issues surrounding Delano and Aldrich’s position in the architecture and urbanism of their age.

The structure of the book is problematic—half thematic essays and half case studies of individual buildings. Brief essays on biography, “style and architecture,” and synopses of the country houses, urban buildings, and institutional projects begin with promise but generally end in clipped summaries of works too numerous to be treated in any detail. One must also question the decision of both authors and publisher to feature twenty representative projects rather than presenting the work of the firm in a chronological or thematic sequence. The arc of their oeuvre follows a consistent pattern of development, leading not to a few masterpieces but to themes and variations in each genre marked by consistency rather than singular brilliance. It is the breadth and development of each building type that sets the work apart from contemporaries such as Bertram Goodhue, Raymond Hood, or Harrie Lindeberg. If the authors selected canonical projects based merely on quality, their choices are difficult to defend. Delano was unhappy with his house for Otto Kahn in Huntington, Long Island (1914–17), yet it is one of the country houses presented. Several other hard-to-explain choices appear as well, including the William Woodward townhouse in New York (1916–18) and Mirador, Delano’s renovation of a Virginia house for Mr. and Mrs. Ronald Tree (1921). Another weakness is the so-called catalogue raisonné at the end of the book, which relies on incomplete office lists in the McIlvaine and Delano collections at Avery, augmented only with surveys of existing published sources. It is likely that the roster of buildings contains significant omissions.

Eschewing sentimentality, Pennoyer and Walker confront the inevitable dichotomy between tradition and modernity in the work—“with its economy of decoration and freeness of spirit, the quality of a Delano & Aldrich design lay strictly in the essentials. . . . Their work could almost be described as ‘nonstylistic’” (28). Citing their “thoughtful abstraction,” the authors praise the firm for its adherence to traditions without sacrificing function, technological innovation, or the American spirit. An interesting discussion of Delano’s designs for airport terminals (first for Pan American, at what would later be La Guardia Airport) makes it clear that he was sympathetic to the streamlined idioms of 1930s Art Deco. His one major skyscraper, for Brown Brothers at 59–63 Wall Street (1927–29), compares favorably with the buildings of Ralph Walker and Ely Jacques Kahn. But the absence of any extended analysis of the connections between Delano’s ideas and those of his contemporaries is disappointing, given the basic soundness of the authors’ approach. Like Goodhue and George Howe, Delano was engaged with the looming design challenges of the twentieth century. It seems unfathomable that his work is now seen as anachronistic, given the degree to which he participated in the public and civic life of his time.

Indeed, Delano and Aldrich made their biggest mark in institutional and government commissions late in their careers. The classical decorum of the Federal Triangle Post Office (1928–35) and the American Embassy in Paris (1929–32) are unmatched among buildings of their type. And Delano’s work for his alma mater, Yale and the Lawrenceville School, fit perfectly the academic and social milieu they were intended to serve. Would Yale even have considered demolishing parts of Delano’s masterly Divinity School if his work had been better studied and known? Perhaps, but this near tragedy for historic preservation reminds us that the politics of architectural history, and the myopia fostered by our obsession with modernist “masters,” can have unintended consequences that could leave future generations with a paucity of great architecture from a critical period in American history. Despite the book’s flaws, we can thank the authors for bringing these two very public architects back into the historical picture.

"Environmental History"

Melanie Simo

Forest and Garden: Traces of Wildness in a Modernizing Land, 1897–1949


Those architectural historians who are interested in the broadest possible view of the built and natural world will be rewarded by Melanie Simo’s new volume, a rich and unusual foray into the writing and enacting of environmental history during the first half of the twentieth century. As Simo explains in her introduction, this series of essays represents a complement to her earlier book written with Peter Walker, Invisible Gardens: The Search for Modernism in the American Landscape (Cambridge, Mass., 1994). Rather than the world of designers and clients, Forest and Garden leads us into the realm of forest managers, ecologists, conservationists, landscape architects, and a broad range of authors who have defined and analyzed the natural world in combat with rapid urbanization. She takes as her starting point the publication of Garden and Forest (1888–97), the influential journal of landscape architecture, horticulture, forest management, and regional planning, from which she draws the inverted title of her book. Her analysis ends with two seminal environmental tracts from 1949—Aldo Leopold’s Sand County Almanac and Jens Jensen’s The Clearing. Between these landmarks, she seeks to unpack the mix of ideologies that jostled to establish an American landscape ethic.

