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Reviews Summer 2022

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Hosseinibalajadeh, S. A review of Negar Habibi, *Modern Middle-Class Housing in Tehran: Reproduction of an Archetype: Episodes of Urbanism 1945–79*, Leiden: Brill, 2021.

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In the Spotlight: A New Place for Lighting Design in Architectural History

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Sarah Schleuning and Cindi Strauss, with contributions from Sarah Marie Horne, Martha MacLeod, and Barry Lowden Perkins, *Electrifying Design.* London and New Haven: The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, in association with Yale University Press, 2021, 207 pages, ISBN 9780300254570.

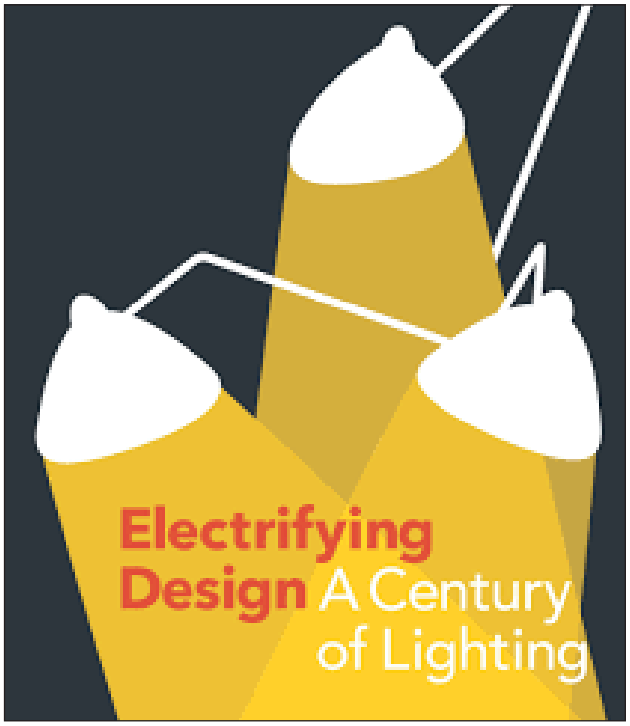

Figure 1: Cover of Sarah Schleuning and Cindi Strauss, with contributions from Sarah Marie Horne, Martha MacLeod, and Barry Lowden Perkins, *Electrifying Design.* Photo: Yale University Press.

In an era where complex algorithms control the shimmer of LED lights across major urban landmarks and our smart homes use machine learning to anticipate the desired hue and intensity of illumination throughout the day, it is easy to take for granted the profound phenomenological power of electric lighting. Lighting design has not only become inextricable from art and architecture, it has been swallowed and regurgitated into the mainstream — James Turrell is now the aesthetic fodder of music videos (as with the musician Drake in 2015) and corporate training centers (e.g., Hyundai Capital Convention Hall in Seoul) (by Gensler Architects, completed 2018). But for all the advanced technology and atmospheric drama of contemporary lighting design writ large, we still buy nostalgic bulbs that simulate spiraling tungsten filaments, and Design Within Reach will happily sell you a 2004 remake of a 1970s update of the classic 1950s Anglepoise Apex 90 desk lamp. Without any pretense of definitively answering how we got to this point, *Electrifying Design: A Century of Lighting*, the catalogue accompanying an exhibition of the same name, successfully pulls on many of the historical, scientific, affective, technological, and artistic threads surrounding this question (**Figure 1**).

In their introduction, authors Sarah Schleuning and Cindi Strauss quote scholar Bernd Dicke, who described lighting design as 'a combination of romantic escapism and decadent aestheticism on the one hand, and reformist zeal with a serious attempt at finding suitable form for the industrial product on the other' (1). While other scholarly books on lighting tend to veer toward one end of this spectrum or the other, *Electrifying Design* admirably plumbs the continuities and overlaps between functionalism and aesthetic joy. In this graphically stunning exhibition catalogue, the most austere task lamp is rendered as an object of visual fascination, and the most lavish and overtly decorative chandelier is revealed to be the outcome of a rigorously rational and iterative design process.

Organized as a series of thematic essays, the catalogue captures the key figures and formative ideas that have driven the advancement of lighting design as a field over the last hundred years. The essays, much like the featured lighting designs themselves, function as a series of provocations. These thoroughly researched sketches aim less at encyclopedic comprehensiveness than at elucidating how the tension between (to quote Dicke again) 'the cult of light and the art of lighting' has played out in the work of various designers, competitions, and typological developments (1).

The chapters called 'Typologies' (Cindi Strauss), 'The Naked Bulb as Inspiration', and 'Quality of Light' (both by Sarah Schleuning) provide a conceptual framework for the catalogue, encompassing both the taxonomic development of certain formal types and lighting's phenomenological role in creating atmosphere and mood. Without significantly disrupting the established canon of lighting design — and indeed there are plenty of iconic examples to be found within these pages — the authors interweave lesser known and very recent designs, making a compelling case for the continuing relevance of historical questions related to, for example, diffusion, reflection, and color. The two chapters on MoMA's *New Lamps* and on awards for lighting design (both by Cindi Strauss) function as complements to the three conceptual chapters, drawing attention to the palpable ways in which lighting design has straddled highbrow art and commercial viability over the past century.

