entry axis, a large, double-height, top-lit, centralized room would serve as a tribune. It would be a space comparable to the Louvre’s Salon Carré and, like it, intended to house the collection’s masterpieces. Smaller, single-height galleries would house historiographical displays of the rest of the paintings.

Whitehead also differs from other historians of museum display by focusing more explicitly on the architectural ramifications of these conflicting approaches to the display of art. One of the major reasons the Wilkins building suddenly seemed so inadequate was the dramatic increase in wall space needed to rehang the existing collection in the sort of linear organization mandated by the historiographical approach. At the same time, the new emphasis on visibility required a wide range of room sizes: grand rooms that would allow visitors to stand back from large paintings as well as more intimate spaces to encourage the close examination of smaller works. Given the importance Eastlake placed on displaying drawings and engravings in close proximity to associated paintings, this approach also called for a subsidiary range of rooms to parallel and not interrupt the evolutionary presentation of national schools.

One of the architectural implications of this history is the extent to which new, historiographical ideas of display thrust nineteenth-century architects into an almost untenable position. It is hard to imagine a public museum building that could meet all the requirements of historiographical display—arranging paintings both chronologically and by national schools in rooms related to the size of the paintings and creating parallel galleries for the display of drawings and engravings—unless it were designed for particular works in a particular collection. Yet, the related drive to develop a comprehensive collection also presupposed constant acquisition and a collection perpetually in flux. Little wonder that nineteenth-century museums were so rarely considered resoundingly successful.

Whitehead’s challenge is similar: how to present the chronological development of the National Gallery while also investigating important museological issues. His solution is to organize the book into two parts. In part one, “The Development of a Public Museology,” five thematically focused chapters provide context and elucidate issues to help readers understand the implications of the chronological narrative presented in the five chapters of part two, “The National Gallery 1850–1876.” The organization almost works, although it seems to have emboldened the author to include every detail of the lengthy deliberations covered in part two.

Given the welcome architectural focus of the book’s analysis, Whitehead’s failure to treat architecture as legitimate historical evidence in its own right is disappointing. The meager forty-five-black-and-white images are gangs at the center of the book and reproduced at so small a size that their details are impossible to discern, a treatment that makes the book’s ninety-five-dollar price tag exorbitant. Moreover, the argument ignores what the designs themselves contribute to our understanding of issues raised in the written sources. How, for instance, might we interpret the prominence of domes in the designs submitted to the 1866 competition? Are they intended to evoke ecclesiastical architecture, providing the churchlike spaces that would allow art to be displayed in something akin to its original context (an approach, Whitehead points out, advocated by Gustav Friedrich Waagen, director of the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin)? Or are they outward expressions of tribunelike spaces, indicating some compromise with the historiographical arrangements in other parts of the plans? What of interior views that reveal the presence of low balustrades separating viewers from the paintings on display, especially given contemporary concerns about working-class gallery-goers? Are these barriers solely an attempt to prevent inexperienced visitors from touching works of art? Or, given the frequency with which figures were depicted leaning over these railings, did they function as supports that encouraged the kind of close examination of the paintings favored by Eastlake and others?

If The Public Art Museum in Nineteenth Century Britain does not confront all of these architectural issues, it nonetheless underscores the value of deeply contextualized studies of individual buildings. It also demonstrates the key role that architectural design played in a process perhaps too complex and too protracted to be called the “birth” of the public museum.

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James B. Garrison
Foreword by Steven McLeod Bedford
Mastering Tradition: The Residential Architecture of John Russell Pope

Chris Wilson
Photography by Robert Reck
Facing Southwest: The Life and Houses of John Gaw Meem

What is the role of history in the home? These publications examine how two American architects, one a firm traditionalist and the other a more individualistic designer, forged their own relationship between past and present. Both John Russell Pope (1874–1937), an East Coast classicist, and John Gaw Meem (1894–1983), a New Mexico regionalist, designed houses that referred to the past while establishing an identity very much of the present. Both Pope and Meem, two understudied but significant architects whose reputations declined somewhat in the postwar period, are ripe for reassessment today. James Garrison’s Mastering Tradition: The Residential Architecture of John Russell Pope and Chris Wilson’s Facing Southwest: The Life and Houses of John Gaw Meem supplement earlier studies that focused on the public buildings of each architect.1 These new texts
are therefore useful for the contrasts they draw between the use of history in the public and private realm, and they are both valuable additions to the history of American domestic architecture.

