The rise of modern "cities of finance" in Europe and North America in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries has been subject to detailed scrutiny by economic and financial historians over several decades. Studies of the development of Amsterdam, London, New York, and Paris, for example, have done much to elucidate the nexus of economic, political, and cultural factors surrounding the location and reproduction of high-level commercial functions in the center of large cities. Despite this substantial body of research, the architectural impact of such dense concentrations of banking, insurance, and stock and securities trading in major urban centers has received far less scholarly attention. Coverage in the literature is uneven. Commercial cities in North America, especially New York and Chicago, are relatively well served by detailed monographs on individual commercial buildings and more general studies of the development of central business districts. In Europe, existing work is patchy. Even the City of London, that most important and enduring of all international financial centers, has not been thoroughly analyzed by architectural historians with regard to its changing commercial landscape in the modern period. In this context, the essays presented in *Commerce in Russian Urban Culture, 1861–1914* on the role of commercial entrepreneurship in fashioning the cultural life and urban landscapes of prerevolutionary Russian cities are welcome indeed.

The book is the product of a 1996 Russian-American conference held at the Kennan Institute in Moscow, and its origin is evident in the structure and content of the published volume. Like many similar publications, it is uneven in quality and, at times, disjointed in the treatment of its principal themes. The volume is divided into two sections, the first concerning aspects of business culture in prerevolutionary Russia and the second exploring the links between this "culture of commerce" and the production of commercial and financial architecture in the key Russian cities of Moscow, Nizhni Novgorod, Odessa, and St. Petersburg.

Despite the broad title "Business Culture," chapters in part one are primarily focused on banks and related companies, such as mutual credit societies. The role of the insurance sector and of stock exchanges, though mentioned, is treated rather lightly. Early essays by Boris Anan'ich, Sergei Beliaev, Sergei Lebedev, and Yuri Petrov outline the development of banking in Russia from the later eighteenth century, drawing out a key distinction between the *baute financiers* of St. Petersburg and the predominantly mercantile and industrial bankers in Moscow. In this divergence, the nature of banking in the two cities mirrored their wider political and economic functions: one the administrative capital of the imperial Russian empire; the other increasingly the center of emerging Russian industry and trade. While Moscow's banks were typically insular, conservative, and responsive to the domestic economy, those in St. Petersburg were more cosmopolitan, looking to the wider European banking system for capital and innovation in banking techniques. The role of court bankers, usually foreigners who became part of the Russian state machinery, is given detailed treatment, as is their replacement by large joint-stock investment banks from the 1860s, who continued to help both state and city governments raise large amounts of capital through bond issues in the major European markets. In this way the banks acted as vital intermediaries in the provision of capital for long-term urban infrastructure projects such as building sewers, waterworks, and urban transport networks.

Subsequent essays broaden out from economic studies of banking and finance per se to encompass wider socio-cultural themes. Galina Ulianova charts the role banks and financiers played in charitable giving, an activity that developed on a very considerable scale in Moscow in this period. The entrepreneur/philanthropy nexus was crucially important in Russian provincial cities, too. Ulianova's text details how in Nizhnii Novgorod, as in Moscow, Russia's newly rich entrepreneurial class sought wider social acceptance and legitimation through the provision of endowments to the poor in the form of hospitals, schools, asylums, and almshouses. In a concise and convincing article, James West outlines the continuing importance of dissenting religious observance, manifest in the practice of the Old Believers, in shaping the trajectory of Russian entrepreneurial culture in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Paradoxically, as West notes, the conservatism inherent in the rejection of reforms to Russian Orthodoxy in the seventeenth century provided a vital cultural context for the development of an aggressive commercial capitalism in the nineteenth century, outside the aristocratic hierarchies of the imperial Russian state.

