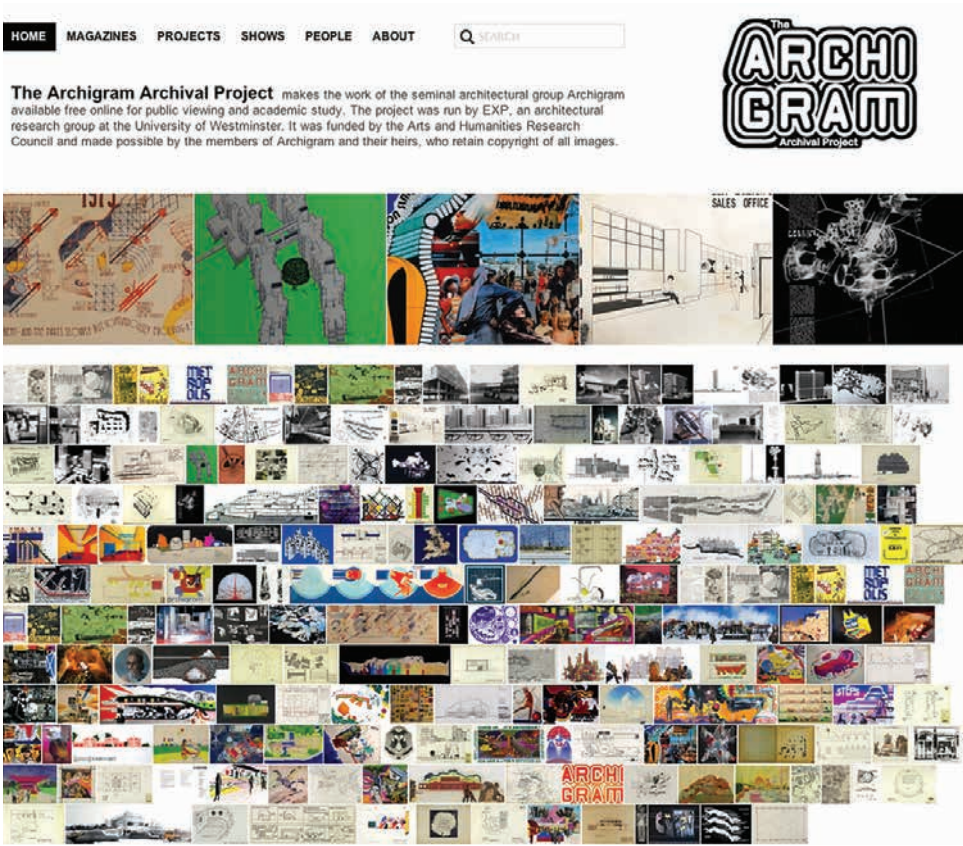
Clarke Magruder
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London Business Meeting Wrap-Up

Thirty-two members of the EAHN convened in London to attend the Sixth Annual Business Meeting at the Victoria & Albert Museum on Saturday 12 February 2011.

The points on the agenda resulted in the following reports and decisions:

- The minutes of the Fifth Annual Business Meeting held in Bologna on 20–21 February 2010 and of the Special Business Meeting held in Guimarães on 17 June 2010 were approved.
- Turin is on offer to host the Third EAHN Conference. The decision will be taken at the Annual Business Meeting of 2012.
- The current officers will finalize the provisional Règlement Intérieur and present the final version at the Annual Business Meeting of 2012.
- The Secretary, Maarten Delbeke, reported that the EAHN membership has increased to 1,355 individual members and six institutional ones. One hundred and seventy-nine members indicated that they are willing to actively participate in network activities. Over the last year the Secretariat sent out thirty messages to members through Constant Contact (so-called CoCo-messages) and produced four issues of the *Newsletter*. Fifty percent of the members open the messages and click on the links they contain.
- The Treasurer, Tom Avermaete, reported expenditures of 16,000 euros and a deficit of 1,000 euros over the last year. For this year, costs will remain by and large the same. Half of the budget is secured by a grant from TU Delft (8,000 euros), the other half still has to be acquired. Apart from the institutional members, only forty-one individual members have paid the—voluntary—annual fee, which makes intensifying the fundraising imperative. Tom is working along a three-pronged plan: increase the number of paying members, both institutional and individual, by a more targeted approach; apply to national and European funds for subsidies; and search for sponsors and/or advertisers. The ultimate goal is not just to close the gap, but to create a sound financial basis, necessary for realising such plans as further development of the network’s website and starting a peer-reviewed annual publication.
- The chair of the Publications Committee, Nancy Stieber, announced the setting up of an entirely new Editorial Board to oversee and develop the strategy, content, and vision of the network’s different publications (web, newsletter, and a planned



Screenshot of the Archigram Archival Project website, accessed March 2011.

peer-reviewed annual publication, its first volume to be published in 2012). It was decided that this executive board has to be installed and active by June 2011. Its chair will also preside over the Publications Committee, which will continue as an open platform at the annual business meetings. Sadly, Nancy confirmed that she would step down as chair of the committee as of 13 February and not put up for any other office. She was warmly thanked by the President and applauded by all present for her invaluable services to the EAHN, as was Susan Klaiber, who per January 2011 resigned as chief-editor of the *Newsletter*.

- Regarding the network's website, it was decided to encourage Josie Kane and Davide Deriu in developing the web 2.0-based online tools that will change the website into an interactive forum, while creating 'members only' or even more restricted areas where necessary. The President stressed that a precise assessment of the development costs was necessary, and that Josie and Davide would closely operate with the new Editorial Board.
- The members of the network's executive board (Adrian Forty, president; Mari Hvattum, vice-president; Maarten Delbeke, secretary; and Tom Avermaete, treasurer) were officially re-elected for another year.
- The next business meeting will be held in Israel, organized by Alona Nitzan-Shiftan. Options and details will follow later this year.
- The chair of the Conference Committee, Hilde Heynen, reported that preparatory work on the Second EAHN Conference is going well. On the basis of the proposals received the committee agreed on a broad set of sessions and themes. Members will be kept informed of upcoming deadlines by coco-messages.
- The chair of the Journals Ranking Commission, Javier Martínez, presented a detailed classification scheme, which will enable users to search with varying sets of criteria. The committee aims at setting up the database within the year and possibly present it at the Brussels conference, June 2012.
- Carmen Popescu presented a proposal for a tour in Scotland, September 2011, to be combined with the EAHN/DOCOMOMO conference in Edinburgh (for details, see the article in this News section). Furthermore, she asked for and was granted the creation of a Tours Committee (meanwhile, a call for applications has been sent out).

More than any business meeting in EAHN history, this one was flanked by an impressive quantity of extra activities. On Thursday 10 February early arrivals could attend Tanis Hinchcliffe's public lecture at Westminster University on the



Royal National Theatre, London, England, 1967–77 (architect: Sir Denys Lasdun).
Photograph: EAHN

interplay between aerial photography and urban planning in the mid-twentieth century. She demonstrated how planners used even perspective photos as if they were reliable maps. On Friday afternoon there was a guided tour to the Reform Club in Pall Mall. With all participants properly dressed—which gave rise to some hilarious tie knotting outside Charles Barry’s sumptuous architecture—the EAHN members enjoyed the Roman grandeur of this club building that so cleverly hides its early Victorian technical features, such as the warm air blown into the rooms from holes drilled between the dentils of the cornices. The little exhibition, laid out for the occasion in the Print Study Room of the Victoria & Albert Museum, displayed several of Barry’s designs for the edifice from the RIBA drawings collection.

On Saturday 12 February, after the Business Meeting, there was an hour for viewing Barry’s neat drawings, followed by a small forum on architecture, archives, and the web. Here, Murray Frazer presented the archival project that makes the work of Archigram, a seminal pro-consumerist architectural group founded in London in the 1960s, available free online for public viewing and academic study. From the time it went online a year ago, the website has attracted over 150,000 visits, and visitors made as many as 600,000 downloads. Next, Barnabas Calder gave a paper on the project of airing the extensive archive of Sir Denys Lasdun, best known as the architect of the London National Theatre. The cataloguing is mostly done and up on the RIBA Library Online Catalogue. Yet the ultimate aim, for which he is busy to find funding, is to put images from Lasdun’s archive online together with analytical texts, thus making scholarly analysis available worldwide. The forum closed with a talk by Kurt Helfrich on archiving digitally born design records. He pointed to some basic problems of digital archives, such as the need for keeping operative all versions of the software with which to read CAD files, the consequent costs of software licences, and the difficulties of, for instance, pinning down a design to a fixed point in time, or conserving and labelling its successive stages.

The programme ended on Sunday 13 February with a visit to the Queen’s House and the former Maritime Hospital in windy and chilly Greenwich. Guided by John Bold, an expert on the buildings’ history, the EAHN members admired the layout of what is now a World Heritage site, and savoured the guide’s not always pc explanations.

Central ‘Saloon’ of the Reform Club, London, England, 1836–41 (architect: Charles Barry).
Photograph: Anthony White, courtesy of the Reform Club



Members of the EAHN in the courtyard of the King William Building of the Royal Naval College, the former Royal Maritime Hospital, Greenwich, England, 1698-1728 (architect: Nicholas Hawksmoor).
Photograph: Carmen Popescu



EAHN Tour to Scotland, 9–11 September 2011

For the first time, the EAHN study tour is organised as part of a joint event, immediately following the EAHN/DOCOMOMO-International two-day international conference on the theme of post-1945 mass housing in the socialist bloc. The theme of the conference will be reflected in the first morning of the tour. Admission to this conference, based at Edinburgh University (ECA), will be free of charge.

The principal organisers of the tour are Miles Glendinning (University of Edinburgh/Edinburgh College of Art) and Carmen Popescu (EAHN). As always, the tour will benefit from the expertise of local scholars, among whom will be Aonghus MacKechnie (Historic Scotland), Diane Watters (RCAHMS), and Johnny Rodger (Glasgow School of Art). The guides will cover a large array of buildings and ensembles, and a chronological span of over five centuries.

The tour schedule is as follows:

Thursday 8 September

- Reception and presentation of tour.

Friday 9 September

- Morning bus tour to the Cumbernauld Town Centre (1963–7) and early housing zone (c.1957–75), designed by the Cumbernauld New Town Development Corporation; and to Outer Glasgow mass housing, among which developments such as Red Road (1962–9), Easterhouse (1954–7), Springburn (1962–70), Sighthill (1963–8), Wyndford (1960–9), Woodside (1963–74), Anderston Cross (1962–70), and Hutchesontown-Gorbals (1954–74).
- Afternoon walking tour of the city centre/Blythwood, including the City Chambers (William Young, 1882–8), Royal Exchange/Royal Ex. Square (D. Hamilton and others, 1830s), St Vincent Street Church and the Egyptian Halls (Alexander ‘Greek’ Thomson, 1857 and 1872, respectively), Central Station/Hotel (R.R. Anderson and others, 1882–4), and Glasgow School of Art (Charles Rennie Mackintosh, 1896–1909); and of the university area, with buildings such as the Kelvingrove Museum/ Art Gallery (J.W. Simpson and E.J. Milner Allen, 1891), Glasgow University (G.G. Scott, 1864), and various nineteenth-century terraces at Great Western Road/Hillhead.



Kelvingrove Art Gallery & Museum, Glasgow, Scotland, 1892–96 (architects: Sir William Simpson and Edmund John Milner Allen).
Photograph: EAHN

- The day will conclude with an evening reception at the Glasgow School of Art.

Saturday 10 September

- A day tour by tourbus to various Scottish castles, such as Linlithgow Palace, Stirling Castle, Doune Castle, Elcho Castle, and St Andrews. The drive back will pass through the restored historic Fife coastal towns of Crail, Anstruther, Pittenweem, and St Monans.

Sunday 11 September

- Morning visit of Edinburgh Castle and a guided walk through the Old Town/ High Street/Canongate area, including the Ramsay Garden and adjacent projects (Patrick Geddes, 1890s), Victoria Hall (G. Graham and A.W.N. Pugin, 1840s), St Giles Cathedral (restored in the 1830s), and the John Knox House/Scottish Storytelling Centre (sixteenth century and 2002).
- Afternoon guided walk through the New Town (a classical area built in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries), with highlights such as the Royal Scottish Academy/National Galleries (W.H. Playfair, 1820s/1850s), the First New Town, with George Street (J. Craig, from 1766), the Second New Town, with Dundas Street and Howe Street (c.1800–20), and the Western New Town (c.1820–70).

The three-day tour will cost € 96, due by 1 June 2011, deadline of registration. Cost includes only local tourbus transportation and the EAHN fee; international transportation, local public transport fares, site entrance fees, hotel accommodation, and meals are not included.

For the full programme and more information (travelling to Scotland, accommodation, extensive presentation of the tour, etc.), see the announcement on www.eahn.org.



Ruin of St Andrews Castle, Royal Burgh of St Andrews in Fife, Scotland, late fourteenth century.
Photograph: Bethany Weeks, Creative Commons

New Early Modern Architecture Initiative

At the beginning of this year Freek Schmidt and Kimberley Skelton launched the organization and associated website Early Modern Architecture (EarlyModernArchitecture.com), an initiative that explores global, interdisciplinary frameworks for the architecture (design, theory, and practice) of Europe and its colonies, 1400–1800. Early Modern Architecture particularly fosters scholarly exchange of innovative research and education. It seeks to showcase methodologies that link architectural history, art history, and the humanities through calls for papers, conference announcements, and fellowship opportunities spanning fields such as literature, philosophy, and sociology. Materials too are provided for global study, with images and bibliography, stretching from the Spanish New World to Russia and with links to digital resources as well as research centres across Europe and North America. As the site continues to develop, a projected online publishing platform will examine the rich array of issues raised by these methodologies and global resources.