In recent years, lighting designers have been increasingly recognized in their own monographic studies, stepping out of the shadows of architects and receiving the recognition they deserve as critical contributors to an integrated architectural experience. The volume edited by Dietrich Neumann and Robert A.M. Stern, *The Structure of Light: Richard Kelly and the Illumination of Modern Architecture* (Yale University Press, 2010), is a prime example of this genre, exploring Kelly's design process and the significance of his work to numerous midcentury architectural icons. Strauss's profiles of Poul Henningsen and Gino Sarfatti and Schleuning's of Ingo Mauer continue this trend, granting the reader a glimpse into the ateliers of three of the previous century's most prominent lighting designers. While each of these designers has attracted their own monographic studies since 2000 (though not all available in English or translation),

the ability to compare their divergent approaches to design, industrial manufacture versus artisanal production, and brand promotion adds substantively to the existing literature. Given the history of the field, it is no surprise that male designers from Europe and the United States dominate the catalogue, with a few Japanese, Israeli, and Australian designers in the mix. However, given the rise of vibrant design hubs across the Global South and the increasing — though long overdue and still insufficient — recognition and representation of diverse designers, this bias, especially among the 21st-century objects, feels particularly glaring.

All of the essays are enriched by seductive color plates, which depict the featured designs as sculptural objects suspended against neutral backgrounds. Materiality, form, and (where the lamp is shown illuminated) quality of light take center stage while context and scale recede to the background. In many instances, this photographic conceit works effectively alongside the essay content. However, as much as *Electrifying Design* centers lights as 'primary objects', the authors also acknowledge that lamps have frequently been designed for specific interiors. Yet few of these interiors are illustrated in the catalogue. Where they do appear, they bring additional clarity and impact to the authors' arguments, as in the photograph of the Lagelinie Pavillonen restaurant in Copenhagen (1959), for which Poul Henningsen originally designed the iconic *Artichoke*. Visualizing the *Artichoke* as part of a holistic lighting schema, which also featured Henningsen's much smaller *Plate Lamp* that shed focused light onto individual tables, adds historical specificity and nuance to an object now ubiquitous in the pages of contemporary design magazines and upscale hotel lobbies.

Likewise, additional archival photographs of interiors would also provide a much-needed sense of scale for designs where the play of size is key to the design, as in the *Moloch Floor Lamp*, by Gaetano Pesce and manufactured by Bracciodiferro in 1971. Here, the humor and ingenuity of the design come from the design's comical scale; Pesce took the form of a standard desktop task light and blew it up to become an articulated, cantilevered floor lamp. While the authors include Pesce's *Design Drawing for Moloch Floor Lamp*, the designer's intentionally surreal marker, pen, and paint sketch on tracing paper does little to convey how the final design might function in a real architectural space. The dimensions of the objects are included with the exhibition checklist near the back of the book but might have also been usefully appended to the plate captions.

The emphasis on form over context also extends to the essays; *Electrifying Design* largely sidesteps the many valences of socioeconomic class, gender, and race that implicitly or explicitly informed lighting design over the past century, as elucidated in the scholarship of Margaret Maile Petty and Sandy Isenstadt, among others. For instance, in 'The Naked Bulb as Inspiration', Schleuning explores the resurgence of the

conventional bulb shape in designs of the mid-1960s and beyond. Equally compelling is why the bulb had fallen out of favor earlier in the 20th century, a history inextricable from thorny issues of class identity and the commercial promotion of a complete electrified lifestyle.

Particularly on the literature of early electrification in the United States, reformers and advocates explicitly discouraged working class people from hanging unadorned bulbs in their homes. In print materials, manufacturers emphasized both task and decorative lighting designed for each room of the house — a panoply of shaded fixtures that served as an antidote to the brashness of the 'naked bulb' while inculcating certain values of urban middle-class consumer culture and aesthetics. The design of new electrified appliances, gadgets, and conveniences paralleled the rise of specialized lighting for each room and household activity. But by the 1960s, the complete electrified lifestyle was practically universal among middle-class households in the Western world, setting the stage for designers to reclaim the incandescent bulb as a source of formal inspiration.

One area where *Electrifying Design* particularly excels in providing ample historic context relates to the evolving role of print in publicizing and communicating ideas both scientific and whimsical about lighting design. For example, Poul Henningsen's scientific research on color and materials featured in a 1931 Louis Poulsen sales catalogue, graphic designer Lester Beall's 1937 'Light' poster for the Rural Electrification Administration, and pertinent covers of *Domus* and *Artemide* and several MoMA catalogues all testify to print's ability to persuade, advertise, and crystallize the canon of lighting design. There is a meta element to this discussion, as *Electrifying Design* both recounts and participates in this history.

