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## INTERVIEW

# Redefining the Globe: An Interview with Murray Fraser on Architectural History for the 21st Century

Vimalin Rujivacharakul

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The highly anticipated 21st edition of *Sir Banister Fletcher's Global History of Architecture* was published in January 2020 by Bloomsbury in collaboration with the Banister Fletcher Trust, the Royal Institute of British Architects, and the University of London. Among many new features is an emphasis on the book's 'global' reach, which reshapes its scope and structure. With all chapters written anew and encompassing architectural histories and sites across the globe over the past 5,500 years, the 21st edition of *Banister Fletcher* emerges at the forefront of the march towards global architectural history. This is a radical transformation of a classic book previously viewed as the Eurocentric canon's centrepiece.

The following interview with Murray Fraser, general editor of the new edition and professor of architecture and global culture at the Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London, explores the paths of his intellectual development, starting with changes from within the 'centre' — the former British Empire and its traditionally defined scope of architectural history — through to his eventual shift towards a global outlook. The conversation also offers a retrospective look at architectural education in the 20th century, now seen as a postcolonial 'tipping point', and discusses recent scholarship that led to the reformulation of *Sir Banister Fletcher's A History of Architecture*. Ultimately, Fraser's intellectual trajectory identifies two critical factors that ushered in the new *Sir Banister Fletcher's Global History of Architecture*: a seismic change that took place within British architectural education, and the ensuing efforts to redefine architectural history for global audiences.

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### Introduction

First published in 1896 in London, *Sir Banister Fletcher's A History of Architecture* covers an extraordinary timespan that includes, in Britain, seven reigns of two queens and five kings with their twenty-nine prime ministers, and on the global timescale, two World Wars and the four-decade Cold War, in addition to nine Apollo missions to the Moon. The book itself also has the Guinness-deserving record of having the highest ever number of general editors for a single-titled textbook on architectural history; seven individuals have between them overseen 21 editions published over a period of 124 years. Yet the voices of these general editors have largely been absent from written records; thus the ideas and efforts behind each edition are either lost in time or else, in a few lucky cases, shortened and embedded into a few pages of their edition's introduction. This interview breaks with that tradition. Murray Fraser (**Figure 1**), the general editor of the 21st edition of the book and professor of architecture and global culture at the Bartlett School of Architecture, opens up about the intellectual roots of the project and his own academic upbringing. The following paragraphs give us a close look, through the lens offered by Fraser, of the shifting directions within the field over the past five decades

and also a description of how the decision to restructure, from *Sir Banister Fletcher's A History of Architecture* to *Sir Banister Fletcher's Global History of Architecture*, rewrites the book's legacy and aids our modern understanding of architectural history on the global scale.

**Rujivacharakul:** I can only start by congratulating you on the publication of the 21st edition of the (retitled) *Sir Banister Fletcher's Global History of Architecture* (Fraser 2020) (**Figure 2**). Do you recall the first time you heard of what is generally referred to as *Banister Fletcher*?

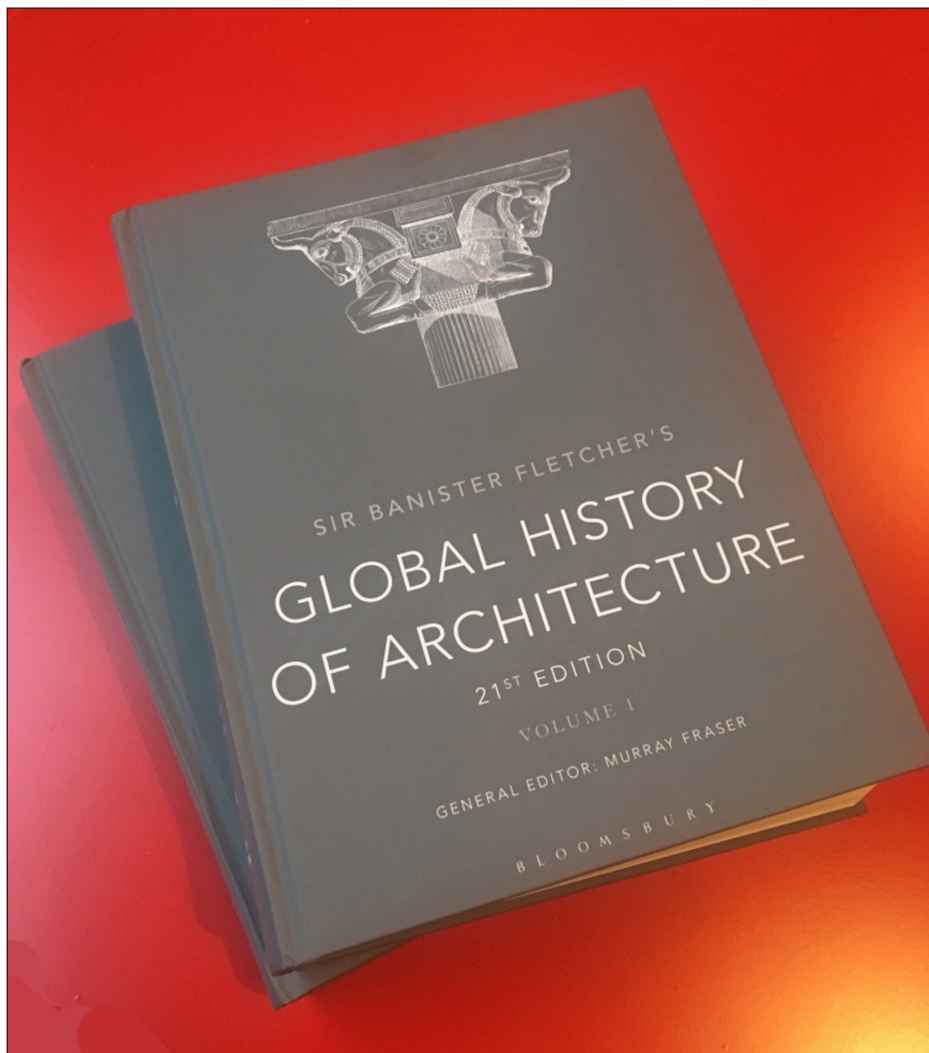
**Fraser:** Thinking back now, I first became aware of *Banister Fletcher* because one of my college classmates at the Bartlett School of Architecture — whom I shared a flat with — happened to own a copy. We began at the Bartlett in 1976 and so his would have been the eighteenth edition, published in the previous year. It was the first edition to drop the term 'comparative method' from its title, thus being only called *Sir Banister Fletcher's A History of Architecture* (Palmes 1975).