In founding this initiative, Schmidt (associate professor at the faculty of arts, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam) and Skelton (an independent scholar who recently received her Ph.D. from Yale University) aim to encourage debate about the ambiguities, paradoxes, and possible contradictions complicating the early modern world. Building, body, book, and boundary all appeared oddly knowable yet unknowable, familiar yet foreign, stable yet malleable to early modern Europeans. Architectural theorists claimed that buildings protected humans, but buildings also might dangerously overwhelm the fragile senses that were too often fallible, too easily drowned by the physical environment, and too closely tied to the volatile passions. Books that claimed to set forth comprehensible design principles were no more predictable; seemingly definite mathematical proportions changed from one author to another, and the same book might contain different content when translated or when reproduced in cheaper editions. Buildings, too, startlingly unsettled their viewers. A long corridor could be a trick of perspective, blocks of stone could be stucco masking brick, and a façade might undulate along a city street. Imagined in the mind, buildings might seem more predictable and controllable—the readily identified spaces espoused by rhetorical theorists for recalling stored knowledge. But the mind could waver as readily as the built façade, digressing from expected to unexpected routes.



Palazzo del Te, Mantua, Italy, 1524–34 (architect: Giulio Romano).
Photograph: Kimberley Skelton

These moments of wavering were anything but surprising to the early modern European. Geographical boundaries were just as uncertain as built ones, for colonial discoveries revealed unmapped territories that cartographers could only suggest with white blankness. Religious and political tradition crumbled as well: papal supremacy suddenly fragmenting across Europe, the Netherlands slipping free of Spanish Habsburg control, England and France disintegrating into civil wars, and the list might continue. Chronological boundaries were equally malleable with growing interest in the historical precision of archaeology. That is, early modern Europeans debated about and navigated through a physical and intellectual world ever in process.

Scholars from a range of disciplines have probed these early modern ambiguities and paradoxes. Cultural geographers and architectural theorists have placed viewers in motion—examining changing perceptions with circulation around a building and exploring a language of formal and spatial analysis. Social and intellectual historians have underscored the perpetually slippery overlap between public and private. In their turn, historians of the book and of reading have complicated the role of the viewer as both audience and author; readers learn from text and image but also excerpt, compare, and critique. And art historians have argued that the eyes and minds of viewers are neither so stationary nor so predictable as Michael Baxandall’s ‘period eye’ once presumed; viewers move, are of differing ages and genders, and experience distinct cultural constructs. Architectural historians stand at the rich confluence of these international, interdisciplinary methodologies. What were the ‘eyes’ through which architect and patron, much like stage directors, manipulated the viewer’s experience? How could those ‘eyes’ be unpredictable and even paradoxical? Such questions stretched across a wide range of media and of disciplines: print, painting, plasterwork, rhetoric, social theory, and science. Debates too swirled in global networks from the North and South American continents to Russia to Portuguese India. With a website searchable by scholars from any field and including basic information alongside current research endeavors, Early Modern Architecture seeks to evoke a broad dialogue about these and other early modern complexities.

For more information, see <http://earlymodernarchitecture.com>

On the Calendar

EAHN Tour to Scotland: 9–11 September 2011

EAHN Second International Meeting, Brussels, Belgium: 31 May – 3 June 2012

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ARCAM - Amsterdam Centre for Architecture **ARCAM - Architectuurcentrum Amsterdam**

ARCAM (Architectuurcentrum Amsterdam) is an independent institution with the objective of stimulating, in the broadest possible sense, the architectural climate in the city of Amsterdam and its metropolitan region. It is a go-between that fosters the knowledge of and debate about architecture and city planning by bringing together various parties, from architects, planners, and builders, through public services and schools, to scholars, critics, and the general public. It also collaborates with a large number of institutes in order to support and co-ordinate existing programmes, and to initiate new activities.

HISTORY, ORGANIZATION, SITE

ARCAM was founded in 1986, at a moment when architectural debate in the Netherlands was peaking and young Dutch architects such as Sjoerd Soeters and Jo Coenen attracted attention. It began with three founding partners in a single room under the roof of the Academy for Architecture in the city centre. Over the years the organization grew in accordance with its expanding activities, taking on responsibility for the whole metropolitan area as of 2007. Now its staff consists of a director, seven employees, and two trainees, based at its own premises on Oosterdok (Easter Dock) near Amsterdam's Central Station. An advisory board of nine external experts representing academia, the art world, architectural design, and construction advises on the year programme and long-term plans.

As an independent institution, ARCAM is subsidized jointly by the sections planning and culture of the City of Amsterdam (30%) and the Dutch national fund for architecture (10%), and generally sponsored by various types of companies linked with architecture, from designers' offices to suppliers of the building trade (25%). For its many projects it organizes special fundraising campaigns, usually obtaining dozens of relatively small contributions (of a few thousand euros each). Project sponsoring represents 20% of ARCAM's annual budget; 15% are revenues achieved by educational projects, publications, and rental income.

ARCAM is located in the old port district of the city, opposite the seventeenth-century classicist warehouse of the Amsterdam Admiralty that now accommodates the Dutch Maritime Museum to the right, and Renzo Piano's 1997 ship-like green copper-clad NEMO Science Centre to the left. For this magnificent site, owned by the town, the architect René van Zuuk designed the new ARCAM building, completed in 2003. It is a compact, three-storey structure, each 200 m²-level interconnected by voids. On the water side the elevation is entirely of glass.



ARCAM building at Oosterdok, Amsterdam, Netherlands, 2003 (architect: René van Zuuk).
Photograph: Steve Cadman, Creative Commons

The building is clad in coated aluminium, which has been folded over the curving roof, right down to the ground. An unusual feature is the sculptural form of the entrance at the quayside.

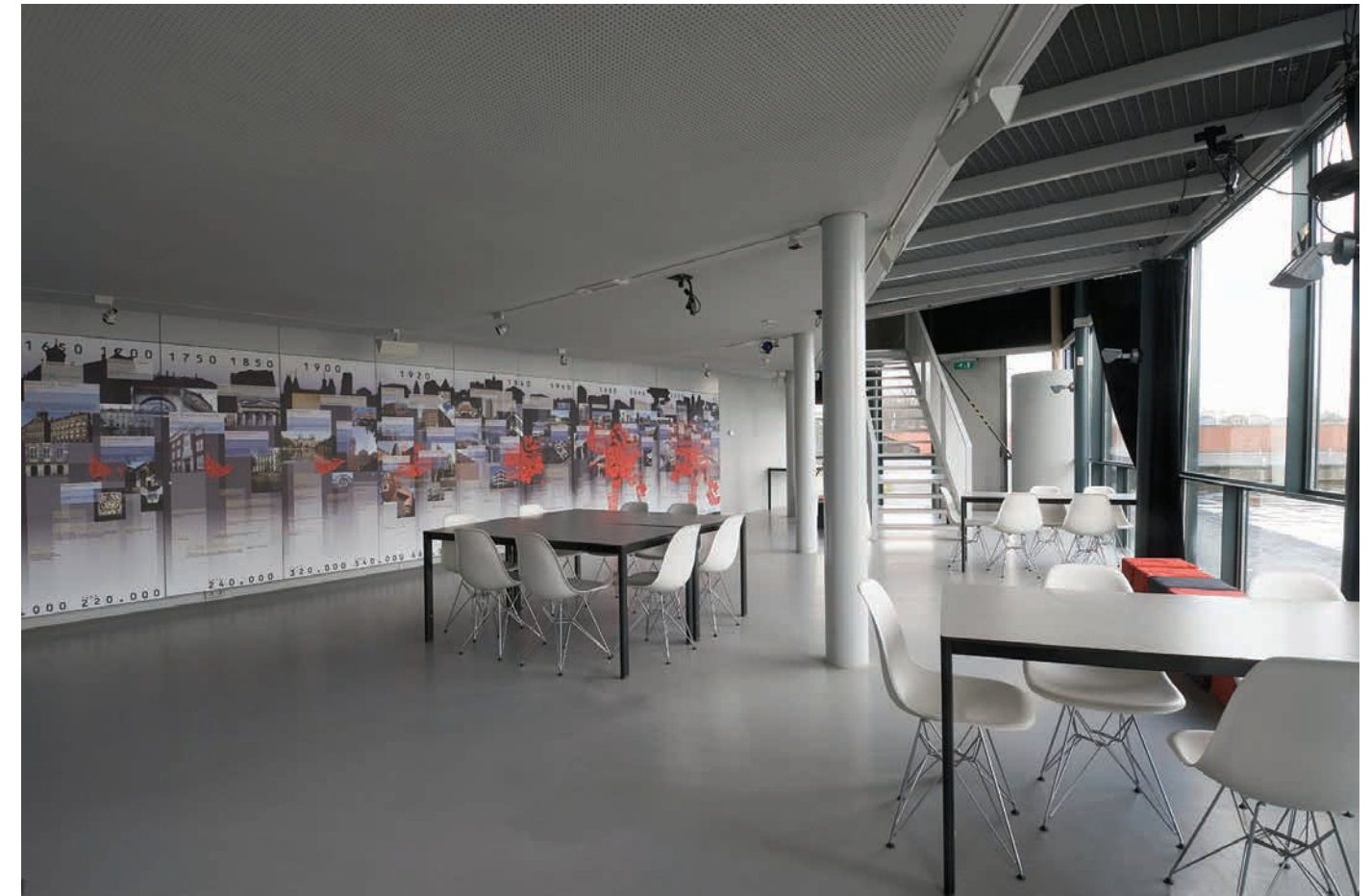
The office is situated on the top floor. The entrance level houses the exhibition space and the information point. The lowermost storey, on the water, is used for small-scale discussions, meetings, and educational activities. This bottom floor, called Lage Kade (Lower Quay) can be rented for commercial and cultural events. It also houses the ARCAM Panorama, a wall covered with a 25 m² theatrical and informative collage of Amsterdam's architectural history, from 800 AD to the present. The aim of this overview is to visually embed current developments in the context of the city's architectural history. Since 2008 the panorama is also available as a book.

On the entrance level sits an information point where people can consult architectural books, magazines, folders, sites, maps, and a collection of newspaper cuttings. These provide a wealth of information for those interested in architecture and urban planning, and can help visitors to find buildings and sites in Amsterdam. Part of the information point is a current affairs bulletin board, with a selection of topical news and developments in the fields of architecture, urbanism, and landscape. Once the visitor has passed the information point he enters the exhibition room, in which ARCAM runs a continuous programme of exhibitions and presentations.

SCOPE, METHOD, VIEWS

Right from the beginning ARCAM's scope was to get as much precise data and need-to-know information about architecture and urban planning in the capital as possible. It's aim is to foster the inhabitants'—and officials'—awareness of the influence architectural surroundings have on daily life, and to stimulate the debate on design and building practices in all walks of society. The centre set up a network of informants, employed at various Dutch and foreign institutions, which grew from the initial twenty persons to more than two hundred now. All ARCAM staff is expected to participate in maintaining and expanding external contacts.

To improve the exchange of information on what is happening in architecture in Dutch cities and regions, in 1993 ARCAM founded, with six sister-institutions, an informal council of local centres for architecture (OLA: Overleg Lokale Architectuurcentra). It is open to all organizations that devote attention to architecture in a structural and public-oriented way and acts as their meeting



ARCAM Panorama on the inner wall at the bottom floor (Lage Kade) of the ARCAM building.
Photograph: ARCAM/Marlies Buurman

platform, while serving also as developing ground for new centres. There are now some forty local and regional centres in the Netherlands, all different in size and scope.

From its first year the centre has run the bimonthly information bulletin *ARCAM Nieuws* (*ARCAM News*), a printed listings magazine for architecture, urbanism, landscape architecture, and design in the Amsterdam metropolitan area. It presented a small selection from all the activities. Now, this newsletter will continue its existence in digital format, integrated in the institution's bilingual (Dutch and English) website.

The website serves both as archive and source of actual information. To visitors, it is the public face of the centre, always accessible, always up to date, and often consulted by visitors weeks or even months in advance of coming to the premises in person. To the staff, it is a central tool, as it contains the institutional memory. This is the more important since *ARCAM* has no collection, no library to speak of, and no archives. As an information broker, it functions without a lot of institutional ballast. There is a small reference library, but the occasional gift copies of books are usually donated to the library of the Academy for Architecture.

Architecture and urbanism are an essential part of our cultural heritage and therefore deserve attention in education. The projects *ARCAM* has specially devised for secondary schools to make the public (pupils and, indirectly, their parents) more aware not only of the—historical—environment of the city, but also of the districts where young people live, play, and go to school. The centre offers three programmes that are easy to integrate in the school curriculum. Furthermore, it has close ties with the art history departments of Amsterdam's two universities and the Academy for Architecture.

For many years now the centre has organized a series of architecture lectures in *De Brakke Grond*, a small theatre in the heart of the old city. Once a month a distinguished architect, urban planner, or landscape architect is invited to talk about his or her work, design philosophy, and sources of inspiration. Whereas this series aims at a more informed audience, a wider one is sought for the recently begun collaboration with *Het Parool* to publish an article on buildings in the city every Wednesday. Thanks to this newspaper's local profile, the series, called *Stadsgezichten* (*Cityscapes*), reaches an audience of old and new city dwellers, higher and less educated people, drawing their attention to the built environment they live in.

