
REVIEW

Reviews Winter 2020

Barry Bergdoll, Shirin Fozi, Andrew Higgott, Jesús Vassallo, and Katherine Wheeler

Bergdoll, B. A Review of Miriam Paeslack, *Constructing Imperial Berlin: Photography and the Metropolis*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019.

Fozi, S. A Review of Robert Bork, *Late Gothic Architecture: Its Evolution, Extinction, and Reception*. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2018.

Higgott, A. A Review of Eva Branscome, *Hans Hollein and Postmodernism: Art and Architecture in Austria 1958–1985*. London and New York: Routledge, 2018.

Vassallo, J. A Review of Martino Stierli, *Montage and the Metropolis: Architecture, Modernity, and the Representation of Space*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2018; and Craig Buckley, *Graphic Assembly: Montage, Media, and Experimental Architecture in the 1960s*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019.

Wheeler, K. A Review of Conor Lucey, *Building Reputations. Architecture and the Artisan, 1750–1830*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018.

Capturing Change: Photography and Urban Modernization

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Miriam Paeslack. *Constructing Imperial Berlin: Photography and the Metropolis*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 191 pages, 2019, ISBN 975-1-5719-0295-7.

Photography was part and parcel of the vast modernization of European and North American cities in the second half of the 19th century. Although anyone or anything that moved was left unrecorded in the earliest photographic images of the city, soon faster shutter speeds seemed to hold out the hope of momentarily freezing the ever accelerating pace of change in the realm of representations that could travel. By the end of the century photographic cameras would have to compete with the motion picture camera in the daunting task of pictorializing urban transformation; but already the decade that saw the unification of Germany into a state and the creation of a German-speaking Imperial capital to rival Habsburg Vienna was also the heyday of photographic documentation. By the 1870s photography was fast becoming a handmaiden to municipal administration. Libraries and museums began to collect individual photographs and albums, and more and more book publications took on the challenge of mechanizing photographic reproduction. Photography stood ever more at the intersection of the gallery, the

archive, and the library and urban images had vacillating statuses and uses.

The second half of the 19th century was then the era in which the camera joined the steam engine as an apparatus of rapid modernization, both in radical physical transformation and in setting new modes, paces, and perceptions of urban living. While urban historians have traced recurring patterns in the physical and economic emergence of the metropolises in Europe and North America, in particular, in this period, photographic historians have rarely sought to work comparatively. The key argument of Miriam Paeslack's study of the uses of photography in a rapidly changing Berlin is that the new German capital knew a distinctive pattern of creating, disseminating, and collecting its own photographic portrait, different from other European cities, even other Imperial capitals (**Figure 1**). It was, she argues, different equally from the mushrooming metropolises of the United States, such as Chicago, with which fast-growing Berlin was often compared in the decades on either side of 1900. Indeed, a promising feature of this book is frequent recourse to comparisons with Paris and Chicago, and to the art historians who have worked on the issue of city imagery in those locales, notably to Peter Hales, whose *Silver Cities, The Photography of American Urbanization, 1839–1915*, Paeslack acknowledges as a major model for her own study.

After the announcement of the invention of the daguerreotype in Paris in 1839, the French capital itself became almost as much a subject for the lens as the countless customers, famed or not, who found their way to the studios of daguerreotypists who soon populated

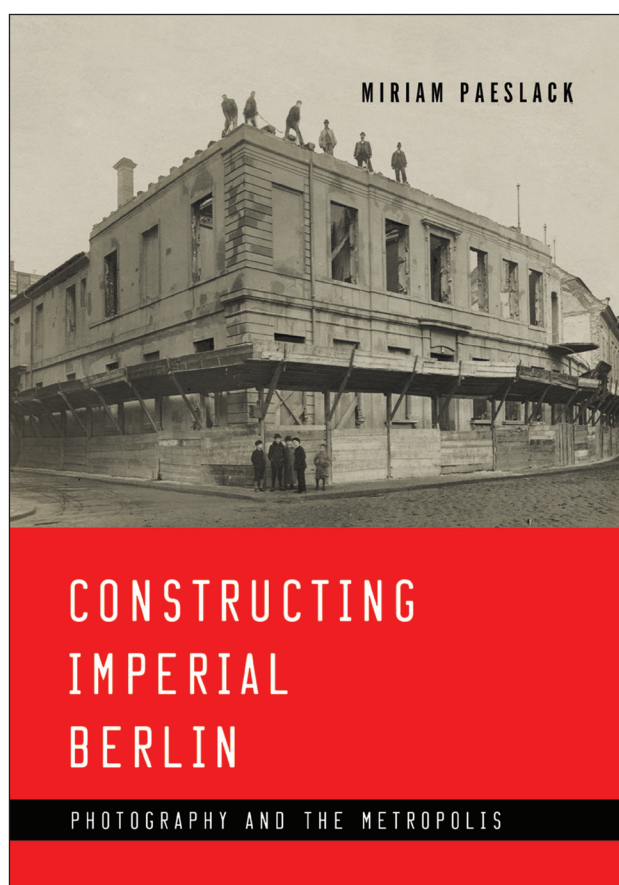


Figure 1: Book cover of Miriam Paeslack, *Constructing Imperial Berlin: Photography and the Metropolis*. Photo credit: copyright University of Minnesota Press, 2019.

the upper reaches of buildings lining the boulevards, mostly on Paris's right bank. It was also in France that the photograph found its way into the administration of the equally new concept of architectural heritage, notably in the launching of the Mission Héliographique at mid-century to add the mechanically produced image to the apparatus for administering the inventoring and ultimately the repair and even aggressive restoration of another modern invention, the 'monument historique'. By 1890 Paris's museum of its own history, the Musée Carnavalet, had begun a collection of photography and developed relationships with photographers who specialized in the physiognomy of the city. The nexus of relations between photographers, administration, and institutions of memory has been extensively studied in the history of French photography. Was this a pattern to be repeated in Berlin? A quick glance at the table of contents and types of images of Berlin of *Constructing Imperial Berlin* would lead one — too hastily, Paeslack would argue — to precisely that conclusion, since the images here are so visually consonant with those of other cities of the period.

