mentary (see below). Arnaldo Bruschi continues in the historical vein by asking how Fontana formulated architectural rules based on approved ancient practice and, occasionally, modern departures from it. Two contributions by Curcio are particularly new and insightful. In the first ("La misura nelle 'Fabbriche Magnifiche'") she demonstrates the persistence of Albertian ideas about architecture and architects to Fontana's core notion of measurement, with special reference to his views of Bernini. The second, written with Norbert Griffitsch ("Il testo e le immagini"), complements Filippo Camerota's overview of Renaissance geometric drawing by surveying Fontana's literary and graphic sources in detail. Taking readers behind his ambitious list of authorities (some clearly cited at second hand), Curcio and Griffitsch reveal the distinctly visual, not theoretical, grounding of Fontana's anti-quaranism. In addition to illuminating the tacit historical arguments in complex plates like the "Plan of the Constantinian Basilica" (1694 ed., 89; 2003 ed., 75), the commentators invoke the concept of montage to show how Fontana collects, corrects, and integrates diverse sources into spectacular visual panoramas like that encompassing Michelangelo's apse and his own proposed terzo braccio (1694 ed., foldout pl. at 425; 2003 ed., 271–73). That savvy synthesis, for Curcio and Griffitsch, lies at the heart of Fontana's textual and design method.

The remaining eleven essays contextualize Fontana's description of St. Peter's in light of modern scholarship, digesting and/or refocusing problems several authors have treated in detail elsewhere. Without trying to prove him right or wrong, these contributions sharpen our sense of what Fontana chose to see and how he opted to present it. Six have a historical slant. Archaeologist Filippo Coarelli presents current thinking about the Vatican Circus and related structures, while Sible de Blaauw highlights Fontana's comparative lack of interest in Old St. Peter's and his failure, common to later generations, to appreciate its formal innovations. Cristiano Tessari summarizes the planning of New St. Peter's, speculating on Fontana's noteworthy silences, and Curcio, as noted, reviews the triumphant moving of the obelisk. Reversing the medal, Thoenes analyzes Maderno's supposed "mistake" in aligning the nave (the culprit, pace Carlo, is Domenico's misplaced obelisk), while McPhee highlights Fontana's contradictory thoughts about the demolished campanile. Though the tower marred the ensemble, it was beautiful, and could and should have been saved; professionally, Bernini was both the victim of Maderno's bad foundations and blame-worthy for not having addressed and solved the problem at the outset. The remaining essays discuss specific parts of the complex. Chiara Baglione treats the sacre grotte and confessioni; Marder the piazza, colonnade, and scala regia (where, as the author states, Fontana's mix of praise and respectful criticism of Bernini was not devoid of self-promotion); and Hager the dome and the terzo braccio, again digesting and updating an important previous study. The illustrations in this half of the book are of superb quality, the rich halftones capturing the subtle washes and precise pen lines of Fontana's preparatory drawings from the Palacio Real in Madrid that are liberally interspersed throughout the essays.

The only downside of such an ample interpretive program is a heft (over eight pounds) that makes the book too heavy to be held or read without a stand. It might help to divide text and commentary in future editions, but at $99 the volume is a bargain and not to be quibbled with. Some inconvenience may be inevitable in such an ambitious project. Fontana reiterated the challenges at the end of his volume, noting that St. Peter's itself was "so worthy, conspicuous, magnificent, and immense as to frighten the very greatest talent who even contemplates it." Curcio and her team, who have not been frightened, have produced a book indispensable for future scholarship on Fontana and his beloved basilica.

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Notes
3. “Albun de dibujos de la Iglesia de San Pedro y otros templos,” 23 VIII-M-398, Real Biblioteca, Palacio Real, Patrimonio Nacional, Madrid; for a concordance of the ninety pencil designs with the 1694 plates, see xviii in this volume.

American Architecture and Settings

Maurie D. McInnis
The Politics of Taste in Antebellum Charleston

Stephanie E. Yuhl
A Golden Haze of Memory: The Making of Historic Charleston

When America declared its independence from Great Britain, Charleston, South Carolina, was one of the fledgling nation's largest cities and, on a per capita basis, its wealthiest. When South Carolinians ignited America's civil war by firing on the Union garrison at Fort Sumter in the spring of 1861, Charleston was still rich but had ceded its pre-eminence place in Southern politics, culture, and business to other cities. Still later, in the decades that separated two twentieth-century wars, Charleston's cultural guardians embarked on a campaign to stimulate memories that recalled the city's lost greatness and to revive a
derelict economy by attracting tourists and their dollars. Maurie D. McInnis and Stephanie E. Yuhl trace this arc of creation, loss, and remembrance. Their new books explore how the pursuit of good taste created one of America’s most distinctive cities. If they could not make Charleston great again, twentieth-century Charlestonians recovered, edited, packaged, and promoted memories that would at least provide reassuring connections to the greatness that had been lost.