Exhibition Room in the *ARCAM* Building at Oosterdok, Amsterdam, Netherlands, 2003
(architect: René van Zuuk).
Photograph: Wim Ruigrok



Debate in the Exhibition Room of the *ARCAM* building.
Photograph: Wim Ruigrok



Another venture is the Amsterdam Architecture Award, created by ARCAM in 2008. It is awarded every April to the architect and commissioner of what an international jury considers the best project completed in Amsterdam in the previous year. The members of the jury, who like the institution's advisory board are representatives of various fields, have to choose from more than twenty pre-selected projects of high architectural standard. These selections are published in the ARCAM Pockets series.

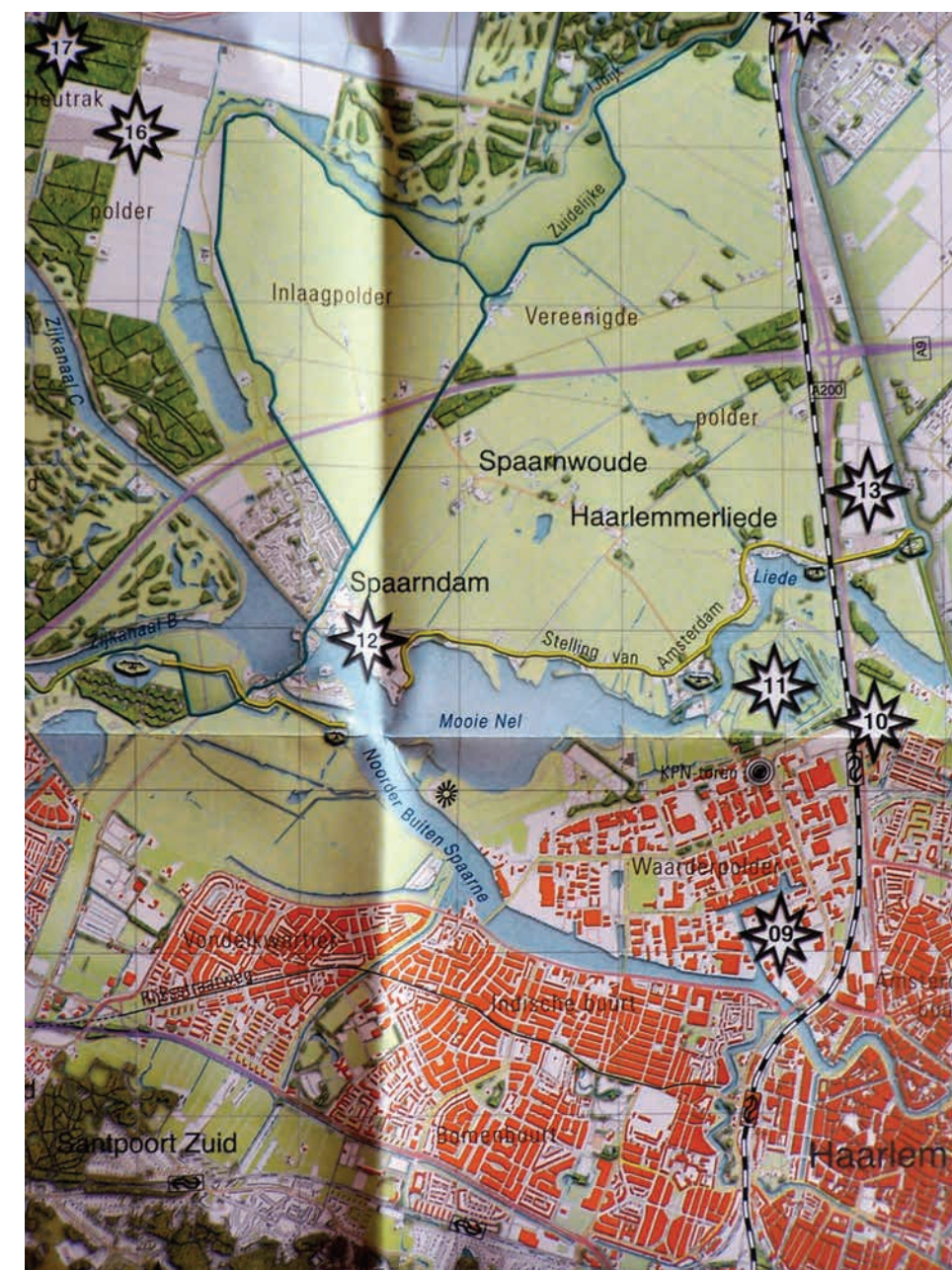
ARCAM's method is based on journalistic practice: the centre is an intermediary and informs the public of what is happening, on its own accord and without limitation or consultation. While the centre's activities might be viewed by the public as unsolicited advertisements, or perceived as a warning ARCAM, as an institution has no opinion—it simply brings all relevant information to the fore.

EXHIBITIONS, PUBLICATIONS, INNOVATIVE PROJECTS

The continuous stream of exhibitions and presentations that ARCAM runs is varied. The programme turns the spotlight on architects, buildings, urban developments, architecture abroad, and themes related to architecture. One of the more imaginative shows was 'City on Wheels' (6 – 28 June 2009), showcasing the various types of street paving in the city and their effect on tires and wheels, from the small discs of trolley suitcases to the giant tires of caterpillars. Another show, 'Coastwards' (4 July – 12 September 2009), focused on the opportunities of the water and the importance of the harbour and the Noordzeekanaal for the triangle between Amsterdam, IJmuiden, and Zandvoort. By pushing the idea that Amsterdam is actually located at sea the show aimed at seducing the public to visit the region with the accompanying, creatively manipulated map and encourage professionals to change their view of the area and search for new ways to make use of it.

Paper publications are manifold. The series ARCAM Pockets, which by now counts twenty-four volumes, is published in cooperation with Architectura & Natura Press, Amsterdam, and sold at affordable prices (around ten to twenty euros each). Most titles are in English; subjects vary widely; witness the following selection:

- *Architecture Now* (nr. 1; 1991; in English) is a compilation of comments on the state of contemporary architecture in the early nineties by seventy-six Dutch and foreign architects who played a prominent role in the international architectural debate.
- *Amsterdam's High-Rise* (nr. 8; 1995; in English) gives an overview of the considerations and problems involved in the realization of high-rise in Amsterdam from 1900 to the present day.



Detail of the map related to the exhibition 'Coastwards', ARCAM, 2009.

- *25 Buildings You Should Have Seen* (nr. 15; 2002, third printing 2008; in English, Spanish, German, and Dutch) presents twenty-five ‘must see’ architectural highlights in Amsterdam. The preface is by the internationally well-known Dutch novelist Cees Nooteboom; languages and author were chosen on the basis of a marketing survey.
- *Hertzberger’s Amsterdam* (nr. 20; 2007; in English and Dutch) is a survey of the Amsterdam-born architect’s work and includes plans from his student days, built projects, never-implemented designs, and even a building that has since been demolished.

Made for travelling are the little architectural guides for passengers on city buses and trams in the Archishuttle series. The booklets are the size of a small pocket notebook—or a carnet of tickets formerly used for public transport—with maps, photos, and succinct descriptions of dozens of architectural sights along the route. They also include a brief introduction in Dutch and English.

Traditionally geographic are the paper architectural maps of Amsterdam and city districts. Entirely different is The Future Map, a web-based publication project that refers to the New Map of the Netherlands, the national atlas of official development plans. The Future Map, embedded in the ARCAM website, enables the visitor to view the future schemes for housing, industry, infrastructure, and green space in the Amsterdam region. As well as maintaining the map, the centre collects as much as possible the published comments on these schemes and links them to similar developments in the past, thus providing an interpretative shell.

Together with the Netherlands Architecture Institute (NAi) ARCAM launched the Amsterdam edition of the free 3D architecture application UAR (Urban Augmented Reality). By means of texts, images, archive material, and films, this smart-phone app provides information about the built environment. It is an architectural history tool because of the addition of advanced 3D models that enables the app user to see what the city used to look like, what it might have looked like, and what it will look like in the future.

UAR is almost the epitome of ARCAM’s view of architectural history: the focus is on the future, while mapping, researching, and imaging the past, including its mistakes and lost opportunities.

Maarten Kloos
 ARCAM – Architectuurcentrum Amsterdam



Covers of ARCAM pockets, respectively top left: *Architecture Now* (nr. 1; 1991); top right: *Amsterdam's High-Rise* (nr. 8; 1995); bottom left: *25 Buildings You Should Have Seen* (nr. 15; 2002); and bottom right: *Hertzberger's Amsterdam* (nr. 20; 2007).

Beyond Columns, or How to Wander at Paestum

The three archaic Greek temples at Paestum still stand magnificently in the quiet plain of Cilento in Southern Italy. The calmness of their situation reveals nothing of what happened on the grounds of Paestum more than two centuries ago, just after their rediscovery, when fierce debates were held on their architecture, aesthetics, and antiquity.

Today’s travellers, when arriving at the tiny train station named Paestum, perceive the tranquillity of the green surroundings, and after subsequently approaching the site from a straight and deserted road, are suddenly confronted with three grand buildings in yellowish limestone, and are struck by the completeness and ancientness of these ruins. The present settings of Paestum are not that far apart from the situation that unveiled itself to the eighteenth-century travellers, nor is the strong and mysterious impression the temples make. But where the modern traveller’s experience might be univocal, the eighteenth-century experience was much more contradictory, paradoxical, and multifaceted. To understand the enormous impact these temples made at the time and the key role Paestum played in the architectural debate, and how the reactions to the site have formed modern architectural thought, I would like to make a short virtual tour into history, into the eighteenth century.

Although the temples have always stood upright, and were thus also permanently visible to travellers, they were discovered, or rather rediscovered, in the middle of the eighteenth century. Even though they were visible, they were not seen, until 1740, when the buildings were brought to the attention of King Charles of Bourbon at the royal court at Naples, in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. Before long knowledge about the site was to spread around Europe, and Paestum came to fascinate people. Shortly after its rediscovery European travellers would flock to the site, write about it, draw the temples, and publish about them in large illustrated folios. In the second half of the eighteenth century alone, eight monographs, an impressive number, were published about the site.

The fascination for the site, however, was rather complex. Paestum attracted, captivated, enthralled, tantalized, disturbed, upset, agitated, and frightened its visitors all at the same time. Travelling to the site offered an invigorating but often hazardous adventure, a vast and enchanting landscape, and some very unusual buildings. The temples were so different from Roman classical architecture and from everything travellers had seen before in publications and at other sites, that the confrontation with these remains startled the visitors, raised many diverse



The much debated temples of Paestum, seen from the south; from left to right: the Temple of Athena, c. 520 BC; the Temple of Hera II (“Temple of Neptune”), c. 460 BC; and teh temple of Hera I (‘Basilica’), c. 570–520 BC. Engraving in Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Différentes vues de quelques restes de trois grands édifices qui subsistent encore dans le milieu de l’ancienne ville de Pesto autrement Possidonia qui est située dans la Lucanie* (Rome: 1778), plate I.

questions, and became a source of vehement debates. These continued throughout the eighteenth century, and well into the nineteenth.

THE SITE

What made these temples so special? What is presently known about them? First of all, of the Grecian temples in Magna Graecia the three in Paestum are the best preserved. They are also the oldest temples to be found on Italian soil. Thus, they are unique for their quantity, location, completeness, and ancientness. Moreover, the three temples, all built in different periods and expressing the diverse ideas on building of the Greek inhabitants at the time, offer an excellent overview of the development in early Greek Doric temple architecture. They were built in the sixth and fifth century BC in the Greek colony of Poseidonia, and are presently known as the Temple of Hera I (ca. 570–520 BC), of Athena (520 BC) and of Hera II (460 BC). Hera was the city's patroness and possessed a sanctuary within the walls. In the eighteenth century the temples would respectively be named the Basilica, the Temple of Ceres, and the Temple of Neptune.

The city was located about 80 km south of Naples and 40 km south of Salerno. It was situated in a vast plain, with the sea on the west side, the river Sele on the north, and the Alburni mountains on the east. The city walls surrounding the site follow the trapezoidal shape of the calcareous limestone shelf on which the city was built. These walls, begun by the Greeks and completed by the Romans, about 4.8 km in length and enclosing 96 ha, include four gates and towers, and are well preserved. Limestone, or travertine, was the principal building material. The three temples are east–west orientated. The Athena temple, the temple of Hera II, and the temple of Hera I are lined from north to south, and all had their entrances on the east side.

Poseidonia was one of the more important colonies in Magna Graecia, was most prosperous during the Greek period, and was an important city in the trade route from the south. The Greeks in the colonies drew on the culture of their homeland, but were also inventive, and while they experimented with novel building inventions, sculpture design, and cultural exchanges, the city prospered. Around 400 BC the Lucanians conquered Poseidonia and held it until in 273 BC, when a Latin colony settled there and the name was changed to Paestum. Roman streets were then laid out and a forum and buildings added, such as an amphitheatre, a temple, shops, and houses. At the same time, the three Greek temples remained amidst this new Roman city.