An ever greater pace of construction of streets, buildings, and, increasingly, the urban infrastructure of transportation, water, and sewage services meant that the patterns of emerging metropolises in Europe and even North America have notable similarities. Differences arose largely through different commercial and governmental vocations. Paris was a capital of a country with

colonial ambitions, even after its second experiment with an Imperial government was brought to an end by the victory of Prussia over France in 1870. That victory catalysed the unification of Germany and the meteoric rise in prominence of its new capital on the international stage. Berlin's distinction was the sudden enormous expansion of the territory that it governed and the requirements for a whole new infrastructure of buildings and services. It was Berlin, unlike any of the German cities that rivalled it in commercial or cultural terms, such as Munich, Hamburg, Frankfurt, or Stuttgart, that crafted an imagery for a new national identity, a situation paralleled only by the rather different case of Rome in these decades. And like any Imperial capital, the challenge was also one of representing a far-flung territory — even larger with the beginning of the German colonial adventure in Africa after 1884 — and at the same time to administer the day-to-day needs of the citizens of a city with a history centuries longer than that of the nation.

Constructing Imperial Berlin is structured around a series of case studies of different practices, people, and institutions that created a dialogue between photography and a changing urban scene, both in terms of the spectacular eruption of the new and the rapid disappearance of the existing. Particularly valuable are the discussions of architect Ludwig Hoffmann's relationship to the photographer Ernst von Brauchitsch, who helped define the way that key architect's work was perceived. Equally valuable is the coining of the term "rubble photography" to denote the romanticism of the creative destruction at the heart of urban transformation, and finally the role of photography at the Märkisches Museum, the city's novel history museum built at the dawn of the new century, which made collecting images of the changing metropolis part of its mandate nearly from the outset. Paeslack is particularly attentive to the construction of individual images and to the context(s) of their publication. She is most convincing when focused on images and on the functions of their assembly into visual discourses. But aside from these insights woven through the book, the larger argument is harder to grasp and is repeatedly undermined by a tension between Paeslack's claims that there is something distinctive about Berlin urban photography and her frequent recourse to parallels with urban photographers and their historians in other places and other times. Instead of sustaining and pushing readings engaged by the impressive body of photographic material assembled here (although often poorly reproduced), the argument jumps around freely, alighting briefly on cultural critics of the time, like Georg Simmel, or arguments that seem to parallel what she observes in her corpus of images with those analysed by others, such as Peter Hales. Disappointingly, the book does little to live up to the promises of its title, of the blurb the publisher has crafted, or of the endorsements procured. There is only the most cursory and inconsequential discussion of the German Empire and the tensions between the desires of the emperors who gave their name to the Wilhelmine period and the ballooning metropolis that posed new challenges of physical administration. Not all the transformation was on the skyline, since during

this period Berlin crafted one of the most complex and far-reaching water management systems to address the backwardness of its infrastructure, even as Bismarck took an increasingly sophisticated arsenal of weapons into the wars that consolidated the new nation. It would have been necessary to follow photographers underground and far from the city boundaries. Nor is the political context the author's concern: Bismarck has one entry in the index. Yet even the politics of architectural style – and with it the relationship between empire and municipality – which lurks in all these images are largely ignored in the terms of analysis of this study. A tendency to mix and match historical moments undermines any attempt to analyse the stakes in photography of the tension between a desire for historical memory and the heightened metropolitan experience of ephemerality, which the author, like so many other historians of metropolitan modernization, sees as particularly acute in the experience of modernity in Berlin. Sadly, the book fails to live up to its own fascinating body of material it assembles and often even the questions it raises.

Persistent Forms: Gothic Architecture at the End of the Middle Ages

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Robert Bork. *Late Gothic Architecture: Its Evolution, Extinction, and Reception*. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 552 pages, 2018, ISBN 9782503568942.

Robert Bork's handsome new book (**Figure 2**) grapples with a central problem for the study of the period 1300 to 1525 in Europe: how exactly do we define the 'end' of the Middle Ages, and what are the greater implications of its ending? Bork's response is firmly grounded in architectural history, but it also lays out the links between architecture and the visual arts and, even more ambitiously, between architecture and the larger social, political, and intellectual changes that shape its form and meaning. Rather than accepting the common truism that the work of historical periodization is an inherently flawed undertaking, Bork leans into this problem with enormous insight, upending the question itself to show the acute sensitivity of late medieval patrons and architects to their own temporalities. This project also allows for the dismantling of a second, equally pervasive historical myth: that the eclipsing of Gothic style with classicizing forms was inevitable. As Bork argues, the Gothic era ended not because its forms lacked vitality by the 16th century, but rather because the changing times demanded a deliberately epoch-breaking visual culture. Bork navigates these thorny topics with great clarity, demonstrating how the uneasy transition of style observed across the pages of this book represents more than the mere residue of historical happenstance. Using the evidence of the monuments themselves, carefully contextualized, the book lays out a vision of late Gothic architecture that avoids the

reductive tropes of inertia or decline, emphasizing instead the creativity and dynamism of structures built in a self-consciously Gothic idiom long after the vogue for Mediterranean antiquity took hold across Europe.

The book's seven chapters are arranged chronologically and then divided into subsections that sustain Bork's arguments across an impressive geographic range, addressing sites from the Mediterranean to the North Sea, and from Slavic Central Europe to the Iberian Peninsula. After the first chapter, which moves quickly through the earlier and more frequently studied 12th- and 13th-century monuments, the book proceeds through temporal chunks organized mostly by half-century: 1300 to 1350, 1350 to 1400, and so on. By eschewing any temptation to set the dates around persons or events, and simply breaking time into neat half-centuries, Bork smartly avoids centring the account on any specific region or dynasty. Instead, each chapter is a vivid cross-section of Europe in a given generation. The internationalism of Gothic as a pan-European phenomenon is demonstrated through the kaleidoscopic variations that can be observed across time and space. The strikingly tall and narrow early 15th-century nave of Saint Nicholas's church in Brzeg, for example, is shown to be contemporary to the airy, 'boxlike but elegant' King's College Chapel in Cambridge, and the frothy north transept façade of Évreux Cathedral of 1507 actually postdates the elegantly restrained ogee arches of Saint Anne's church in Vilnius by a decade. As Bork makes clear throughout, these Gothic experiments reflect the ingenuity of their builders. For example, the arresting courtyard