**Rujivacharakul:** Had you heard of the *Banister Fletcher* book before then?

**Fraser:** I must confess that I didn't know of *Banister Fletcher* at all. My friend had attended a private school in Harrogate and his art master used the book to teach the



**Figure 1:** Murray Fraser and Vimalin Rujivacharakul. Courtesy of the authors.



**Figure 2:** Front cover of *Sir Banister Fletcher's Global History of Architecture* (2020). Bloomsbury.

boys about architectural history, which was very far from my experiences in a state-funded grammar school. There were no architects in my family, nor any art tutors that I knew, and so the book was a complete novelty for me.

**Rujivacharakul:** Did your classmates and teachers at the Bartlett read *Sir Banister Fletcher's A History of Architecture*? How did this book figure in British architectural education at the time?

**Fraser:** *Banister Fletcher* wasn't really mentioned at all at the Bartlett, other than by my friend, as the book was generally seen as so old-fashioned. When I started at the Bartlett, it was at the tail end of Richard Llewellyn Davies's dream of 'scientific functionalism'. He had famously got rid of the old neoclassical plaster-cast models as part of the drive to shift the school from Beaux-Arts to modernism. It was hardly a conducive atmosphere for a book like *Banister Fletcher*. Architectural history was regarded by Llewellyn Davies as less important, despite the presence of Reynier Banham, who sadly left for Buffalo in the summer before I started. Far more positive was that Adrian Forty had begun teaching a few years earlier as Banham's assistant and protégé. In due course, Adrian would become my mentor. Also influential within the school were Mark Swenarton, who joined the Bartlett in 1977, and the engagingly lively presence of Robert (Bob) Maxwell, who died recently at the impressive age of 97 years.

**Rujivacharakul:** Adrian Forty, Mark Swenarton and Bob Maxwell were renowned as the foundation of the Bartlett's intellectual powerhouse. Could I learn more from your perspective about their ways of thinking and their contribution to the teaching of architectural history and theory at Bartlett?

**Fraser:** I saw them as by far the most interesting figures in the Bartlett at the time. Bob Maxwell taught us architectural history and theory in the final year of the graduate diploma course, which today is the masters-level stage of professional training. Bob was extremely open-minded, as well as a superb orator who, in his Northern Irish burr, regaled us with stories such as being taken by Robert Venturi around the latter's mother's house soon after completion. Bob's interest was always in the dialectical interplay between history and 20th-century modernism, a movement in which he himself played a not insignificant part as architect and theorist.

His love for history was of course shared by Adrian and Mark, yet their motivation was far more politically inclined. Both Adrian and Mark had initially studied history at Oxford University, albeit at different times; there they imbibed many of the left-wing ideals of what is known as cultural studies, notably from Raymond Williams; after all, Adrian's celebrated book on *Words and Buildings* (Forty 2000) is a sort of reworking of Williams's *Keywords* (1976). When I was an undergraduate student, Adrian taught the first-year course and Mark the second-year course.

**Rujivacharakul:** Their dynamic at the Bartlett must have been quite inspirational to their students. What did you do with that intellectual capital from your education, and how did your professional development continue from there?

**Fraser:** I finished my architectural training at the Bartlett in 1981, and for me the most crucial discovery during the postgraduate course was the writings of Manfredo Tafuri – above all his sharp analysis of Aldo Rossi and the Italian neo-rationalist 'tendenza'. For all of Tafuri's justifiable criticisms, here at last was a broad, hard-hitting socialist discussion about architecture and urbanism. I was hooked. I remember feeling slightly aggrieved that I had only come across this strand of thought right at the end of my education.

Then, somewhat like a *deus ex machina*, I was told that Adrian and Mark were just about to launch the MSc in History of Modern Architecture, the Bartlett's first postgraduate course in the subject. I was fortunate to join the initial cohort in October 1981, doing my studies part-time while working in an architectural office to meet the bills.