View of the Temples of Hera I ('Basilica'), c. 570–520 BC, and II ('Temple of Neptune'), c. 460 BC, from the northwest. Photograph: Sigrid de Jong

THE DEBATES

The eighteenth-century visitor did not know the history of the temples in such detail. On the contrary, as the monuments were built on Italian soil and surrounded by Roman remains, their origin came to be a constant source of debate in the eighteenth century. Travellers saw Etruscan, Greek, Roman, and even Egyptian elements in the temples. The origin of architecture was a major topic in eighteenth-century architectural debate and was tested at Paestum. This happened with other subjects of architectural thought as well, and at the same time the site raised questions that fuelled the debates and gave rise to new controversies. As such, between about 1750 and 1830 Paestum functioned as a laboratory and meeting ground for architects, artists, writers, and tourists who travelled to the site and discussed their experiences and findings. The experiences at the spot incited the eighteenth-century debates in which Paestum played a role, and were mainly held in France, England, and Italy, and more specifically in Paris, London, Rome, and Naples. The principal issues of these debates in architectural, artistic, and aesthetic theory were on the sublime and the picturesque, primitivism and the origins of architecture, changing ideas of cultural meaning, classical architecture and its role and historiography, and the ongoing validity of classical architecture as a design model.

In many observations of the site, the sublime was used to give words to the awe-inspiring and contradictory experiences. The concept of the sublime, theorized by Longinus, Nicolas Boileau, and Edmund Burke, among others, provided visitors with a frame by which to express their sensations in images and texts, as for example John Robert Cozens did in his drawings. The sublime was used to make sense of the way the temples deviated from the classical ideals of beauty, harmony, and proportion, and to do justice to the spatial experience they elicited, something not touched upon in Vitruvian architectural theory.

Another concept of aesthetics, the picturesque, also played a role at Paestum. In theories of the picturesque, the principal endeavour was to view a landscape and the buildings in it as a painting, thus framing a site from a distance. By observing the temples at Paestum only from a distance, and as if framed, however, the structures became just some ruins, like follies in a garden. The sublime turned out to be much more suited to characterise a complex site as Paestum.

Sometimes, when visitors tried to apply existing theories to the temples, tensions occurred. For example, the theories of primitivism, written by Marc-Antoine Laugier, among others, turned out not to correspond with viewing ancient remains in reality; the real remains were not as good a model for contemporary architecture



The Temple of Hera II ('Temple of Neptune'), c. 460 BC.
Photograph: Sigrid de Jong

as the primitive hut was in cultural normative theory. Nonetheless, architects did try to transform the Paestum temples into a model in architectural handbooks, treatises, and collections. The temples became illustrations of the historical development of classical architecture, as for instance in the drawings of the British architect William Wilkins. When, however, Paestum was reduced to one element, such as an order, proportions, or tectonics, or blended into the general mass of classical architecture, nothing was left of its specificity. And above all, nothing was left of the experience *in situ*.

THE EXPERIENCE

The architectural experience, so important a subject to eighteenth-century architects, was examined at Paestum's site in all its facets: travellers tested the diverse impressions a building could have on the spectator. The vastness of the site made it possible to stage different scenes of the temples when approaching from a distance. One could walk around the buildings, which were not to be taken in at one glance as the classicist rules prescribed, a necessary characteristic to be overwhelmed by sublime feelings. The experience of the buildings did not end with sensations of the sublime conveyed by the vastness of the site, its infinity, or the strangeness of the architecture. The next step was the movement around and eventually inside the temples. Architects could explore the spatial qualities that changed with every pace. This is very well shown in the etchings of Giovanni Battista Piranesi. The fact that the temples were in ruins but at the same time remarkably intact contributed to this. Inside and outside are intertwined; the limits become vague, and thus one could easily wander through the structures to examine its spatial qualities. That is why architects such as Claude-Mathieu Delagardette or Henri Labrouste stayed for weeks at the site, not just to measure the temples in detail, but above all to capture the impact of different conditions on the buildings, to take them in from diverse angles, opening up with every step a new perspective, as Piranesi demonstrated in his engravings. Moving towards, in, and around the buildings was the means to comprehend the architecture. The spectators, by entering the ruins and relating themselves physically to the buildings, examining mass and space, load and support, openness and closeness, scale and situation with all the senses, allowed the temples to become comprehensible. The visitors gained an awareness of the spatiality that was only to be felt through their body.

In the middle of the eighteenth century, at the time that Paestum was discovered, the importance of experience in architecture and its significance for design had become a focal point for many architects and theorists of architecture. The publications written by Julien-David Le Roy, Marc-Antoine Laugier, Nicolas Le Camus de Mézières, or John Soane, to name a few, are pervasive examples of this



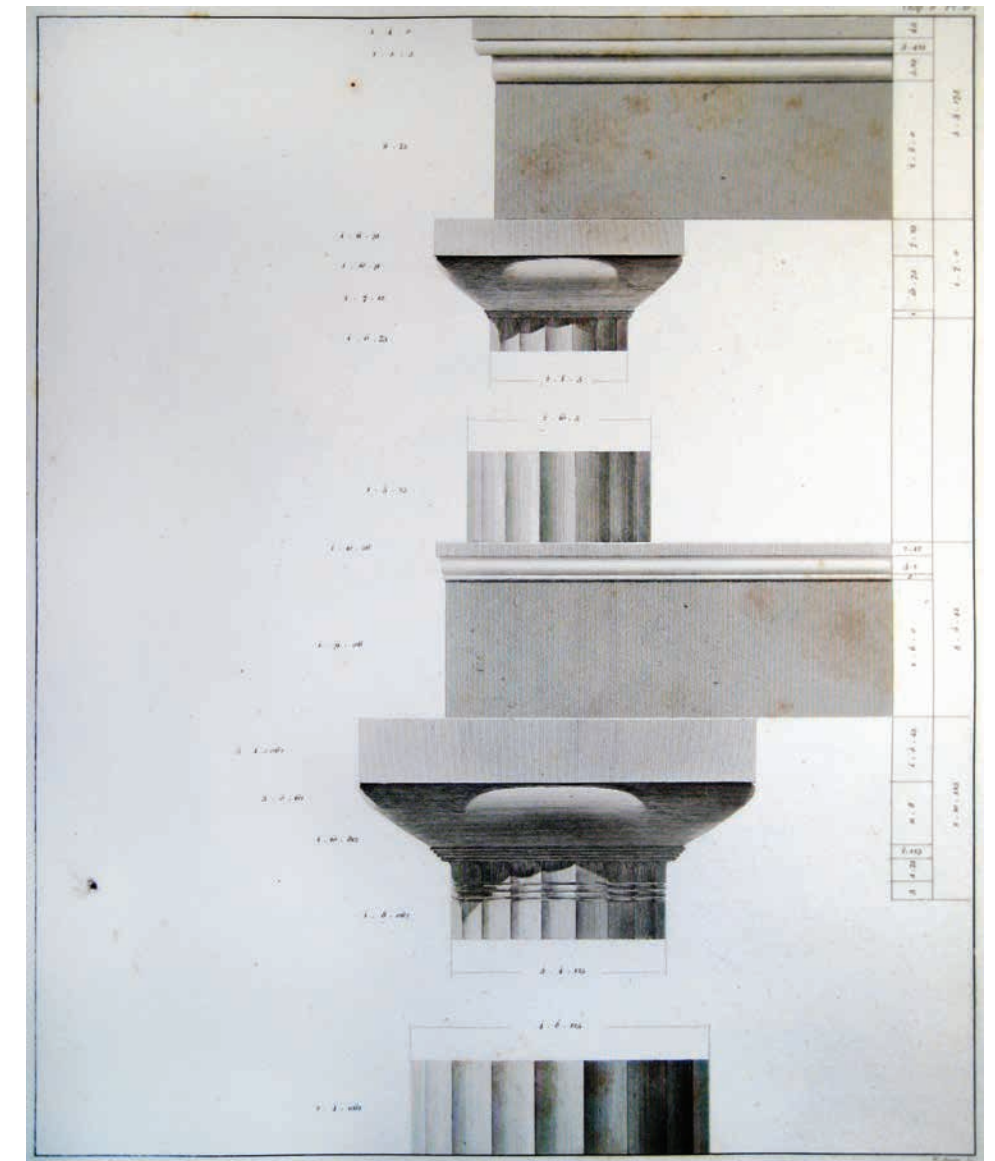
John Robert Cozens, *Sublime Temples* (the 'Temple of Neptune' and the 'Basilica'), watercolour on paper, c. 1782.
Photograph: Victoria & Albert Museum, London

new interest in putting architectural experience in the foreground. Architectural experience was thus used to analyse existing buildings, and to give the architect tools of designing architecture with the experience around a building and through the different spaces already in mind.

Significantly, at Paestum it became clear that elements other than only architecture determined the experiences: the danger of travelling, the situation, the weather, the time of day. Through movement these experiences took shape, giving importance to the changing influence of the sun, a perception during night or day, the difference between seeing the monuments from afar as a picturesque painting or from up close or even inside, sensing the ruins with one's own body. All these aspects of experience were explored. From the perspective of Enlightenment empiricism this is understandable. Posing questions and being convinced that the question of how a building can be understood and, more important, makes an impression on the beholder, can only be solved through an experience of buildings in a three-dimensional exploration on the spot.

The richness of these experiences is in stark contrast with the exportation of Paestum into design manuals or in architectural projects. In an urge to turn the temples into a design model, Paestum was reduced to one element. It was also made part of a larger context of Greek Doric architecture and became swallowed up in a sea of examples. As we can see in architectural projects by Wilkins in England, for example, when implemented in a new context, the site has evaporated. We perceive any Doric order, a combination of baseless orders found in Sicily, Athens, and Paestum, in a newly blended and abstracted version. These designs are worlds apart from what we can still experience at the site. As we wander among the Doric temples of Paestum in the footsteps of those eighteenth- and nineteenth-century architects and remember how they shaped modern architectural thought, history is not that far away.

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- The websites are in Italian.*
- <http://www.museopaestum.beniculturali.it/index.php?it/1/home>
 - <http://www.infopaestum.it>



Yorkshire Museum, York, England, 1830 (architect: William Wilkins).
Photograph: Kaly99, Creative Commons

BOOK REVIEW

Vinni Lucherini

La cattedrale di Napoli: Storia, architettura, storiografia di un monumento medievale

Rome: École française de Rome, 2009, 448 pp., colour and b/w ill., € 43

ISBN 978-2-7283-0852-1

Naples cathedral, dedicated to the Assumption, can be considered one of the most prominent extant examples of European medieval architecture. Begun in 1294, when Charles II of Anjou ruled Naples, the cathedral we see today is the result of many layers of construction and restoration. Lucherini’s study *La cattedrale di Napoli: Storia, architettura, storiografia di un monumento medievale* succeeds in the difficult task of revealing the obscure and extremely complex origins of this building. In particular, the book focuses on the complex relationship between the Angevin monument and the remains of the pre-existing basilica, known as Santa Restituta, portions of which are still recognizable in the large lateral chapel along the North aisle.

In the first chapter Lucherini challenges one of the most deeply rooted theories in the church’s historiography, according to which the Neapolitan cathedral was built on the site of two pre-existing ancient Basilicas: one dedicated to the Saviour, known also as the Stefania, which would supposedly have been completely destroyed to create space for the transept of the new building; the other to Santa Restituta, which was only partly torn down to allow the construction of the three aisles of the new church. By means of an extremely detailed philological analysis of all the written sources, the author demonstrates how the existence of the two cathedrals corresponds to an ‘invented tradition.’ This was a strategical ruse used at the beginning of the eighteenth century by a cathedral body known as the *ebdomadari*, who were less important than the canons of the cathedral chapter, but sought to claim descent from the chapter of the no longer existing Stefania, thus ‘establishing’ equal status to the cathedral’s canons, this in order to defend their right to burial prerogatives and the use of the cathedral’s cross. By showing how this juridical controversy gradually affected the cathedral’s subsequent



Photograph: EAHN

historiography, Lucherini convincingly demonstrates that only one basilica preceded the Angevin construction: the Stefania, subsequently rededicated to Santa Restituta, remains of which are still visible today.

By a careful analysis of the *Gesta Episcoporum Neapolitanorum*, Lucherini in the second chapter sheds new light on the architecture, liturgical furnishings, and sacred topography of the original Stefania, from its founding in the eighth century through to its refashioning in the tenth century. The author discusses the bishops' propagandistic program of transferring the corpses of their predecessors and various city martyrs from their original burial places to the first Neapolitan cathedral, where their sepulchres were systematically decorated with effigies. Lucherini also sheds new light on the dual role played by the Stefania and the Basilica of San Gennaro extra moenia, which acted as the two major poles of the religious, ceremonial, and sepulchral preferences of the Duchy of Naples between the eighth and ninth centuries. Furthermore, a detailed description of the geopolitical reorientation of Naples from the sphere of the Byzantine Empire to that of the Papacy provides the context for a discussion of the architectural and artistic references to Saint Peter and the Lateran in the refashioning of the southern part of the Stefania.

Relying on literary sources such as the *Vita Sancti Aspreni* as well as surviving documents, in chapter three Lucherini analyses the delicate transition from the Stefania, which in the meantime had been dedicated to Santa Restituta, to the new Angevin cathedral, demonstrating the exclusive role of episcopal patronage in the construction of the new building between 1294 and 1317. The author reconstructs the evolution of the building site of the new church and the progressive shift of functions and objects from the old basilica, such as the relocation of the Angevin royal burials, whose controversial position in the apse of the new cathedral is accurately discussed.