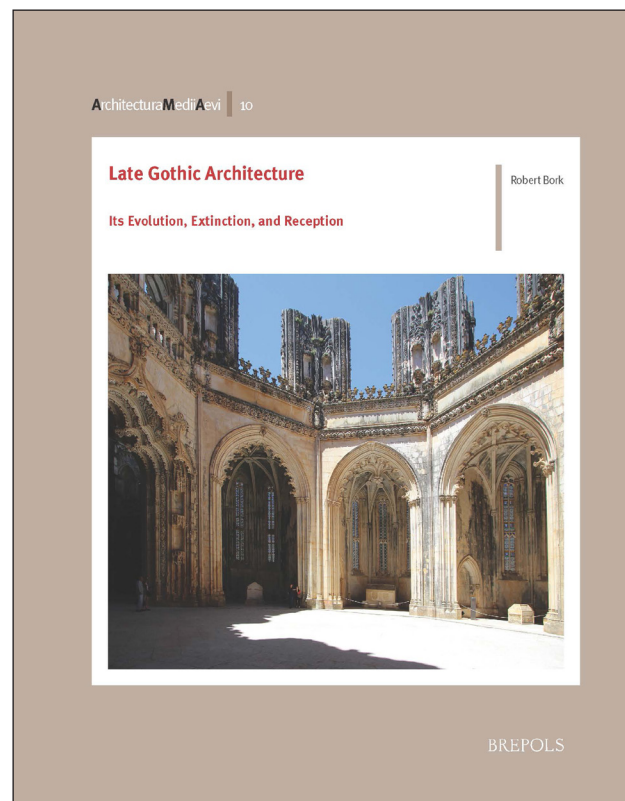


Figure 2: Book cover of Robert Bork, *Late Gothic Architecture: Its Evolution, Extinction, and Reception*. Photo credit: copyright Brepols, 2018.

of San Gregorio in Valladolid shows how talented architects like Simón de Colonia and Juan Guas could synthesize exuberant Gothic details with a restrained classical vocabulary that helped to construct the self-conscious hybridity of 15th-century Iberia.

Architects, eminently sensitive to the embedded meanings of form, shaped structures not only in response to the practical requirements of the buildings themselves but also in dialogue with the personal and political requirements of their clientele. This balance of 'inner' artistic effort and 'outer' pressure from patrons is everywhere evident in the book, not only in buildings but also in artworks that cited architectural forms. This integrated approach to other media is clearly of great importance to Bork; even though the book maintains its close focus on buildings, a few carefully selected artworks of a smaller scale are introduced at critical junctures to remind the viewer of the pervasive impact of Gothic style. Chief among these is the recourse to tomb sculpture; for example, the visual juxtaposition of the City Hall of Bruges with the architectural frame of the tomb of Philip the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, showcases artistic innovation paired with princely ambition. Prints and drawings appear regularly throughout the book as well, and the author unpacks the relationships between architecture and its two-dimensional representations with great panache. One memorable example comes from an edition of Vitruvius published by Cesare Cesariano in 1521; it shows Milan's famous Gothic cathedral laid out in a Vitruvian diagram, its forms unmistakable, but its proportions distorted to fit the requirements of the text. Bork adroitly highlights the touching contradiction inherent in this image: Cesariano is at once proud of the iconic façade of the cathedral in his native city, and yet also committed to promoting an architectural paradigm that does not, in fact, match the actual design of Milan's most famous monument.

The printing of architectural treatises plays a vital role in Bork's paradigm, as these books not only promoted the world view that would eventually help supplant Gothic forms in favour of Renaissance revivalisms, but also placed knowledge of this material directly in the hands of an educated and moneyed elite. Other events that contributed to a turning of the tide against Gothic architecture are omnipresent in the book. For example, the Halle Market Church from the 1530s displays Gothic ribs regulated in a crystalline web that stretches across a high, flat ceiling, taking the 'diamond' vault to its snowflake-style extreme. Though this compelling hybrid of Gothic articulation and Renaissance restraint was made for Catholic patrons, it would become a Lutheran church within ten years. Meanwhile, the influence of Cardinal Albrecht of Brandenburg was also beginning to exert itself in this time; his enthusiasm for classical antiquity would soon come to dominate more than the Saxon territories around Halle, overshadowing the last great Gothic churches of the region. By 1600, the vogue for Renaissance architecture had even extended to Tudor England, with the crenellated glory of manors like Burghley House soon giving way to the sober classicism that marked the 'anti-Gothic turn' of the 17th century.

These examples reflect the 'three R's' that Bork formulates as a central driving thesis of the book: he argues that the ending of the Gothic age was due, not to any inherent 'decline' of form or even to a disinterest among architects, but rather to the larger ripple effects of Renaissance, Royalty, and Reformation. In other words, the fashion for 'classical' or 'Renaissance' forms was often fuelled by monarchs looking to signal their rising power through a new visual idiom; this combined with the chaos of the Reformation to effectively end the Gothic age. The argument is convincing because of the depth and breadth of Bork's near-encyclopaedic survey, which demonstrates his point through an astonishing array of examples. The inevitable result is a book that has more breadth than depth in its treatment of buildings; the individual structures are unpacked in compelling but very brief accounts. Some readers will itch for opportunities to delve deeper, and to see key sites illustrated with more than one or two photos. What the book offers in the place of extended analyses, however, is a geographic and temporal span so extensive that it captures European architecture of the 15th and 16th centuries from a bird's eye view, offering a breathtaking glimpse of a visual culture that once stretched from Portugal to Lithuania. The book can gallop across these huge expanses in large part because of the intellectual framework laid out in the introduction. Drawing on sources from Giorgio Vasari and Karel van Mander in the 16th and early 17th centuries to Johan Huizinga and Jan Białostocki in the 20th, Bork rightly demonstrates that the breaks and overlaps between 'Gothic' and 'Renaissance' style are not only evident in the monuments as we see them, but also in discourses that have accompanied them since their inception. The introduction also explores the various metaphors that have been applied to the late Gothic period. Given the nature of the topic – the end of an era – it is no surprise that it has been saddled with notions of 'decline' that are rooted in the body's inevitable aging process. Bork is at his rhetorical best when arguing against such anthropomorphic analogies, but somewhat less convincing in his attempts to formulate new similes to take their place. I am sympathetic to the argument that 'Darwinian' evolution may be a useful model, placing emphasis on catastrophic extinction events that precipitated the end even for populations that were healthy before the meteor hit, but it invites the uncomfortable mental image of Gothic buildings as the proverbial dinosaurs of early modernity, lumbering towards unforeseen disaster. Even less felicitous is the invocation of Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. No matter how carefully Bork formulates this use of Diamond's methodology to consider how the upheavals of early modernity in Europe had an overall effect comparable to the arrivals of the *conquistadors* and the subsequent decimation of indigenous civilizations across the Americas, there is no truly good way to compare stylistic evolution to genocide. At least for this reader, the metaphors of eclipses and meteors were far easier to appreciate.