Indisputably, Schleuning, Strauss, and their collaborators have created a satisfying book that begs to be browsed, revisited, and filled with sticky notes; an annal of timeless and trendy designs to fuel the imaginations of the next generation of lighting designers. The timeline that follows the introduction and the collection of short designer biographies preceding the index in addition to a century's worth of visual inspiration, process sketches, and archival material make this a handy reference work indeed. For the architect or architectural historian, though, *Electrifying Design* presents many compelling examples where architectural trends shaped lighting, but notably fewer instances of lighting's reciprocal effects on the built environment. How did focused desktop task lighting affect the floor plan of the modern office did the light-diffusing floor lamp affect the size and configuration of the midcentury living room? While such queries are beyond the scope of this long overdue re-centering of illumination in design history, *Electrifying Design* nevertheless raises these broader questions about the centrality of light within the practice and forms of 20th- and 21st-century architecture.

The Subtle Tones of *Race and Modern Architecture*

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Irene Cheng, Charles L. Davis II, Mabel O. Wilson (eds.), *Race and Modern Architecture: A Critical History from the Enlightenment to the Present*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2020, 424 pages, ISBN: 978-0822966593.

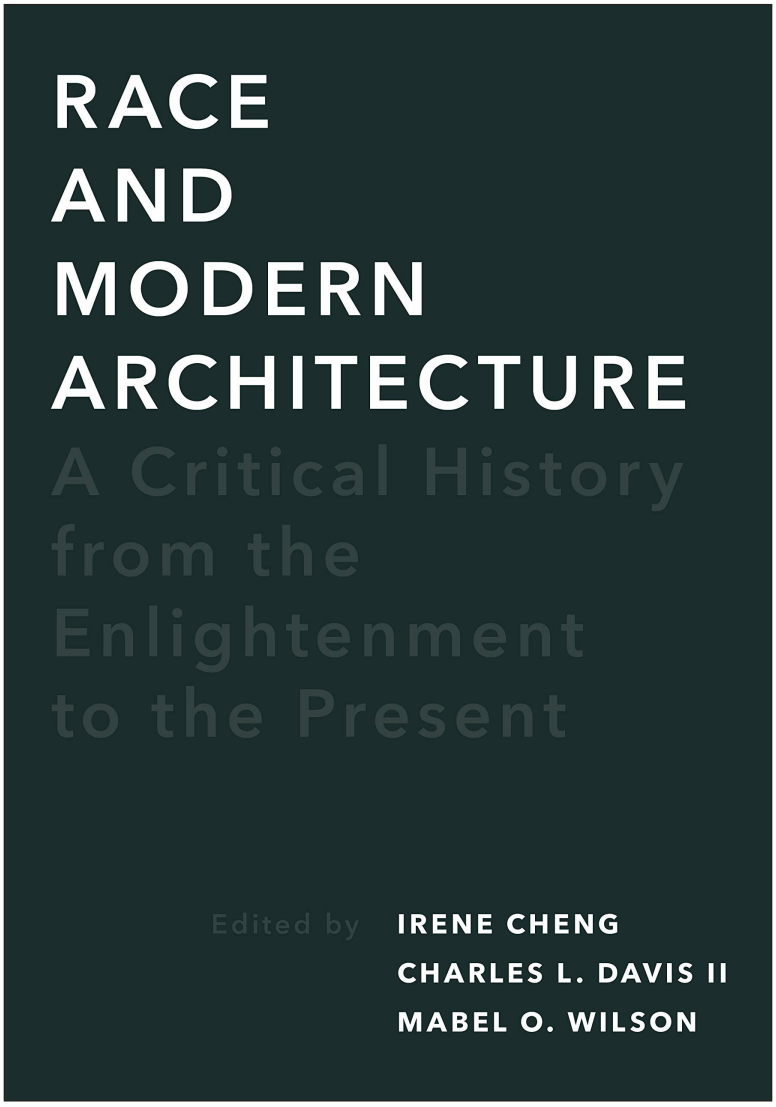

Figure 2: Cover of *Race and Modern Architecture: A Critical History from the Enlightenment to the Present*. Photo: University of Pittsburgh Press.

How does architectural history tell history? Winston Churchill argued for the importance of built environments in 1943, when the bombed-out Houses of Parliament by Charles Barry and AWN Pugin elicited the comment, 'We shape our buildings and afterwards our buildings shape us' us (UK Parliament n.d.). Houses of 'Commons' and 'Lords' spatialized an opposition between British classes by overlooking (and thereby eliminating) rights claims of those ruled by imperial Britain but outside the British Isles. English white supremacy recalls the first term of *Race and Modern Architecture* (**Figure 2**) where Mark Crinson, in one of many fine essays, pinpoints one root of racist thinking: the pervasive, narcissistic-nationalist logic of Hegelianism, a 'mastering of the other that in the end only makes [its] recognition more difficult' (266–267) (Turpin and Tomkins 2007: 41–42, 47–49).

In a warren of earlier buildings that burned in 1836, reputedly dating back to Canute the Great, Westminster government chambers occupied various spaces over time — not all well suited to the purpose. The new 1857 complex institutionalized a manner of governmentality through design. Unapologetically racist himself, Churchill's claim that the built environment is a feedback loop appears correct, in this case at least: as the British made Parliament the center of an imperial world, their governing body hunkered down on the seat of ancient British royalty, in a new shell ('The Churchill You Didn't Know', 2002). Thus unfolds the second term of the book's title.