In the fourth and last chapter Lucherini summarizes the major restorations carried out over the centuries, as a means of identifying medieval traces beneath the Baroque forms of the Stefania/Santa Restituta. A substantial appendix of documents shows how the findings of this book are grounded in considerable new research based on primary and secondary sources. The author intentionally pays

less attention to the material sources, considering that 'the history of the cathedral of Naples can by no means ignore the history of its historiographic tradition' (p. 151). By bringing together an accurate philological analysis of the written sources and a discussion of the Stefania and the new Angevin cathedral within the context of medieval pan-European architecture between the eighth and the thirteenth centuries, this book subverts three hundred years of Neapolitan historiography and provides a new understanding to one of the most obscure and overlooked periods of Neapolitan history.

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BOOK REVIEW

Rachel Stewart

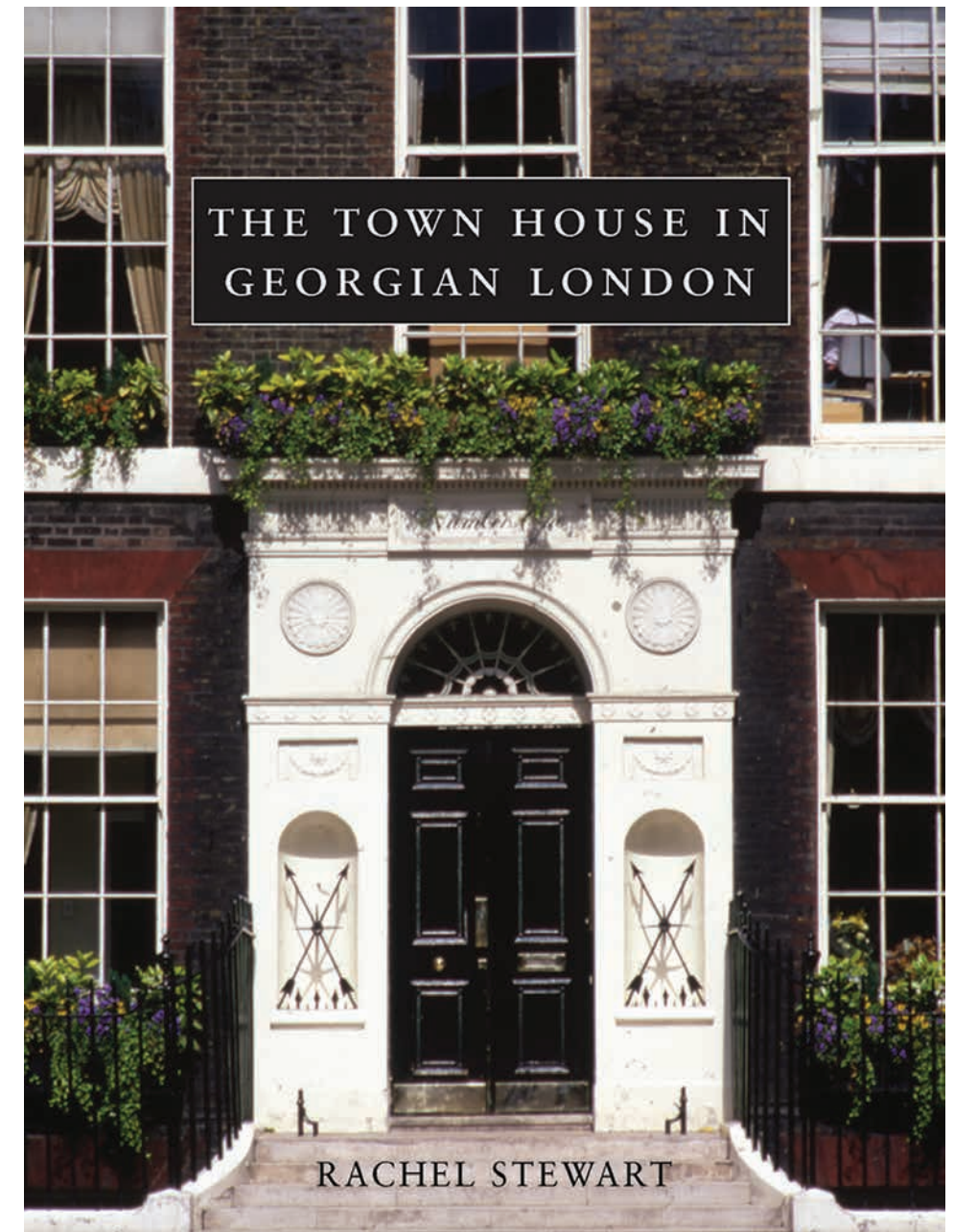
The Town House in Georgian London

Yale: Yale University Press, 2009, 272 pp., 20 colour and 60 b/w ill., \$ 65

ISBN 978-0-300-15277-7

Studies of the eighteenth-century town house are few and far between in contrast to the vast literature on the country house in this period. I still recall with irritation contributing to a useful British conference on the topic which remains unpublished, a fate it does not share with the many symposia on the country house. The reasons for this imbalance are manifold, not least the bespoke nature of the country house as opposed to the commercial character of urban domestic architecture. Convention simply does not thrill, and architectural history of the past century has been principally concerned with buildings that stimulate aesthetic delight. Pioneers in the examination of urban domestic form include James Ayres, Neil Burton, Dan Cruikshank, Mark Girouard, Peter Guillery, Frank Kelsall, Elizabeth McKellar, and Sir John Summerson. The literature, though compact, is diverse in character. It includes general linear discussion of urban form, typological analysis of plan and detail, integration of social and architectural history, exploration of the economic drivers to speculative development, and close examination of specific buildings and urban contexts.

In focusing on clients' wants and needs and considering a group of bespoke town houses, Rachel Stewart's *The Town House in Georgian London* endeavours to straddle several of these categories. A stated aim is to redress the balance of interest from the country house to the town house and to view the latter in a holistic way, focusing on the client or occupant. This 'is not architectural history with a nod to social history.' Rather, the book delivers what it promises, and the strength of the volume lies in its fresh coverage of town house inhabitants, while its discussion of town house design is less original and more reliant on published sources. Though the book certainly adds useful information to our knowledge of the eighteenth-century London town house, the title is somewhat misleading in



Photograph: courtesy of Yale University Press

suggesting a comprehensive coverage of the topic over the entire century. In fact, as the introduction makes clear, attention is focused on the West End in the period 1766–90. The product of a doctoral thesis, the book combines fresh and original documentation with material that derives from literature review both of recent and eighteenth-century sources.

In the three initial chapters, which constitute Part One of the volume, Stewart gathers together a diverse range of documentation on the acquisition, ownership, and usage of the West End town house. The particular financial status of the London house, realisable as an asset or dowry, is contrasted with the very different role of the country house as the key element in an unbroken patrimony. The multiple reasons for owning or renting a city house are vividly portrayed and effective use is made of quotation from correspondence, diaries, and contemporary literature. One of the less trumpeted attractions of having a city pied à terre is nicely captured in General Mostyn’s quip of 1776 to the Duke of Newcastle: ‘Tired of worsted...I took a run to London last Saturday to fuck somebody in silk.’ At times the author is apologetic for working on the ‘scale of the individual actor’ rather than taking a global approach, but it is in the particular that she most effectively evokes the patterns of ownership, consumption, evaluation, and emulation which characterised life in London’s late eighteenth-century streets and squares.

Part Two of the book is less convincing. It deals in two chapters with the largely negative portrayal of the town house in contemporary architectural literature and its limited graphic representation in plans and elevations. A final chapter focuses on the achievements of the Adam brothers in raising a conventional and limited domestic form to the status of architecture, drawing significantly upon existing Adam scholarship.

There is a certain contradiction in juxtaposing critical comment of the summary and conventional character of speculative building with demonstration of architectural ingenuity in bespoke town house design. Here one senses a thesis being translated too readily to book form. Town houses designed by William Kent, William Chambers, and Robert Adam are surely in an entirely different category to

the run-of-the-mill, off-the-peg row houses which seemed to satisfy the needs of the majority, despite their critical reception by architects and cognoscenti.

To focus so much attention on negative perceptions of the standard house form and to conclude the book with discussion of the exceptional house points up a tension that runs through the book. The author wishes to redress the balance of historical interest from the country house to the town house and does so admirably in her discussion of town house occupants. It is, however, a very tall order to redress the balance of formal architectural interest from the vast wealth of eighteenth-century British country house design to a limited number of custom-built city mansions that are but oases of sophistication within a desert of speculative brick boxes. It is the cumulative effect of those boxes, the range and ingenuity of their internal planning and ornament, the fascinating development histories that drove their production and acquisition, and the lives lived within them that sustains growing interest in the urban domestic form. The strength of Stewart’s book lies in the very valuable new documentation that she presents, which offers fresh insight into the lives of town house dwellers in the late eighteenth century.

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BOOK REVIEW

Maiken Umbach

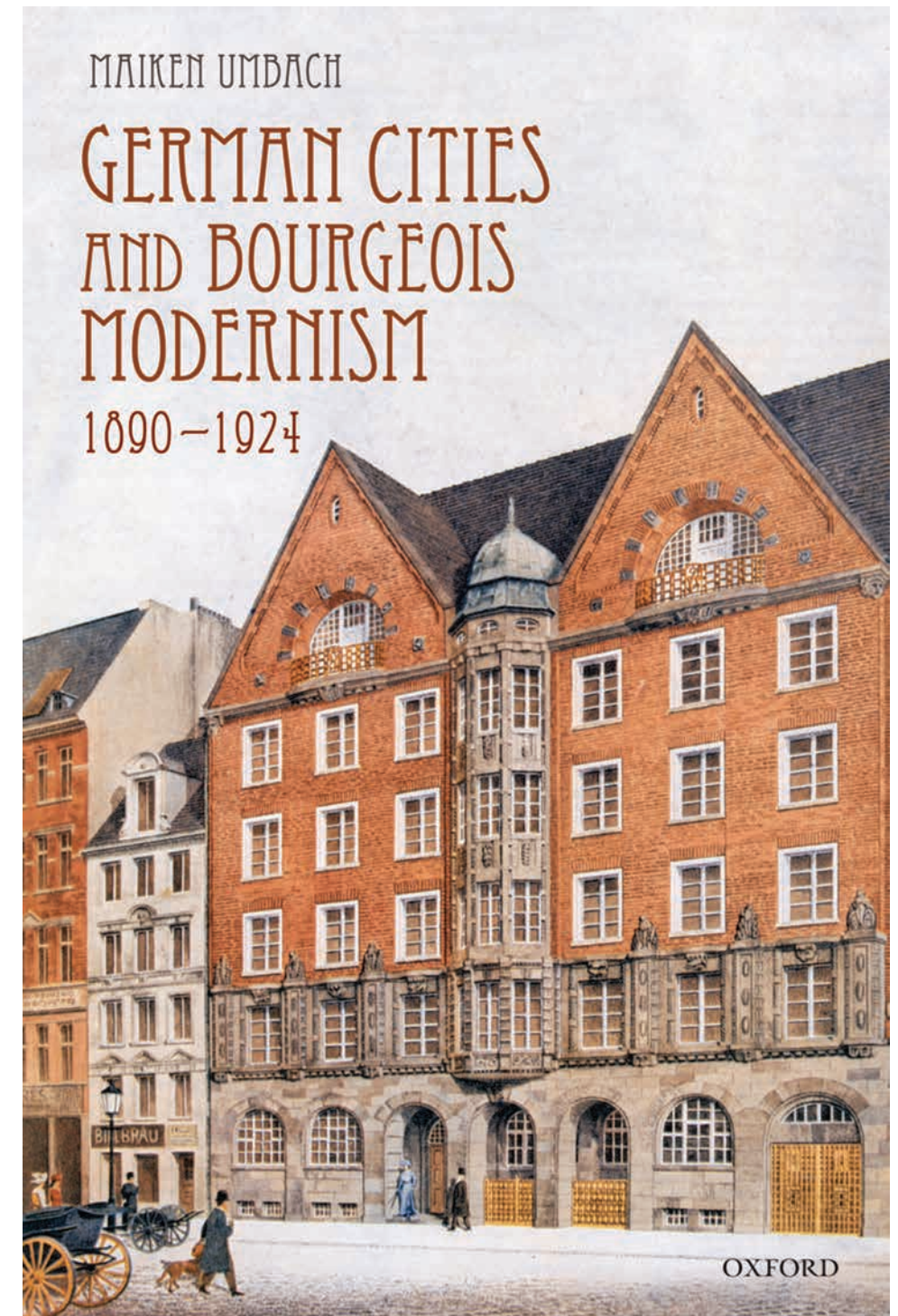
German Cities and Bourgeois Modernism, 1890–1924

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, xii and 254 pp., 55 b/w ill., £ 61

ISBN: 978-0-19-955739-4

Overviews of the architectural developments during the first decades of the twentieth century were traditionally framed as the triumphal rise of the International Style. For instance, in Germany, Bauhaus dominated the scene, while the Deutscher Werkbund was reduced to a mere precursor of later modernist tendencies. A younger generation of architectural historians, such as Harmut Frank, Wolfgang Voigt, Barbara Millar Lane, Frederic Schwartz, or John Maciuika, have seriously revised this rather one-sided account by showing that architects including Richard Riemerschmid, Hermann Muthesius, and Fritz Schumacher formed a highly interesting reformist current that belonged neither to nineteenth-century historicism and eclecticism, nor to a blatant avant-garde movement.