But it would be unfair to let this objection diminish the contributions of an immensely interesting book that argues provocatively for late Gothic architecture as

something distinct from the inert survivals and nostalgic revivals that laid claim to it. The material is compelling not only because of the intrinsically fascinating forms of the monuments themselves, but also because their long history of misreading provides an opening to rethink the contradictions of this era in a much broader sense. Bork has done the field a tremendous service by sustaining his arguments across an expansive geographic and temporal span and rooting them in the intellectual apparatus of their time. The result is an eloquent and entertaining book that will be indispensable for any serious work on the late Middle Ages that takes Europe's built environment into account.

Everything is Architecture: The Radical Origins of the Architecture of Hans Hollein

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Eva Branscome, *Hans Hollein and Postmodernism: Art and Architecture in Austria 1958–1985*. London and New York: Routledge, 243 pages, 2018, ISBN 9781472459947.

Acknowledged by the award of the Pritzker Prize in 1985, delivering packed-out lectures in the world's architectural schools, and acclaimed in architectural publications, Hans Hollein's reputation has suffered an unparalleled crash since the end of the 1980s. Unlike James Stirling, the other figure who dominated European architecture in the period, Hollein has received little critical attention. Eva Branscome's book aims to lead to a rehabilitation and recognition of Hollein as an accomplished figure of real historical significance (Figure 3).

By starting the story in the shadow of World War II – Hollein's native Austria only saw the withdrawal of Allied troops in 1955 – Branscome effectively repudiates the neat labelling of his work as 'postmodern', which, while partly appropriate, is reductive of the approach and achievements of his work. Although Hollein was to gain international recognition, his approach was located within the very specific cultural milieu of Austria, which is amply described and drawn out in the book's narrative.

Branscome's subject is the architect's intellectual and artistic formation rather than an analysis of Hollein's buildings, such as the much-published and award-winning Retti Candle Shop of 1965. Her narrative concentrates on his ensuing development as a widely acknowledged figure whose art work, publications, and polemic amounted to a radical and relevant new position. The diversity of his output is extraordinary. With work in numerous public art collections from the 1960s onwards and his many exhibition designs, along with his extensive writing, and particularly with his editorship of the journal *Bau: Schrift für Architektur und Städtebau*, Hollein stands as a plural, mediated figure.

The book opens with a discussion of the phenomenon of Postmodernism, which is analysed and reconsidered from the linguistic roots in Hollein's work. Hollein himself

was co-opted into this putative movement, initially by historian Charles Jencks, who had earlier described him as a 'supersensualist' for whom architecture was an activity beyond political and technical imperatives. At the first Venice Architectural Biennale in 1980, curated by Paolo Portoghesi, Hollein was among the twenty architects who contributed elements to its central exhibit, the Strada Novissima. Rather than the heavily Classical derivation of certain of the exhibitors, Hollein addressed Portoghesi's theme 'the presence of the past' in an installation that was perhaps the most paradigmatic of them all: a progression of six highly differentiated columns, each with their own narrative and meaning, effectively added wit and colour to the theme. But as Branscome argues, it was also an effective critique of the historicist theme. The six columns were presented as a part of a wider rethinking of architecture and its relevance to the present.

The manifesto 'Alles ist Architektur', published in the journal *Bau* in 1968, places Hollein in a very different discourse to that represented by the Venice Biennale. Far removed from the conventional practices of design, it declared that 'everything was architecture', which could even be achieved by 'popping a pill'. Corroborated by the writing of the popular media theorist Marshall McLuhan, Hollein's subject ranged from questions of dress to the largest scale of issues of the environment marking his iconoclastic position, even if his insistence on the (often female) body as the site of architecture now seems offensively sexist. Preceding this manifesto, Hollein's developing

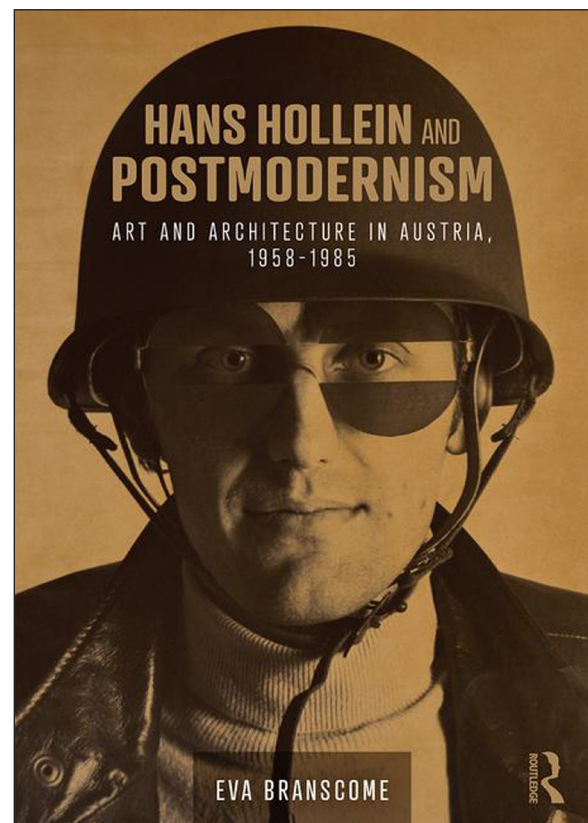


Figure 3: Book cover of Eva Branscome, *Hans Hollein and Postmodernism: Art and Architecture in Austria 1958–1985*. Photo credit: copyright Routledge, 2018.

work can be seen as firmly rooted in the art practices of a network of relationships in Vienna and beyond: in 1974 Joseph Beuys, who became a close friend and collaborator, formally (and ironically) attested to Hollein's identity as an artist in a statement on a postcard that is illustrated in the book.

The catalyst of his intellectual awakening was a Catholic priest, Otto Mauer, who set up the avant-garde Galerie St. Stephan adjacent to the Cathedral in Vienna. At a time when Austrian identity was still very much in post-war flux, Mauer was committed to radical forms of art, in contrast to the more usual position of the Catholic Church. He showed new art and enabled young artists to participate in debates, experiments, and exhibitions. The Galerie became a crucible of new thinking and practice; Hollein joined this group in 1956, and later became its leading figure.

The enormous contrast of Hollein's experience during the two following years in the USA, from 1958 to 1960, is also not widely known, but is meticulously described in Branscome's study. After being awarded the Harkness Fellowship from the American Commonwealth Fund, which was part of a programme of re-education set up in post-war Europe, he embarked on this life-changing journey to the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago and the University of California in Los Angeles. Rather than engaging with familiar 'modern' architecture, however, he turned to the popular culture in these vibrant cities, and to the highway and the breadth of the American landscape. The work he produced here showed the limits of high culture, much like the American-influenced work of British Pop artists, such as Richard Hamilton and Eduardo Paolozzi, or what Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown were to do some years later in their book *Learning from Las Vegas* (1972).