'Modern architecture' utilizes the built environment for social, cultural, and political engineering, and it has provided a valuable tool. *Race and Modern Architecture* (hereafter *RaMA*) reveals how, in histories littered with the injustices, the present must 'own', despite longings for historical distance. Architectural history, the argument runs, can locate the violence of the past in space, and tie it to human action. The book's contributions to that end are at least threefold: first, how to *see* race-based practices — how to recognize them in constructed places — along with the histories they produce, embedded in social context and site. Second, in conjunction with this power of seeing anew, the book reveals the subterfuges and ruses that conceal *how* the built environment has fostered race-based practices, hiding behind artistry, exclusivity, and abstraction, at times exercising power through manifestly political buildings, at times dropping clues to its own diabolical or merely devious operating procedures for later historians to scout out. And third, the book recognizes the unlikelihood that racism will disappear from contemporary life, instead suggesting how the built environment might inflect or deflect it, with the potential to initiate (if not fully realize) social change. Forensics on the one hand; incipient co-creation on the other.

After a cogent introduction, the collection considers race and western Enlightenment (chapter 1), organicism (2), nationalism (3), representation (4), colonialism (5), and urbanism (6), all distinctive strands of the history of the built environment. The historicity of race, whether in collective spatial decisions or in political hegemonic ones, reveals colonial appropriation and empire-building. Addison Godel's essay on Chinese gardens traces racist theory in European global expansion. Quite differently, Peter Minosh's 'American Architecture in the Black Atlantic' argues that slavery was foundational to the 'political imaginary' of construction in the US capital. The collection focuses on US history and enslavement and on global colonization in tandem with racializing practices. In both cases, industrial capital moves alongside opportunistic discrimination. The book is invaluable for students of all ages and backgrounds, and it joins a growing bibliography on the racial underpinnings of the discipline (Wilson 2012; Osayimwese 2017; Brown 2017; Davis 2019; Benson 2019).

While both 'race' and 'modern architecture' are usefully contested terms, the tonalities of race explored in this volume prove exceptionally valuable. The collection includes complex cases, from racial difference as the locus of injustice in Mabel Wilson's 'Notes on the Virginia Capitol' to carefully shaded hierarchies of ethnicity in other contexts. The racial hierarchies of colonial Malaysia (Jiat-Hwee Chang, 'Race and Tropical Architecture'), or the 'white-black' (òyìnbó *dúdú)* of 'Victorian' Nigeria (Adedoyin Teriba on the Lagos colony) show phenotype as the pretext for exploitation, expropriation, and discrimination, yet in different ways according to context. At the same time, an 'optimism of the will' (*pace* those who invoke Antonio Gramsci) pervades these essays as they amplify former silences of history (Trouillot 1995).

Such a collection raises questions of confirmation bias. In recent years, the racial coding intrinsic to the Enlightenment has appeared ever more clearly, its lethal and penetrating results continuing to have wide ramifications, as Irene Cheng's lucidly argued chapter makes clear. Racialism penetrates spatial practices as well as legal protocols or social interactions. Some essays struggle to articulate research questions beyond foregone conclusions. The question of whether Enlightenment thought, and therefore modern architecture, is racially coded is no longer contested; framed so broadly, it meets a resounding 'yes'. But essays that explain '*how* modern architectural discourse and practice from the Enlightenment to the present have been influenced by race' (4; emphasis mine) suggest the lessons close studies like these can teach. Racially

inflected spatial discourses and practices provide a both base and starting point; the work of decolonization thus begins. Many of these essays set new thresholds for work on the built environment.

The editors, Cheng, Wilson, and Charles Davis, note how the project necessarily inhabits the terrain of Western epistemology because this terrain 'has structured the modern world — that is, into temporal periods arranged from the past to the present, from the "primitive" to the "modern," and geographic territories ranged according to national/cultural affinities' (18). The project instigates a beginning to 'a much-needed dialogue and a critical historiographic project'. Because it follows the knowledge structures of the present, the volume also reveals alternatives. Going forward, the implication is that students of the built environment will not need to repeat the gesture. Instead, they can explore multiplicity, pluriversality à la Walter Mignolo, or situatedness à la Donna Haraway — other options and differing power regimes, in other words. The volume offers a foundation for such work (Mignolo and Walsh 2018; Haraway 2003; Haraway 2016). Lisa Uddin, in 'Noah Purifoy's Junk Modernism', offers a particularly provocative contribution to a narrative of Black agency in the built environment.

To that, then, applause and a gesture: let's also remember the book's precursors. As in so much recent work, the book might seem to reflect amnesia about fellow travelers from the past, although some of those travelers appear on its pages. In this, I would argue, the book reflects a truth that bears consideration: things *have* changed over recent decades, since Rodney King's experience (just one example) produced the shock and horror that also engulfed 2020. Yet they have not changed for the better. A new urgency appears in *RaMA*, protesting a collective manifest inability to acknowledge the depths of racist behavior — most egregiously in the US, but also globally. Looking back on the early work of bell hooks, Sharon Sutton, Dianne Harris, or Dell Upton helps focus on present tasks (hooks 1995; Sutton 1996; Sutton 2017; Upton 1986; Harris 2013). If considerable knowledge about racist environmentalism was generated recently, it was also ignored. The collection recalls the rejection of social justice by US presidents Reagan and Clinton as it also astutely identifies persistent residues of Enlightenment thought that dominate architectural history. We will not easily dissolve those residues as we build new knowledge based on pluriversality rather than universality. But the political devolution of recent decades, *that* we might work harder to change.

