of the world. Two particular themes recur throughout. First is the centrality of imperialism, the seemingly never-absent tie between scientific and political activities. Perhaps the most striking example occurs in Shawn Malley’s essay, “The Layard Enterprise.” Malley presents Austen Henry Layard, the renowned English archaeologist, as seamlessly ensconced between political and archaeological motivations. He juxtaposes Layard’s activities in excavating Mesopotamia with his equally meticulous (and virtually never discussed) plans for the pacification and internment of its indigenous people, in what Layard himself called “quasi-military colonies” (115). While this particular example is a breathtaking addition to the legacy of a founder of English archaeology, it is not qualitatively different from the finding of, for instance, Ussama Makdisi on Baalbek in Lebanon, which, as a whole, he deems “a metaphor for empire in the nineteenth century” (257). One considerable fruit of awareness of the “imperial eyes” of archaeological investigators is to be able to acknowledge and evaluate the competing pasts promoted by competing imperial powers. 1 Thus Philippe Jockey’s elegant, concise essay on the discovery and reception of the Venus de Milo indicates not only how the statue’s actual Greek discoverer is largely written out of accounts of the work, but also how it comes to function as “a mirror of the international relations of the times” (240) in the competing claims for age and authenticity of the object by scholars of different nations. Other essays on the investment of Western scholars go even further to identify the imaginative vocabulary, both ideological and aesthetic, through which French scholars and archaeologists viewed Ottoman lands. Notable here is the essay by Sophie Basch on the challenge of sites in Asia Minor to the European imagination of a monolithic classical Greek civilization centered in Attica. For figures such as the ultranationalist Maurice Barrès, the enemy was archaeology itself, as well as the symbolic space of the museum, which inconveniently disentangled objects from their picturesque overgrowth and ruination, and in the process refused to flatter the Western viewer’s expectations.

But this volume not only offers material to contextualize the assumptions of the “discoverers,” it also works to take seriously the essential contribution of local and indigenous cultures and practices conscripted, or even supplanted, by archaeological activity. In “Indigenous Archaeologies in Ottoman Greece,” Yannis Hamilakis looks with an anthropologically sensitive eye at the treatment of antiquities by indigenous Greeks before Western authorities imposed their practices. He uses both advanced theoretical tools and a palpable sense of irony to reconnect the varieties of the treatment of antiquities across cultures. In a parallel way, Zainab Bahrani writes against an inherited narrative of archaeological discovery, which, she states, “best yields its meaning when it is unwound and read against the grain” (126). She tracks in particular both the centrality at the time and the later dismissal and unwriting of the many contributions of Hormuzd Rassam, a native Mesopotamian whom Layard befriended and depended closely upon, but who was most coolly treated by the overseers of the British Museum and related authorities. These essays work not only to intervene in the progressive narrative of scientific archaeology but also to analyze critically its essential cultural and ideological imbrication.

But the volume goes even further, notably in the groundbreaking essay by Edhem Eldem, the longest single work in the collection. Based on lengthy research in official Ottoman governmental archives, Eldem’s essay, “From Blissful Indifference to Anguished Concern,” tracks in detail the Ottoman government’s attitude toward antiquities, and historic preservation more generally. Eldem looks over a span of nearly a century, from governmental indifference in the late eighteenth century to the rise of the earliest Ottoman antiquities law in 1869. He closely examines Ottoman attitudes during the Elgin affair and seriously probes the attitude of indifference they bespeak. Later, as the Sublime Porte awakes to the political value of antiquities, we can almost put ourselves in the Ottoman position, as we read in detail the words of the British ambassador, Stratford Canning, which alternately flattered and demanded, successfully getting the export license Canning wanted, thereby maintaining the British franchise. Two other essays work further toward understanding the Ottoman public position about antiquities, by analyzing its representation later in the nineteenth century. Zeynep Çelik considers the circulation of imagery of antiquities. She ranges from their coverage in the new media, illustrated histories and popular illustrated magazines to their striking absence in the vast, seemingly comprehensive photographic albums that Sultan Abdülmecid II presented to the United States and Britain in the 1890s. Wendy Shaw writes cogently on the Ottoman Imperial Museum, begun in 1846, a rich site for considering the valuation of its archaeological holdings. Shaw sees in Turkish museums a sort of “resistance” to the West (425). She considers the influence of its first, and formative, director, Hamdi Bey, as well as the museum’s organization, which was not in the typical chronological/typological fashion of the museums then growing over Europe. Rather, the Imperial Museum was, and indeed remains, organized according to the territories of the Ottoman Empire, and Bey’s original scholarship is still sold in the museum shop. In both of these important essays, the Ottomans are active players in the drama of defining their own past, in a way that connects with the challenge of their present.

This pioneering volume has many more hits than misses. It succeeds brilliantly in its task, demonstrating in detail the actual, global range of producers, gatekeepers, and audiences through which archaeological knowledge, and history itself, is filtered.

Fred Bohrer
Hood College

Note

Richard Ingersoll and Spiro Kostof
World Architecture: A Cross-Cultural History

Some books are usefully filled with facts and can be consulted when one needs
information. They can properly sit on the library shelf and be taken down when the need arises. There are other books that go about their business in a different way, and by taking a hold on our imagination they leave us changed by our encounter with them.

