different approach than Dubbini’s, particularly in response to the legacy of modernist historiography. For example, Neil Levine’s “Il rovesciamento del sistema della rappresentazione nelle biblioteche di Labrouste” presents a subtle, sensitive, and penetrating analysis of the system of architectural representation in Labrouste’s two libraries. Unlike Dubbini, he acknowledges an important debt to Giedion. To complete or complement the earlier historian’s approach, Levine aims to shed light on “the urgency of establishing a historical tradition for modern architecture [Giedion had] decided to ignore”: the classical aspects of a system of representation that is nonetheless modern (167). Marc Saboya analyzes Labrouste’s collaboration with César Daly’s Revue Générale de l’Architecture and its adaptation of architectural image, rhetoric, and representation to the medium of the press in “Alla conquista di un immagine.” Understandably, he is also concerned with the modernity of this aspect of Labrouste’s work.

In a thought-provoking piece, “La Salle des Imprimés alla Bibliothèque Nationale. Finzione e interpretazione,” David van Zanten describes the evolution of his own thinking about Labrouste over a twenty-five-year period: his earlier perceptions, marked by the context of American architecture in the 1970s and the “magic realism” of Michael Graves, have been nuanced by new documentary evidence. Thus when analyzing the “Pompeian garden” effect of the reading room, with its multiplicity of thin metal columns, nine enamel “vela” cupolas and painted treetops, he argues that it should also be understood as arising from an abandoned earlier project that had only a single cupola, which would have been less effective in distributing reflected light.

Marco Gaiani’s well-documented and knowledgeable account of Labrouste’s travels in Italy stands in most vivid contrast with the project outlined by Dubbini in his introductory text. After von Moos’s clear explanation of the partisan and reductive way in which modernist historians linked Labrouste with Le Corbusier, it is a bit disconcerting to find Gaiani comparing the two architects’ drawings. Moreover, his juxtaposition of certain of Labrouste’s architectural renderings of ancient vestiges with Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot’s vedute of the same sites shows that both men visited the same places, but stops short of a historical argument. Finally, his comparison of the architect’s 1829 view of Palermo with paintings by Giorgio de Chirico (74) seems anachronistic and ahistorical. Yet, the comparisons are useful, for they compel us to stop and take a closer look at the drawings. Ultimately, Gaiani’s approach reminds us that architectural history also has an essential aesthetic dimension.

Many publishers seem hesitant to publish books that grow out of conferences, fearing that the multiplicity of authors will result in a lack of coherence and unity. But such publications can provide an invaluable cross section of approaches, raising issues that are essential to our discipline. Such is the case here, and Labrouste is a perfect vehicle for the debate. My only real complaint is a practical one. While the reader cannot fault the quality, pertinence, and, often, beauty of the illustrations—particularly the photographs by J. C. Doerr—they are not numbered. The reader is thus obliged to flip back and forth to find a given plate under discussion.

Despite this irritating flaw, the book is important, both for what it teaches us about Labrouste and for the issues raised by the contrasting historical approaches of its authors. The editor is to be credited for allowing such diversity and including essays that at times directly contradict his own positions. As a group, the texts seem to warn against the pretension of claiming to identify the “real” Labrouste, as opposed to the “mythological” one established by modernist historiography. They also remind us that each generation will inevitably bring its own sensibilities and preoccupations to the historical material examined, even as new documentary evidence is made available. In the end, what is likely to make this volume another turning point in the Labrouste historiography is precisely its inclusive approach, which permits scholars to develop readings and interpretations more freely, no longer marked by the need to refute a “myth.”

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Thomas S. Hines
Irving Gill and the Architecture of Reform

In a 1916 essay that was probably his most important written statement, Irving Gill railed against contemporary historicism and argued for a return to origins: “the straight line, the arch, the cube and the circle.” His ideal was not the primitive hut but an equally convincing trope that he called “the stone in the meadow.” This phrase implied a method by which the rational was to be brought into an intimate relationship with the organic: “We should build our house simple, plain and substantial as a boulder, then leave the ornamentation of it to Nature” (11).

Thomas S. Hines begins his monograph on Gill with a discussion of this essay, which is appropriate, but it also serves to emphasize the problem facing anyone studying Gill’s work: the dearth of written evidence. In 1928, when he closed his Los Angeles office, Gill reportedly put ten truckloads of documents in storage; they have never been found. The Gill archive is thus, “sadly fragmentary,” requiring Hines to combine “the methods of the architectural historian with the sensibilities of the archaeologist—attempting to divine meaning from the shards of Gill’s experience” (15, 18). The result, as Hines admits, is a highly speculative biography full of “must haves” and “might haves.” It is not, as he warns us, the catalogue raisonné the architect deserves.