In *German Cities and Bourgeois Modernism, 1890–1924*, Maiken Umbach approaches these architects from a different, but equally revisionist angle. As an historian who subscribes to the revision of the Sonderweg thesis, Umbach argues that the German Empire should not be considered an anti-modern regime, but that Wilhelminian Germany should be seen as Europe's 'laboratory of modernity' where 'a silent bourgeois revolution' developed (p. 3–5). Accordingly, the Werkbund has to be understood as part of a liberal renewal movement. To understand this reformist project, the author does not limit herself to studying the written statements of the main participants, which she even disqualifies as 'a rather dilettantish hotchpotch of various fashionable ideas of the time' (p. 13), but also explicitly examines the actual 'objects and spaces' that were created by these architects and designers. And instead of writing another history of the Werkbund, or analysing its main representatives, her book has a thematic approach. The chapters deal with the sense of time, the sense of place, nature and culture, the designed object, and the spatial politics of *Bürgerlichkeit*.



Photograph: courtesy of Oxford University Press

Although one could disagree with some of Umbach's methodological preferences, her analyses produce some highly interesting new insights. Thus, in the first chapter, entitled 'The Sense of Time: Configuring History and Memory in the City,' Umbach argues that at the end of the nineteenth century historicism was challenged by a new intellectual preoccupation with memory. This is illustrated in a detailed analysis of the Hanseatic High Court building in Hamburg, which was built in 1903 by Lundt and Kallmorgen in an archaic and severe classicist style. The mysterious statues on the building and in the surrounding park seem to refer to a 'mythological memory' that defies periodization. Unlike the allegorical statues adorning earlier buildings, these sculptures could not be decoded by referring to a canon of historical knowledge that was familiar territory for the well-educated classes, but appealed to a more intuitive and at the same time more democratic collective memory. The author thus concludes that the combination of references to both history and memory in buildings such as the High Court show that the transition from historicism to modernism 'was less abrupt than modernist propaganda implied' (p. 17).

Another insightful chapter discusses the *bürgerliche* aspects of this artistic trend. According to Umbach, the reformist architects probably valued the transformation of daily conduct more than the direct exercise of power. And this could be achieved especially in the domestic sphere, to which they devoted much of their creative attention. In an extensive examination of some of Muthesius' best-known villas in Berlin-Nikolassee, Umbach demonstrates how the architect carefully designed these bourgeois homes with their rather unconventional layout and functional decoration. The austere music chamber in particular was the place for a new type of sociability that was intended to replace the 'mock-feudal habits' of the upper classes. Thus, the musical soirée, in the 'privacy of the bourgeois home,' became the 'training ground for the new *bürgerlich* lifestyle' (p. 175).

Umbach's analysis of Muthesius' work from the years immediately before the First World War is based on an impressive body of primary sources, but she also refers to a wide variety of possible precursors and contemporaries. At the same time, she discusses present-day interpretations by architectural historians, while applying concepts from Benjamin, Elias, and Foucault. This is characteristic of her approach, and produces some fascinating results. Sometimes, however,

her analyses seem rather impressionistic and even questionable. For example, in her conclusion Umbach states that bourgeois modernism was defined by 'the tension between history and memory, between order and nature, between nation and locality, between the progressive and the archaic,' and that it did not 'seek to establish a fiction of unity, but sought to make these paradigmatic oppositions visible, resulting in a dialogical and dialectic structure' (p. 207). Considering the strong longing for organic unity and the overcoming of social fragmentation at the time—which were clearly present in the 'dilettantish' statements of these bourgeois reformists—this interpretation would have sounded very strange to most of her protagonists.

Nonetheless, Umbach's plea to re-evaluate the contribution of this generation of reformist architects and designers in the development of twentieth-century modern art and architecture seems fully justified. Umbach proposes the use of the term 'bourgeois modernism' to define the content of their reformist art. It seems to me that she is right in emphasising both the liberal and bourgeois tenor of their work and its progressive and innovative character. Why, then, not accept the term *Reformarchitektur*, as used in German discourse? Another option would be to use the term 'regionalism,' which is in use in Spain and France, to characterise this same type of reformist architectural trend. One could argue that in Germany there was no clear equivalent for the neo-Normand and neo-Basque styles in France, but at the same time architects such as Muthesius, Riemerschmid, and Schumacher also believed that buildings should be adapted to their natural surroundings, and that if possible local building traditions and materials should be used. Although Umbach's analyses are not always totally convincing, they are certainly thought provoking and worth considering.

Eric Storm
Institute for History, Leiden University

EXHIBITION REVIEW

Rietveld's Universe: Rietveld, Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier, Theo van Doesburg

Curators: Rob Dettingmeijer, Marie-Thérèse van Thoor, and Ida van Zijl

Utrecht, Centraal Museum, 20 October 2010 – 13 February 2011

Rome, MAXXI, 14 April – 17 July 2011

My first impression when visiting the exhibition 'Rietveld's Universe' was a sense of disclosure. We all know about the importance and influence of Gerrit Rietveld's work, but when attention moves away from him everything seems to slide into a dense but less defined horizon and what remains is the Schröder House and a few unforgettable pieces of furniture. The most immediate contribution of this exhibition is as a reminder of the breadth and depth of Rietveld's legacy, made evident not only through a thorough display of his complete series of works but also through the focus on the wide range of small and large issues addressed by the Utrecht master. The construction of this new critical consciousness is also well supported by the choice of the continuous 'face to face' confrontation with Rietveld's contemporaries, considered as the real key to his conceptual and formal universe. Furthermore, the curators, both in the show and in the catalogue, aimed to place Rietveld comfortably among the masters of Modernism, and to keep his profile as far removed as possible from being exclusively a representative of De Stijl, the best-known of Dutch Modernist artistic movements.

The show also conveys an overwhelming sense of duality and time displacement. Rietveld, or at least the concept guiding this exhibition, speaks to us about the roots of Modernism, and the way we look at it today. It is an unexpected sensation, just like working on a site or text that is both archaeological and contemporary at the same time and challenges both our knowledge and our creativity. Rietveld's unspoken manifesto is clear in this sense: simplicity of components, process versus style, and assemblage versus composition ensure that the original components remain visible after the assemblage is performed.



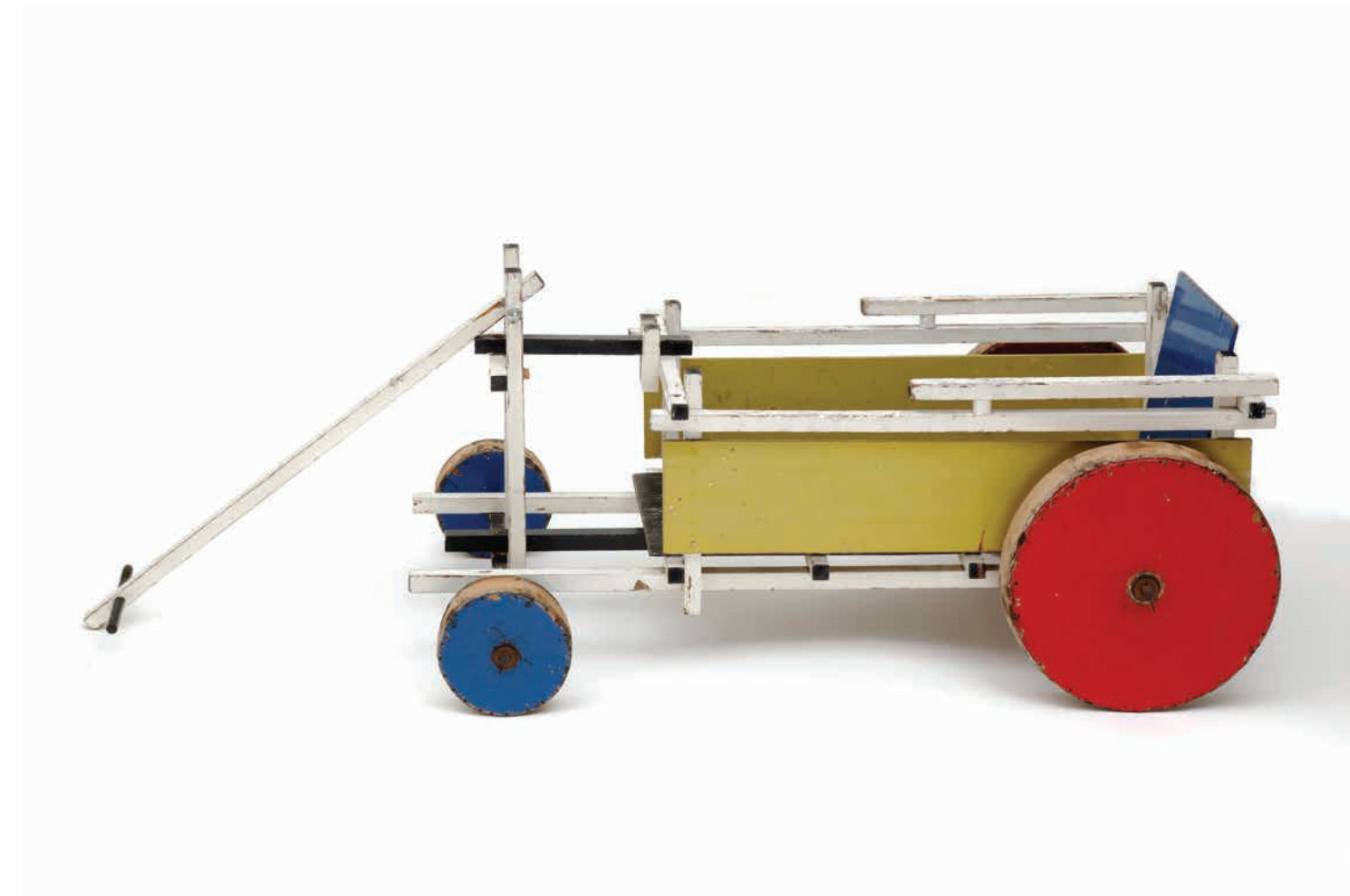
Gerrit Rietveld and Gerard A. van de Groenekan, model of the Berlin chair, 1923; wood; 106 x 75 x 58 cm; collection Centraal Museum, Utrecht, Netherlands.
Photograph: Ernst Moritz

So, what's my reading of 'Rietveld's Universe'? Why should we consider this show and its curatorial approach relevant? Where, beyond the obvious historians' hunger for continuously re-reading fundamental topics, is the 'actuality' of Rietveld's oeuvre? I found several answers.

The first derives from a quote by Rietveld displayed at the exhibition: 'My furniture tries not to interrupt the space.' This quote contains the most inclusive legacy of this exhibition and the best possible answer to our ordinary quest about what 'modern' means for our everyday life. And it perfectly matches with Rietveld's approach to architecture and design, an approach intended to be a non-separated and synchronic investigation of space, society, and technique.

The second has to do with history and historiography. My impression is that the twenty-first century is still waiting for a new approach and a new reading of the 'epic' of Modernism and of the work of its masters. Together with other books and curatorial projects now in preparation, 'Rietveld's Universe' could be one of the first steps towards defining a new approach to the history of modern and contemporary architecture.

I'm impressed by how the show relates to the issues of contemporary architecture. The seeming indifference to our age of the materials and items in the exhibition is contradicted at the end of the visiting route by the presence of the artist's fierce red and blue that acts as an abrupt break-in of the contemporary uncanny in the peaceful display of the show. This reminds me of the condition of architecture today, and how each new generation of designers reacts to the urge for renewal, as strong today as never before, by developing their own independent reading of history. It is the story of early Modernism, with Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe reading classicism. It happened in Italy in the Fifties, with Aldo Rossi and his classmates at the Milan Politecnical University (the so-called 'giovani delle colonne') dedicating issues of *Casabella continuità* to designers such as Adolf Loos and Hendrik Pieter Berlage. It happened again in New York in the late Sixties, when the Five tuned their reading of the modern tradition, to say nothing of Post-Modernism, or the liaisons dangereuses between de-constructivist architects and the early twentieth-century avant-garde, as evidenced by the exhibition Philip Johnson and Mark Wigley at the MoMA in 1988.



Gerrit Rietveld, model of a handcart, 1925 (designed c. 1922–23); redwood, beech, oak, and plywood; 65 x 112 x 65 cm (without the drawbar); collection Centraal Museum, Utrecht, Netherlands.
Photograph: Ernst Moritz

There is a real chance that ‘Rietveld’s Universe’ will offer to the young the possibility to start writing their own history and transferring it into the articulate landscape of political, artistic, ecological, and social issues that architects are facing today. Rietveld developed his own political approach to democratic design, moving discretely from the use of basic carpentry timber to the construction of furniture and the ambitious investigation of the problems of mass housing. I recall that in the exhibition ‘Spazio’, the opening show of the MAXXI museum in Rome (May 2010), many of the invited architects focused on issues Rietveld was used to address. A Scandinavian designer in particular, Sami Rintala (Rintala & Eggertson, Oslo), decided to answer the brief by building with his own hands a house in the MAXXI courtyard, basically using only those carpentry timber elements Rietveld was the first to apply in the design of furniture and buildings.

For the curators of ‘Rietveld’s Universe’ it was not an easy task to fit the strongly structured sequence in the traditional layout of rooms in Utrecht’s Centraal Museum. The device they chose, based on the double distinction of front-back and white-grey, proved successful in making the show readable to every type of audience. Since we learned, however, that the exhibition will travel to other places (I can personally vouch for MAXXI), it will be interesting to see the Rietveld narrative displayed in different spaces, possibly attracting new readings and provoking discussion about its relation to contemporary space and time.

