upon its present relevance, and I would suggest that its argument on theatricality is, if anything, too directly oriented toward interests in atmosphere, mood, and affect in current architectural discourse. With its account tending more to collapse the distance between the two moments of cultural fascination than to summon readers back across that distance and into the experience of the house in the early nineteenth century, the useful comprehension a reader gains of the persistent relevance of the “theater of display” is offset by a diminished understanding of the actual consequentiiality of such an architecture within its historical moment.

One cause of this tendency is likely the author’s decision to reconstitute the house as the crystallization of its cultural moment only through categorical discursive terms, rather than by also employing the more shaded terms that emerge through exchanges and occurrences, the margins of discourse that are created by circumstance. Put simply, notably absent from Glorious Visions is any scrutiny of catalytic events, or evaluation of rival decisions, or portrait of antagonists. Culture here is discerned through a careful and detailed accounting of theoretical propositions and their dissemination, but that may not suffice for the deeper revelation of architectural experience that Furján intends. Soane was a famously fragile figure, quick to turn a deeper revelation of architectural experience of Soane’s house is an accomplishment, yet with no weakness or shortcoming acknowledged in either Soane or his house, only an affirmation of the currently prevailing discursive terms seems possible. A further layering of the relation between the house’s architectural and atmospheric complexities and the uncertainties of the cultural moment is wanted in order to understand the “spectacular theater” as not only making effects within its architectural interior but also having an effect upon its social and cultural exterior.

With the thematic chapters of Glorious Visions, Furján finds a creditable balance between the desire to convey the innumerable refractions of meaning and space in the house and the need to guide her reader toward a conclusive understanding of its “theatrical structure.” Liberal quotation from Soane’s contemporaries supplies a sense of the fluidity of terms such as “imagination,” “scene,” or “gothic,” while Furján’s explication of the concepts defined in those terms is generally distilled and precise. The organization of the book around such themes induces a degree of repetition, belaboring the main theme of spectacularity and theatricality. The reader could perhaps have been given responsibility for recalling this theme from the finer grain of correspondences between chapters. One compensatory contribution to the reader’s understanding of the intricacies of the house is the set of color illustrations that compose a tour of the house. Most of these illustrations are photographs by the author that, at first glance, may appear to be underexposed or incorrectly tinted. But as the text makes clear, what Furján has endeavored to capture in these images are the various effects of gloom, contrasting colors of light, and optical distortion, whence her argument about spectacularity proceeds. Combined with a selection of watercolors of the house interior, the photographs do offer a supplementary guide into the remarkable experiential framework that Furján asks us to see.

TIMOTHY HYDE
Harvard University

Notes

Katerina Rüedi Ray
Bauhaus Dream-house: Modernity and Globalization
London and New York: Routledge, 2010, 228 pp., 32 b/w illus. $49.95 (paper), ISBN 041575821

Katerina Rüedi Ray opens her book on the Bauhaus with four questions, which she repeats again in her conclusion. “How,” she asks, “do models of design education emerge in relation to social, economy, and cultural change,” “do economic and special structures, spatial and corporeal practices as well as systems of representation influence identity formation within architecture, design and art education,” “do models of architecture, design and art education change over time and within space,” and, finally, “can critical social theory inform architecture, design and art education?” None of the four relates specifically to the Bauhaus, although certainly the school can be used as a case study around which to develop answers to them. The strength of this book is its radical departure from the assumptions that have governed most earlier literature on the subject; the weakness is the attempt to cover such an extraordinary extent of ground in a scant 228 pages, sixty of which are devoted to notes, bibliography, and index. Ray careers back and forth in a narrative that spans at least six centuries and
as many continents, between keen insights with which subsequent scholars will have to contend and superficial coverage of almost every topic to which she all too briefly gives her attention. That her analysis is usually based upon a small number of secondary sources only adds to the disappointment, at the same time that it challenges others to complete the journey on which she has so suggestively embarked.

In what she describes as “the first book-length study of the Bauhaus through the lens of critical social theory,” she is certainly unusual in the degree to which she fails to be seduced by Gropius’s rhetoric. Rather than focusing on his objective rhetoric of production, she relentlessly concentrates on the links to consumerism. “Supposedly an institution teaching art, design and architecture centered on industrial production principles, the Bauhaus suddenly stood revealed [in an account in which former Bauhaus student described his visit to the exhibition on the school staged at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1938] as a media phenomenon—a ‘dream-machine’ trading in desires,” she writes (7).