**Rujivacharakul:** What was it like to be in the first class of this new MSc course? Had you perhaps thought about going to another university for a postgraduate degree?

**Fraser:** There really wasn't much choice around. At the time in Britain there was an MPhil course in architectural history and theory run by Dalibor Vesely and Joseph Rykwert at Cambridge (previously it had been at the University of Essex), or else one could go to the Courtauld Institute of Art for their MA degree. The Bartlett's was without doubt the one for me.

**Rujivacharakul:** Why was that specifically the case?

**Fraser:** For me the disconnect during my architectural education was the separation of design from politics and everyday social life. In a period when Margaret Thatcher was happily dismantling the post-war Keynesian welfare state, as part of an attempt to shift Britain towards neo-liberal monetarism, I couldn't understand why architecture wasn't being seen by everyone as political, with cities serving as its spheres of appearance. It was a view that also underpinned Adrian and Mark's new course, hence I felt I had found my home.

**Rujivacharakul:** Was this around the same time that you started thinking about the colonial impact on architecture and urbanism?

**Fraser:** Yes, I also realised that to be true to the spirit of the Bartlett's new MSc course, I needed to develop a critique of it as well as of the likes of Cambridge and the Courtauld. This is why I turned to a then still-emerging academic approach known as postcolonialism. Edward Said's *Orientalism* had only been published in 1978, and I remember reading it avidly on Saturdays up in the quiet

upper recesses of Charles Holden's Senate House Library. I was the only person I knew of in architectural circles who read *Orientalism* back then; none of my colleagues on the Bartlett course, nor indeed Adrian or Mark, were discussing it. I thus felt I had stumbled onto something different and new. The only other useful text I could find was written by a sociologist, Anthony King, in his *Colonial Urban Development* of 1976; even his seminal book on *The Bungalow* wasn't to come out till 1984.

**Rujivacharakul:** From Manfredo Tafuri to Anthony King, you were about to make an impressive leap.

**Fraser:** Both were hugely influential. The question for me, then, was how to find a suitable subject for my MSc thesis that could embrace postcolonialism at a time during the early 1980s when it was all but unknown in the architectural realm.

**Rujivacharakul:** Yes, I can see the dilemma, and so how did you get around the problem?

**Fraser:** Recognising that my language skills were not good enough to stray too far afield, plus it being a time when it was rather expensive to travel around, I decided to try to investigate the colonial dimension of Irish architecture and urbanism. During my scoping work, I remember reading a book by Kerry Downes – a stalwart of British 18th-century architectural history – in which on the last page he says something to the effect that the very best Georgian architecture was erected in Dublin, but then signs off without explaining why (1979). Smelling a rat, this became my starting point.

What my Bartlett MSc thesis then served to demonstrate was that the reason why Dublin's Georgian architecture is so fine was because of the colonial desire to prop up those loyal to the British Crown at the expense of others within the Anglo-Irish Protestant Ascendancy who, in the wake of the American colonies, were calling for greater independence. British governments thus generously funded the opulent Customs House and the Four Courts, both designed by James Gandon, and also the schemes of the Wide Street Commissioners, pioneers of aggrandising urban remodelling long before Nash's Regent Street and Regent's Park scheme (which they influenced directly) and the even more ambitious plans of Baron Haussmann.

For my research, I buried myself deep in the state archives in Dublin and the Public Records Office in Kew. My MSc thesis was completed in 1983 and published in *Architectural History* in 1985 (Fraser 1985). It remains the standard work on the subject. But at the time the great-and-the-good of Irish architectural history were incensed. One reviewer tried to block publication even though he then quoted from my research in a conference paper. I appealed to the editor of *Architectural History*, John Newman, and duly traipsed along to his office in the Courtauld for a meeting. John agreed the essay ought to be published, quoting in support Christopher Wren's dictum that 'architecture has its political use'.

**Rujivacharakul:** You fought for what you believed, which sets a useful example. How did your research into architectural history develop after that?

**Fraser:** Due to the presence of Mark Swenarton, then still teaching at the Bartlett School of Architecture, the history of subsidised state housing for the working classes was a key topic in the mid-1980s. This was just at the point I was thinking about starting a PhD. For financial reasons, I again had to do it part-time while working as an architect – but now also while starting a family and teaching one day a week with Adrian on the Bartlett MSc course, before taking up a full-time post in January 1990 at Oxford Brookes University.

