Note
to “Pan-Americanize Western architecture, or to classicize the Native? The architects did not seem to think systematically about either” (81). Nonetheless, Gonzalez’s meticulous analysis of the Union’s uneasy bifurcations allows him to probe the paradoxes embedded within the larger Pan-American idea.

The third case study examines a largely forgotten but striking 1931 competition to build the Columbus Memorial Lighthouse. Constructed decades later, in Santo Domingo, the monument’s larger program reflected the ambitions of a fascinating and occasionally appalling cast of characters, including Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo, and the ever-active Albert Kelsey. This is an extraordinary and compelling story but, as Gonzalez notes, because the project’s lengthy and tangled history clouded the 455 entries (including designs by Tony Garnier, Alvar Aalto, and Konstantin Melnikov) “the competition’s influence on the development of Pan-American architecture was minimal” (104).

After these three partially deflated balloons, the last chapter considers a final cluster of attempts to clothe a Pan-American idea with architectural garments. The most radical among them, building upon decades of failed starts and inconsistent gestures, was Miami’s plan to host a hemispheric celebration of trade and travel. In the 1950s and ’60s, enlisting the graphic skills of Hugh Ferriss and a bevy of celebrated architects—including Louis Kahn—Interama, as the project was named, repudiated older world’s fair stereotypes with designs transcending nationalism and American domination. The project confronted a set of complex political and diplomatic events, from the rise of Castro to the assassination of Kennedy. Had Interama been built, Gonzalez argues, “visitors would not have remembered it as a lush garden of ethnocultural stereotypes, tropical references, and colonialist associations,” the fate of so many other Pan-American plans (174). But it was not built. During this same decade San Antonio’s Hemisfair of 1968 did manage to reach fruition. In this, the most suggestive part of his book, Gonzalez pointedly contrasts these two very different conceptions of Pan-American identity. “Business and leisure travel no longer determined which city could claim to be a gateway to Pan-America,” he notes, replaced as they were by a new experience “emerging in the U.S.–Mexico borderlands” (150).

Rigorously researched, imaginatively conceived, broadly situated, supported by a wealth of highly relevant illustrations, and replete with a stellar cast of architects, Designing Pan-America is occasionally overwhelmed by its massive quantity of detail and the scale of its subject. The effort to incorporate architectural analysis with geopolitical themes is daunting, and the larger arguments are sometimes obscured by multiple narratives. But the trip is worth taking even if the final destination remains elusive. Along the way Gonzalez cleverly decodes the dance between subject and object that accompanied the lengthy history of the Pan-American idea, and establishes the emerging centrality of modernism as a common ground for hemispheric identity, just as its most dramatic form of built expression threatens to be a militarized wall.

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Richard Nickel and Aaron Siskind with John Vinci and Ward Miller
The Complete Architecture of Adler and Sullivan
Chicago: Richard Nickel Committee, 2010, distributed by the University of Chicago Press, 461 pp., 51 color and 758 b&w illus. $95, ISBN 9780966027327

In its depth and breadth of research, elegance and range of images, and quality and size of production, this book may be without precedent in historical studies of American architecture. Its creation involved extraordinary, ongoing collaboration among architects, historians, preservationists, photographers, curators, librarians, foundations, book designers, printers, and other contributors over nearly sixty years since the project’s inception. It has been so long in development that its creation bridges the prevailing midcentury consensus that Sullivan was a forerunner of the modern movement, and the renewed interest of the later twentieth century in his work’s ornamental richness, a view that coincided with the postmodern architectural movement of the 1980s. This book’s store of information will assist with ongoing efforts to preserve and restore Adler and Sullivan’s extant buildings, and it will help to clarify the original architectural context of ornamental fragments from their works that are today housed in various public and private collections. Apart from its rich documentation of Adler and Sullivan’s architecture, this volume’s images highlight how different photographers have presented the work of the architects, as the field of architectural photography evolved in the last century.

The book is organized into two complementary sections. The first includes six essays by John Vinci that chronicle the development of Adler and Sullivan’s work together until their partnership ended in 1895, and their subsequent individual careers until Adler’s death in 1900 and Sullivan’s in 1924. These essays are illustrated by black-and-white photographs and some drawings integrated with the text. But each essay is also followed by a series of mostly black-and-white and some color plates that are largely but not exclusively the photographs of Richard Nickel, who began to document Adler and Sullivan’s architecture in 1952 as a student of Aaron Siskind, in a course on architectural photography at the Institute of Design, later part of the Illinois Institute of Technology. Some of the photographs are by Siskind, and by Nickel’s fellow students, in addition to images by contemporary architectural photographers. Siskind and Nickel were originally encouraged to pursue this project by Ben Raeburn (1911–1997), editor and publisher of Horizon Press in New York, and perhaps best known as Frank Lloyd Wright’s longtime publisher. There was an initial exhibit of Sullivan photographs directed by Siskind in 1954; its history has recently been published. Nickel continued to research Adler and Sullivan’s architecture until his death in 1972, when his body was found in their Chicago Stock Exchange Building (1893–94), then being demolished. Since Nickel’s death, his photographs and research files have been cared for by Chicago architect John Vinci and