describing the topography of ancient Rome. She extends this argument to Manetti’s oft-cited description of the new St. Peter’s, over which scholars continue to disagree owing to its discrepancies with the dimensions given in De gestis (alternately in passio and cubiti). Smith offers the intriguing hypothesis that Manetti’s account fuses observations from different architectural models made at successive stages in the project. However, to sort through the various modern reconstructions of Rossellino’s project, several of which are illustrated, is beyond the scope of their study.

Smith also leaves aside the question of Rossellino’s polygonal choir, allowing that Bramante’s well-known drawing for new St. Peter’s, Uffizi Arch 20, records not the extant foundations but one such modello then on hand. In fact, Manetti describes the tribuna in some detail, dwelling on the stained-glass windows (subvented at considerable expense by the bank of Tommaso Spinelli). According to the contemporary chronicler Mattia Palmieri, it rose thirteen braccia before Alberti counseled the pope to cease construction. One is left to wonder whether the walls had reached the point of the extrados for the transept to wonder whether the walls had reached the point of the extrados for the transept vaults, and whether models of the interior structure might have informed Manetti’s perception of the space. Could Rossellino’s solution have anticipated the Hallenkirche he devised for the Duomo in Pienza less than a decade later?

Still more problematic is the loose aggregate of buildings comprising the Vatican Palace. Plans drawn in the Bramante workshop give an accurate record of the complex before the interventions of Julius II. Smith disentangles the individual components as laid out by Manetti—
the curia prima (“curtis”), the first garden (“palatium inferior”), “theatrum” (an open loggia facing onto the Cortile del Papa-gallo), atrium (“aula prima”) and chapel—explaining how they were interconnected by subtle shifts in elevation. The discussion is engaging, if difficult to follow in places. Reconstructed ground plans clarify the relationship of old and new structures, but the reader needs corresponding sectional diagrams as well, particularly along the rise in grade from east to west.

The vexing issue of Alberti’s presence within this flurry of building activity lingers uneasily throughout the book. Generally Smith and O’Connor do not see his role as ideator, as first proposed by Bill Westfall. Rather, following the more recent arguments of Eugenio Garin and Manfredo Tafuri, they characterize Alberti as a marginal figure in the urban renewal of Rome and the Borgo. Much of this hinges on the satire Momus, in which Alberti thinly veils his contempt for the bombastic Nicholas in the guise of a ranting Jupiter. In the view of Smith and O’Connor, Alberti composed this text after the pope’s death in 1455, when it was all too clear to Romans that Nicholas’s building mania (libido aedificandi) had far exceeded any practical measure. Until at least 1453, it appears that Alberti shared enthusiasm for the pope’s initiatives, as evinced by his original dedication of De re aedificatoria to Nicholas. More tenuous is the notion that Alberti harbored a particular animosity for Manetti. In his famous letter to Matteo dei Pasti on the completion of the Tempio Malatestiano in Rimini, Alberti refutes the opinion of a certain “Manetto” that cupolas should properly be twice as tall as their width. Possibly he was referring to Antonio di Manetto Giccheri, capomastro of the Duomo and San Lorenzo in Florence. Smith quotes the next passage in which Alberti lays into this critic on the matter of round windows (“occhi”) and how they should be inserted, with the structural integrity of the wall in mind. Alberti complains that one “who makes [architecture] a profession ought to know his trade.” To take this as a swipe at Giannozzo Manetti may be to overstate the influence of a cleric, one with virtually no formal knowledge of architecture (apparently not even Vitruvius), within the papal entourage.

This book amply showcases the extraordinary historical range of both authors—not the least in the critical apparatus to De Pompis and the Vita. The text is mostly free of errata, although the confusion of Alessandro “Sforza” for Alessandro Struzzi as the author of the map of Rome in the Biblioteca Medicea-Laurenziana bears mention (123–24).

While there is no shortage of scholarship on the place of rhetoric in Renaissance letters, our knowledge of how architectural ideas were transmitted—through treatises, drawings, models and in conversation—is far less complete. This book attempts through close textual analysis to open a window onto that lost world, where patrons, architects, humanists, and clerics came together in discourse.

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Notes
3. This methodology expands upon Christine Smith’s earlier monograph, Architecture in the Culture of Early Humanism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).


