until shortly before his death in 1976. Even though the hut was deeply connected to Heidegger’s political life, Sharr strangely stays away from discussing the former in relation with the latter. Instead, he concentrates on the more existentialist meaning of the building as the location of Heidegger’s being-in-the-world. To this end, Sharr approaches the hut within the context of such essays by Heidegger as “Why Do I Stay in the Provinces” (1934), “The Thinker as Poet” (1947), and “Building Dwelling Thinking” (1951). Yet, this narrow and apologetic approach decontextualizes Heidegger from his time more than it helps to contextualize the hut within the philosopher’s work. For example, in his essay “The Origin of the Work of Art,” written in 1935–36 but published only in 1950, Heidegger interprets Van Gogh’s painting of his own boots as a depiction of himself and his time. Sharr has written a most fascinating account of this small but highly significant hut in the Black Forest.

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**Notes**


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**SwM. Die Festschrift für Stanislaus von Moos**

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Over the course of his long and productive career, Stanislaus von Moos, who was professor of art and architectural history at the Universität Zürich from 1983 to 2005, engaged an impressive range of topics, from the buildings and ideas of Le Corbusier and Robert Venturi to the development of modern Swiss architecture and the problems of contemporary design. As founder and, for many years, editor of the journal *architec* *tura*, von Moos also assumed a central role in shaping the architectural discourse in his native Switzerland and abroad. What characterizes his writings are not only an ardent curiosity and an acute intelligence but also a facility for finding the inner connections between what on the surface seem to be quite disparate moments, thinkers, or trends. Von Moos has been deeply interested in the changing framework of architecture—issues like nostalgia, populism, and spectacle have long attracted his critical gaze. But he has also shown a marked propensity for combining quite varied architects or concepts to make his points. In a recent essay on Herzog and de Meuron in his book *Nicht Disneyland—Und andere Aufsätze über Modernität und Nostalgie*, for example, his analytical lens falls upon, in no particular order, Le Corbusier’s Ronchamp, Rudolf Steiner’s Goetheanum, and Mies van der Rohe’s Barcelona Pavilion as well as the work of Herbert Bayer, Donald Judd, Frederick Kiesler, Rem Koolhaas, Roy Lichtenstein, El Lissitzky, Claes Oldenburg, Kurt Schwitters, and Oswald Mathias Ungers.

It seems all the more appropriate, then, that the essays in his *Festschrift* cover myriad themes and span great intellectual distances. The fifteen pieces—by such luminaries as Tilmann Buddensieg, Jean-Louis Cohen, Beatriz Colomina, Alan Colquhoun, Hans Frei, and Werner Oechslin—encompass an array of problems and issues. As one might expect given the direction of von Moos’s own work, a number of the essays examine the life or work of Le Corbusier (those by Cohen, Oechslin, and Arthur Rüegg) or the art and culture of modernism (Oskar Bätschmann, Christine N. Brinckmann, Buddensieg, Ludmila Vachtova, and Beat Wyss). But there are also interviews with Jacques Herzog, Gion A. Caminada, Thomas Hirschhorn, and Denise Scott Brown and Robert Venturi, whose work was touched by von Moos in some way over the years.

Yet, this book is more than a snapshot of von Moos’s scholarly interests and activities. It also presents a telling look at the historical profession and how it has evolved over the last several decades; indeed, these essays offer a primer of sorts about the changing interests and methodologies of the field and how a new, more composite approach is altering the way we read the past.

Perhaps the most apparent change has to do with our understanding of
modernism. When von Moos started his career in the early 1960s, the age of modernism was coming to a close. The modern masters—Gropius, Mies, Le Corbusier—would all expire over the next decade. For historians at the time, the charge was to document the passing revolution, record the words and thoughts of the elders, and begin the arduous task of reevaluating what had taken place over the previous half century. Von Moos’s own work, especially his *Le Corbusier. Elemente einer Synthese*, which appeared in 1968, played a significant part in this reappraisal. Over the next two decades, historians rewrote much of the history of modern architecture and design. The new historical paradigm focused on adopting a critical distance—one at odds with the writings of Nikolaus Pevsner, Sigfried Giedion, and the other first modernist historians, whose texts had often been as polemical as they had been historical. But his new paradigm was also methodologically different: the architectural historians who came on the scene in the 1960s began to apply other approaches, from social history and neo-Marxism to critical and literary theory and poststructuralism. (There was also a growing divide between those focused on archival research and those who relied to a great extent on critical theory.) The result was a markedly divergent view of the modern movement, regarding it on the one hand as a cultural and social phenomenon and on the other as a rich mine of aesthetic questions. Still, architectural modernism was seen as a discrete phenomenon, as a more or less cohesive body of thoughts and approaches. In the last twenty years, this view itself has come under assault. The essays in *Sc/M. Die Festschrift* suggest a more elastic conception, both in terms of the meanings of modern architecture and design and how one might go about studying them.

