clarion call for “green,” Fitch exposed the fundamental misconceptions regarding energy, namely, that it was cheap and inexhaustible. Modern technology must be directed to benefit mankind. Above all, he deems the auto the “enemy of urbanity” and calls for its “banishment . . . either to the periphery of the city or to a subterranean plane all its own” (276).

In considering “The Future of Architecture” (1970), Fitch emerges as remarkably prophetic. Emphasis on cognitive studies today and the entry of neuroscience into the discipline of art—as in the late nineteenth century—reinforce the interplay of visual phenomena and experiential reality. The study of sensory stimuli, whether overload or deprivation, revive the discussion of the connection between metabolic function and aesthetic response and of man’s psychosomatic relationship with his environment. Unprecedented challenges in aerospace medicine and technological inventions “confront architecture with new aesthetic and ethical responsibilities” (290).

An appendix presents “Fitch as Architect.” Photographs depict modest houses that demonstrate principles of “climate control,” the ideal integration of house and site, and Fitch’s affinity for Japanese architecture, especially in landscaping. However, in 1970 he abandoned the bucolic life and settled in Manhattan’s East Village—a “committed urban dweller” deeply involved with adaptive reuse and historic preservation.

In his many publications, Fitch reiterated the purpose of architecture—to serve human needs—and the requirement that architecture be conceived “according to ethical guidelines that emphasize the welfare of human societies.” No finer tenet can be conceived than his conclusion that “the ultimate task of architecture is to act in favor of human beings—to interpose itself between people and the natural environment in which they find themselves, in such a way as to remove the gross environmental load from their shoulders. The central function of architecture is thus to lighten the very stress of life . . . to maximize our capacities” (24).

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**Philip Niles**
*Beauty of the City: A. E. Doyle, Portland’s Architect*
Corvallis: Oregon State University, 2008, xvi + 352 pp., 98 b/w illus. $29.95 (paper), ISBN 9780870712982

**Susan Hume Frazer**
*The Architecture of William Lawrence Bottomley*

**Stephen Fox**
*The Country Houses of John F. Staub*
College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007, 408 pp., 224 color and 114 b/w illus. $75 (cloth), ISBN 9781585445950

Three recent monographs on the work of American architects who practiced in the first half of the twentieth century consider a period when traditional, classical, and historically based design was eclipsed by the rise of modernism. This was a time when, in Marcus Whiffen’s words, “some architects went so far as to regard the historians as necrophilous disturbers of the graveyards of the past, who might at any moment disinter a corpse whose style was still capable of infecting the living.” The dusting-off of this architecture of many styles raises the specter of eclecticism—a label used by many twentieth-century critics and historians to brand entire careers as out of step with modernism’s progressive ideals. The historian who examines these virtually forgotten practices today rescues buildings of great beauty from the oblivion of critical aversion and general neglect.

These three books present this architecture on its own terms, using contemporary sources and astute observation to let each architect’s work speak for itself. But the authors’ approaches are very different. Philip Niles has written a biography of Portland, Oregon, architect A. E. Doyle that includes as much information about the early history of that city as it does about architecture. Doyle’s large body of work, which defines the character of Portland to this day, is celebrated more for its volume than its quality. Very little ties this architect’s career to contemporary developments or to other cities. Susan Hume Frazer has produced a carefully researched and beautifully presented catalog of William Lawrence Bottomley’s work, with histories and descriptions of many significant commissions. Her mission is to celebrate the deft, erudite, and stylish hand of an architect whose works range from Georgian-style single-family houses to great Art Deco masterpieces such as River House in New York City. Setting a more ambitious agenda, Stephen Fox has completed a masterful account of the career of John F. Staub. With incisive and trenchant criticism and analysis, and brilliant illustrations, Fox argues that Staub’s architecture served a central role in formalizing and codifying the nascent social order of Houston and other southern cities where he worked. Fox was writing in the shadow of Howard Barnstone’s book, *The Architecture of John F. Staub, Houston and the South,* a project on which Fox had assisted. Published in 1979, this was an early and thorough examination of the career of an eclectic architect; in the foreword, Vincent Scully posed a question that is relevant to the study of the work of any eclectic architect of this period: the question is not how the work is “different from that of the Modern movement, nor how it is eclectically varied in itself, but how it is like that of the modern architects, and what is its own overall stylistic cast of form.”