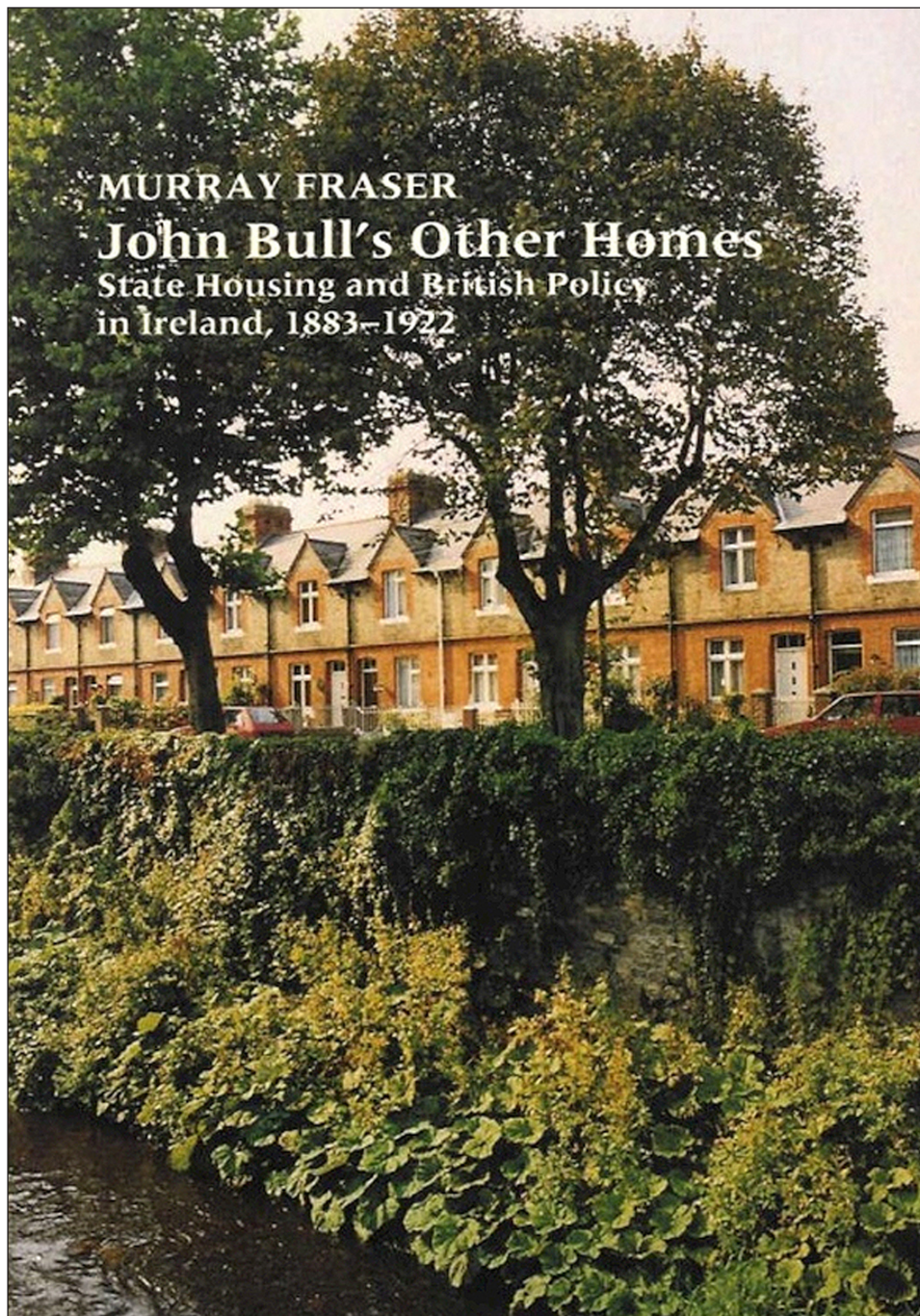
For my doctoral thesis, having by this point investigated the Irish archives rather thoroughly, I decided to look into early state housing in Ireland. What I found was something that Mark had missed out completely in his argument that the post-war British government adopted the 1919 Addison Act, often called the 'Homes fit for Heroes' campaign (Swenarton 1981). Parliamentary debates and governmental papers in private revealed that the justification for the policy in Britain was precisely that it had by that point been used for over 30 years in Ireland, initially to build a largely successful programme of rural labourers' cottages and then more controversially for urban working-class housing prior to 1919, as part of British efforts to counteract demands. Hence that staple of 20th-century modernist architecture – i.e. subsidised state housing that used standard design types – was invented not in Britain but in Ireland, and for expressly political reasons. My PhD thesis was completed in 1993 and then published as a book a few years later (Fraser 1996) (**Figure 3**).

**Rujivacharakul:** Architectural history still did not engage actively with postcolonial arguments in the mid-1990s. Could you tell me more about your experience in that intellectual landscape?

**Fraser:** I felt lucky in my PhD thesis to be able to bring in ideas from the latest – and in my view, greatest – intellectual contribution by Edward Said, his 1993 book on *Culture and Imperialism*. He rightly warns in that book against a potential ossification of postcolonialism if one were to overly rely upon binary terms such as self/other, centre/periphery and such like. This got me worried, which fed into a very different approach for my next major research project.

**Rujivacharakul:** In what way did it become different?

**Fraser:** As I understood what Edward Said was saying, if one stuck to the same old colonial binaries then postcolonialism would turn into a trap, no doubt providing interesting insights about reverse flows and so on, but also locking us forever into a condition of stasis. It could hence become an academic cul-de-sac, just like the older viewpoints it sought to overturn. By this stage I was also reading Homi Bhabha and other writers who too were fir-



**Figure 3:** Front cover of *John Bull's Other Homes: State Housing and British Policy in Ireland, 1883–1922* (1996). Liverpool University Press.