There are two distinct trends manifested in these texts. One is a willingness to look outside standard architectural concepts and approaches and observe the history of building within a broader cultural frame—to investigate how the ideas of other disciplines (media studies or popular culture, for example) might illuminate our understanding of architecture. This implies, quite literally, “thinking outside the box”; in many cases, architecture becomes almost a secondary issue, part of a larger story. The second trend, which is closely related, involves a readiness to evaluate architecture based on new criteria—not only to inquire if it is beautiful, sound, and functional, but to ask what it reveals about its makers and those who dwell within.

Both of these impulses are at work in Colomina’s essay “Double Exposure: Alteration to a Suburban House (1978).” Colomina examines Don Graham’s model of a typical suburban house that has had its entire facade removed and replaced with glass. She sees this work as a “culmination of a continuous reflection on the postwar house” extending back to the glass pavilions of Mies and Philip Johnson and the advent of the picture window. In her view, this is part of the changes in life wrought by television: “The post-war house operates like a TV set in exposing a representation of family life. The house, which from the 1950s had to make space for TV by rearranging its living room to provide everybody with a view, itself operated as a television set airing representations of family life to passersby” (99–100). Thus, for Colomina, Graham’s work “parallels the evolution of modern architecture”; if early modern architecture was decisively influenced by illustrated publications, photography, and movies, architecture of the postwar period “is the architecture of video and television” (103).

Colomina’s article implies that the very substance of architecture is changing: a house is not just a house; it is also a stage set to broadcast the drama of modern life. This notion of a fundamental shift in how we regard architecture also rests at the heart of Colquhoun’s essay “Changing Museum.” Colquhoun argues that the conventional meaning of the museum is undergoing a seismic shift. Whether modern museums are purpose built as mere backdrops for art (“the white cube”), products of adaptive use (“the museum as found space”), or intended as individual artistic statements (“the museum as a work of art”), all have taken on a radically different cast:

[the] relatively stable relation between the museum and the gallery has not survived late capitalism and mass society. There is no longer a commonly held notion of the value of works of art outside a specialized and ideologically inflated art market. That being the case, it would seem that the museum has lost much of its raison d’être. Why, then, does the public flock to it in ever-greater numbers? It must surely be because it constitutes a new public—one shaped by universal education, leisure, and, above all, by the information media (132–33).

The museum, Colquhoun contends, has assumed an “ambiguous cultural status” not because it has taken on new architectural forms, but because those who use it have very different assumptions about what it is.

Two of the book’s essays, Cohen’s contribution “‘France ou Allemagne?’ Un Zigzag Editorial de Charles-Edouard Jeanneret” and Rüegg’s piece on Le Corbusier’s apartment in Paris and his Zurich pied-à-terre, examine the history of modern architecture by probing the inner life of one of its makers. Cohen’s essay addresses the young Jeanneret’s early confrontation with Germany and German modes of production, which the young Swiss architect found alternately fascinating and repellant. In the end, the mature Le Corbusier would answer the question “France or Germany?” by fusing the French and German approaches to industrial modernity. But his course, as Rüegg shows through an examination of Corbusier’s own living spaces, was far from direct or determined. Unlike his famed interiors for clients, the components of Corbusier’s apartments were assembled piecemeal—and rather haphazardly. Rüegg writes: “With their almost accidental forms and heterogeneous arrangements, they come close, paradoxically, to the credo of Josef Frank, who had just ‘outed himself’ at [the Weissenhofsiedlung in] Stuttgart as a...
critic of Le Corbusier’s ‘vacuum cleaning’: ‘Because in the course of life one assembles a plethora of experiences and objects, one’s living space should offer the opportunity to accommodate them all’ (217). Rüegg is quick to note the consequences: it is not just that Le Corbusier’s messy living spaces reflect the diversity of his ideas about interior design and are “instruments of autobiographical reflection”; they are also the physical manifestations of his theories as they developed. To study these spaces is to understand in a fundamental way how Le Corbusier formed his ideas.