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Publication related to the exhibition:

Rob Dettingmeijer, Marie-Thérèse van Thoor, and Ida van Zijl, editors,
Rietveld’s Universe, Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, colour and b/w/ ill.,
€ 47.50, ISBN 978-90-5662-746-1



Rietveld Schröder House, detail of the interior, Utrecht, Netherlands, 1924 (architect: Gerrit Rietveld).
Photograph: Kim Zwarts, courtesy Centraal Museum

EXHIBITION REVIEW

The Space of Romanian Modernity 1906–1947

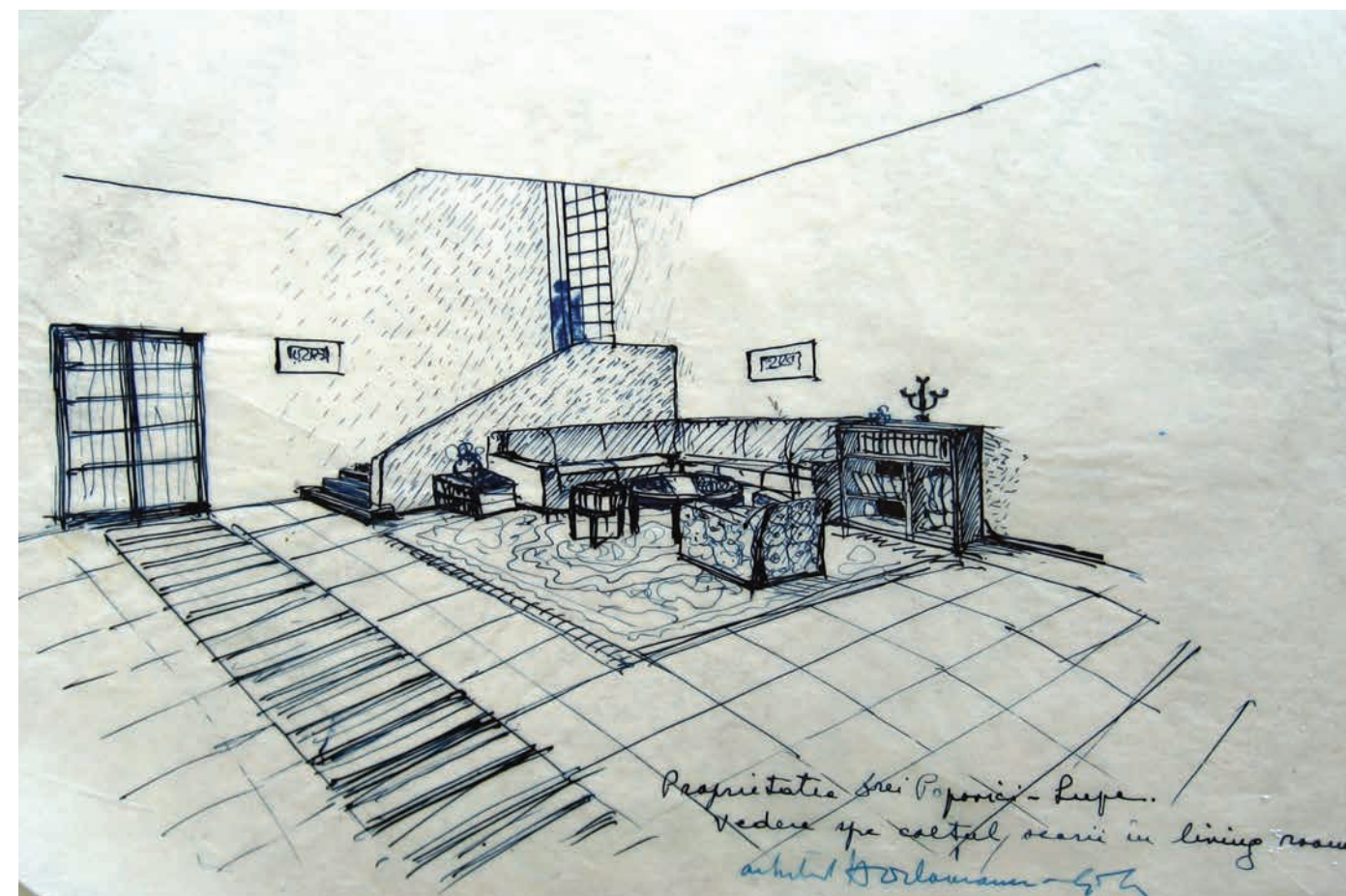
Curator: Carmen Popescu

The Romanian Peasant Museum, Bucharest

27 October–12 December 2010

It is a fact that architects sometimes partake in the rather tortuous task of building a national identity. This happened in modern Romania, between the founding of the monarchy (1881) and the expulsion of the last king (1947), when various architectural discourses, such as eclecticism, traditionalism, and modernism, were successively engaged in configuring the country’s most appropriate representations. It is also a fact that the image can be a valuable medium for architectural development, as proved, for instance, in interwar period in Romania, by the influence of multifaceted visual material (magazines, posters, paintings, commercials, postcards, etc.) on both creativity and taste. Architecture and image are therefore key terms in a narrative about the interwoven relationships between habitation, social practices, fashion, aesthetics, (national) purposes, and the like. I believe that Carmen Popescu’s exhibition ‘The Space of Romanian Modernity 1906–1947’ brought these exchanges to the fore.

The exhibition assembled an impressive quantity of various artefacts illustrating the ‘space of modernity,’ such as drawings, decorative objects, paintings, photographs, and fragments of documentary films. The core of this vast display consisted of more than one hundred drawings, never before exhibited, made by three of the most significant Romanian architects: Paul Smarandescu, Henriette Gibory-Delavrancea, and Octav Doicescu. Unquestionably an ambitious project, unparalleled in the last decade, the show involved numerous institutions, among which the Architect’s Chamber of Romania, the art museums in Braila and Constanta, the National Museum of Art of Romania, and the Academy National Library. And last but not least, the venue of this enterprise, symbolically appropriate to the topic of modernity, was the Romanian Peasant Museum, located in the very edifice that once housed the Museum of National Art.



Henriette Delavrancea, interior for the villa Popovici-Lupa at Balcic, Romania; drawing on paper, 1934.
Photograph: EAHN

If I were to summarize Carmen Popescu's curatorial approach, I would stress at least three theses: a chronological readjustment (1906–1947) that somehow attenuates the impact of the two World Wars, while emphasizing other decisive events; the delineation of three major fields—expositions, city, and leisure—pertaining to a ceaseless reformulation of modernity; and the interplay between image and architecture (in my opinion the most interesting part).

For Romanian modernity, the year 1906 has a multilevel significance: it produced the first General Exposition, the founding of the Society of Architects in Romania, the first issue of its magazine *Arhitectura* (*Architecture*), and the founding of the Museum of National Art that was supposedly engaged in creating a national artistic language. The other temporal limit—1947—was set by the end of monarchy, followed, in a captive 'popular democracy,' by a rigid subordination to the Soviet system. In the same year, the well-known architect and theoretician George Matei Cantacuzino published a book on the aesthetics of reconstruction, meant to guide, in the aftermath of the war, a rational, modern, and ethical rebuilding. The forty years between these two milestones were marked by the recasting of the national style (after 1918), followed by the advancement of the sharpest Modernism (towards 1930), and later by a sort of modern classicism (around 1939), while traditionalism gradually reinvented itself as a form of modernity.

All these developments were framed, in the exhibition, by three domains divided in multiple aspects. For instance, the 'city' section was structured according to the daily life rhythm—work, habitation, entertainment, cultural habits, etc.—and 'leisure' was geographically divided in seashore architectural programs, mountain houses, and the like. The 'expositions,' in their section, were ranged not only chronologically but also according to status (local or international). Without any doubt, the most significant was the General Exposition in 1906 (celebrating, at the same time, eighteen centuries of Latin continuity, twenty-five years of independence, and four decades since the arrival of the future King Carol I of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen), as it favoured the national style as the only valid option—hence its privileged space within the exhibition. Symmetrically, the 1939 World Fair in New York imposed the new classicism as official program, supported by King Carol II himself. Taking this section as a starting point, I would



Octav Doicescu, the Romanian House for the New York World Fair; drawing on paper, 1939.
Photograph: EAHN

particularly emphasize the *mise en abîme* at work here: the visual memory of highly important past exhibitions becomes an organic part of the present one.

Consequently, the interplay between image and architecture could be taken as the central theme of this curatorial event. Interlaced in its discourse were ‘the architecture of the image’ and ‘the image of architecture.’ One level dealt with the image of Romania ‘built’ abroad (at the international expositions after 1930) through the medium of its pavilions. It dealt, moreover, with the rigorous (architectural) structuring of the visual material. The other level, centred on the image of architecture, included, first of all, the very special historical expressiveness of the objects themselves (especially the drawings), and, more generally, our polymorphous contemporary representation of the architecture from that particular epoch.

Even if image and architecture were the key terms in this exhibition, the ‘text’ that accompanied the curatorial project cannot be forgotten. The marvellous display of artifacts was framed by an international conference entitled ‘(Dis)continuities: Spaces of Modernity 1900–1950’ (26–27 November 2010), organized by the Architect’s Chamber of Romania, the Geisteswissenschaftliches Zentrum Geschichte und Kultur Ostmitteleuropas, Leipzig, and the National University of Arts, Bucharest, with the support of the ‘Ion Mincu’ University of Architecture and Urbanism, Bucharest; and by a volume of scholarly essays.

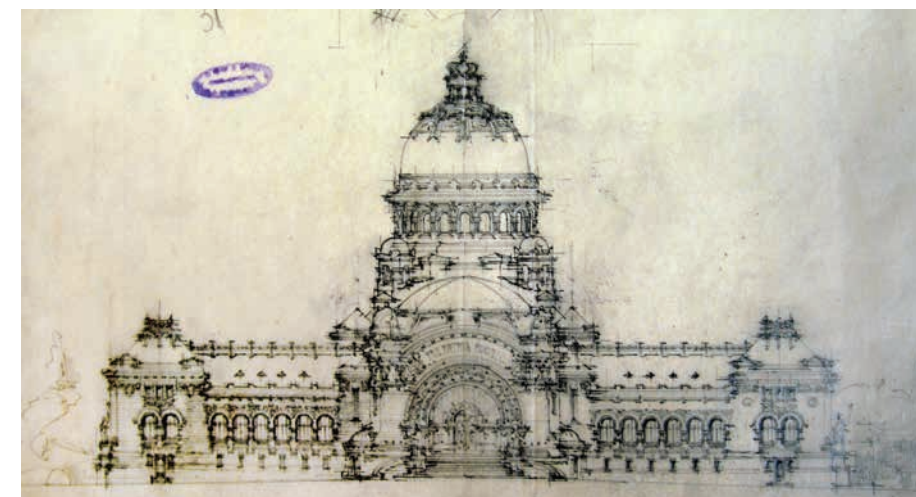
Cosmin Ungureanu

[‘Ion Mincu’ University of Architecture and Urbanism, Bucharest]

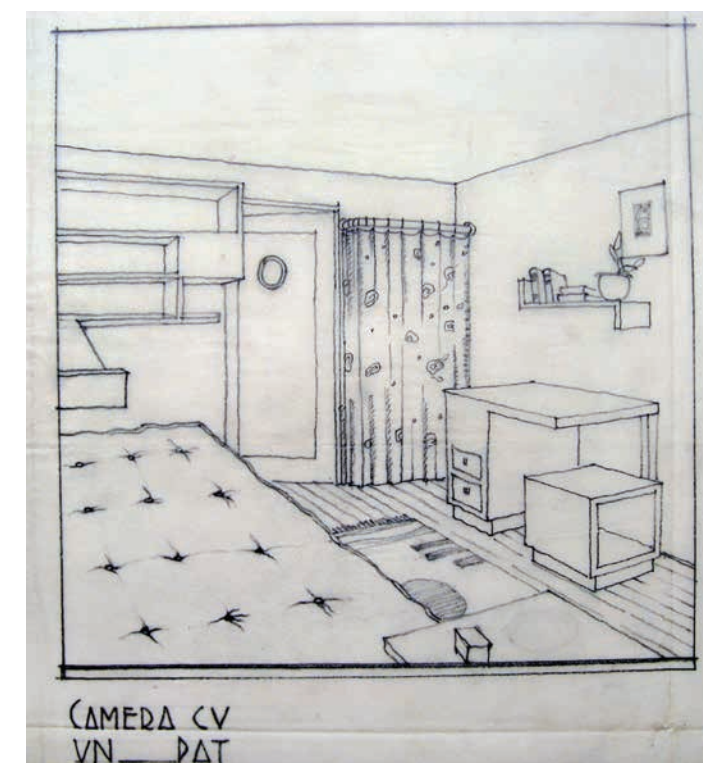
Publication connected to the exhibition:

Carmen Popescu, ed., *(Dis)continuities: Fragments of Romanian Modernity in the First Half of the 20th Century*, Bucharest: Simetria, 2010, 228 pp., 142 illus., LEI 51.23, ISBN 978-973-1872-15-5 (Romanian and English versions)

Paul Smarandescu, the Senate in Bucharest, Romania; sketch on paper; entry for the competition, 1911.



Octav Doicescu, interior of a room in the resting house for the Yachting Club at Snagov, near Bucharest, Romania; drawing on paper, 1930.



EXHIBITION REVIEW

Discords: Norwegian Architecture 1945–65

Curator: Bente Aass-Solbakken

The National Museum of Art, Architecture, and Design, Oslo

14 November 2010–3 April 2011

‘Discords: Norwegian Architecture 1945–65’ is the result of a collaboration between The National Museum, The Department of Philosophy, Classics, History of Art and Ideas at the University of Oslo, and part of a national researcher network called Norwegian Architecture and Design 1950–70. It marks a new interest for research-based exhibitions so successfully practiced at institutions like MoMA (New York) and Neue Pinakothek (Munich), and which hopefully will be continued in the program under the museum’s new director.