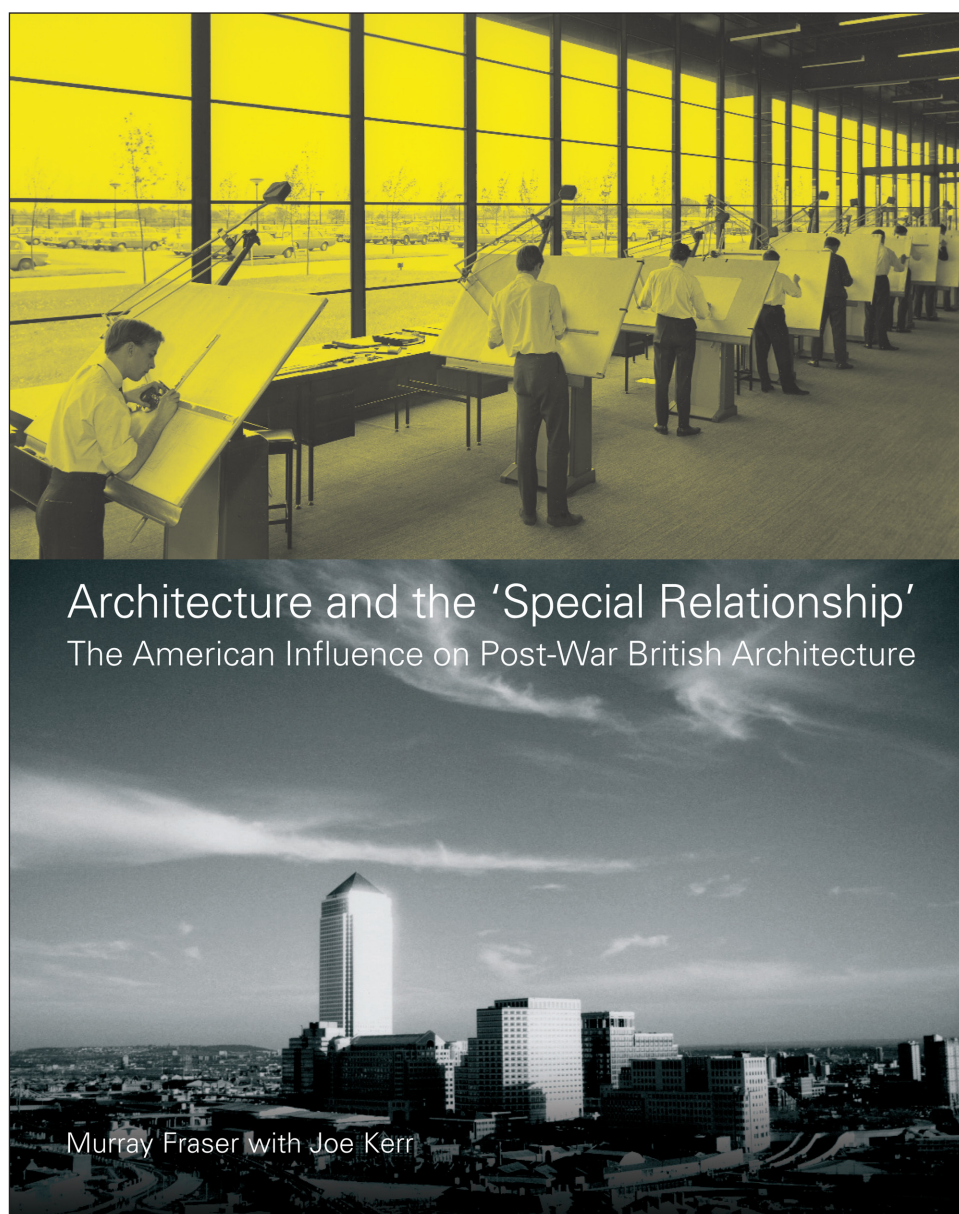
ing warning shots. How then could one get away from a reliance on binary divides?

**Rujivacharakul:** Indeed. Equally challenging was how to push the subject outside of the prevailing East/West, colonial/non-colonial cultural demarcation within architectural history.

**Fraser:** An idea then struck me that it might be useful to reshape the centre/periphery model by showing the extent to which 'centres' were themselves subject to specific patterns of 'colonisation', and thus also inherently hybrid. At the same time, I was increasingly aware that

so much of my architectural training at the Bartlett had come from figures who for various reasons had fallen in love with the USA, and with American design, so I thought this might be a good way to diversify the postcolonial approach.

Published in 2007 as *Architecture and the 'Special Relationship'*, the resulting book offers an exhaustive examination of the USA's many influences upon British architecture, while also tracing cultural influences in the reverse direction across the Atlantic Ocean (Fraser and Kerr 2007) (**Figure 4**). Initially I invited a colleague, Joe Kerr, to join me in the task, since I knew the subject was huge. Joe,



**Figure 4:** Front cover of *Architecture and the 'Special Relationship': The American Influence on Post-War British Architecture* (2007). Routledge.

however, had to drop out during the project, which was a pity. The eventual book was generally well received. I also look back at it now as the point when my interests moved away from postcolonialism as such and towards the wider networks that we call globalisation – understood in its very diverse material and ideological forms, and in both a positive and negative light.