Pope is best known for his public buildings, such as the Jefferson Memorial (1939–43) and National Gallery of Art (1916–41) in Washington, D.C., both completed after his death. However, as Garrison argues, Pope was also a talented designer of domestic forms. Trained at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Pope was fluent in a variety of European styles. Yet, his real skill lay not in his manipulation of form but in his sophisticated understanding of the interplay of history and form in his client's homes. Pedigree was crucial to these clients, and the historical references on the interior and exterior of their homes made their ambitions concrete. Pope's houses demonstrate his masterly synthesis of historical reference and graceful proportion with the social demands of the American upper class. In their scale, these houses were clearly intended to impress the lower ranks of society with their sheer mass. For the upper class, the goal was the opposite; despite the size of his commission, the restraint with which Pope deployed ornament and the ease with which he made large spaces appear simple conveyed a message of taste and social decorum.

Pope could, and did, work in a variety of styles, all with the same apparent facility. The George Hewitt Myers Residence (1912), also in Washington, D.C. and now home to the Textile Museum, perhaps demonstrates Pope's most sophisticated use of form and became a prototype not only for Pope's later houses, but also for other less finely wrought imitations. Many of Pope's houses were in the New York area. A gatehouse (1906) at the William K. Vanderbilt estate in Great Neck, New York, attracted considerable critical attention for the authenticity of its Elizabethan-style construction. Yet, the sources of Pope's inspiration were not always European. Calumsett (1925), the massive estate that Pope designed for Marshall Field III in Lloyd Harbor, New York, and Rest Hill, the Robert Collier residence (1911) in Wickatunk, New Jersey, are among examples of work Pope produced in the American colonial style. In fact, all of Pope's houses, whether Tudor, Jacobean, or neoclassical, were evidently interpreted as fully American. His idea was to convey only the prestige of the knowledge of history, never the sense of actually being in Europe. Behind their historical facades, each of Pope's houses was equipped with a contemporary American level of services: the quantities and qualities of the spaces were designed with American conceptions of comfortable bathing facilities and service areas.

Mastering Tradition is a book for both historians and potential builders of grand homes of conservative design. In fact, the design of the book shares an aesthetic with Pope's houses: it is a rich, solid tome, with large, elegant illustrations. Garrison, a practicing architect, launches the book with a brief and factual biography of Pope. The rest of the book is organized as a catalog of Pope's work, with individual essays for each of thirty-four selected residential projects. The book also includes a complete list of Pope's houses, clubs, and mausoleums. Each essay is well illustrated with interior and exterior photographs of the houses as well as reproductions of Pope's floor plans and elevations. The large-format reproductions of the interiors will be of particular interest to design historians. Garrison supplemented period images with his own elegant, well-detailed photographs, but undated captions require searching the illustration credits in the back of book to distinguish between period and contemporary photographs.

Unlike Pope's patrons, Meem's clientele sought homes that reflected the history of the immediate region and its culture. From the late 1920s to the early 1940s, Meem was the preeminent architect of the Santa Fe style. Many of Meem's clients were buying second homes or moving from the East Coast. Spurning comparable, if more traditional, resort destinations in the Northeast and Midwest, this group sought comfortable houses that would make them feel close to the spectacular scenery and culture of northern New Mexico. Synthesizing the regional Pueblo and Spanish vernacular with his knowledge of the Beaux-Arts tradition, Meem integrated his client's desire for proximity to southwestern traditions with contemporary expectations of comfort, aesthetics, and spatial configuration. He came to believe that this use of history in the service of the present was in itself modern and appropriate to the time and place in which he worked. Spurring the doctrinaire modernism of the International Style, Meem insisted that regional responses to technological changes were the only way to design an architecture sensitive to culture. Overlooked as a historicist or regionalist, Meem in fact played a pivotal role in the American response to architectural change. Wilson's study of Meem's career reveals complexity and variation in the history of American domestic modernism.

Meem's deep commitment to New Mexico's architectural heritage began as an accident of fate. Diagnosed with tuberculosis at the age of twenty-five, Meem sought refuge in the high, dry climate of the desert Southwest. He remained frail even after recovery, and his fragile constitution influenced his architectural training and practice. After a brief stint at a Beaux-Arts firm in Denver, Meem returned to Santa Fe. In 1924, he opened his practice on the grounds of the Sunmount Sanitarium, the site of his own recuperation. Former tuberculosis patients were among his first clients. With a European grand tour out of the question, Meem immersed himself in the architectural traditions of the American Southwest. He became an expert in the field of Pueblo and Spanish colonial architecture and served as the southwestern director of the Historic American Building Survey. Unlike his more polemical peers, Meem saw no conflict between the past and the present. “Particularly in the Southwest,” Meem wrote in 1934, “architects who use old forms need do no violence to the ideals of contemporary architectural thoughts. On the contrary, the fundamental form of time can best be expressed in a language native
to the region. These ancient shapes are modern!” (37).