Accompanying its eponymous exhibition, Modern Times: The Untold Story of Modernism in Australia, is an engaging, scholarly, and visually inviting book. It comprises essays by multiple authors on an array of topics circling around the complex topic of Australian modernism in the domains of art, design, and architecture between 1917 and 1967. The publication is orchestrated by the authoritative voices of the three editors: Ann Stephen (art historian and curator at the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney) and the principal...
The timeframe for Modern Times is 1917 to 1967. In 1917 Tristan Tzara performed his own version of indigenous central Australian songs at Dada's Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich, representing the earliest, and one of the most unlikely engagements with Australian aboriginal culture as a source for avant-garde art. In 1967 the blockbuster exhibition Two Decades of American Painting reached Australia, providing a kind of closure by signaling a shift away from British cultural cringe and toward the embrace of postmodern American movements.

The main text is organized into five parts, broadly reflecting the conviction that across five decades common themes emerged in modernism in Australia: “internationalism, abstraction and interdisciplinary practice.” Each section comprises five generally complementary but independent essays. Thematic groupings require contextualization, which are provided by expansive initial essays for each part by one or more of the editors, allowing the shorter individual contributions to express themselves as discrete vignettes, discursive yet compact and focused.

Part one, “Abstract in Australia,” explores local inflections of international avant-garde experiments in color and form. “The Bauhaus in Australia” discusses expatriate Bauhaus student and teacher Ludwig Hirschfeld-Mack’s arrival and impact in Australia. “Colour in Art” celebrates Roy de Maistre’s idiosyncratic color-music theory, including his 1919 “Rhythmic Composition in Yellow Green Minor,” cited as the first Australian abstract painting. This legacy is the topic of the six “Modern Rooms” designed for the 1929 Burdekin House Exhibition in Sydney. “Designs on Aboriginal Culture” looks at the irony of a notion of aboriginal modernism, and addresses the disturbing issue of the appropriation of Australian indigenous material by non-indigenous artists. “Abstract Fountains” commences with a satirical 1964 piece from Oz magazine announcing the opening of a fountain at Sydney’s P&O building, as a urinal. This moment of humor illustrates the irreverent Australian character trait known as “larrikinism,” or mockery of authority and disregard for norms of propriety.

Part two, “Bodies and Bathers,” traces the culture of the healthy modern body in both fine art and mass media. “The Body at the Scene of Modernism” situates the modern body at once in the rush of an urban crowd, as subject to norms of fashion, and as an object of precise medical investigation. “Annette Kellerman” follows the “Australian mermaid,” an athlete and entertainer who confronted prevailing attitudes toward the female body. “Crossing the Line” presents two revealing case studies on animation and aboriginal representation. “Speedo” traces the development of the competitive swimwear brand following an aesthetic of modern functionalism, and is followed by “Modern Pools,” a contribution that shows how prowess in the water became an integral part of Australia’s self-image.

Part three, “City Living,” maps the reshaping of urban culture by office towers and new recreational sites. “Tall Tales” traces how the 1957 removal of statutory height limitations permitted construction of skyscrapers such as Harry Seidler’s heroically radiant Australia Square. “Melbourne modern” refocuses discussion on how the modern movement was launched in small shops and galleries. “Blue-collar Bars” observes the singularity of Sydney’s 1930s Art Deco hotel architecture. In “The Architect’s Studio, 1948–59,” Goad interviews Penelope Seidler on Harry Seidler’s early years in Sydney, particularly his first studio-cum-office (which is faithfully reconstructed in the exhibition). “Milk Bar Moderne” addresses the introduction of the popular new design language of American streamlined moderne in metropolitan milk bars.

Part four, “Designs on the Space Age,” focuses on the Cold War period. “Shells, Spires and Domes” follows the deployment of thin-shell concrete technology in architecture. “Industry” looks at the architectural photography of Wolfgang Sievers. “Rocketing into a New Era” explores the popular appeal of space exploration and its rocket-driven aesthetic. “The House of Tomorrow” presents Robin Boyd’s 1949 case-study house, demonstrating the application of principles of modern design to contemporary living, and the final essay, “Controlled Spirals,” examines the 1961 Wickham Terrace Carpark in Brisbane, designed by the architect James Birrell with the collaboration of Melbourne artist James Meldrum.

Part five, “Electric Signs and Spectacles,” investigates interdisciplinary projects utilizing electronic technology and new forms of mass culture. “Good Evening America” explores the Australian
pavilions at the 1939 New York World’s Fair and Montreal’s Expo ’67 as spectacles of representation. “Speaking for Australia” presents insights into Grant Featherston’s sophisticated Expo chair, both as a singular piece of furniture and an embodiment of the aspirations of a nation. “MoMA’s Exports” follows Australian art’s engagement as part of an anti-totalitarian Cold War cultural program. “Animating geometry” pays tribute to idiosyncratic animate art driven by challenges to perception in photography and science. “Signs of the Times” explores how lighting and signage were intimately tied to modern architecture and design.