Buildings and the evolving symbolic purposes to which they were put lie at the intersection of these two books. McInnis is interested, as social historians of other places and times have been for some twenty years, in what Charleston’s antebellum houses and public buildings “meant to the people who built them, used them, and lived among them” (13). McInnis, in other words, analyzes Charleston’s elite houses and their furnishings as “texts,” elaborating methods pioneered by Bernard Herman, Dell Upton, and John Vlach. Buildings also play an important role in Yuhl’s study, but her texts are the activities of a handful of cultural organizations which, collectively, reinvented Charleston’s history. Among them, the Society for the Preservation of Old Dwellings saved a few of the city’s most significant houses. But its more lasting achievement was the establishment of the nation’s first historic district and the zoning apparatus that protected historic buildings from demolition and insensitive change. In its fights to save what it judged to be the best of the city’s historic buildings, the society constructed, through a selective nostalgia, a backdrop against which the city would remember its past.

If the twentieth-century Charlestonians Yuhl studied created what might be called a tableau of nostalgia, McInnis’s innovative analysis of what she terms a landscape of self-assurance explores how elite antebellum Charlestonians “perceived themselves and how they wished to be seen by others” (9). Inherited wealth, the preferred path to prominence in Charleston, allowed its rich, white citizens to indulge artistic and architectural tastes matched in few places in the nation. Most of this building was neoclassical in form and ornament, the privileged and preferred style consciously linked to what was already perceived as Charleston’s eighteenth-century golden age. The half-century that preceded the Civil War was, architecturally, perhaps the city’s most important, but the pursuit of refinement extended beyond buildings to dress, dance, dining, art, and household furnishing and was, McInnis argues, wielded to lay claim to, and then defend, positions of cultural and political leadership.

McInnis’s broad-ranging exploration of how elite Charlestonians “used their expressions of taste to differentiate themselves even from others with money” (13) provides a revealing glimpse of antebellum society. More provocative is her contention that Charleston’s obsessive and sometimes erudite pursuit of fine things during the prewar period was essential to maintaining boundaries between white and black in a world in which artistic refinement was contrasted with the cultural and moral crudeness white Charlestonians, wrongly, associated with all persons of color. Her portraits of the city’s neighborhoods and streets and the buildings that populated them are adroit. It is, however, her exploration of rear yards—the location of work spaces and living quarters of enslaved Africans—that is the most distinctive aspect of her analysis. McInnis explores the city’s racial topography in bold and interesting ways, suggesting, for example, that Charlestonians cast “the buildings of slave control” (223) almost exclusively in the Gothic style in the 1840s and ’50s. If there was an architectural idiom for racial oppression, in Charleston it was the Gothic style. McInnis’s analysis is as its best explicating how buildings shaped, and were shaped by, the complicated and conflicted racial hierarchies that animated all aspects of life in the antebellum city.

McInnis poses a number of interesting questions, one of the most compelling of which is, Why were antebellum Charlestonians so apparently self-confident? Money, of which some Charlestonians had much, provides a partial answer. A more challenging suggestion is that displays of confidence built on impeccable taste and big houses were, in fact, compensation for declining positions. Charleston’s expansive and unabashed demonstrations of erudition and good taste may, she suggests, have been intended to deflect political criticisms leveled at the city and the South in general, which increased with tempo and vigor through the antebellum period. As Northern accusations of Southern corruption increased, Charlestonians invested still more in displays of taste.

The South’s defeat in the Civil War shattered Charleston’s self-satisfaction just as surely as it wrecked its economy. How Charleston regained some of its lost confidence through “memory shaping” is one of the important purposes of Yuhl’s study. The author explores a wide range of cultural activities launched to preserve some fading link to the antebellum era of refinement McInnis describes. In Yuhl’s book, architecture is the raw material for cultural revitalization and a setting against which stories are told, memories revived, and possessions gripped like life preservers against the eddies of change. During the years between the two world wars, some Charlestonians, fearful of what modernization delivered to their doorsteps, sought reassurance by blocking any changes that might diminish the proximity, emotional or physical, of their history. Other Charlestonians, less frightened by modernization, decided that their city’s future lay in its past—that packaging its history could replace the economic energy rice and cotton had once provided. These Charlestonians launched a successful historic preservation movement that quickly determined what residents would value and what visitors would see.