On the surface, Rüegg’s approach appears to be quite conventional: using elements of biography has long been a part of how we study the evolution of a particular designer and his or her work. But Rüegg uses this tool as a way to reverse—quite radically—our previous understanding. The rapid unfolding of Le Corbusier’s new conception of how we live, in this view, is neither seamless nor direct. Rather, it is the product of a more arbitrary—even serendipitous—progression. Rüegg’s reading is at once part of the older historiography and assumes a position outside it.

In a related vein, Frei, in his essay “Der Meister von Lockhart (Texas),” reinterprets the famous article by Colin Rowe and John Hejduk, “Lockhart, Texas,” that appeared in Architectural Record in 1957. Rowe and Hejduk sought to elevate Lockhart—a very ordinary town comprised mostly of anonymous late nineteenth-century buildings—to a paragon for a new urbanism: “It is a guileless architecture,” they wrote, “which, because innocent, is often apparently venerable; and which, because one may believe it to be uncorrupted, is sometimes curiously eloquent. . . . [W]e are in the presence not of an amusing specimen of Americana, but of an exemplary urbanistic success whose meaning has for too long been obscured.” But Frei points out not only that there is no “master of Lockhart”—no figure who assembled it—but that its meanings, too, are illusory. Not only is Lockhart far from the model town that Rowe and Hejduk suggested, but it is itself a sort of fancy—“like Paris (Texas) or Zabrisky Point (California), which one knows as the Point title places from the films, respectively, of Wim Wenders or Michelangelo Antonioni” (166)—and, as such, a sort of utopian nowhere. What seemed like visionary pragmatism to Rowe and Hejduk in the 1950s now looks to Frei hopelessly naive.

Hermann Czech’s “Die Sprache der Verführung” (The Language of Seduction) similarly seeks to explode the old modernist ideas of simplicity and purity. “Architecture, he writes, paraphrasing Venturi, “is always complex and contradictory.” It is in the “planes of perception, in the shifting of meanings that the architectural idea is set into motion. The required justification ‘why’ has long since been supplanted by the countervailing question ‘why not’” (153). For Czech, modernism—with all of its many facets—represents a latter-day Mannerism, fraught with possibilities but also admitting multiple readings.

One explanation for this multiplicity, as Vachtova argues in her essay on the Czech graphic artist and designer Ladislav Sutnar, is the force of globalization. She insists that one can no longer interpret the history of the last century in parochial terms; the work of a figure like Sutnar, even though he remained an orthodox modernist to the end and did not stray far from his roots in Czech functionalism, must be read in a different light. But how does one find a place in the canon for such lesser figures? If all knowledge, she writes, critiquing the historical approach of the recent past is perfectly networked together, retrievable and available at any time, what happens to figures of local importance? Do they disappear . . . or do they remain of equal greatness? How great is this greatness? In the regular rhythm of passing generations, the same unavoidable celebrities reappear over and over, commemorated, exhibited, and extolled. The names are familiar; there is little margin for variation. From the distance of time, the modern movement appears to be a well-regulated little club of free-willed figures with great demands for attention and clearly fixed positions. One must not write their history anew, just alter the syntax a little and group the figures in different ways until the emphases begin to slide around by themselves: less pomp, more points (262).

A figure like Sutnar who in his myriad designs for advertising and products played a significant part in creating a universal visual language—a “world language”—requires a new kind of reading. But what precisely that means Vachtova does not tell us.

Indeed, one of the hallmarks of this new history is a greater willingness to tear down old modes of thinking than to erect new ones. Von Moos’s own writings are replete with ironic remarks and rejoinders; after producing major studies of Le Corbusier and Venturi, von Moos, like most of the contributors to his Festschrift, has become less interested in building a new synthesis. In fact, if one regards his writings of the last thirty years, they appear to argue for the futility of such an approach. Meaning in some instances may indeed be established far more readily through negation than through the agency of system making. This is hardly a surprise in our age of cultural uncertainty, but it does underscore the challenges now facing historians. If there is a lesson in this book, it is that our time is far more complex and variegated than anyone working a hundred years ago might have imagined. Those who write history now and in coming years will have to grapple with this fact.

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