_Facing Southwest_ offers an excellent introduction to Meem’s residential work. Wilson, the author of _The Myth of Santa Fe_, is sensitive to the complexities of New Mexico’s multilayered histories. Wilson deftly summarizes Meem’s biography in the first section of _Facing Southwest_; the remainder of the book offers a systematic and extremely well-illustrated analysis of Meem’s design patterns and idioms. As Wilson demonstrates, Meem’s floor plans adapted Pueblo and Spanish colonial precedent to the cultural expectations of a largely Anglo-American clientele. Open courtyards and terraces reflected regional tradition, while enclosed private areas and separate service spaces responded to contemporary expectations of privacy. Meem’s clients often shared his interest in New Mexico’s past. Some, like Amelia Hollenback, whose home Meem designed in 1932, collected Spanish colonial wooden doors and beams, which Meem then incorporated into his designs. Traditional adobe Spanish colonial fireplaces (often incorrectly referred to as kivas), such as those in the dining room and bedroom of the Conkey Residence (1928), added an Anglo Arts and Crafts sensibility to an interior that was distinctly Santa Fe.

The excellent illustrations in _Facing Southwest_ support Wilson’s arguments about the significance of Meem’s architecture. As Wilson notes, site was crucial to the design of many of Meem’s houses, and clients often chose their building sites specifically for the views of the Jemez or Sangre de Cristo mountains. Meem adopted a romantic sensibility in his approach to the site, often employing irregular floor plans or window placement to capture the best view of the spectacular natural setting. Photographer Robert Reck’s superb photographs capture the harmonious interaction of nature and architecture in Meem’s houses. The bright New Mexico light that dapples Reck’s interior images conveys a specificity of place and time, while the exterior images are carefully composed to illustrate the importance of foliage and views to the character of each house. In the “Design Idioms” section of the book, close-up images of Meem’s doors, window seats, ceilings, and floors give a sense of the range of the architect’s skills. Reck’s contemporary photographs are supplemented by period images, notably by Ansel Adams and Laura Gilpin, and copious floor plans and other visual materials. They are pleasurable to browse and useful to scholars. The result of Wilson’s work is a sophisticated and well-written book that will appeal to historians of American modernism and casual aficionados of the southwestern style.

Taken together, _Mastering Tradition_ and _Facing Southwest_ show how references to the past provide both social prestige and a heightened sense of place in the American home. The grand formal houses of Pope and the smaller, more intimate homes of Meem are fascinating counterparts in the ongoing dialogue about the integration of tradition and modernity in the domestic environment. Too often it is perceived that this dialogue took place only in the public sphere, where grand monuments and public buildings are interpreted as announcements of a culture’s commitment to its heritage or its ambitious embrace of the future. As Garrison and Wilson demonstrate, the architectural interplay between past and present is not always as polarized, nor as public, as one might believe. The synthesis of architectural traditions and modernism in the private houses of Pope and Meem demonstrates the complexity of the transition from the past to the present.

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_Sandy Isenstadt_  
_The Modern American House—Spaciousness and Middle Class Identity_  
$85, ISBN 0-521-77013-0

The twentieth-century middle-class desire for a small spacious house is the theme of Sandy Isenstadt’s clearly written and well-illustrated book. His account of the modern house takes a new direction in identifying the perception of spaciousness as its key feature, really a feature of the owners’ experience of the house rather than a quality of the architecture per se. To trace this idea, Isenstadt follows the word _spaciousness_ as it appears in descriptions of and critiques of houses starting in the eighteenth century. Designers wrote about qualities of spaciousness, providing clients with a vocabulary to talk about it. “The polemic of this book,” Isenstadt asserts, “is that modernism in architecture may be defined as much by the perceptual ambitions of its patrons as by the formal innovations of its producers and that the desire for spaciousness in small places preceded modern architecture’s much-vaunted ability to provide such an effect” (9).

In tracing the ups and downs of the idea of spaciousness, Isenstadt shows that “spaciousness . . . was historical, a cultural preference in the United States for visual extent in domestic environments that developed over time” (10).

The introduction locates this work as part of the general postmodern interest in visual studies that surfaces in cinema, ethnography, geography, sociology, and other disciplines. The author mentions Guy Debord’s 1964 _Society of the Spectacle_ as a related investigation of the role of the visual. One might have expected an acknowledgement of phenomenological studies having to do with human perceptions, such as Christian Norberg-Schulz’s _Meaning in Western Architecture_, or more on Grant Hilbrand’s _Wright Space_, with its investigation of prospect and refuge. The author is not, however, especially interested in

Notes


2. Chris Wilson, _The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating a Modern Regional Tradition_ (Albuquerque, 1997).