New art, poetry, and choral associations shaped the venues (house tours, lectures, concerts, poetry readings, gallery exhibitions) through which the city, and the visitors who came to see it, would remember Charleston’s past. By selectively editing the city’s history, these
same groups also determined what would be remembered. In this new view what was most important about the past was Charleston's role in the nation's founding, not its dismemberment. Of course, the twentieth-century guardians of Charleston's reputation still cared very much about discernment and refinement and employed access to, and knowledge about, Charleston's good taste as cleverly as their ancestors had used their houses and the furnishings that filled them.

It is no surprise that this sometimes self-conscious process solidified the old elite's claim to cultural and political authority. Nor is it surprising that the process was rife with ironies, inconsistencies, and hypocrisies. Susan Pringle Frost, the doyenne of the early historic preservation movement, decried changes made to her beloved city by the forces of what she called "grease and cheapness," but then courted tourists who might become clients of her real-estate business. The Poetry Society and a community of artists—primarily watercolorists and etchers—created images of the city as an unhurried, genteel enclave of good taste. Other writers, novelists, and playwrights, most notably DuBose Heyward, represented Charleston as a bastion against the assault of modernization. And, like Heyward, the Society for the Preservation of Spirituals, through its performances of African-American songs, celebrated a past in which there was a perceived racial harmony between grateful blacks and gracious whites.

The civic organizations and clubs that shaped what would be remembered and how it would be portrayed initially emerged from nostalgia for a prosperous past without social conflict. Ironically, it was precisely the city's postbellum poverty that preserved its antebellum environment, which twentieth-century modernization and investment threatened to ruin. Nostalgic preservation efforts quickly became more self-conscious. The creation of what Yuhl calls the "legacy of memory," a history over which elite whites claimed ownership, created a new source of class consensus through which advantaged white citizens connected themselves to an idealized past their grandparents had inhabited. Charleston's privileged class found in this newly crafted civic memory a source of pride in themselves, their city, and their places in it.

It is of at least passing interest that the research McInnis pursued was enabled, in large part, by decisions made by the organizations that are the subject of Yuhl's study. One suspects that the process continues. No doubt the Charlestonians who eagerly opened their houses and their collections to McInnis subscribe to a more recently amended view of Charleston's past. McInnis explores the past that Charlestonians prefer to remember, but by insisting that readers understand that the cost of Charleston's graciousness was a system in which many lived miserably so that a few could live very well, she has presented an honest appraisal of both the price and the purposes of refinement. Yuhl, too, invites us to consider costs, those associated with the creation of an idealized memory. Together, these two books help unravel the complicated intentions embedded in the cycles of creation and remembrance that have shaped Charleston across two centuries.

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Roberta Moudry, editor
The American Skyscraper: Cultural Histories

Molly W. Berger, editor
The American Hotel

The editors of The American Skyscraper: Cultural Histories and The American Hotel have compiled essays on two American building types at very different stages of historical inquiry. The skyscraper has received significant scholarly attention, including general histories and monographs on specific projects and figures. In contrast, the few serious works to date on the American hotel have been narrow in focus, notably Annabel Jane Wharton, Building the Cold War: Hilton International Hotels and Modern Architecture (Chicago, 2001), and Susan R. Braden, The Architecture of Leisure: The Florida Resort Hotels of Henry Flagler and Henry Plant (Gainesville and Tallahassee, 2002). Nevertheless, the two publications share an interdisciplinary approach to the time period 1870–1960, and together cast new light on the history of American architecture during this period.

The American Skyscraper, edited by Roberta Moudry, is divided into four major sections: Makers and Users, In the Image of the Client, Urban Contexts, and Popular Culture. In the first of these, Gail Fenske documents architect Cass Gilbert's balancing of a small atelier-style office with the demands of designing and constructing skyscrapers. Gilbert's success was due to his collaborations with engineers and contractors as well as the rigorous and hierarchical organization of his office. Keith D. Revell demonstrates how, prior to 1916, city officials could regulate buildings on health and safety issues but had no legal justification to regulate aesthetics. By promoting the healthful benefits of light and air and accepting the aesthetic possibilities of a vertical city, architect George Ford and others behind New York's zoning ordinance created a law that, Revell believes, saved New York City from the worst features of tall buildings while permitting experimentation with great height and encouraging a unified urban effect. Lisa M. Fine's essay on women office workers during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries draws on movies, novels, trade magazines, and firsthand accounts. Fine creates a nuanced portrayal of female workers, acknowledging both the oppressive aspects of strictly managed, male-dominated places of employment and the empowerment that some women experienced through work and the establishment of housing, tea-