this book offers fresh analysis of architecture as a manifestation of new forces at a particular time in the evolution of this complex profession. It makes for illuminating and worthwhile reading, and its methodology demonstrates how scholars from other disciplines have much to offer architectural historians. Students and researchers alike will discover sources to steer them in new directions when conducting inquiries into the relationships among architects, state and industrial patrons, and the forces that push and pull architects from within and outside their profession as they compete for success in a variety of national contexts. By contributing an insightful chapter to the history of what he calls the “lost” aesthetic of scientific management, Guillén challenges architectural historians to identify other overlooked factors in the development of twentieth-century architecture as well.

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Beatriz Colomina
Domesticity at War
Barcelona and Cambridge, Mass.: Actar and MIT Press, 2007. 448 pp., 156 color and 327 b/w illus. $49.95, ISBN 9780262033619

This is a “double” book within a single cover; the pages are laid out so that the top part contains images and the lower part text, although sometimes the images stretch over both the upper and lower books. While the format resonates with the author’s intention to treat images as source materials in their own right, it does not provide for comfortable reading. Anyone interested in postwar architecture should, nevertheless, take this in stride, because the subject at hand is interesting.

Beatriz Colomina deals with the impact of military technologies and war-related anxieties on the discourse and practice of architecture and domesticity, looking at the role of the media in redefining private and public. If this short description sounds as if you already came across these ideas before, you probably did—earlier versions of most chapters have been published in various journals and edited volumes. They are now brought together as discrete pieces that together should form a whole. Unfortunately, the seams, overlaps, and stitches remain rather visible. The book thus forms a patchwork of well-written and provocative fragments that do not add up to a completely convincing argument.

Colomina’s introduction evokes the strange contradictions of postwar architecture, which was “aggressively happy” (12). Modern architecture borrowed the techniques and materials of the military, but turned them into tools to shape a new sense of domesticity. This new and happy domesticity was at the same time used as a weapon in the Cold War. The American suburban home, full of appliances and commodities, was positioned as the opposite of the far less spacious Soviet apartment, with its correspondingly far less comfortable household routines. In Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era (1988), Elaine Tyler May highlights the central role of domesticity in the Cold War discourses on both sides, and Colomina provides us with an extensive array of images to support this argument and make it bear forcefully upon architecture. For instance, the image of the domestic bliss of Walter and Ise Gropius in their house in Lincoln provides the framework for a discussion of the changing image of the architect—no longer the heroic figure of the prewar years, but now simply a casually dressed and relaxed man “at home.”

The chapters themselves move back and forth between a discussion of well-known figures in modern architectural culture and an analysis of topoi related to the house and domesticity in the media and popular culture. The architects singled out by Colomina—Buckminster Fuller, Charles and Ray Eames, Alison and Peter Smithson—were all fascinated with popular culture. They worked with materials and approaches derived from everyday experiences, such as vernacular buildings in the case of Fuller (the round grain bins of the Midwest), plywood and assemblage techniques in the case of the Eames, and advertisements in the case of the Smithsons. Moreover they directed their efforts not only toward a well-informed and well-educated group of peers and possible clients, but also to a much larger audience. They participated in popular exhibitions (House of the Future by the Smithsons, the Moscow exhibition by the Eames) and published in a diversity of media. Because their work was closely linked to Cold War politics and technology and hence invested in postwar militarization—either by implication (Fuller and the Eames had worked for the Army during the war) or by default (the Smithsons)—Colomina argues that it contributed to the “domesticity at war” logic that pervaded postwar homes. By unraveling the multiple ties that connect Fuller and the Eames to these Cold War efforts, Colomina conveys this argument well. It works less well in the case of the Smithsons, whose House of the Future necessitates an additional twist to make it part of Cold War rhetoric. The author finds that twist by comparing the house with a camera pointing to outer space (the only place where one can “look out” is in the interior courtyard, where one can indeed only “look up” to the sky and beyond), thus linking it with the race to conquer space.

The architect-centered chapters provide interesting analyses from somewhat unexpected angles, but I found the chapters dealing with popular culture the most compelling, possibly because I had not read them before. Chapter four, “The Lawn at War,” looks at how the lawn becomes a central element in the American representation of home and family life. The lawn acts as a symbol of the good life, a key element of the suburban qualities of freestanding homes, where inhabitants freely enjoy the pleasures of outdoor living. Colomina draws attention to the remarkable advertising tradition of displaying a family’s possessions spread out over the lawn—exemplified by advertisements from 1946, 1952, and 1996 (images 202–5). This is not just consumer exhibitionism, but also points to the hidden military logic of insecti-
cides, domestic equipment like lawn mowers, and bomb shelters—all advertised as being part of the great battles fought by the American people.

