The Professione di Architetto in Renaissance Italy shows how Renaissance Italian architects used the concept of the professione di architetto as a way to affirm and delineate the character of their occupation. Drawing inspiration from antiquarian models and taking advantage of the humanist ethos, these architects equated “profession” with manual and theoretical expertise, social authority, and the fulfillment of artistic, civic, and moral ideals. Elizabeth Merrill places the origins of architectural professionalism in early modern Italy—rather than in the nineteenth-century movements frequently cited by social historians—and describes the theoretical context for the architect’s professional rise. Positioning themselves alongside university-educated professors, architects of Renaissance Italy crafted didactic treatises about their work and created academies for its instruction, foreshadowing a long history of architectural discourse that continues to this day.

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the nascent independent communes of central Italy expressed a new sense of civic identity through the staging of elaborate public liturgical processions that shaped and were shaped by local mythology and idiomatic urban landscapes. The Medieval Inchinata Procession at Tivoli: Ritual Construction of Civic Identity in the Age of the Commune examines Tivoli’s Inchinata procession, which continues to circle the city every year on the eve of the Feast of the Assumption. Reconstructing the route and performance of the medieval Inchinata through textual, topographical, and archaeological data, Rebekah Perry argues that the procession evolved as an adaptation of “official” liturgical rites introduced by Tivoli’s rival Rome to a native apotropaic ritual and local narratives embedded in the city’s topography. Through the cosmographical choreography of the procession, the young municipality may have used this amalgamation to invoke the New Jerusalem as an appeal to divine authority for the right to self-rule.

Louis Sullivan and the Physiognomic Translation of American Character examines the racial politics of Louis Sullivan’s democratic vision for American architecture, as manifest in his interpretations of physiognomic character in people and the built environment and in his reflections on U.S. nationalism. Charles L. Davis II argues that while Sullivan believed that ordinary Americans would produce an indigenous culture reflective of democratic ideals, his assimilationist conception of American citizenship excluded recent white immigrants and resident nonwhite peoples and limited his democratic architecture, as in the case of Kehilath Anshe Ma’ariv Synagogue in Chicago. While Sullivan’s ornament for the synagogue expressed Jewish identity in Chicago, its Richardsonian exterior referred to his secular-assimilationist model of national culture. The synagogue’s subsequent use as Pilgrim Baptist Church by an African American congregation complicates our understanding of Sullivan’s assimilationist political theory and its expression in his architecture.

The graphical method propounded by Russian German Israeli architect Alexander Klein during the late 1920s evaluates the qualities of architectural plans through a process of diagrammatic analysis following purportedly objective criteria. In Evaluator, Choreographer, Ideologue, Catalyst: The Disparate Reception Histories of Alexander Klein’s Graphical Method, Christoph Lueder examines the reception and adaptation of Klein’s method. Ernst Löwitsch reinterpreted Klein’s analytical notation as choreography of domestic life. Following Klein’s forced emigration from Nazi Germany, Frank Gloor rediscovered Klein’s graphical method and transformed and adapted it into a scientific method classifying degrees of flexibility. Catherine Bauer disseminated the method to the English-speaking world under a new title, “Functional Housing for Frictionless Living,” which led to Robin Evans’s enduring indictment of Klein’s diagrams as emblematic of reductive functionalism. Throughout its reception, the graphical method has been viewed at various times as a methodology of scientific evaluation, a choreography of everyday life, an indictment of functionalist ideology, and a catalyst for new working methodologies.