Although not noted by Branscome, the influence of American culture on Hollein's architecture in Vienna resonates with that of Adolf Loos. In the late 19th century, Loos spent three years in the USA, where he washed dishes in Chicago restaurants and looked at its radical new buildings, built outside the prevailing architectural culture and conventions. Loos's interpretation of new ways of building and a new culture reflected the reality of modern life and had a radical influence on the thought and approach of early modern architects. Loos's own insertions into the streets of Vienna may still be seen as radical; they have their counterpart in Hollein's shop designs sixty years later. Just as Loos returned to his homeland and declared that he was bringing culture to the Austrians, so Hollein was responsible for a shift in a wider European context. His assertion that 'the architecture of today does not yet exist' resonated widely in the 1960s and beyond.

The book is without doubt a worthwhile and well-researched volume that enriches our understanding of architectural developments in post-war Europe. It should also be appreciated that the book introduces work and ideas from the German-speaking world across the linguistic barrier and presents material inaccessible to an English-speaking public. The key subject matter of Branscome's research — Otto Mauer and the Galerie St

Stephan, documentation of the post-war Austrian scene and the time Hollein spent in the USA, and his work with the journal *Bau* — can be seen as fascinating, and early, contributions to a post-revisionist phase of modern architectural culture. Further parallels could be drawn, for example, with the work of Aldo Rossi or aspects of Archigram.

As a book, rather than the doctoral dissertation that preceded it, the study might have engaged in a wider discussion of Hollein's work. After all, Hollein is discussed *because* of his architecture. Branscome might have included more analysis of his early built designs, as for example the Museum at Mönchengladbach, initially designed in 1972. How did this structure, often considered to be his best building, emerge from his earlier artistic discourse? Likewise, the series of drawings and collages he achieved around 1964, including his most famous image, *Aircraft Carrier City in Landscape*, merit further discussion. The subtle, witty, and inventive installation that he designed for the major exhibition *Traum und Wirklichkeit* is also not mentioned. The extraordinary culture of the early modern city of Vienna was the subject of this exhibition, from the celebrations of the emperor's jubilee to the music of Arnold Schönberg, the thought of Sigmund Freud and Theodor Herzl, the art of Gustav Klimt through to the architecture of Loos, Richard Wagner, and later 'Red Vienna'. This was brilliantly evoked in Hollein's design: a room devoted to Freud, virtually empty with the exception of a miniature gold couch and therapist's armchair. This was arguably one of Hollein's best and most unique public achievements, and, like him, represented the quintessence of a period in Austrian culture. Branscome's book succeeds in presenting Hollein as an artist, designer, architect, and cultural leader, a complex figure worthy of further study and interpretation, and one whose position transcends the conventions and limitations of architectural discourse.

Taking Stock of Montage

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Martino Stierli, *Montage and the Metropolis: Architecture, Modernity, and the Representation of Space*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 320 pages, 2018, ISBN 9780300221312.

Craig Buckley, *Graphic Assembly: Montage, Media, and Experimental Architecture in the 1960s*. Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 400 pages, 2019, ISBN 9781517901615.

Over the last decade, the increasing interest in the role of images in architectural production has matured to the point where it is starting to yield studies that take on the form of definitive statements. That is the case of the two books reviewed here, which I consider to be complementary, and which, in their depth and rigor documenting montage practices, become necessary frameworks of reference

for scholars to come. In the case of Martino Stierli's *Montage and the Metropolis: Architecture, Modernity, and the Representation of Space* (Figure 4), this foundational quality is most evident in its ambition to theorize montage itself as a distinctively modern cultural technique, as well as to map the continuities and discontinuities among its different expressions in the fields of literature, cinema, and the visual arts, including architecture. In the case of Craig Buckley's *Graphic Assembly: Montage, Media, and Experimental Architecture in the 1960s*, on the other hand, the text is definitive to the degree to which its account of the montage practices of a specific period — the utopian architecture of the 1960s — is exhaustive (Figure 5).

In addition to the aforementioned difference in scope, and perhaps because of it, both books also differ methodologically. While Stierli proceeds from a general definition of montage as a conceptual category to entertain its specific manifestations, Buckley builds on a close analysis of the objects, processes, and technologies involved in a series of case studies, in order to gradually sketch the larger picture of the issues at stake in his period of study.

As a logical consequence of his broad ambition, Stierli delivers the bulk of his contribution in the first passages of *Montage and the Metropolis*, in which he lays out a tentative theory of architectural montage in five points. According to Stierli, montage as a historical phenomenon is defined by a new heterogeneity or plurality of the image, which in turn is brought about by the advent of both industrialization and its capacity for mechanical reproducibility, and by the physical discontinuity and contrast inherent to the modern metropolis. These two

phenomena combined prompt a change of visual paradigm, one where montage becomes a polyfocal alternative to perspective and its emphasis on unity.

The fact that the modern industrial city precedes and in fact produces the breakdown of former modes of perception and representation of space is the guiding principle of Stierli's text. Accordingly, he devotes much of the first half of the book to unpacking the emergence of montage in the 1920s, once the accelerated and fragmented experience of the modern metropolis rendered the former static regime of perspective obsolete. In these pages, and in a true tour de force of research and synthesis, Stierli covers the prehistory of montage in 19th-century vernacular modes of imaging; its eruption in the interwar period in the Dada and Constructivist scenes, with a privileged account of the figure of Paul Citroen; and its connections to Russian factography and the urban films of Fritz Lang, Dziga Vertov, and Walter Ruttmann.