**Rujivacharakul:** Am I right to observe that from that moment your interest in and questions about architectural history moved onto the global context? Is this the step leading you to edit the new *Sir Banister Fletcher's History of Architecture*?

**Fraser:** A fascination with globalisation has certainly become my main academic interest ever since – although not exclusively, since I also continue to teach architecture and write widely about the concept of design research,

thereby involving that side of my training as well. Yet I guess it is my writings on postcolonialism and then globalisation that got me chosen as general editor for this new 21st edition of *Banister Fletcher*.

**Rujivacharakul:** Sir Banister Fletcher edited his book up until the sixteenth edition, which was published in 1954, one year after his death. I heard that you have collected all editions of Fletcher's *History* and are familiar with his work. Could I ask you to position yourself in relation to the original direction of *Sir Banister Fletcher's A History of Architecture*?

**Fraser:** I cannot claim to own copies of all editions of *Banister Fletcher*, just the main ones from the 1901 fourth edition onwards. I have never even seen a first edition being offered for sale. Many editions were effectively re-issues of the same material, so my focus has been on

acquiring only those that introduced something notably different. Hence on my bookshelves I have now got 10 out of the first 20 editions (plus of course the latest one!). That's more than enough, I think.

As to how to position myself, I am torn between awe about the sheer depth of architectural knowledge offered by the father (Professor Banister Fletcher), the son (Sir Banister Flight Fletcher) and subsequent general editors, coupled with something near to revulsion about the blatantly pro-Western, indeed colonialist, bias of the original enterprise. It is a difficult book to like without expressing extreme caveats.

**Rujivacharakul:** We often regard *Sir Banister Fletcher's A History of Architecture* as a book on world architectural history. Could I ask you to reflect on this pre-existing view and, if possible, also share your own view of what a global survey of architectural history should be?

**Fraser:** It was an undoubted intention of the various general editors from the 18th edition onwards to extend the global range of architectural history contained in *Banister Fletcher*, and also bring in more contemporary examples. Yet by still sticking too much to the established format, they could only get so far. The last edition of *Banister Fletcher* was back in 1996, and an intended revision in the mid-2000s aimed to introduce a postcolonial approach under the editorship of John McKean, but it never saw the light of day.

What this hiatus did was to open the path for more up-to-date competitors that did a better job of presenting a global architectural history without the *Banister Fletcher* baggage. Particularly well known back then was Spiro Kostof's *A History of Architecture*, dating from 1985. Another scholar working away on his own was Christopher Tadgell, whose series of books has in fact recently been republished by Routledge. More ambitious still, and probably the best of the rivals, is the joint volume by Francis Ching, Mark Jarzombek and Vikram Prakash (published in 2006, revised in 2011 and 2017), which uses a novel time-slice device to mix up the different architectures of the world at given points.

**Rujivacharakul:** When you decided to take up the *Banister Fletcher* project, did you wonder about how to differentiate your book from this existing corpus of inspiring competitors?

**Fraser:** While I have nothing but admiration for such scholars, my view is still that none of the rival versions had been able to crack the problem. A global survey of architecture, if it is to carry real weight, needs to be written by subject experts in each of the different regions/countries and in different periods, not just by erudite summarisers of the research of other scholars. It has to be based on primary research and not merely be an intelligent review of secondary literature. This offers a challenge, for sure, but a more ambitious approach was

precisely what was envisaged for the 21st edition of *Banister Fletcher*. Hence, from the outset, it was to comprise a total rewriting and total reframing of all the book's contents, starting from scratch.

**Rujivacharakul:** Such an objective must have set up the presumption of a transformative change for this new edition.

**Fraser:** Here I must make it clear that while I support this decision wholeheartedly, I cannot claim any responsibility for choosing to have the book fully rewritten by expert authors under their own by-lines. Nor did I select the overall shape of the 21st edition. Instead, the spark for updating *Banister Fletcher* came around a decade ago mainly through discussions between Irena Murray, then director of the RIBA Library and Drawings Collection, and Adrian Forty, the academic representative on the Banister Fletcher Trust. Others were involved too, of course, not least Christine Stevenson from the Courtauld Institute, who took over from Adrian on the Trust. Catherine Gregg was appointed early on and stayed with the project all the way through. The initial advisor was Tom Dyckhoff, an architectural historian best known for his work in print journalism and television presenting. I was then made general editor, with responsibility for the book's academic content. The publisher, Bloomsbury Press, was also determined that the material would also be available online via their new Bloomsbury Architectural Library, to which institutions and individuals can buy subscriptions.

Thus, for full disclosure, I inherited the basic framework for the 21st edition of *Banister Fletcher*. Most of the expert chapter authors were already in place when I joined the project in mid-2016. What, then, could be my contribution?

**Rujivacharakul:** Yes, that is something I would like to learn more from you. From the seventeenth to the twentieth edition of *Sir Banister Fletcher's A History of Architecture*, the book was edited by different editors, each of whom brought in new elements to the book. As the general editor of the prestigious 21st edition, could I ask what are the new elements or changes that you have introduced to the book?

**Fraser:** The very first thing that I insisted upon, once appointed, was to change the title to *Sir Banister Fletcher's Global History of Architecture*, with the word 'global' being inserted for the very first time. I regarded this as an important symbolic marker, and indeed it echoed the use of the word in many of the rival books mentioned before.

