In this regard, see comments by Barbara Goss, "'sw o r ko np a t r o n a g ei s s w o r ko np a t r o n a g ei s' of an important new trend involving deep and thoughtful consideration of the relationship of Greek architecture to its broader context.  

PHIL STINSON  
University of Kansas  

Notes  
3. For fuller analysis, see Mary B. Hollinshead, “The North Court of the Erechtheion and the Ritual of Pnyxteria,” American Journal of Archaeology 119, no. 2 (2015), 177–90.  

Piet Lombaerde, ed.  
The Notion of the Painter-Architect in Italy and the Southern Low Countries  
Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2014, 311 pp., 258 b/w illus.  €95, ISBN 9782503548500  

This book owes its title to an insightful essay by Frans Baudouin that appeared in 2002 in the first volume of the Brepols Architcutura Moderna book series, also edited by Piet Lombaerde. Baudouin describes how painters got a share in designing buildings and became architects as well, focusing on the role of the painter-architect within the building process by clarifying Peter Paul Rubens’s part in the design of a Jesuit church and his own house, both in Antwerp. Baudouin makes clear that the cooperation between painters and craftsmen such as masons, stonecutters, and carpenters benefited both groups: the craftsmen could improve their designing skills as a result of their cooperation with a painter, who, as a professional “designer,” expanded his activities to the field of architecture. This interesting phenomenon of painters becoming architects is the subject of the present volume, in which Lombaerde narrows the subject down to Italy and the Southern Low Countries (present-day Belgium) within the time frame of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries. Other countries such as France and the Dutch Republic are not included. Lombaerde indicates in his foreword that his aim for the book is “to provide fresh insights into the relationship between the arts, more specifically painting and architecture” (vii).  

Unexpectedly, the book does not start with a historiographical introduction on the notion of the “painter-architect.” According to Lombaerde, that designation can be used for certain practitioners of architecture, including not only artists like painters and sculptors but also artisans like goldsmiths or carpenters. Following his introduction, thirteen essays “treat the notion of the painter-architect in entirely different ways, using a broad range of approaches,” as Lombaerde states (ix). These essays include various monographic studies, historical overviews, and theoretical articles, which collectively shed light on the subject. Most of the authors also contributed to the international colloquium of the same title as the book, held in Antwerp in 2011. Not every contribution from that colloquium is included, however, which may account for the notable omission of an essay devoted to Pieter Coecke van Aelst, one of the earliest and most important Flemish painter-architects.  

Three essays focus on individual painter-architects and, mainly, the paintings they produced: Sebastiano Serlio, discussed by Sabine Frommel; Jacopo Barozzi da Vignola, discussed by Bruno Adorni; and Wensel Cobergher, discussed by Tine L. Meganck. Frommel’s contribution begins with an interesting observation that Serlio was trained as a painter-architect, but regrettably offers no elaboration on the nature or significance of this characterization. Frommel and Meganck stress the importance of Serlio and Cobergher as painters. Adorni is the only one of the three who looks for parallels between the built architecture and paintings of the painter-architect under discussion, stressing the importance of perspective in Vignola’s paintings and buildings.  

One-third of the book, consisting of five essays, concerns the work of Rubens. Stefano F. Musso and Giulio Girondi address the influence of the prints in Rubens’s book Palazzi di Genova in essays that would have been excellent additions to the 2002 volume mentioned above. Musso compares the prints with the Genoese architecture that Rubens must have seen in person. Interestingly, Rubens in some cases ignored figurative paintings on façades in order to provide a clearer view of the architectural scheme of a building, even in cases when this scheme of columns and cornices was painted as well. Girondi describes the influence of Palazzi di Genova in the work of Frans Geffels (1625–94), who trained as a painter in Antwerp and worked in Mantua as both a painter and an architect. In another Rubens-related essay, Stefan Boykens offers a digital reconstruction of the portico and garden pavilion of the Rubens House in Antwerp. The reconstruction aligns these built elements (which are actually not aligned), thereby revealing the degree of skill and knowledge of perspective that Rubens harnessed to create the illusion of symmetry in a garden pavilion that is, in fact, asymmetrical. Carolien De Staelen’s essay starts with a short and insightful overview of Rubens’s activities as an architect and ends with the (arguably exaggerated) idea that Rubens equals Michelangelo as an architect. The most interesting of the essays devoted to Rubens is authored by Lombaerde, who demonstrates a scenographic parallel between Rubens’s paintings and the design for his own house, showing how Rubens created a similar aspect of space and light in both paint and
stone. As a painter, Rubens had a profound knowledge of perspective, optics, and lighting, which proved to be an excellent quality for a designer of architecture. This highly interesting visual analysis deserves more study, as it could be the starting point for a better understanding of the nature of the relationship between the two arts.