Philip Niles sets out to show how Portland and A. E. Doyle grew up together. He has written a biography that provides an intriguing record of many aspects of the history of Portland, yet one that suggests the need for more scholarship on the architecture. The book is chronologically organized into ten chapters that tell the story of Doyle’s life and work, followed by a list of projects. Niles discusses the early house commissions, the commercial buildings that were the backbone of the practice, and Reed College, Doyle’s most prestigious commission. A postscript addressing how Doyle dealt with the emergence of the modern movement as the firm’s business dried up after 1929 concludes that he was ultimately a traditionalist; however, Doyle’s young
associate Pietro Belluschi assumed control after his death and rose to become a noted and influential modernist.

Despite a plethora of tangential threads, Niles’s is a gripping narrative. The rough and tumble world of a rising southwestern capital is far removed from the staid milieu of the East. The son of a carpenter with an eighth-grade education and no social connections, Doyle managed to leave his imprint on Portland with over thirty major commissions, including hotels, department stores, and many civic buildings. The statement that he was entirely self-taught and office-trained hardly expresses the colorful facts of his apprenticeship. As the low man on the totem pole, his early days included drunken roving through taverns to track down the firm’s builders and other rough tasks in an atmosphere of cutthroat competition under his querulous mentor William Whidden, an alumnus of the École des Beaux-Arts and McKim, Mead, and White’s office. With a commendable record as an errand boy and draftsman, Doyle finally got his break working in Henry Bacon’s office in New York.

Niles had the advantage of working from extensive records from the architect and his firm. Among his revealing discoveries is that Doyle relied, in his formative years, on a few very basic builders’ guides that were really no better than self-help texts.

Unfortunately, Niles never deciphers the nature of Doyle’s talent as a designer. Even from the small and poorly reproduced photographs, one sees a range of architecture that suggests authorship by more than one principal. Yet while admitting that certain buildings simply followed the template of another architect’s work and that others were copied closely on models, Niles insists that Doyle was responsible for every design that came out of every office where he was a partner. With illustrations that are below the level expected in an architectural biography, there is not enough visual evidence in the book to allow the reader to come to grips with Niles’s conclusions.

While Niles’s book is so under-illustrated that it must be read with a guidebook to the city in hand, Susan Hume Frazer’s tome on Bottomley includes a rich selection of historical photographs from libraries, archives, and contemporary periodicals, as well as clear plans of many of the buildings. Frazer sets out to examine the career of this master interpreter of Georgian precedents whose work defines Monument Avenue in Richmond, Virginia, and many important American estates. Frazer introduces Bottomley with a biography that sets the stage for his work. In a lavishly illustrated section including twenty-six houses and eight other important works, Frazer illuminates the importance of Bottomley as an eclectic architect who transcended the styles through scholarship and close observation of precedents. She makes a strong case that he transformed his grasp of architectural history into distilled and personal interpretations of past architecture. Frazer also proves that Bottomley had more than a designer’s interest in the past—that he was a skilled and sensitive preservationist and the editor of both volumes of Great Georgian Houses of America (1933–37), which was published just as the twentieth-century preservation movement was emerging. In Frazer’s view, interior architecture, furnishings, and artwork complete the character of each building, and she makes a persuasive case that for this architect, a unified design approach was paramount. Her careful descriptions of the houses’ interiors and the period photographs help us understand Bottomley by seeing his buildings as they were used in their own time. Her references to the current uses, occupancy, and condition of each project, however, seem destined to be soon out of date.

In addition to the great brick Georgian-inspired houses he designed in New York for the romantic and asymmetrical composition of the garden front, the arrangement of the floor, and for the shared garden, defined by low vine-draped walls. That Bottomley was able to create sophisticated classical façades on the street and turn to a more romantic, Mediterranean style in composing the garden side showed true virtuosity.

Not far from Turtle Bay Gardens, Bottomley won the commission to design River House, a twenty-five-story skyscraper apartment building located on the East River. In his only commission for a high-rise building, Bottomley demonstrated his mastery of form making, style, and the accommodation of a complex program within a coherent design. The upper base of the building contained triplex, duplex, and simplex apartments; the lower floors included a club with entertainment and athletic facilities. Vehicular traffic approached via a drive-through motor court to the west, while a bulkhead at the river level received yachts. With the swimming pool level of the club treated in the newly fashionable Egyptian-influenced Art Deco, the building transitioned smoothly to the more traditional, Adam-inspired classicism of the individual apartments.

While Frazer delivers an excellent catalog of Bottomley’s work, the tour of the architecture is not followed by the kind of incisive analysis suggested by Scully’s challenge. Bottomley’s architecture is erudite, inspired, and personal in its use of precedent, and one years for more transcendent criticism that would define the common ground of the architect’s varied practice.