Ray is convinced that the history of the school is the history of commodities; never does she accept its own focus, or that of the modern movement more generally, on the supposedly objective alternative—production. This prompts her, for instance, to pay welcome attention to the importance of marketing both in the school’s self-promotion efforts and as a field of study there.

Ray’s other major contribution is her preliminary mapping of the dissemination of modern architecture. While her all too brief account seldom distinguishes between the impact of Bauhaus pedagogy and Bauhaus aesthetics on the one hand, and the presence of former Bauhaus students and faculty or modern architecture and design more generally on the other, she is right to suggest that its geographical reach was far greater than has usually been acknowledged. Here again she provides a tantalizing hint of how new directions might yield insights in an account that defi-
antly refuses to privilege Europe, or even the West, over the rest of the world. Perhaps the most suggestive pages are those chronicling Hannes Meyer’s activities in Mexico. Ray is, not surprisingly, quite sympathetic to Meyer and offers glimmers of the major reassessment he deserves. Situating him in relation to the large German Communist exile community in Mexico City might have yielded further insights into his activities there. The fact that local architects such as Juan O’Gorman had already mastered the language of the European avant-garde nearly a decade before Meyer’s arrival suggests, however, that there was an indigenous engagement with modernism in Mexico and perhaps in other Latin American and Asian settings that hardly required the presence of Bauhaus exiles to manifest itself.

Bauhaus Dream-house covers a great deal of ground. Ray opens with a history of design education that begins with medieval guilds and ends with the Bauhaus. The second of her six main chapters briefly introduces critical theory. Heavily larded with quotes from secondary sources, they provide the background for her analysis of the Bauhaus “as a cultural commodity.” Two chapters focusing on the school follow. The first concentrates on the body and on the way in which the First World War shattered not only bodies but also traumatized minds in ways that influenced the experimental art produced at the school.

“In general,” Ray writes, “the Bauhaus responded to its psychosocial context by reconstructing personal identity through first, quasi-military and masochistic ritual and second, corporeal identities symbolically promising sexual equality through androgyny yet literally reinforcing the traditional superiority of men over women” (63). The second of these chapters focuses on the economic context in which the school operated, and its response to it. The issues it raises about the relationship of the school to the marketplace deserve further investigation. The two final chapters offer accounts in turn of the Bauhaus’s own publicity and, as described above, survey its international influence.

The book appears unusually lightly edited and contains many passages of extremely awkward writing. More frustrating for the fellow scholar are the many instances in which sources are not given, making it impossible to follow Ray’s promising leads without repeating her initial spadework. Most citations are embedded parenthetically in the text; the extensive bibliography is supplemented by footnotes, but very seldom does she provide the published sources (she has apparently consulted no archives) for the often fascinating nuggets she supplies in the notes.

Ray’s book offers compelling evidence of a welcome shift in the writing of history of the Bauhaus, and indeed of modern architecture and design in general, away from the acceptance of the rhetoric of its founders, whose convictions its earliest chroniclers generally shared. To be as convincing, however, as their often extremely polemical manifestoes and accounts, requires more than the substitution of one set of theories for another. Ray is derailed in part by her initial questions, which neither outline an approach nor define a thesis, but also by the tension between understanding design education as overwhelmed by external forces and yet having the agency to effect significant change. The power of the Bauhaus came at least in part from the degree to which its faculty and students were able to find forms that both contemporaries and their successors—opponents as well as champions—recognized as representing the myriad contradictions of Weimar Germany. This was a more substantive achievement than the marketing hype that failed to trigger the consumer demand that might have put the school on a more stable financial footing. That the school’s goals, whether economic self-sufficiency or objective industrial design, proved in many ways to be illusory dreams does not mean that they lacked intellectual and artistic rigor, as our apparently enduring fascination with it proves.

KATHLEEN JAMES-CHAKRABORTY
University College Dublin

Ken Tadashi Oshima
International Architecture in Interwar Japan: Constructing Kokusai Kenchiku

Ken Tadashi Oshima’s International Architecture in Interwar Japan represents a new