As its title suggests, ‘Discords’ casts its light on a conflictive and formative, yet sparsely investigated, period in Norwegian architectural history when prewar functionalism dissolved into a number of different movements, categorized in the exhibition as ‘New Empiricism,’ ‘(Abstract) New Traditionalism,’ and ‘(Avant-Garde) Modernism.’ The latter enrolls prominent architects like Arne Korsmo, Sverre Fehn, Christian Norberg-Schulz, and Geir Grung, who played a decisive role in forming postwar Norwegian architectural culture, and continues to be a subject for research. The exhibition carries multiple perspectives and proves to be a useful instrument for dissecting the mythologized and often oversimplified Late Modernist period.

The sober selection of works on display is organized in five thematic sections—‘Early discords, 1945–55,’ ‘From sketch to media presentation,’ ‘Landscape and nature,’ ‘Modernism and history,’ and ‘Space and experimentation’—which reappear in the bilingual text folder and the extensive exhibition catalogue, unfortunately so far only in Norwegian. Canonized icons of the era, like Fehn’s Villa Schreiner, Fehn and Grung’s Økern home for the elderly, Grung’s own house at Jongskollen, Knut Knutsen’s summer house in Portør, and the houses in Planetveien by Korsmo and Norberg-Schulz, are accompanied by less



Summer house in Portør, Norway, 1949 (architect: Knut Knutsen).
Photograph: Studio Teigen

acknowledged works such as Are Vesterlid's dance hall in Elverum, Håkon Mjelva's temporary duplex house, Anton Paulson's Villa Bjerke, and Nils Holter's extension of the house of parliament. Even though the exhibition spans over two decades and includes a great variety of buildings, urban prospects, and pieces of furniture, it allows in-depth examination of selected projects, like Bodø Church by Gudolf Blakstad and Herman Munthe-Kaas, and the Bergen town hall by Erling Viksjø.

Fehn's celebrated glass pavilion from 2008 houses the greater part of the exhibition. Upon entering, one is immediately confronted with the paradoxes of contemporary exhibition spaces. For this occasion, the 'wall-less,' transparent pavilion is, by the help of provisory curtains, turned into a black box to accommodate light-sensitive drawings, and filled up by the architect's own rather clunky display modules which effectively counteract the generosity of the space. Unfortunately, the exhibition draws attention to the shortcoming of the architectural frame, emphasizing how unsuitable this beautiful space is to host various forms of architectural representations, unfortunately limiting the curators.

The exhibition consists entirely of original material. The lack of reproduced models, computer generated animations, and instructive diagrams is striking—and relieving. Besides documenting architectural modes of representation, it adds a sense of authenticity that gives the works on display a particular degree of presence. This curatorial strategy makes the architecture relevant to us, more so, I would say, than any computer-generated animation would do. The fast-track visitor might find the exhibition old-fashioned and restrained, but after spending some time among the delicate, handmade artifacts, one is easily touched and convinced. The challenge of exhibiting fragile paper on vertical surfaces is overcome by mounting a thin transparent tape frame around each drawing, exposing the paper edges, a method more low-key and respectful than a passe-partout. The method is not optimal, however, as the relationship between frame and paper appears flimsy and accidental. The display cases are more successfully organized and give sketchbooks, photos, and single-sheet drawings a distinct setting. Miniature monitors dispersed throughout the space display (apparently) unedited and soundless film clips, giving them, alas, a rather mystical aura. They would have deserved more thoroughly contextualization. The curator has deliberately withdrawn into the shadows of the show, casting full light at the



Gudolf Blakstad and Herman Munthe-Kaas, perspective view of the interior
for the cathedral at Bodø, Norway; charcoal on paper, 1947.
Photograph: Nasjonalmuseet

material on display, but struggles to release the full potential of the research project from which the exhibition is derived.

The absence of explanatory text on the wall is a bit problematic. The exhibition appears first and foremost as an esthetic arrangement, providing the visitor with little information. The slightly idiosyncratic headings and subtitles on the wall appear cryptic without the text folder in hand (easily overlooked when entering the space). The folder is instructive but fails to activate the material on display. This could have been compensated, not necessarily by adding more text to the wall, but possibly by adding a parallel context, a commentary and discursive layer made accessible by graphic means, for example in the adjacent room where a small but interesting film is running.

The sought-after context is retrieved between the covers of the attractive exhibition catalogue, edited by art historian Espen Johnsen, comprising twenty-three essays by eighteen authors that give a multifaceted and in-depth, though not always comprehensive and consistent, trajectory into the subject matter. It is rewarding to read Espen Johnsen's introductory chapters, claiming straightforwardly how history has been constructed based on misconceptions and simplification, by accident or by intent. In the essay 'Artefakter fra arkitektkontoret' ('Artifacts from the architect's office') curator Bente Aass-Solbakken examines the different artifacts (drawings, models, and photos) surfacing from the architectural practices, asserting their international influences and how they altered the production of architecture.

The exhibition is a result of a meticulous excavation of the museum's archive. Pursuing the artifacts per se is obviously a highly pertinent exercise to track the diversity and ambiguity of an understudied period in Norwegian architectural history. All the same, the show would have benefited from focusing more consistently on how production of architecture was influenced by the shifting modes of representation.

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Institute of Form, Theory and History
Oslo School of Architecture and Design



The architect's own house at Jongskollen in Bærum, Norway, 1961–63 (architect: Geir Grung).
Photograph: Johan Brun

Publication related to the exhibition:

Espen Johnsen, ed., *Brytninger: norsk arkitektur 1945-65*, Oslo: Nasjonalmuseet for kunst, arkitektur og design, 2010, 317 pp., colour and b/w ill., NOK 268, ISBN: 978-82-8154-054-5 (only in Norwegian)

CONFERENCE ROOM

Proportional Systems in the History of Architecture

Organizers: Matthew Cohen, Maarten Delbeke, Caroline van Eck, and Eelco Nagelsmit

Leiden, 17–19 March 2011

In 1948 Le Corbusier published the first edition of *Le Modulor*, his own version of a proportional system for architecture. The next year saw the publication of two studies in the history of architectural proportion, Rudolf Wittkower's *The Principles of Architecture in the Age of Humanism* and “‘Ars sine scientia nihil est’: Gothic Theory of Architecture at the Cathedral of Milan’ by James Ackerman. These three authors also participated in the conference on proportional systems held during the Ninth Triennale in Milan in 1951. The Leiden conference ‘Proportional Systems in the History of Architecture,’ sixty years after the event in Milan, was intentionally both a critique of the discussion initiated in 1951, and a continuation of it in new directions. The human link between the two conferences was James Ackerman, ‘present’ in Leiden by means of a video interview conducted by Matthew Cohen shortly after Ackerman’s ninety-first birthday in November 2010.

Twenty-eight papers, presented by twenty-six speakers from all over Europe and the United States, addressed the question articulated by Mark Wilson-Jones: ‘What is the pay-off of proportions?’ The answer the scholars came up with was twofold: throughout two thousand years of Western architectural history—the presentations ranged chronologically from the Roman Empire to the second half of the twentieth century, although most attention was given to the medieval and renaissance periods—proportions have been employed both practically and ideologically by architects, theorists, and builders.

In the pre-modern world proportional systems of fundamental simplicity served the purposes of the building trade and the local decision makers. Often, a community takes several generations to complete a major project, such as a cathedral with annexes, or a city hall. This made it imperative to have at hand



Le Corbusier, *Le poème de l'angle droit*, 'Le Modulor', lithography, 1955.
Photograph: courtesy of the Fondation Le Corbusier

criteria and relatively simple schemes to finish, expand, or change the original design. Marvin Trachtenberg called this ‘building in time,’ a procedure beautifully illustrated by Matthew Cohen’s paper on San Lorenzo in Florence. In the first decades of the fifteenth century, the prior of the monastery laid out the plan of the church, using traditional (i.e., medieval) methods to establish its proportions. Sometime in the 1420s Filippo Brunelleschi took over and changed the style from gothic to classicist, while maintaining the proportional system. The interior was only finished in the 1490s, fifty years after Brunelleschi’s death.

Specific systems of proportions were used to transpose plans and models into actual buildings, and to translate (modular) ratios into local measures. It could even be argued, as Emanuele Lugli did, that proportions by some were considered a way out of the power games connected with the use of a set measure. Moreover, architects used dynamic proportions in the design process, as demonstrated by Caroline Voet in her talk on the twentieth-century Dutch Benedictine architect dom Hans van der Laan. Conversely, modern scholars use these operations to discover what design practices earlier architects may have followed, as a way of ‘reverse engineering.’

Nowadays, technical tools, such as laser scans of entire buildings or software that enables the user to draw in 3D and virtually build up a structure (or let it crumble down), make it easier than ever to achieve this ‘reverse engineering.’ It has its pitfalls, though. The precision of the tools and beauty of the images lure us into confusing information with knowledge and forgetting that it is for us to decide what paradigms we do endorse. And it can make us see more in a building than there is, or lead us to contend that earlier designers followed practices that seem natural to us because of their feasibility.

Then there is the ideological side. To the medieval mind numbers were bearers of meaning, and it can be argued that this was true of proportions also. In the early modern period the sheer quantity of treatises, architectural or not, that are partly or entirely dedicated to proportions witnesses to their importance. How sincerely the pre-moderns believed in these systems remains difficult to assess. For some it was more of an intellectual game, which could serve to prove they understood the workings of the cosmos. For others it was a means to make sense of ratios they

believed to perceive in Nature. And some architects added markers of proportion to their plans because they knew it would sell their work better.

The architects’ and art historians’ interest in proportions during the 1940s, as James Ackerman suggested and Francesco Benelli proved, was a side effect of the Second World War, a time so insecure and confusing that people craved stability and order. Proportional systems seemed to offer that order in the design of new architecture, and could explain the order perceived in ancient, medieval, and early modern buildings. This explains why the immediate post-war generation had difficulty perceiving the flexibility and irregularities that earlier periods had used in their proportions.

Lots of questions remain unsolved. Why did architects use two proportional systems in the same building? How did workmen cope with it? Which were the ways of transmitting proportional ‘best practices’? Did the architects and their patrons believe in the symbolical values proportions are supposed to express? Was there a ‘culture of proportion’ in fifteenth-century Italy? Can one really see proportions? The conference presented illuminating answers and insights, and many parts of the puzzle seem to be in place now, yet—to quote from Howard Burns’ closing remarks—we are nowhere near creating a history of proportion.

Lex Hermans

EAHN Newsletter

For the programme of the conference and abstracts of the papers, and eventually for further information on the planned publication of the proceedings, please see the conference website at <http://www.hum.leiden.edu/icd/proportion-conference>

‘Ongoing and Upcoming’ events listings are available in an online database on the EAHN website.

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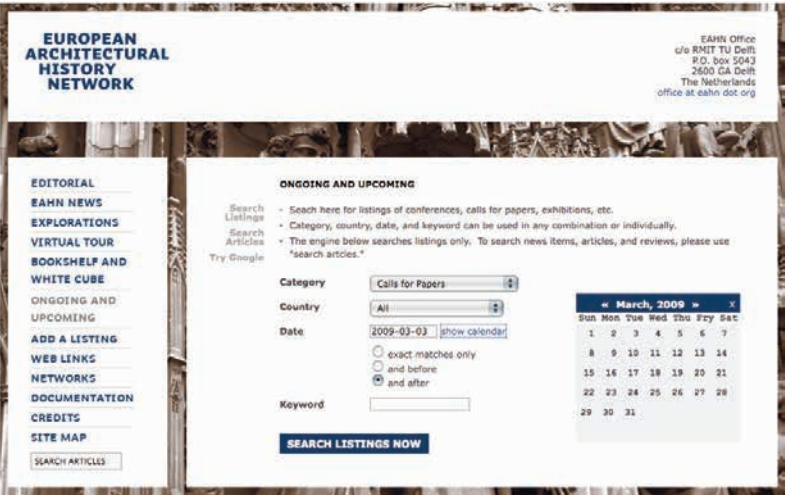
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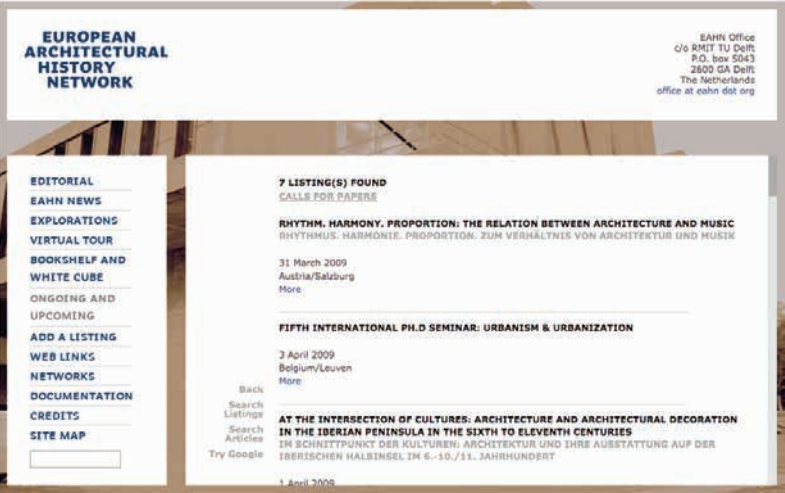
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