Spiro Kostof (1936–91) was attracted to drama, and saw buildings as the settings in which we perform our rituals, public and private. When A History of Architecture was published in 1985, this side of his approach was prominently signaled in his subtitle, Settings and Rituals. The book has been around for so long now that it is difficult to imagine architectural history without it. It joined the bookshelf alongside the dictionary-like Banister Fletcher, which had its origins in a text and drawings by the architect Sir Banister Fletcher, but through the twentieth century it went through many editions and editors, and has been updated and reconceived many times. Banister Fletcher has some interpretative essays, but its real strength is in the brief factual coverage of a vast array of buildings; it is to be consulted for a name or a date, but probably not for a narrative.

Kostof’s narratives were his book’s great strength. His History was heavy with examples and illustrations, giving the impression that it touched on everything one might be expected to know, but of course that was an illusion, and any single-volume work, no matter how compendious, is bound to omit nearly everything. The point is not that everything should be included, but that the reader should be given a good overview: an orientation that allows independent exploration to go ahead without feeling utterly lost. Kostof managed to give an impression of a vast range of buildings, across the whole span of human building activity, and from humble dwellings to vast monuments.

Kostof was born in Istanbul and worked in California, so his worldview was cosmopolitan, with perspectives from East and West. His success in presenting world architecture can be seen in the fact that the text has been revised to meet new demands on it. The 2013 version has a completely new text (by Richard Ingersoll, who was one of Kostof’s PhD students) and a new title. Many of the illustrations remain the same, and the large format remains very similar, though the number of pages has increased.

Really, it is a new book. The structure of the contents has changed. Each of the twenty chapters covers a period of time (e.g., Chapter 4, 700–200 BCE; Chapter 18, 1920–1940) and is divided into three sections that present coverage of different parts of the world. So, for example, Chapter 4’s three sections deal with Southwest Asia and Achaemenid Persia, the Greek city-state, and Mauryan India, while Chapter 18 presents American skyscrapers and automobiles, European modernisms, and totalitarian settings in modern Europe. The structure allows coverage of buildings from around the world, while still retaining a broadly “Western” perspective, as the traditional staging posts of the high-art lineage from caves to modernism are all in place: Egypt, Greece, Rome, Gothic, Renaissance Italy, and so forth. There is not the same level of continuity for other parts of the world.

As the coverage has been expanded to include much more on Southeast Asia, Eastern Europe, sub-Saharan Africa, Central America, and pre-Contact Peru, there is less detail about some of the places that were studied more closely in earlier editions. I miss, for example, the multiple plans of the Great Temple of Amon Ra at Luxor, which Ingersoll represents only by its southern harem. In general the plans are clearer than they were before, as areas of tone have been used to differentiate zones, and students will find their way around them more easily. There are, however, fewer plans, which is a pity, as they are usually necessary for an understanding of the organization of a building. Relying more heavily on photographs tends to give the reader a more pictorial understanding, making the architectural history more like art history and less like architecture, and tending to inform stylistic discussions rather than giving the information to imagine how the building might have been used.

Some of the gains in the new format are clear: the original project aimed for a level of inclusivity that has now been managed more thoroughly. There is no longer any need to argue for the inclusion of vernacular architecture; it can be included as a legitimate part of the subject. Where the very distant past is concerned, there is scant evidence on which to build our narratives, and it is there that the interpretation is most likely to change.

The Lascaux caves that figured in Kostof’s text are now joined by the even older Chauvet cave, discovered in 1994, and the differences in the way they are described illustrates the different authors’ approaches. Kostof tried to imagine how the caves might have seemed to the people who painted them nearly 20,000 years ago, evoking the hunters’ evident sense of their own frailty in contrast with the strength of the animals they depicted. They depended on the animals’ flourishing, but also on killing them, and it was not an equal fight. There was peril for the hunter as well as the prey, and the hunt was a matter of life and death to be contemplated as a practical concern that was bound up with the mysteries of mortality. By contrast, Ingersoll’s method is to evoke the cave with reference to our own experience. So the Chauvet cave is clearly positioned as a religious place, “as large as a cathedral.” The outer part of the cave had been inhabited by bears, who hollowed out nooks. People later, about 30,000 years ago, decorated these nooks “as if they were side chapels in a church.” Something is gained here; something is lost. For us there may be a resemblance to chapels, but we can be sure that the people who decorated them did not aim to make them churchlike, so the statement is anachronistic. Ingersoll’s description is quicker and effective for our understanding of the form, but it does not take us on the imaginative journey that Kostof’s text did. We are informed by Ingersoll, and have a good impression of the place, but we have no new empathy. We do not need to engage so fully with this text as with Kostof’s, and it rewards us less. We do not grow as much, but nor do we have to work so hard.

Ingersoll’s opening sentence gives a clue: “Architecture is the single cultural expression that affects everyone.” There is much that is well judged about this first statement. It is arresting and well balanced. It challenges us to think. Its problem as an opener is that it is not self-evidently correct;
surely all human cultures have language as well as architecture, so that “singular” status is not accurate. To say that “architecture is the single cultural expression that affects everyone” is to say that the sense of architecture marks the limits of one’s world.