Much appreciated in his own day, Gill’s work was frequently praised by journalist Eloise Roorbach—Gill’s
Boswell, according to Hines— in magazines such as Archi-
tectural Record, The Craftsman, House Beautiful, House and
Garden, and Western Architecture. But his reputation and his prac-
tice plummeted after the 1915 Panama-California Exposi-
tion in San Diego, where Bertram
Goodhue’s baroque confections in-
igated a period of intense historicism in
California architecture that lasted
through the 1920s. Brief mentions in
Lewis Mumford’s The Brown Decades
(New York, 1931) and Henry-Russell
Hitchcock’s Architecture: Nineteenth and
Twentieth Centuries (Harmondsworth,
1958) served to keep Gill’s memory alive
until Esther McCoy definitively restored
his reputation, first with an exhibition
and catalogue (Los Angeles, 1958) and
later with a chapter in her much-read
Five California Architects (New York,
1960). William Jordy completed the
revival with a fine, appreciative essay on
Gill’s masterpiece, the Dodge House in
West Hollywood (1914–16), in the third
volume of American Buildings and Their
Architects (New York, 1972). By this
time, the house had already been demol-
ished, but Gill’s reputation as a proto-
modernist— important but neglected—
was firmly established.

The significance for Hines of that
prefix, “proto,” cannot be underesti-
mated, for it is his announced intention
to establish Gill as “a major player” who
ranks in importance with his contempo-
ary Adolf Loos (12). Hines asserts that
Gill, like the other rationalists of the
everal twentieth century, “eschewed his-
toricism and strove for pure, new, and
original statements” (13). This was true
up to a point, or rather, after a certain
point; until 1907, as Hines demon-
strates, Gill was not averse to a little
style-mongering. Even later, his
approach to the interior of the building
remained relatively conservative, as is
apparent in the planning of his many
boxy houses. In marked contrast to
Loos, Gill seems to have rarely designed
in section.

As history, this book is a hybrid.
The twelve chapters provide a rough
chronology of events, but each one has
a specific theme expressed in a teasingly
enigmatic, one-word title (“Genesis,”
“Growth,” “Transition,” and so on).
Chapter three, “Identity,” is without
doubt one of the most substantial, deal-
ing as it does with the context of Gill’s
work. Here Hines identifies seven “fac-
tors” that made Gill’s thinking distinct-
ive: first, the creative potential of
concrete construction; second, the twin
virtues of simplicity and efficiency; third,
the reformist impact of the contempo-
rary Progressive Movement . . . fourth,
the contemporary implications of
California’s Hispanic architectural
legacy . . . fifth, the broadening . . . of
Gill’s interest in nonorthodox religious
and philosophical movements . . . sixth,
the reinforcement of Gill’s penchant
for the primitive . . . ; and seventh, Gill’s
growing identification with the develop-
ing modern movement” (70). It is an
ambitious program with mixed results.
Any one of these factors would have
served a single chapter; together they
suggest the outline of a very different
kind of work.

Hines’s discussion of concrete is a
case in point. It is remarkably brief and
narrowly based, which is disappointing
given the importance of the material in
the argument for Gill’s significance.
Equally problematic is the author’s
exploration of Gill’s relationship to the
buildings of Hispanic California. He
makes an ambiguous argument about
the missions’ influence, citing an unpub-
lished comment by the late McCoy. She
regretted her earlier reading of Gill as a
regionalist, having come to the conclu-
sion that his signature arches “refer just
as much to contemporary practices in
reinforced concrete” as they do to the
missions (265 n. 15). Hines, like McCoy,
does not want to call Gill a regionalist,
because that would tarnish his reputa-
tion as a modernist. The result is that he
must circumscribe the influence of the
missions and related buildings, even
while he gamely documents Gill’s rela-
tionship to them.