After comparing all these different attempts at finding a suitable way to represent the city of the early 20th century, Stierli turns his attention to architecture to produce an account of the specific use of montage techniques in architectural practice. As the author notes, architecture had its own prehistory of montage, since the practice of manipulating photographs of sites to foresee the result of the insertion of a new project was popular already in the late 19th century. While these early images were mostly drawn-over photographs, they clearly set a number of standards that influenced the evolution of architectural montage. In covering the work of figures like Karl Moser, Kasimir Malevich, and El Lissitzky, Stierli sets the

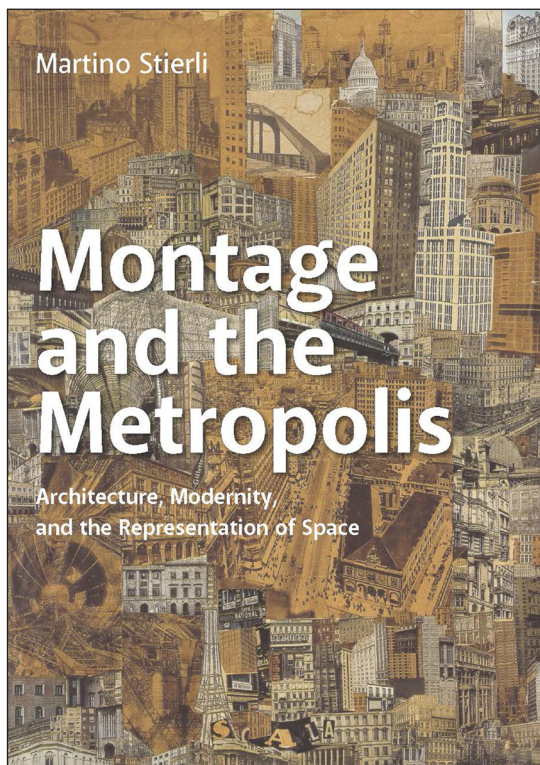


Figure 4: Book cover of Martino Stierli, *Montage and the Metropolis: Architecture, Modernity, and the Representation of Space*. Photo credit: Yale University Press.

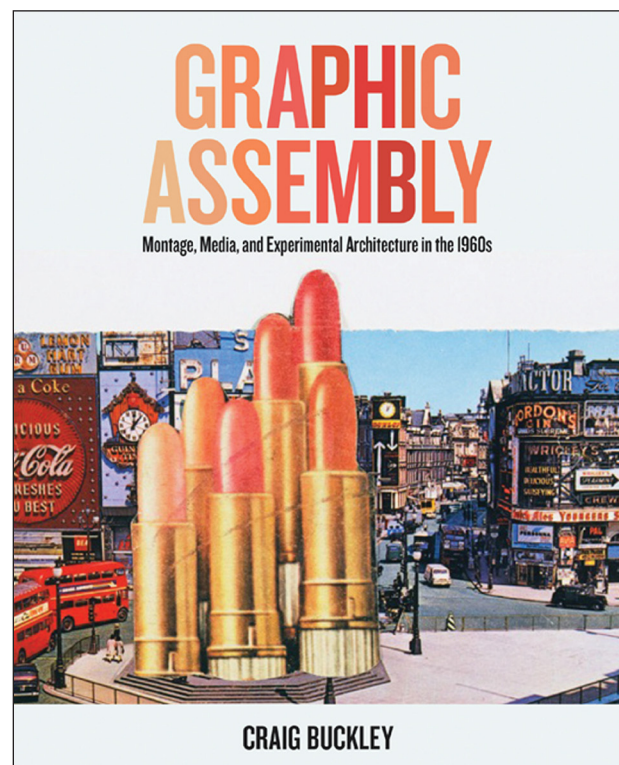


Figure 5: Book cover of Craig Buckley, *Graphic Assembly: Montage, Media, and Experimental Architecture in the 1960s*. Photo credit: University of Minnesota Press.

parameters of a conversation about architectural montage that verges largely on the degree of heterogeneity of the fragments being composed, and how such gaps in content affect the political interpretation of the image. Fittingly, the author then documents how such mechanics of image manipulation allowed montage to be co-opted by the authoritarian regimes of the 1930s as an instrument of propaganda.

The book then proceeds with three monographic chapters centred on the figures of Mies van der Rohe, Sergei Eisenstein, and Rem Koolhaas, incarnations of the logic of montage in the fields of, respectively, architecture, cinema, and literature. Stierli's intention is not, however, to present these three figures as canonical examples, but rather to provide insight on the rich and often conflicting sources of their approach to montage. In the case of Mies, for instance, the groundwork laid in the previous chapters allows Stierli to dissect with precision how the architect's environment and life story influenced the production of a body of work with different and even opposing political readings, contrasting the radical quality of the Berlin skyscraper projects – produced while deeply embedded in the German avant-garde of the time – with the flatter images of the American period as they became assimilated with the logic of post-war capitalism.

This approach, which does not try to neatly resolve each figure or project, results, in the chapter on Eisenstein, in a discussion of the figure of the Soviet filmmaker through different lenses, including but not limited to the assimilation and criticism of his work into architectural theory and a contextualization of his thinking within coetaneous cognitive science and psychology of perception. Similarly, when addressing Rem Koolhaas's *Delirious New York*, which the author treats as an exemplar of literary montage, Stierli interprets in the fragmented and mechanical writing of the Dutch architect a conscious desire to find a new historiographical model for the modern metropolis, one that builds on the often contradictory montages of fragments already found in the writings of Walter Benjamin or Manfredo Tafuri.

With *Montage and the Metropolis*, Stierli builds on his previously demonstrated capacity to contextualize and explain historical events with great clarity, to propose a text that not only explores more theoretical grounds but is also, in its basic concept and structure, a decisively more speculative work. If one had to find a shortcoming in the book, it would likely be a certain redundancy in the content of the chapters, which try to both be independent monographic texts and stress the transfers and influences between disciplines and figures. One wonders if this is perhaps due to the strictures of writing for an American university press, and if the venue was ultimately not as conducive to the type of montage-like logic at the heart of a book that strives, and succeeds, in taking a high degree of intellectual risk. Such conflict is evident, for instance, in the discussion of Koolhaas's radical writing technique, which inevitably brings to mind a question about how a less orthodox approach to the writing of the book could have propelled its argument further.

If Stierli's *Montage and the Metropolis* covers a century of visual culture across a wide array of disciplines, Craig Buckley's *Graphic Assembly* narrows the focus to provide in-depth examinations of four groups of utopian architects from the 1960s. His introduction, which shares most of its sources with Stierli, questions the pervasiveness of photomontage across the international network of experimental practices in the period, and after tracing the origins of the phenomenon, sets out to analyse the differences between its proponents through a focus on their technique. It is precisely this type of analysis, modelled on a *Kulturtechnik* approach, in which technology is understood as an assembly of practices, instruments, and media with a constitutive relationship to culture, that allows Buckley to reveal a previously unacknowledged depth of difference within a group of architects that is too often lumped together as a generation.