Together the seven essays in part one provide a valuable introduction to financial and commercial development in prerevolutionary Russia, helping situ- atate the urban and architectural transformations considered in part two. However, the texts will probably be more useful to those unacquainted with the particulars of Russian financial history than to specialists. At times, too, the papers became repetitive and, at several points, overwhelmed by detail. Such problems stem largely from the volume's origin in a set of conference papers; firmer editing would have eased their transition to more rounded, integrated, and interpretive arguments.

The remaining essays are brought together in part two, under the title "Commerce and the Urban Environment." They deal with the restructuring...
of urban space in the central commercial cores of St. Petersburg and Moscow, together with wider architectural developments in Russia's southern port city of Odessa and its key inland trading center of Nizhnii Novgorod. Traditionally, as the editors acknowledge, scholarly analyses of commercial architecture have sought to place such buildings within the corpus of work of individual architects and/or to relate these edifices aesthetically to wider national debates over style. A central objective of the present book is to reconfigure our understanding of the design of commercial buildings by relating the changing scale, form, and style of banks, insurance companies, and exchanges to the broader context of "business culture" in which they were conceived and built. On this crucial point, the division of the volume's texts between business and architecture is unhelpful. What emerge in the articles by Boris Kirikov and Natalia Datieva, on bank architecture in St. Petersburg and Moscow, respectively, are simple typologies of bank buildings related to the work of key architects and the periodization of stylistic changes in Russian architecture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This is precisely the pitfall the editors sought to avoid. Both pieces lack a sufficiently rigorous conceptual framework to tease out the mutually constitutive relationships between business culture and architectural form. The authors rehearse traditional concepts surrounding bank architecture, including the banks' need to project an image of stability and security for money transactions. More usefully, they also delineate how different types of banking institutions, such as state banks, private banks, and joint stock banks, sought different architectural solutions in the Russian context. But almost nothing is said about the dynamic qualities of these new commercial spaces. How did the changing aesthetic schemes signal symbolic struggles in the new modern money economy? How did the evolving internal layouts of these new financial institutions help constitute new forms of financial practice?

It is the book's insistent analytical separation of business culture and its associated architectural form that renders the authors' examinations of architecture passive reflections of broader socio-economic change. Lebedev's essay, "European Business Culture and St. Petersburg Banks," hints that the architecture of finance developed in St. Petersburg was part of the interconnection between Russian and European business culture. But beyond a consideration of the biographies of significant architects operating in St. Petersburg and Moscow, tracing their earlier travels and design work outside Russia, surprisingly little is said about the use of European models for bank architecture in late-imperial Russia. While the financial historians pinpoint the importance of Russia's integration into the wider European financial system, the architectural historians significantly underplay the importance of architectural form as a means of incorporating and adapting wider European business culture.

The final four essays in part two are mixed. William Craft Brumfield's paper on the Trading Rows in Moscow provides a contrast to the typology of bank buildings by bringing retail spaces to the fore. It is sharply observed and captures the sheer scale and ambiguous aesthetic scheme for encouraging the shopping experience, via a peculiarly Russian interpretation of the arcades that were such a prominent feature of the modern European city. The texts on Odessa and Nizhnii Novgorod, by Patricia Herlihy and Brumfield, respectively, seem tangential to the principal themes of the book. Much of the architecture considered is not truly commercial, but public or infrastructural, and both essays are organized around detailed narratives of major architects and philanthropists rather than pursuing the commerce/culture nexus. The book ends with an iconoclastic, sweeping discussion by Blair Ruble on the pursuit of a pragmatic urban politics in Chicago, Moscow, and Osaka in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Again, the biographical approach is emphasized, full of interest and insight, but only weakly integrated with the framework of the book.

In sum, I found this book more interesting in its details than in its articulation of broad conceptual themes. Ultimately, I was not convinced that the editors ensured an effective link between the earlier discussions of the culture of commerce and the concomitant transformations of landscape in late-imperial Russian cities. The volume is largely self-contained, lacking a sustained engagement with wider contemporary debate, both theoretical and historical, on the formation of modern business cultures, their internationalization in the nineteenth-century world economy, and the role of commercial architecture in consolidating these changes in cities of finance both East and West. In the Russian context, as elsewhere, the practices of business and the practices of architecture need simultaneous treatment in order to enable a full appraisal of the mutual interdependence of urban, economic, and cultural change in this extraordinary period.