A Phytocentric Approach to Design History Studies

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Penny Sparke, *Nature Inside: Plants and Flowers in the Modern Interior*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021, 224 pages, ISBN: 9780300244021.

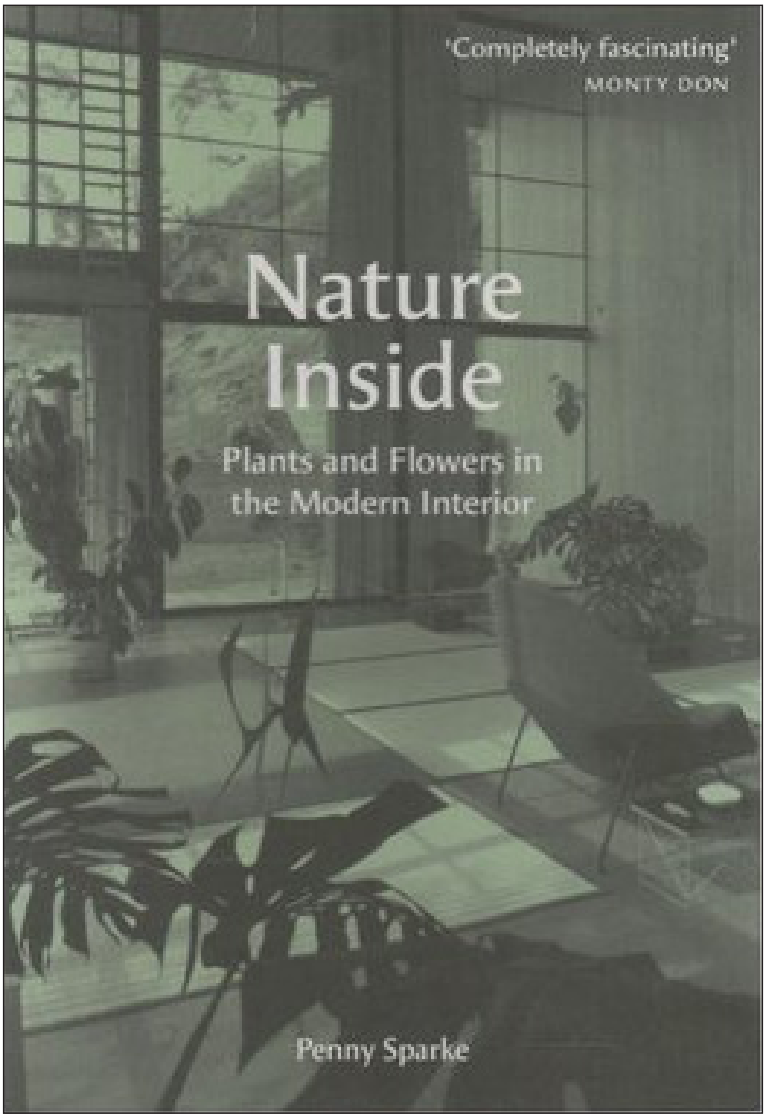

Figure 3: Cover of Penny Sparke, *Nature Inside: Plants and Flowers in the Modern Interior*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021. Photo: Penny Sparke.

Plants, whether they be slender trees, potted shrubs, or fresh-cut flowers, have had an enduring presence in modern indoor spaces in the Western world. Plants located within and along the borders of interiors are neither mere backdrops nor just centerpieces but living participants in these spaces and have profoundly affected the human experience of cultivated nature. But, for far too long, their impressive presence in indoor settings has been marginalized, as has their prominence in the history of modern architecture and interior design. And that perceptive assertion provides the impetus for Penny Sparke's vibrant 2021 book *Nature Inside: Plants and Flowers in the Modern Interior* (**Figure 3**).

Sparke's study of design history is at once innovative and familiar. The book's familiarity arises from its chronological organization following an established periodization of modernism, with a particular emphasis on what came before (mid to late 1800s), during its reign (interwar and postwar eras), and on what followed (1970s to 2010s). Its geographic trajectory is familiar too, moving as it does from England and continental Europe to the US and then across the globe. Yet *Nature Inside* also breaks new ground: applying a phytocentric lens to the study of interiors. From that synthesis of old and new emerges a startling narrative illuminating the enduring importance of plants to indoor spaces. Further, that narrative offers something unexpected: it articulates continuities of plant-related cultural practices spanning the 19th century to the interwar and postwar periods and, in doing so, succeeds in challenging one of the prevailing conceptualizations of modernism as a radical break from what came before (Baudrillard 1982).