The judiciously procured essays in Modern Times are generally well situated in respect to each other. There is no substantial duplication of content, while the essays in each part hold enough in common to justify their location, and also to support the overarching premise that modernism was broadly pervasive in Australian culture as a whole. There is cross-referencing among essays, signifying curatorial diligence, but more importantly demonstrating that there were genuine conversations among the arts and the key figures representing them. These easy allegiances are supported by the tangential reappearance of protagonists of one essay elsewhere in the book. For example, the photographer Wolfgang Sievers (from “Industria”) provides supporting visual material for a number of other essays.

Modern Times is not a comprehensive reader on Australian modernism, nor does it intend to be. It prefers previously incompletely documented cross-disciplinary moments over outstanding individual contributions. Modernists who have been the subject of much contemporary scholarship (including Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony, Fred Williams, Sidney Nolan, and Jorn Utzon) have either been omitted, or make peripheral appearances to illuminate a particular theme. For example, Utzon’s Sydney Opera House is portrayed as a representation of the global fascination at that time with thin-shell concrete structures, alongside other buildings. Modern Times is a visually inviting printed artifact—a high-quality exemplar of the exhibition catalog format. The typography of the 253-page book is tidy, legible, and precise. There is a comfortable syncopation in the main text, as every numbered essay is clearly announced graphically. The generously spaced and consistently formatted sans serif text is composed into two columns, amply supported by rich, appropriately chosen and well-captioned color and black-and-white illustrations.

Ultimately, the press-release claims that modernism “transformed” all aspects of Australian culture, might be rephrased as “accompanied.” The subtitle “The Untold Story of Modernism in Australia” suggests a single definitive narrative, which does the book a disservice. It is much richer, and one is left with the impression that again as many episodes could be uncovered, connections could be established, and cogent arguments could be framed to support alternative interpretations. This is, perhaps paradoxically, the principal scholarly contribution of the book. Modern Times satisfies the claim that the modern movement was multidimensional and complex—even contradictory. It is an important contribution to the scholarship on Australian art, design, and architecture from 1917 to 1967, conducted more or less in the modern manner.

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Isabelle Warmoes and Victoria Sanger, eds.
Vauban, bâtisseur du Roi-Soleil
Paris: Somogy éditions d’art/Musée des monuments français/Musée des Plans-reliefs, 2007, 431 pp., 208 color and 30 b/w illus., 7 maps €49, ISBN 9782757201213

This massive book—over 400 closely-printed pages—was published to mark the 300th anniversary of the death of Sébastien Le Prestre, marquis de Vauban (1633–1707). It consists of six chapters, each with contributions by up to ten scholars. These chapters cover “The Art of War in Europe before Vauban,” “The Century of Louis XIV,” “Vauban and His Time,” “Vauban the Builder,” “Vauban’s Legacy” and “Vauban’s Patrimony Today.” Each is followed by illustrations and captions for the material in the exhibition that accompanied this catalog in 2007.

“The Art of War in Europe before Vauban” offers a survey of the coming of the bastioned trace. Emmanuel de Crouy-Chanel and Marino Viganò are not entirely agreed on the stages of its appearance, the former limiting it to the 1520s in Italy, but the latter finding such traces in the late 1480s in the territories of Venice, Florence, and the papacy. Both are agreed on the importance of the activity of Italian engineers in France from the 1530s onward, by which time Viganò identifies distinct schools in Genoa, Naples, Milan, Florence, and Venice.

Charles van den Heuvel follows these developments in the southern Netherlands, where the emperor Charles V had invited the aged engineer Giovannamaria Olgiati to make a tour of inspection in 1553; he was succeeded by the better-known Francesco Paciotto, architect of the fortifications not only at Turin but also at Antwerp. Moving northward, Heuvel confronts the different problems posed by the building of fortifications in the Netherlands, where the generally marshy ground precluded the use of massive masonry structures, leading instead to the extensive use of earthen ramparts and water-defenses. This Netherlands style, characterized by Heuvel as “engineers in the mud,” was formalized in the work of Simon Stevin and Adam Freitag.

Alicia Cámara contends that under the Spanish monarchy there was a huge variety of engineers and sites, ranging from the rounded bastions at Salses in northern Spain to the entirely conventional fortifications in many New World locations. Curiously, this section does not mention the very original forts constructed by Henry VIII of England in the1530s, using monies generated from the dissolution of the English monasteries. Finally, Jean-François Pernot explains how the first generation of Italian engineers in France was replaced under Louis XIII by a new generation of Frenchmen.

Chapter two, “The Century of Louis XIV,” is designed to set the background for Vauban’s work. Thierry Sarramont explains the place of Vauban in the hierar-