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Notes

Twentieth-Century Architecture and Design

Paul Greenhalgh, editor

**Art Nouveau, 1890–1914**


Charlotte Benton, Tim Benton, and Ghislaine Wood, editors

**Art Deco, 1910–1939**


Since its initial appearance in the late nineteenth century as a slim publication describing works displayed by the Académie Royale de Peinture et Sculpture in Paris, the exhibition catalogue has evolved into an essential guide replete with definitive information about each work on view. Recently, however, catalogues have become massive compendia of essays that extend far beyond the material and intellectual dimensions of the exhibition they accompany. Discussion of objects not on display serves the interest of an exhaustive presentation, but comes at the expense of the careful compilation of details about the individual object. Far too heavy to lug about in the galleries, catalogues are no longer so much the record of an exhibition as a meditation on it.

Over the last three years, the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) has weighed in with two such blockbusters. *Art Nouveau* (reviewed in *JSAH* 60 [Sept. 2001]) contains thirty essays by twenty-two contributors; *Art Deco* (reviewed in *JSAH* 62 [Dec. 2003]) features forty chapters written by twenty-nine authors. Although the phenomena the publications chronicled suffered first opprobrium, then oblivion, they eventually were rehabilitated and accorded extensive bibliographies. Nevertheless, the V&A volumes are scarcely redundant; in addition to summarizing previous explorations (one of the few omissions from *Art Nouveau* is Walter Benjamin's perceptive article "Paris—the Capital of the Nineteenth Century," but he merits two brief references in *Art Deco"), they cover more territory (literally) than earlier publications and offer fresh insights about familiar material. *Art Nouveau* explores previously overlooked regions, such as Scandinavia and Eastern Europe; *Art Deco* demonstrates the truth of the movement's claim to universality by including studies of its heady presence in China (mainly Shanghai) and Japan, Australia, Brazil, India, and South Africa.

The growth of serious scholarly interest in the decorative arts and increased recognition of the role of design in our culture coincided with a decrease in the obsession with unique, fine art "masterpieces." This shift fueled the production of the volumes under discussion and the V&A's imprimatur guarantees their probity. Many of the contributors are curators or research fellows at the institution, and have at their disposal not only its archival resources but also its superb collection of furnishings, architectural models and fragments, drawings for every manner of design, photographs, and so on. A good number of its holdings were purchased at the international expositions where *Art Nouveau* and *Art Deco* first flourished. Preceded by the Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers in Paris, the V&A, founded in 1852 as a Museum of Manufactures, today comprises the world's most extensive assemblage of applied arts. However retrospectively deplorable its imperialist foundations, these brought treasures that are extraordinarily global in origin. Although museums of decorative and industrial arts typically privilege national contributions, the V&A has covered the world since its conception at the first Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, held in London in 1851.

Each publication opens with an essay titled "The Style and the Age" and concludes with a consideration of the demise—and revived fortunes—of the style. Individual chapters explore sources—some broadly cultural ("The Cult of Nature" and "Collecting and Constructing Africa") and others located specifically in previous or concurrent artistic movements (such as Japonisme and symbolism for Art Nouveau, and Cubism and Surrealism for Art Deco). The nuances engendered by various regional, national, and personal interpretations are analyzed, and the manifestations in applied arts and crafts are expounded by a specialist in the field. The impeccably researched pages on distinct media are useful, especially to the collector, and may be recommended to students of textiles, wood, ceramics, jewelry, glass, and so forth.

Perhaps the most original aspect of *Art Nouveau* is part four, "The Metropolis and the Designer," which widens the focus from objects to the site of their making and consumption and encourages a synthetic consideration of art, architecture, and design. In some cases, the discussion is dominated by one...