Chapter five, “Modernity,” deals
with the period of 1907 to 1914, when
Gill found his own architectural voice.
One of the meatiest chapters in the
book, it includes interesting coverage of
the Miltimore House in South Pasadena
(1911) and the Banning House in Los
Angeles (1911–13), both commissioned
by strong, self-sufficient women. This
section also makes vivid the connection
between progressive values of health and
cleanliness and the smooth surfaces and spare details of modernist design. Unfortunately, however, Hines is in such a hurry to proclaim Gill a prophet of modernism that he does not take the time to make his case. He also betrays a certain confusion about building in concrete that is not unique to this chapter. In his discussion of Gill's use of the Aiken tilt-slab system in the construction of the Banning House, for example, Hines says that the walls were cast flat on the floor slab, but his own quoted source plainly indicates that they were cast at an angle. Hines does see, perceptively, a link between this system of construction and Gill's tendency to design in plan and elevation only. He correctly contrasts Gill's essentially flat conception of architecture with Loos's more three-dimensional idea of the Raumplan.

The main claim of the chapter (and by extension the entire book) is that Gill beat Loos to the punch—that Gill was making white boxes before Loos, which leads to the perennial question: Who knew what and when? Gill's nephew Louis stated that his uncle did subscribe to the European magazines, but Hines wisely concludes that although Gill and Loos could have known of each other's work, they were more likely responding to the same influences.

Much more information is offered: later chapters deal with Gill's commitment to the design of affordable, multifamily housing, as exemplified by Lewis Courts in Sierra Madre (1910); his varied work in Fontana, La Jolla, Oceanside, and the new town of Torrance; his frustrating involvement with the Panama-California Exposition; even his sexual orientation (237–39). But there is in the end something hasty about Hines's approach, including a tendency to overstate the case for Gill's significance and to make large claims without substantiating them, as well as the kind of small mistakes that every scholar dreads. In chapter nine, for instance, he describes the Raymond House in Long Beach (1918) as undergoing a "belated rediscovery" in the 1980s (207), but it is clearly listed in the 1977 edition of David Gebhard and Robert Winter's _A Guide to Architecture in Los Angeles and Southern California_. The description of the house is further hampered by the fact that the orientation is incorrect and by the lack of floor plans as illustrations. The latter is a persistent problem with the publication, and one is left wondering whether Hines used the surviving evidence of the buildings as well as he might have.

Hines is a leading scholar with an established reputation, and one approaches his work with high expectations. This makes _Irving Gill and the Architecture of Reform_ something of a disappointment. The volume itself is handsome—a fitting addition to Monacelli's catalogue—but much of the text consists of short building descriptions and simple formal analysis: Gill made white boxes and arranged the openings in a certain way. There is no comprehensive attempt to grapple with his architectural language in depth, which is a shame since Gill's creation of a regionally appropriate vernacular is his most important accomplishment. After considering his impact on the architecture of southern California, as well as the fate of his reputation and his buildings, the Dodge House in particular, Hines concludes with a disinterested, oddly truncated conclusion—a single-sentence paragraph that begins with the phrase, "The rest, as the saying goes, is history..." (261). One hardly knows what to make of this cliché, but it certainly does not belong at the end of a study that aspires to any level of seriousness.

Hines's book cannot be considered anything less than a substantial contribution to an otherwise limited literature, and it has already become a standard source on the subject. But despite providing a comprehensive survey, the publication is marred by Hines's ambition to improve Gill's stature, a goal that seems to have blinded the author to the architect's limitations. In the end, Hines cannot pitch Gill's influence much further than Richard Neutra's, which puts a serious limit on Gill's "premonitory" significance" (106). After weighing the arguments, and professing my own admiration for Gill's work, I still cannot think of him as anything more than a transitional figure.

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**Note**


Stephen M. Salny

**The Country Houses of David Adler**


**Robert James Coote**

**The Eclectic Odyssey of Atlee B. Ayres, Architect**

College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2001, xi + 177 pp., 13 color and 63 b/w illus. $50, ISBN 1-5844-122-8

Until recently, any early-twentieth-century architect who worked in a mode antithetical to modernism could garner little critical attention. These "other" architects, who designed in various historicizing styles, have now become an essential focus for a more balanced appraisal of American architectural history. _The Country Houses of David Adler_ by Stephen M. Salny and _The Eclectic Odyssey of Atlee B. Ayres, Architect_ by Robert James Coote are welcome additions to the revisionist genre. Each provides a microcosm of American architectural education and practice in the period, and a methodological model for how to approach its architects and their buildings.

Stephen M. Salny's study of David Adler (1882–1949) is the culmination of three decades of work. His focus is on the country houses and his goal is to prove Adler worthy of a place in the history of American building. Salny is a thorough researcher and a coherent, fluent writer. He contacted more than a thousand people associated with the architect and developed an impressive archive that included Adler's job book, drawings, scrapbooks, and even his postcard collection.