The first chapter of *Graphic Assembly*, written as a preamble, examines the immediate prehistory of the utopian moment through a close reading of Reyner Banham's concept of 'clip-on architecture'. By confronting Banham's writings with several works from the period, Buckley argues convincingly that Banham's idea of 'clipping' as a mode of articulation of difference is key in explaining the leap from the proto-pop experiments with images, produced by members of the Independent Group in the 1950s, to the radical montages and publications of the 1960s.

Delving straight into its subject matter, the second chapter of the book presents a monographic study of Archigram's multimedia montage techniques. Emphasizing their plug-in architecture as an evolution of Banham's clip-on logic allows Buckley to paint a vivid and rich account of the group's activities, which interestingly privileges their experiments with immersive installations versus their better-known publishing practice. Through a detailed and expansive analysis of works such as the *Living City* exhibition, the *K4* kinetic audio visual environments for the Brighton Festival, or the Entertainment Center in Monaco, Buckley produces a nuanced account of the group's progression towards electronics as a conceptual system that challenges those interpretations of their trajectory in which dematerialization is equated with a negation of architecture itself.

The third chapter follows Hans Hollein's experiments with media assemblage, starting with the early montages of his American period and following with his collaborations with Walter Pichler, including a close reading of 'Alles ist Architektur', their infamous issue for *Bau: Schrift für Architektur und Städtebau*. Here, Buckley proposes that Hollein's graphic work of silhouetting and pasting became a model for his early retail and exhibition designs, but also, and more importantly, that the directness of his absorption of a myriad of contemporary phenomena onto the page mimicked the immediacy with which he came to envision architecture as the managing of a series of different media and technologies.

In a contrast with Hollein's absorption of everything into architecture, the last two chapters of the book, which are devoted to the groups Utopie and Superstudio,

abound with the tension between the visual and physical outputs of these collectives. In the case of *Utopie*, a graphic production that explicitly tried to ‘make legible the contradictions at the heart of industrialized consumer urbanism through [its] very images’ coexisted with the physical production in the form of non-other than a series of plastic inflatable products. In the case of *Archigram*, a similar tension is identified as a calculated ambiguity; the political position and schematic work process of the Italian architects, based on contemporary ideas about the refusal of work in far-left circles in Italy, was sometimes hard to reconcile with their production as industrial designers of high-end furniture.

Throughout *Graphic Assembly*, Buckley displays an encyclopaedic knowledge of his topic, authoritatively marshalling an impressive amount of dense information. Perhaps most impressively, the author does not rely solely on his deep understanding of the web of alternative publications of the period, but rather uses each chapter as an opportunity to contextualize the subversive image-based projects of his protagonists against the backdrop of an architectural field struggling to adapt to a new media condition: as the rather virtual technologies associated with media surpassed industrial production with its heavy physical footprint as the prime cultural manifestation, architects scrambled for new metaphors and new methodologies. It is precisely in that regard that Buckley’s book can be understood as a filter with which to confront contemporary practices. The radical, complex, and often-conflicted work across different platforms gathered in the book can be understood as a repository of strategies to resist or complicate the seemingly unstoppable absorption of contemporary architectural production into the seamless flow of digital images that has become our daily experience.

Sometimes one would desire a stronger or more explicit thesis threading through the onslaught of information and the many eye-opening passages. Unfortunately as well, for a book that so sharply dissects the nuances of the different types of images and their production, the black-and-white figures inserted within the chapters are separate from a group of plates compiled at the end of the volume, an arrangement that makes the reading exhausting and confusing at times. This is of course not the author’s responsibility, but on the contrary makes one question once more the primacy of a few academic presses and their actual capacity to keep up with the sophistication and expertise of their writers.

Interestingly, and despite their differences in scope, what unites the two books reviewed here, in addition to their expanded understanding of montage as a conceptual technique that cuts across media, is their careful and sharp consideration of its pervasive political implications. Through conscientious documentation and lucid writing, both Stierli and Buckley render visible what is perhaps the most elusive, contradictory, and captivating feature of montage, namely, that it emerged as a way of making and thinking that mimicked the logic of assembly of prefabricated parts of late industrial capitalism, precisely in order to produce its critique.

The Rise of the Speculative Builder

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Conor Lucey, *Building Reputations: Architecture and the Artisan, 1750–1830*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 264 pages, 2018, ISBN 978-1-5261-1994-0.

Conor Lucey’s *Building Reputations: Architecture and the Artisan, 1750–1830* reframes the role of artisanal building trades and the speculative builder in 18th-century urban centres of the British Atlantic world (**Figure 6**). Through a series of examples drawn from London, Dublin, and America, Lucey grants architectural and design authority to the artisan bricklayers, carpenters, and plasterers who executed the ubiquitous brick-terraced houses in this period. Lucey’s speculative builder was an individual skilled in one of the building arts who turned his knowledge to his own economic advantage by investing in the construction of townhouses for which he was the designer, builder, and seller. Concerned not only with the economics and techniques of building but also with architectural taste, and far from a mere labourer who blindly followed the architect’s instructions, the builder emerged as a figure of power, situated in the social and professional hierarchy

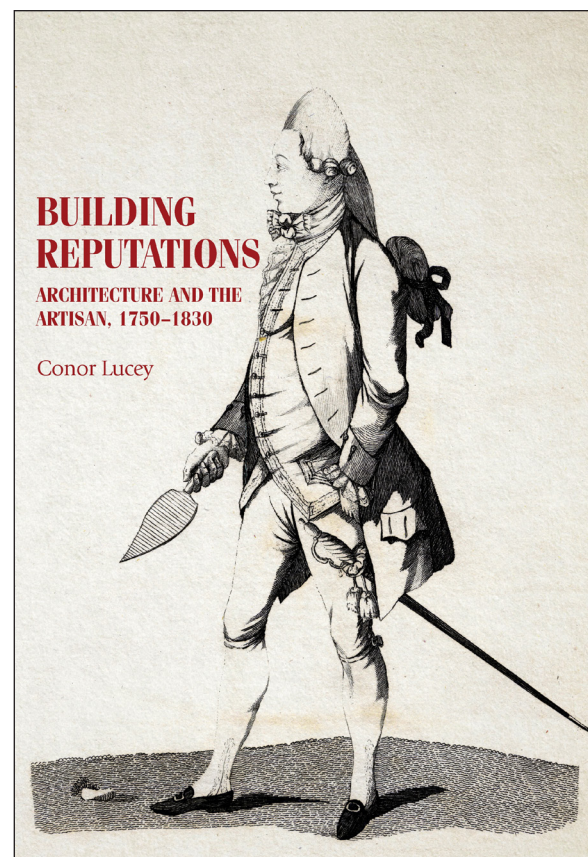


Figure 6: Book cover of Conor Lucey’s *Building Reputations: Architecture and the Artisan, 1750–1830*. Photo credit: Manchester University Press.

between the tradesman and the architect. Lucey divides the book into four chapters, allowing him to stretch pre-conceptions of the builder's reputation in relation to social class, the design and decoration of townhouses, and their marketing and sale. Going beyond the traditional presentation of the builder as solely involved in the production of the building, Lucey reveals how because the speculative builder does not neatly fit into this simplified role, he has been overlooked in the scholarship.