In *Nature Inside*, Sparke also succeeds in using that chronological organizational structure and that phytocentric lens to advance her overarching argument. Her book's thesis is that indoor plants and flowers have held important roles, functions, and meanings in the Western world throughout the 19th, 20th, and early 21st centuries, and while their roles have remained constant, their functions and meanings have changed (10). To support this assertion, Sparke first interprets the roles of plants in canonical and unconventional interiors of the mid to late 1800s, such as parlors, winter gardens, and hotel dining rooms, and she then shows how plants later played the same roles in analogous spaces of the 20th century and afterward. At the same time, Sparke advances a set of discrete arguments about how plants and flowers were used and imbued with meaning, during specific historical moments. Weaving all these arguments together, over the course of ten chapters, Sparke constructs an elegant narrative centering on plants in human-constructed on spaces and within one strand of design history studies.

Before delving deeper into *Nature Inside*, it is useful to situate the book in conversation with related studies. An evocative epigraph from Chapter 1 helps to do just that. The epigraph, quoted from a book by historian Londa Schiebinger (2004), acknowledges Sparke's indebtedness to her. The epigraph reads, 'Plants seldom figure in the grand narratives of war, peace, or even everyday life in proportion to their importance to humans. Yet they are significant natural and cultural artifacts, often at the center of high intrigue' (3). As the epigraph suggests, Schiebinger's pioneering research — unearthing the forgotten significance of individual plants for histories of European colonialism — laid the groundwork for subsequent studies, such as Sparke's. Indeed, one can even credit Schiebinger with contributing to a body of scholarship that initiated a phytocentric turn in the humanities (Marder 2014; Batsaki and Humphreys 2018; Ryan 2020). Those foundations have nurtured numerous historical studies, some of which have charted the mobility of plants within colonial trade networks (Taylor 2009; Keogh 2020). To a certain extent, Sparke's *Nature Inside* picks up where those accounts leave off. Chapters 1 and 2 chart the global flow of plants into domestic interiors, expanding on Sparke's prior research in that area (2015; 2016) and marking her contributions to the plant humanities.

Connecting *Nature Inside* to studies in plant humanities also highlights what makes the book so distinctive—Sparke's singular focus on 'real plants located in actual interiors' (12), which is distinct from perspectives taken by authors of prior books about indoor plants (Horwood 2007; Domec 2008). By drawing a clear separation among registers in which plants existed (i.e., the real world and the cultural imaginary), Sparke's book offers a concrete account of individual plants and their material presence in actual interiors. Her research strategy also responds to a fundamental problem of inquiries within plant humanities plants and plant-materials in cultural settings have rarely survived the passage of time due to their fugitive nature. For this reason, it can be extraordinarily difficult for historians to say, in the absence of preserved specimens, which plants were used at a particular place, even when indirect evidence provides some clues. While that was not a problem for Sparke, who was fortunate to have many forms of evidence (e.g., extant interiors, photographs, illustrated magazines, and architectural drawings) at her disposal, she still had to contend with some obstacles. As she notes, sources often fail to credit those who selected, arranged, and displayed plants in living spaces, creating problems of

attribution (11). Nonetheless, her research strategy can serve as an effective model for certain kinds of historical studies.

Through By focusing intently on real plants, Sparke's *Nature Inside* also accomplishes other goals. For instance, it provides a survey of changing plant trends over more than 200 years. Some types considered include palms, ferns, cacti, monsteras, and rubber plants (12). To find out what was at the root of their popularity, Sparke directly observes these plants in interiors, and she closely analyzes photographs showing them in furnished spaces. In that way, she gathers phenomenological and visual evidence pertaining to specific plants and their interactions with surrounding forms, materials, and spaces. Her skill in doing so is evinced by her discussion of the monsteras and rubber plants located in Charles and Ray Eames' Case Study House 8, in Los Angeles, completed in 1949 (112, 114). Through her analyses of indoor plants, Sparke also demonstrates the deep imbrication of cultivated nature in design. Indeed, as the main title of her book implies, Sparke's project involves bringing the 'natural', as a category, into current discourses surrounding the interior. The natural would then join, according to her, 'visual, material and spatial phenomena' as defining features of the interior (13). A triumph for indoor plants and design historians everywhere.

At times, however, *Nature Inside*'s many accomplishments are blunted by what looms outside the scope of the book. More specifically, it is impossible to separate Sparke's descriptions of indoor plants, especially exotic ones, from what we know about the global conditions (e.g., capitalist exploitation and settler colonialism) that enabled many Europeans and North Americans to furnish parlors and living spaces with such foreign luxury goods (Lowe 2015; Silverman 2011). A more substantive acknowledgment of that fraught history would therefore have benefited Sparke's book and readers as well.

Nature Inside not only makes vital contributions to design historical studies and the plant humanities but also makes us more attuned to the vast richness of the vegetal world and hopefully also plant-related environmental concerns. Its wealth of historical information, arresting images of plant-filled settings, and carefully worded descriptions of botanical forms will no doubt inspire scholars and students alike to embark on their own phytocentric explorations of cultural objects and interiors for years to come.

Architecture of Large-Scale Affordable Housing in Pre-Revolutionary Iran

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Negar Habibi, *Modern Middle-Class Housing in Tehran: Reproduction of an Archetype: Episodes of Urbanism 1945–79*, Iran Studies 21, Leiden: Brill, 2020, 214 pages, ISBN: 9789004443686.