Stephen Fox aimed for a thorough presentation of the work of John F. Staub, but goes even further to explore the social dimensions of Staub’s practice. Since Staub was working in Houston as the city was maturing and neighborhoods of affluent and influential citizens were being formed, the architect’s work both reflected and established the aspirations of the new city’s elite. Fox lays out this argument in a chapter that also gives the basic outlines of Staub’s life, but the primary focus is on mapping the larger meaning of the architect’s work. The balance of the book is
organized geographically and thematically with chapters on major developments where Staub made a mark, such as River Oaks in Houston, and on general themes, such as the Palladian revival. The text is supplemented by scores of color photographs taken by Richard Cheek, who clearly understands both the architecture and the author’s argument. Meticulously drawn and labeled plans complement the photographs, creating a set of illustrations that is so complete that the reader may experience Fox’s points visually and find more to ponder.

While interested in Staub’s designs, Fox consistently explores the larger context of each commission, moving his focus from the urban plan to the streetscape to the actual building lot, and finally, to the internal spatial sequence and the actual qualities of each room. Staub is a master at weaving seemingly contradictory qualities into one structure, but Fox does not miss an architectural trick. For example, in analyzing several houses, Fox describes how Staub manipulates the reading of scale to achieve “intimate monumentality, a paradoxical association of two sensations.” His observations about each house go beyond the simple cataloging that Frazer achieves—considering proportions, scale, materials, and arrangements—to discover the essential impressions created by these spaces and how the houses established the images of their patrons’ owners.

While Frazer and Fox defend their work of a great American architect and compelling us to think about eclectic architects in a new light.

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Notes


Gloria Fraser Giffords
Sanctuaries of Earth, Stone, and Light: The Churches of Northern New Spain, 1530–1821
Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007, 480 pp., 289 b/w illus. $75.00 (cloth), ISBN 9780816525898

According to Gloria Fraser Giffords, scholars writing about the architecture of New Spain have generally favored the richer churches of central Mexico while largely ignoring those of the north. Those who have studied the northern churches have “examined and treated them in isolation, ignoring the fact that they were part of a larger network and were built to the explicit requirements of the Catholic Church and the architectural and decorative precepts of a specific time and place.” Giffords thus has two goals: to provide a “thoughtful, wide-ranging introduction to the churches of northern New Spain; and to heighten awareness of the many influences that come to bear upon the art and architecture and furnishings of those churches during the colonial or viceregal period” (ix).

It is gratifying to see a publication on the churches of northern New Spain that encompasses almost the entire period of Spanish rule (1521–1821), especially one that represents a great deal of research carried out throughout the region with visits to sites, libraries, archives, and other sources of information. Although the surviving colonial architecture in this region dates from the end of the seventeenth to the beginning of the nineteenth century, the timeline really begins in the early sixteenth century, when the exploration of northern New Spain commenced, and when the new architecture that would influence the north emerged in central New Spain. The geographical area covered by Giffords runs from the northernmost limits of New Spain (present-day Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California) to the northern halves of the modern Mexican states of Zacatecas and San Luis Potosí. It is unclear how this boundary was established, for it excludes the cities of Zacatecas and San Luis Potosí, both located in the southern parts of their respective states. Both are usually considered part of northern New Spain given their importance in the exploration and settlement of the region and the development of its art and architecture.

The book is divided into eleven chapters, each devoted to a topic related to the churches. The material falls under three major areas: the builders and the built fabric of the churches, the lives and practices of the clergy who lived and worshiped in and around them, and the furnishings and religious images found inside. Six chapters provide information on their styles, plans and builders, the materials and techniques used to build them, their exterior and interior surfaces, the details and decorative motifs found on those surfaces, and their furnishings. Two chapters on the clergy include information on liturgical objects, the administrative structure of the clergy, their titles, and their clothing. Three chapters on religious images discuss the objects and their frames as well as their identification and their meaning. There is no summary or conclusion. At the end comes a list of selected churches in northern New Spain, annotated to indicate those that are discussed in the text.

The discussion of styles in chapter two is thorough and informative, pointing to previous scholarship that has helped define the various styles found in Spain and New Spain. Giffords further that discussion by placing many churches within particular stylistic groupings. Her discussion of builders in chapter three is noteworthy, particularly the portion on guilds and women artisans, who participated in the preparation and hauling of adobe bricks and possibly in the actual construc-