Kostof’s opening was different, based in human activity: “A history of architecture is both less and more than a grand tour. It does not have the immediacy of walking through the streets and public places of towns as diverse as Isfahan and London, or stepping into covered spaces that range in mood from the dappled, swarming tunnels of Muslim suqs to the single-minded sublimity of the Pantheon in Rome. That is how architecture is meant to be known. As the material theater of human activity, its truth is in its use.” This is a principled pragmatist position. Ingersoll dropped the subtitle Settings and Rituals, he explains, because it “worked well with ancient civilizations but made little sense of the subsequent architectural events in the modern age.” It would be possible to articulate a discussion about recent architecture based on our current rituals of dwelling and conspicuous consumption. There are rituals around the commute and the long-haul holiday, rituals in shopping, bathing, and theatergoing. To articulate them would be an imaginative challenge, and given the varied cultures in the places that are covered in the book, maybe it is too much to expect, but it is a shame to have given up on it as an aim.

Those reservations notwithstanding, Ingersoll’s rewrite is a significant achievement. The book now covers a wider range of architectural examples from more cultures than it did before. The information is more up-to-date, and the text is more approachable for students. At the same time, we miss Kostof’s personal and at times inspiring tone. In part it was Kostof’s text that prompted the changes in curriculum that are now institutionalized and to which Ingersoll’s text is so very well adapted. It is a businesslike book that will serve its student-readers well. They will be pleased by the accessibility of the text and will not know what they have missed.

ANDREW BALLANTYNE
Newcastle University

Caroline Constant
The Modern Architectural Landscape
Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012, 344 pp., 139 b/w illus. $30.00, ISBN 9780816676354

In an era when many think the historic narratives of landscape architecture and architecture are irreconcilably distinct, Caroline Constant elegantly constructs “thresholds out of boundaries” (99). Written over twenty years, the essays collected in The Modern Architectural Landscape critique recognized projects from the 1920s design of Sunnyside Gardens in New York City to the 1980s competition for the Parc de la Villette in Paris, countering the assumption that architects did not play a role in “shaping new attitudes toward the field” of landscape architecture (vii). Constant persuasively describes how the relationship between modern architecture and landscape architecture has never been monolithic, but rather becomes “capable of elaboration and change by means of iterative processes of negotiation” (8). Formulating an alternative framework, she reasserts the “nature of the architecture-landscape continuum” (vii) in the West, suggesting it has been far more fluid than previously acknowledged.

Binding Constant’s nine essays (three new, six revised) is the contention that there were modernist architects who took landscape seriously. She uses text as well as selected black-and-white photographs and drawn plans for each project to build the arguments within contextually rich frameworks. In the end, she has deconstructed the abstract white building placed on the tabula rasa as the quintessential product of modern architecture, a deeply embedded trope in architectural as well as landscape history. Her argument expands on David Leatherbarrow’s descriptions of shared topographical conditions of architecture and landscape architecture to engage in the process and the final product of design, socially, culturally, and ecologically.1

Setting the stage for the essays, Constant’s introduction describes “potential points of convergence” between architecture and landscape architecture practice. She begins with the challenge that “if we understand landscape as the medium through which the social, political, and physical structures that endow the ground with cultural value are brought into relationship with the immense scale of natural phenomena, then landscape is the means by which the structure of the ground is made intelligible” (1). Thus landscape as medium, as agent, as a way of seeing, and/or a signifier of identity, grounds her essays in a discourse of landscape able to absorb a multiplicity of explorations by modernist architects and landscape architects.

Referencing Elizabeth Kassler, Constant cautions that her intention is not to conflate the practices or negate the differences in the operational procedures of architecture and landscape architecture, but to explore how landscape has been investigated architecturally.2 Providing an alternative description of landscape theory in the first half of the twentieth century, Constant establishes significant threads of praxis as understood in the United States and Europe that support such explorations. By the end of her introduction, the complex position she describes is both clear and compelling.

The architectural articulation of social ideologies is a recurrent theme and the specific focus of two essays on housing projects, the first a comparison of Sunnyside in New York with Römerstadt in Frankfurt, the second a discussion of Lafayette Park in Detroit. In each of the projects, Constant considers the social agendas and sources as the designers manifested them in the design process. She contrasts the Sunnyside project, designed by Clarence Stein and Henry Wright with Marjorie Sewell Cautley in response to a grassroots social movement, with the Römerstadt project by Ernst May and Leberecht Migge, which exhibited a primarily utilitarian landscape reflecting a government-sponsored political agenda. Lafayette Park reveals the intersecting ideologies of Ludwig Hilberseimer’s vision of the progressive settlement unit and Alfred Caldwell’s engagement with the regionalist-based Prairie school of landscape architecture (Mies van der Rohe’s architecture is evidently nonessential to this discussion). Constant’s detailed attention to the political and cultural milieu within which each project is realized lays the groundwork for her distinct narrative of the design processes and intentions as well as the final experience of the place.

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