From this point on, I saw my role as setting a strong intellectual direction for the 21st *Banister Fletcher*, and to this effect I could bring to bear my background in postcolonial and globalisation studies. As I explain at some length in the book's introductory chapter, I rapidly distilled down the changes needed for the 21st edition to three crucial points.

**Rujivacharakul:** What are those three points?

**Fraser:** Firstly, I was determined to reduce as far as possible the Western bias that had so restricted all previous editions. In terms of chapters, some 60% of these are now written about the architectural history of non-Western regions/countries, easily the highest proportion to date.

Secondly, I wished to get away from the tendentious use of illustrations in previous editions so as to bring new ideas and information into play. The *Banister Fletcher* book's celebrated style of representation, while often producing exquisite drawings, is far too limited in an Internet age of ultra-profuse imagery, and hence much effort was put into providing a wider blend of visual illustrations – including also, for the first time, the use of colour photographs (**Figures 5 and 6**).

Thirdly, my aim was to use the diversity of the contributing authors, all 88 of them, to break with the falsely unitary and Olympian tone of writing in previous *Banister Fletchers*. Our authors, each an expert engaged in primary research in their respective fields, come from around 40 countries that collectively contain 75% of the world's population. Slightly over a third of authors are women, by far the highest proportion of any edition, although ideally it should have been an even gender split. We commissioned a range of ages of authors, and also mixed archaeologists, art historians and cultural historians into the usual milieu of those engaged in writing architectural history.

**Rujivacharakul:** Could you share with us some of the most memorable challenges you faced in editing the 21st edition?

**Fraser:** The most obvious challenge was one of size. The 21st *Banister Fletcher* is the first to be split into two volumes as it contains one million words between its 102 chapters, and therefore even collecting and editing the texts proved an enormous undertaking. To create some sense of chronological order, we split the chapters up into seven approximate time periods, starting around 3,500 BCE and spanning through to the present day. Seeking not to give predominance to any single part of the world, we began each time period in the 'Fertile Crescent' of the Near Middle East as a convenient marker, and then spiralled out in the same manner each time across the globe so as to take in every inhabited zone.

For many regions/countries we discovered that there are not as yet sufficient scholars writing at the highest level and suitably proficient in using the English language, so in some cases finding the right person to write a particular chapter was difficult. We deliberately asked each author to follow a specific structure by writing about the history and geography of the region/country at that time, then about its society and culture, before moving onto the architectural analysis. Perhaps unsurprisingly, some authors found this easier to follow than others, which caused problems.



**Figure 5:** Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève in the Place du Panthéon, Paris, France (1843–50), designed by Henri Labrouste. Marie-Lan Nguyen/Creative Commons BY-2.0 FR (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/fr/deed.en>).





**Figure 6:** Housing estate at Gröndal in Stockholm, Sweden (1948), designed by Sven Backström and Leif Reinius. Ankara/Creative Commons BY-SA (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>).

Sadly, one of our authors, Peter Blundell Jones, a noted English historian of European modernist architecture, died just after submitting his chapter's text, which I then had to edit; thankfully his widow, Christine Poulson, was excellent in resolving any issues. Another of our authors, Cathy Oakes, who wrote about early medieval France, then passed away last summer before the book was printed. With such a large group of experts, such events are regrettably bound to happen.

**Rujivacharakul:** Hearing from you, I sense rather strongly that the new edition of *Sir Banister Fletcher's History* is a collective work that the current generation of architectural historians put forward for the future. Are there other logistical issues that you also encountered while editing this impressively massive work?

**Fraser:** Other problems included finding acceptable transliteration methods, given that we were writing in English yet dealing with such diverse languages around the world. Then there was the issue of assembling the 2,500 or so illustrations. For this we needed to produce a sizeable number of new drawings to augment the old *Banister Fletcher* book's images, plus we had to create our own explanatory maps. Sourcing photographs and other images was likewise a major enterprise in which we were fortunately aided by professional picture researchers.