By her own admission, Simo did not attempt to write a coherent and comprehensive narrative history. She has divided her topic into two general sections addressing place and time. Within these broad categories, she crafted a series of smaller components, organized by landscape typology, personality, or ideology. This approach gives readers
the opportunity to follow her deeply into the publications and archives of individuals who have been either ignored or poorly understood by most modern students of the American land. Indeed, her analysis of land issues in the desert Southwest, on the prairies, or around the San Francisco Bay Area, for example, supplies close readings of these, and other, landscape zones. The frustration of her organization is the circuitousness of the route she maps, which brings us back repeatedly to the same people or places from differing perspectives.

Despite these repetitions, she provides a useful and comprehensive overview of the development of a conservation ethic in the United States between the Back-to-Nature movement of the late nineteenth century and the anxieties of the cold-war period. As Simo states, “the main interest, the heart of our quest, will be traces of wildness (a quality, not a terrain), along with experiences of freedom, abundance, the sense of being alive” (xv). She emphasizes the difference between wildness and wilderness, a charged concept that emerged during this time, noting the common mistake made by those who quote Thoreau’s dictum “in wildness is the preservation of the world.”

Simo provides an excellent review of the major issues in the development of American conservation. We relearn about the divisions between John Muir and the aesthetic approach to landscape versus Gifford Pinchot and the utilitarian attitudes of forestry. The two men famously came into conflict over the Hetch Hetchy project, which proposed damming the Tuolumne River in Yosemite to provide water for San Francisco. What she contributes to this famous account are the background on the key players and an examination of how they emerged from an interlocking web of histories and interests to adopt opposing goals. She also helps us understand how adversity led to new victories as the conservationists’ loss of the Hetch Hetchy debate stimulated the founding of the National Park Service, the Wilderness Society, and national policies toward wild lands and wildlife. Recent actions of the Bush Administration fit into patterns of earlier tensions and disputes, which she carefully dissects.

In addition to discussing the period’s leading landscape architects, conservationists, and planners who are well known today, Simo introduces figures who have been forgotten or whose type of writing is rarely read by contemporary historians. For example, we learn of the career of Walter Pritchard Eaton, a successful critic of the New York stage, who retreated to the Berkshire Mountains of western Massachusetts and became a probing commentator on the land and its animal and human inhabitants. She introduces us to Louis Halle, a career bureaucrat at the State Department, who cured his failing eyesight by deserting his desk to explore the surviving wildness he could find in the capital, as reported in Spring in Washington (New York, 1947). Simo incorporates figures familiar to architectural historians, such as Charles Keeler, Lewis Mumford, and Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer, but reads them within a broad context of relationships to natural and humanized landscapes. Not only do we benefit from her study of both ignored and respected texts, but she often provides analysis of how these books were written, documenting changes that were made by editors or demanded by publishers. She traces the evolution from systematic botany to integrated ecology in the publications of numerous academics, amateurs, and designers. Ultimately, Simo is at pains to analyze how people navigated between the poetic and the scientific in their formation of ideals of nature, a feat she also engages successfully, with a clear preference for the former.

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Matthew Gandy
Concrete and Clay: Reworking Nature in New York City
Urban and Industrial Environments
Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London:
MIT Press, 2002, 358 pp., 40 b/w illus.
$34.95 (cloth), ISBN 0-262-07224-6; $19.95 (paper), ISBN 0-262-57216-8

What do the establishment of the Croton Water System in early-nineteenth-century New York and the defeat of a proposal to construct a large waste incinerator in the Brooklyn Navy Yard in the late twentieth century have in common? Matthew Gandy, an urban geographer and winner of the Society of Architectural Historians’ 2003 Spiro Kostof Award, seeks to establish a link through five case studies that present his argument: the idea of the modern city is tied to the changing use, meaning, and understanding of nature. The title Concrete and Clay is never really explained, but it can be seen as a metaphor. Unadulterated nature is the clay. Gandy presents a “metropolitan nature,” the concrete, reworked from the raw materials of nature and intrinsically molded by capital as it has shaped urban space.

Gandy examines the establishment and expansion of the New York City municipal water system in chapter one, “Water, Space, and Power,” as a strategic urban vision that controlled disease and fire while promoting industrialization. Such a modern engineered water system, beginning with the Croton Aqueduct in 1842 and expanded into the Catskills and the Delaware River watershed in the twentieth century, enhanced the economic efficiency of urban space for capital investment. To protect that investment, New York exerted its political influence to take over land in the system’s watersheds well beyond its geographic jurisdiction. Gandy brings the story to the present and identifies the contradictory impulses that now control water systems. By the late twentieth century, problems with infrastructure, federal environmental regulations, and increasing suburbanization were all placing strains on the water system, while