Contributor Werner Oechslin seeks a more theoretical explanation for why painters became architects by looking for a principle common to both media. The Roman Accademia di San Luca united painters, sculptors, and architects, who agreed on the equality of all arts by stating that disegno (the visualization of an idea, or inventio) is the father of all of them. Despite this common ground, discussions continued between painters who believed that painting is the mother of arts and architects who believed that the use of mathematics and perspective in architectural drawings puts architecture on the level of the liberal arts. Edward H. Wouk uses a similar theoretical approach in his essay on the painted façade of Frans Floris’s house. Christopher P. Heuer compares travel sketches to the Wonderschaft and education of artists.

Despite the merits of the above-described contributions, only two essays in the volume actually address the notion of the painter-architect, and both do so from a historical point of view. In his unannounced essay, Howard Burns discusses painter-architects in Italy, and while analyzing the lives of painters like Bramante, Raphael, and Peruzzi, he draws the conclusion that most painters who designed buildings were, in fact, architects by opportunity. As court artists they fulfilled the tasks of artistic directors, being responsible for all sorts of design needed at court, including architecture. On the other hand, Burns acknowledges that they were not necessarily better architects than others who were trained as sculptors (Brunelleschi) or who came from intellectual backgrounds (Alberti). The other essay elaborating on the notion of the painter-architect is contributed by Oliver Kik, who analyzes how architectural knowledge was transmitted in the Low Countries in the period 1480–1530. According to Kik, architectural design cannot be clearly isolated to one professional group. Rather, it was a shared skill of many artists involved in design in general. Interestingly, Kik reverses the whole idea of architecture being made by painters by asserting that most painters from the sixteenth century were, in fact, sons of architectural designers and goldsmiths (e.g., Albrecht Durer). He proposes to use the more general term designer instead of painter-architect, since categorizing particular artists as painters or architects does not do justice to the design skills they exercised in the various arts. As Kik puts it, “The professional identity of the architect during the fifteenth and sixteenth century is at least to be described as fluid and transversal” (87).

The book’s central question of the relationship between painting and architecture is compelling, but a clear view of the nature of this relationship requires further research. Many contributions are interesting in themselves, but it is not always clear how they relate to one another and the volume as a whole. Only Burns, Oechslin, and Adorni elaborate on the theme of the painter-architect, and Kik is the only contributor who interrogates the usefulness of the categorization for architectural history. Kik explicitly refutes the argument that the Renaissance was the reason that painters started to design architecture, as most of these painter-architects came from families of goldsmiths and masons. One could say that before we can study the notion of the painter-architect, we need to study the notion of the architect.

Kik’s essay is the most intriguing among the contributions in that his analysis challenges the notion of the painter-architect as reflected in Lombaerde’s definition. Perhaps it would have been helpful had Lombaerde taken the example of Baudouin’s earlier essay and really focused on painters active within the field of architecture. Italy and the Southern Low Countries provide enough names of such painters to fill a book on this subject that would promote the study of their mutual influences. This approach might have resulted in a clearer image of the relationships among painting, architecture, and related arts in the early modern period.

PIETER VLAARDINGERBROEK
Universiteit Utrecht

Note


Paul Dobraszczyk
Iron, Ornament and Architecture in Victorian Britain: Myth and Modernity, Excess and Enchantment

Until recently critical discussions of architectural ornament were generally to be found in writings about nineteenth-century and/or Islamic architecture. Still riding the contemporary wave of interest in ornament and its relationship to architectural form, Paul Dobraszczyk’s Iron, Ornament and Architecture in Victorian Britain offers the reader new perspectives on a historical moment of the nineteenth century that is curiously apposite to architects and theorists today. One aspect of the resurgence of this interest is carefully detailed and chronicled in Dobraszczyk’s comprehensive study of Victorian Britain’s experience with iron as the first truly modern building material. Dobraszczyk articulates a technological experience for Victorian architects that is analogous to the one that Antoine Picon and others have theorized regarding the reappearance of ornament in contemporary architectural culture, which they see as strongly influenced by the new wide-ranging opportunities made possible by advances in digital culture. In similar fashion, advances in iron production methods and technologies in the second half of the nineteenth century led to revolutionary ways of understanding and producing architecture.

Through an exploration of various “ironworlds” in Victorian Britain, Dobraszczyk claims to seek out how a “fusion of iron and ornament” sought to reconcile art and technology by creating “a new, modern architectural language that drew on both history and modernity” (3). Striving also to challenge assumptions about the perceived ideological split between Victorian architecture and engineering (5) as well as more enduring and complex relationships, such as perceptions of architectural form and material as they relate to history, Dobraszczyk concerns himself in detail with what he refers to as iron’s “unboundedness” (9).