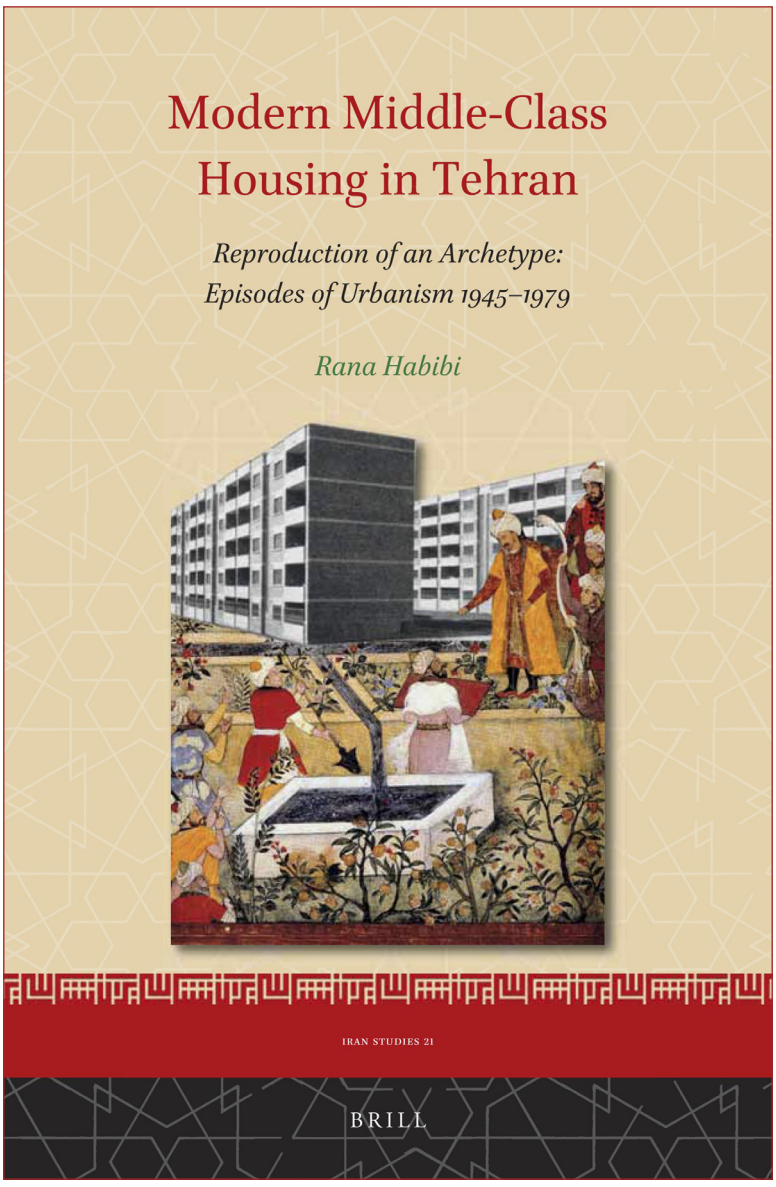

Figure 4: Cover of Negar Habibi, *Modern Middle-Class Housing in Tehran: Reproduction of an Archetype: Episodes of Urbanism 1945–79*. Photo: Brill.

The volume by Negar Habibi, *Modern Middle-Class Housing in Tehran: Reproduction of an Archetype: Episodes of Urbanism 1945–79*, published in 2020, is a welcome addition to the growing body of recent works that examine narratives of modernity in the architectural history of 20th-century Iran (Grigor 2009; Karimi 2013; Gharipour 2019). While shedding light on the important, but less examined, topic of large-scale affordable housing for the emergent and growing middle-class residents of Tehran, this book also attempts to offer a critical interpretation of modernization by demonstrating the complicated nature of this process (**Figure 4**).

Habibi takes us on a journey that begins in post-WWII Iran and ends at the 1979 Revolution. Setting aside the introduction and the coda, each of the four chapters of the book focuses on specific examples of large-scale housing projects in Tehran and the discourse within which they developed. The book demonstrates how different models of urban blocks emerged from the synthesis of foreign and local models, technologies, practices, and discourses. For this process, Habibi also identifies multiple key players and tacitly shows how architects, architecture clubs and journals, laws and regulations, as well as financial institutions and market forces contributed to the models of large-scale housing in Tehran.

In Chapter 1 Habibi examines the establishment of the first subsidized large-scale housing project for government employees in the context of post-WWII Iran. Examining two main architectural publications of the time, the journal *Ārshitekt* and *Majalle-ye Bank-i Sākhtimanī*, Habibi exposes the main concerns surrounding modern housing at the time. These publications criticized the shortage of proper housing and instead envisioned modern, sanitized standard housing as the key to the health and growth of the nation.

The first large-scale housing complex in Tehran, Chahārsad Dastgāh, at once followed and departed from the worldwide versions of collective mass housing, which often took the form of apartment buildings. At the outset, the form and façade of the houses in this complex followed the compositional language of modernism; however, the typology and layout of this new neighborhood were a synthesis of imported and vernacular elements. While the city's new urban grid defined the main divisions of land, the apartment template was abandoned for a version of a courtyard house that could accommodate the courtyard-centered lifestyle of Iranian families.