Chapter five, on “X-ray Architecture,” explores the metaphorical connections between x-rays, which expose the inside of the body to the public eye, and the modern house, which likewise exposes its interior. The “skin and bones” modern architecture of Mies van der Rohe can indeed be understood as a conscious search to go beyond all attempts of covering up, to reach toward the pure representation of the building skeleton and nothing else. Similarly the picture windows that pervaded the suburbs acted as two-way x-ray machines: they both turned the interiors of the houses into showcases of domesticity and, at the same time, exposed their exteriors to continuous scrutiny from an interior gaze. Colomina analyzes how Dan Graham and Philip Johnson investigated this logic in subsequent permutations of the suburban house and glass house, respectively. The connection to the war relies on both the battle against tuberculosis, initiated by the x-rays, and on the system of surveillance and control, accommodated and domesticated by the picture window.

Chapter eight, “The Underground House,” confronts us with one of the excesses of the Cold War: the proposal to go completely undercover by burying homes into the earth. The author zooms in on a project by Jay Swayze, presented at the New York’s World Fair of 1964. This model home provides all the expected spaces, including an “outdoor” patio, as parts of an underground shelter, thus completely internalizing the inside/outside distinction. According to the publicity brochure, it gives man “an island unto himself; a place where he controls his own world—a world of total ease and comfort, of security, safety, and above all, privacy” (281). This logic was reinforced by the advent of television, which allowed people to consume public events in the privacy of their homes.

In the epilogue, Colomina connects the military logics that she analyzed in the previous chapters to the uncanny experience of 11 September, which for her happened almost next door. She recognizes the role of the media as the crucial link between both histories: the role of television in the 1960s, the role of internet and cell phones in 2001. She ends with the cell phone—a last vestige of domesticity during 11 September (as in the desperate calls home from some of the victims) and at the same time a weapon that triggered the bombs on the Madrid trains on 11 March 2004, thus showing with a last telling example how pervasive the notion of “domesticity at war” can be.

Several observations and interpretations in this book offer a powerful analysis of what was at stake in the domestic architecture of the 1950s and 1960s. The lingering impact of military technologies, military logics, and military metaphors throughout this period and beyond is clearly exposed by the author. Yet one wonders if this is the whole story. What about the differences between Europe and America? Where do the debates come in about regionalism, the city, the welfare state, segregation, participation, organic architecture, kitsch, and camp? What about gender and domesticity? All these issues figure only marginally in Colomina’s narrative, but would certainly need to be addressed in a more encompassing history of postwar architecture and domesticity. Colomina’s working method, where she looks at disparate materials that are usually left disconnected, is seductive and provocative. She is capable of teasing out improbable meanings from seemingly innocent data, unraveling unexpected interconnections and exposing hidden logics. At the same time she doesn’t justify why she is looking at the things she is looking at—leaving her readers with a sense that this book, important as it is, does not provide more than just a beginning of what should become a serious scholarly study of a recent past.

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Martin Aurand
The Spectator and the Topographical City

Martin Aurand’s splendid book on Pittsburgh’s urban development is a visual feast, with 150 superb illustrations packed into two hundred pages. The book itself, as much as the city it celebrates, summons its own delighted spectator. The issue of who this spectator is—and how she experiences the unique built environment of Pittsburgh, whether directly in the city itself or indirectly within the covers of the book—is a question that lingers over Aurand’s beautiful image-text.

Aurand’s book seeks to reconnect the history of Pittsburgh’s urban development to its magnificent local terrain and thereby reestablish Pittsburgh as a “topographical city.” Once the site of some of the most intense industrial development in the world, the city seemed to have devoured its physical environment in an explosion of factories, fire, and smoke. But Aurand argues that the city’s distinctive topography of plateaus and hollows, far from being overwhelmed, has not only shaped the built environment in crucial respects but also fired the imagination of architects and patrons, and in the process inspired the city’s most significant architectural achievements. Intellectually indebted to architect William Rees Morrish’s book Civilizing Terrains: Mountains, Mounds and Mesas (1996), and to Vincent Scully before him, Aurand’s argument reasserts the primal link between cities and the earth. Aurand takes pains to demonstrate the sacred power of landforms and waterways and their controlling influence over the built environment. In this way, The Spectator and the Topographical City does not simply relate a local history but assumes a more important place alongside books such as Reyner Banham’s Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies (1971), which teach us to look at the city in a new way.

After a brief introduction, The Spectator and the Topographical City provides