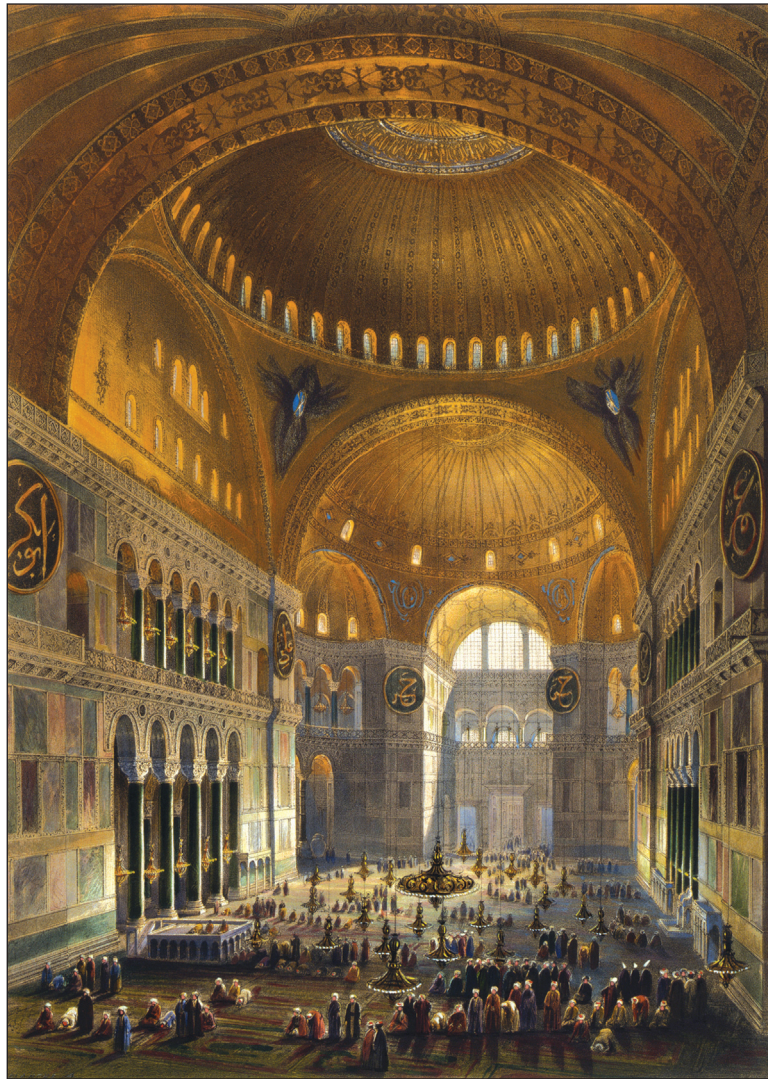
**Rujivacharakul:** How does the 21st edition figure within the institutional history of the 100-years-plus lifespan of *Sir Banister Fletcher's A History of Architecture*?

**Fraser:** An obvious question was whether we should keep the *Sir Banister Fletcher* name at all, given that the 21st edition was always going to be entirely rewritten and have a totally different structure and approach to any preceding version. In my view, however, it is only right to refer to the past institution, as you term it, but also to conceptualise the new *Banister Fletcher* as a palimpsest. It sits upon the previous editions, which had their obvious merits, yet it scrubs away almost all of what was there before in order to cast things afresh.

Thus, if anything, my aim was to make the book feel far from an institution. While we have our seven time periods and a general spiralling pattern for each period, I equally made it clear to authors they were free to dictate the precise time period for their chapter within the general framework, and that gaps and overlaps in their stories were highly welcome. Hence there is no attempt to offer a singular narrative, or a false sense of completion to any chapter. Divergent interpretations and propositions were exactly what we were hoping for.

The result is a rich mix and takes its strength from this diversity. I regard the book more as a collective effort to describe the astonishingly varied forms of architecture produced by societies across the world, over long periods of time (**Figures 7** and **8**). It needs many experts to achieve such a task.

**Rujivacharakul:** We write books not just for ourselves, but for future generations. Could we discuss how the 21st edition of *Sir Banister Fletcher's Global History of Architecture*



**Figure 7:** Lithograph of an 1852 painting by Gaspare Fossati of Hagia Sophia Mosque, Istanbul. Library of Congress, LC-USZC4-11883.



**Figure 8:** View of Itimad ad-Daula's Tomb in Agra, India (1622–28). RIBA Collections.

ture may reshape the ways architects and students study architectural history, say for the next 20 years?

**Fraser:** That is a really good question and is probably the single thing I agonised about the most as general editor and in writing the introduction and my chapters. I have long admired the Annales School with its emphasis on slowly changing structures, as that seems to me how the world works. Jean-Luc Nancy said recently that globalisation might take centuries, which is a sobering thought when thinking about reshaping anything, let alone architectural history. Capitalism will pass, but what might be in its place?

What does seem clear to me is that this is the first instance in history that it has been possible to produce a book like this, due to several factors: digitalisation, trans-spatial communications, widespread use of English as a com-

mon language, conceptual structures made possible under globalisation, and so on. While the 21st *Banister Fletcher* pushes global architectural history further than ever before, I also acknowledge that is merely a stepping stone, not an endpoint. The near future is likely to see a rise in scholarship into new topics, including a boom in Chinese architectural history and hopefully also greater research into Africa and other relatively neglected regions (**Figures 9 and 10**).

This is bound to lead to a rebalancing within architectural history, with it becoming progressively less dominated by Western countries – something only to be desired. I think your forthcoming book for Bloomsbury about the critical reception globally of earlier editions of *Banister Fletcher* will be an important contributor to the rebalancing process (Rujivacharakul forthcoming). If there is a message that I would like to be taken from this 21st edition, it is that architecture has always been driven by



**Figure 9:** North Pagoda (Beita) in Chaoyang, Liaoning province, China (1044). Creative Commons BY-SA (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0>).



**Figure 10:** Painted aerial view of Changdeok Palace in Hanyang, South Korea (1405). Dong-A University Museum, Busan/Wikimedia Commons (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/fr/deed.en>).

cross-cultural flows and networks, as a fluid and dynamic condition, and as such it needs to be seen as open and relational rather than fixed and absolute.

**Rujivacharakul:** Thank you so much for this opportunity to interview you.

#### Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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