In a similar vein, Chapter 2 examines the second large housing project in Tehran, Nārmak Neighborhood, which synthesized multiple vernacular and imported modern elements. The case of Nārmak beautifully demonstrates the non-linear transmission of modernity. While the technology of construction was a French prefabricated system, the basic layout of the complex was adopted from a project that implemented this system in Italy. Habibi further demonstrates the complexity of this process by incorporating

the voices of local residents: their requests for the addition of a small pool (*howz*) in the middle of the courtyard for daily washing practices and an external staircase providing access to the roof (to accommodate the then-common practice of sleeping on the roof) represent excellent examples of modernism's negotiated nature. The author successfully shows how vernacular everyday practices claim their own voice and space in the imported version of modernism.

If the initial phase of construction in Nārmak embodied the translation of vernacular elements by trained designers, its second stage elucidates the messy process through which alternative versions of modernity emerge. Due to financial constraints, only part of the project was completed according to the original plan. The remaining plots of land became the subject of speculation, the result being that their completion was turned over to the oversight and skill of vernacular builders. While in layout and overall form this stage of development tried to mimic the buildings constructed during the first phase, the division of land as well as the incorporation of local materials and construction techniques led to the emergence of a third version of modernity.

Chapter 3 looks at two other large-scale residential developments that were established in the 1960s, spurred on by the oil boom and rising wealth of the middle class. In its analysis of Kuy-i Farah, this chapter demonstrates a shift in the lifestyle and taste of modern middle-class families, which is reflected in the layout and spatial arrangement of the neighborhood and its units. The larger size of plots and units is taken as evidence of the growing wealth of the middle class. Importantly, the layout of the neighborhood is a testimony to the increasing centrality of cars and car ownership in the life of the middle class, as is the new function of the yard as a parking space. Likewise, the interior spatial arrangement of houses demonstrates cultural transformations in the domestic sphere, whereby rooms with flexible and overlapping functions were replaced by mono-functional rooms equipped with the latest consumer products.

Not long after the completion of Kuy-i Farah — and with the passing of the apartment ownership law in 1965 and the development of the new comprehensive master plan for the city of Tehran —a new pattern of large-scale housing emerged that followed the dominant model of tower-in-the-park. In Chapter 4, the author examines one of the prime examples of this model, which came to replace the courtyard-centered single-family residence developed in the 1940s and '50s. By focusing on Ekbātān, the chapter demonstrates the international and transnational flow of ideas, goods, people, and techniques that contributed to the development of most high-rise apartments in the 1970s and the establishment of the high-rise as a desirable model for large-scale housing in Tehran. From the envisioning of the complex as an independent suburb centered around a shopping center, to the U and Y shape of the super blocks in phases 1 and 3 of the complex, one can see traces of foreign (and especially American) prototypes. However, the author argues that most of these foreign models were

localized. For example, Victor Gruen's idea of a central shopping center is combined with the linear model of the Iranian bazaar, offering a local interpretation of the Gruen model. Furthermore, by facilitating the establishment of foreign factories that produced construction materials (tiles, isolation materials, a cement tanker, etc.) in Iran, the development of Ekbātān also facilitated the import and establishment of new materials and construction technologies in Iran.

Building upon these examples, Habibi identifies three new urban typologies that emerged in connection with the development of large-scale housing in Tehran: the row courtyard house model (Chahārsad Dastgāh and Kuy-i Farah), the linear courtyard house model (Nārmak), and the super-block courtyard (Ekbātān). These models, Habibi argues, emerged in the process of integrating the Persian garden as an archetype with foreign imported models, which is a premise that calls for some critique.

The problem lies in employing the concept of archetype and suggesting that 'designing the land as if it were a garden is an approach and concept that is ingrained in the mind of Iranians' (29). Multiple cases, such as the addition of pools (*howz*) and stairs to accommodate practices of daily life, or the agency of local market and vernacular builders, both of which transpired in Narmak, are excellent examples of 'indigenous' practices influencing and transforming imported models of modernity. However, the author's claim regarding the unconscious implementation of the archetype of the Persian garden is not very convincing. The author could benefit from offering more than a faint geometric similarity to persuade the reader that the idea of Chahārbāgh was the source of inspiration for these schemes (particularly in the case of chapters 1 and 2). What is more, during the time period covered by the book (particularly during the 1960s and '70s), concepts and forms associated with ancient Persian history were celebrated, reinterpreted, and used as political and cultural statements. However, the concept of the Persian garden was not a living element of local culture and had scarcely any bearing on the everyday lives of the local population. Therefore, its employment as formal geometry is more aligned with Griffin's 'rooted modernism' than 'indigenous modernism' (Griffin 2018; Hosagrahar 2005).

Setting this point of contention aside, the book is successful in enriching our understanding of the processes and forms of modern housing in pre-revolutionary Iran, while taking another step in decentering the canonical narrative of modernity. In each of the cases she examines, Habibi synthesizes a great number of primary sources with expertise and takes an important step in opening up several critical and exciting spaces for additional exploration. The carefully produced illustrations that accompany the text — although they could have been better organized, especially in terms of their size — further illuminate her points and showcase the power of mapping and drawing as both research methods and modes of communication.

Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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