Lucey's first chapter, aptly entitled 'Building Reputations', considers how a speculative builder in 18th-century England might create a 'genteel life in trade'; in other words, how the builder could use his position as an 'agent of architectural taste' to climb social and professional ladders. Central within this chapter is the caricature of the 'Macaroni Builder', a gentleman who is 'conspicuously fashionable' in his adoption of the 'exotic' clothing and dining preferences from abroad, specifically from areas frequented on the Grand Tour. Although mocked, the Macaroni Builder exemplifies the tensions and contradictions of being both a man of the trade and of refinement, being both 'useful' and of polite society. What comes across clearly in Lucey's analysis is the more rigid stratification of the classes in 18th-century Britain and Ireland than in America, where the class structure was more fluid. In this chapter Lucey draws on a range of archival resources from print culture, including portraiture, caricatures, illustrations from children's books, certificates of membership to builders' organizations, trade cards, portraits, and hand bills, to reinforce the complexities of the builder's social mobility in this period. Because the builder was still considered to work with his hands, he was not considered an equal in social status to people of the 'genteel' class who purchased and inhabited his designs. Trained primarily through apprenticeship in a trade, an ambitious builder could supplement his education through studying books or learning drawing at a local academy or society, such as the Dublin Society for Improving Husbandry, Manufactures and other Useful Arts. Lucey's thesis breaks down the strict division in the historiography between building design and production, analysing the means by which the builder learned and promoted the design and decoration of the terrace house.

The book's second chapter, 'Designing Houses', examines the realization of the brick townhouse, a building typology that flourished in this period due to population increases in urban centres in Britain. Design in this context refers to the creative control of the artisan-architect, which involves not only the building's aesthetic but also includes the technical aspects of the building process. Drawings served both as tools for design and as a reflection of a skill-set that allowed the builder to set himself apart from his competitors. In addition, architectural publications and pattern books provided sources for the builder to incorporate, combine, and innovate as needed. Lucey's assertion that the builders of the brick townhomes were also the designers may be traced in the individualized ornament and forms of these structures, which collectively adhere to a 'flexible system of Palladian classicism'.

'Decorating Houses', chapter three, reinforces the importance of the townhouse's interior decoration in the builder's role as an 'agent' of taste, specifically the use of plasterwork designs in an Adamesque neoclassical style. Because the ornament was installed prior to the sale of the townhouse, it was the builder (or plasterer) who determined the building's 'taste', not the client. Lucey draws on a range of sources from both Britain and America, including estimators' books that documented the pricing of standard interior elements, pattern books, drawings, surveyor's descriptions, insurance records, and extant interiors. The importance and nuance of Lucey's argument become clear in this chapter as he analyses print culture, the spread of design ideas by immigrant tradesmen, and new decorative ideas and technologies. The standardization of decorative ornament within the economically driven context of speculative design places the builder at the 'vanguard of disseminating the taste for the Adam decorative style'. By embedding taste and interior decoration within the context of consumer culture, the 'shared architectural culture' of pattern books and immigrant tradesmen expands into Lucey's presentation of the townhouse as a 'proto-industrial' model for its standardization and commodification.

The most unexpected chapter, 'Building Sales', addresses the connection between the builders, the houses they produced, and the processes by which these constructions were advertised to the public. Parsing 18th- and 19th-century newspaper advertisements, Lucey analyses how the use of images and typographic distinctions—a hand, asterisks, a house, or the use of all capitals or changes in spacing— attracted the eye of the 'genteel buyer' perusing the many advertisements. Competing with auction houses, solicitors, brokers, and notaries, the speculative builder who decided to sell directly had to be pragmatic, knowing he needed to sell to recoup his investment. The stakes could be quite high, and Lucey shows how the risk involved showed up in advertisements for the sale of unfinished houses. Yet the rewards and scale of building could also be high, as shown in his example of James Burton, a London builder at the end of the 18th century who completed and sold over two thousand homes in almost forty years. Many speculative builders— and certainly the successful ones— understood how to leverage both text and image in an advertisement to catch the buyer's eye. The advertisements, therefore, become an extension of the builder's knowledge of what appealed to buyers in the first place, thus tying back again to the builder's own agency in the design process.

In his rehabilitation of the speculative builder, Lucey brings together sources from architectural history, social history, and material culture, as well as economic and trade history. He paints a picture of a British Atlantic building world at the end of the 18th century that is nuanced and complex. His inclusion of figures such as Michael Stapleton, a builder in Dublin, and Joseph Rose, a London plasterer, anchor the history in real figures; that is, men who were ambitious professionally and who worked outside what we now consider to be the typical constraints of a builder. For example, after Rose's death in 1799, an

auction of his estate itemized the books and folios in his collection, revealing not only his intellectual approach to building but also ‘the diversity of published material available to, and utilized by, the 18th-century artisan’. Some drawing portfolios of both Stapleton and Rose survive, and Lucey uses them to reveal not just their use of drawing as a tool for professional advancement but also as evidence of their roles as designers, not just builders.

Building Reputations reflects Lucey’s time in Dublin and the two years he spent at the University of Pennsylvania on an Elevate fellowship from the Irish Research Council, which undoubtedly provided him the opportunity to pursue his research in America, allowing an important point of comparison to London and Dublin that helps to draw out geographic distinctions in the builder’s role. While each chapter could be expanded into its own book, they can be easily read alone, as Lucey incorporates

historiographic context throughout. There are a couple of places where the weight of the fine grain detail begs for a broader perspective, but overall the book is very readable and will be useful for scholars of architecture, interior decoration, advertising, labour, material culture, and the British Atlantic world in the long 18th century. By bringing together the image of the builder, architecture, interior decoration, and advertising, Lucey successfully ‘rehabilitates’ the position of the speculative builder as one who makes worthwhile contributions of his own to both architectural taste and the resultant urban fabric. Far from naïve about class and aesthetics, the speculative builder *had* to be fluent in taste to be successful in his business.

Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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