end times through human hands. The stakes, then, for the subjects and the architectural historian are quite high. Given such Mormon beliefs, everything in members’ lives reflected back to God’s purposes, from farmland to barns to parlors to towns- scapes to the entire line of settlement in Utah itself. Accordingly, Mormon villages were nucleated to strengthen cohesion, fine houses and prosperous businesses were celebrated as signs of God’s favor, public works were interpreted as arenas for members’ sacrifices, and temples were used as anchors for the sacred. Interestingly, this sense of purpose corresponds with Carter’s own emphasis on the symbolic power generally inherent in human landscapes. Further, Carter sees the Mormon doctrine of continuing revelation as lending fluidity to the group’s various architectural solutions. His focus on the Sanpete Valley provides a testing ground for these ideas; here, he can compare relationships among specific buildings and types over time on a human scale while ranging outside the valley when necessary. Beyond Manti, the valley towns of Ephraim, Mount Pleasant, Spring City, Fairview, Fountain Green, and Moroni allow for elaboration of Carter’s points as much as Salt Lake City and Mormon precedents elsewhere. Throughout, Carter’s study highlights the active hand of church president Brigham Young in directing the nature of these settlements and their architecture. But just as often we learn of architects such as William H. Folsom, whose French-inspired Manti Temple (1877–88) may be “the finest of LDS buildings, past and present” (240), or of the improvisational solutions arrived at by individual settlers.

Carter’s material evidence also points to landmarks for change over time that are different from those typically ascribed by historians to the Mormon experience. The death of Joseph Smith in 1844, the arrival in Utah of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, and the disavowal of plural marriage as a church policy in 1890 recede in importance in light of a different chronology. Rather, the landscape shows that by the 1860s an accommodation process was already under way in which the symbolic centrality Mormons pursued during an experimental Zion-making phase shifted to a more “enduring Zion” with “discrete sacred and secular zones” and a less imminent millennium (15–16). Key to the shift toward an enduring Zion was the reorientation of Mormon temples to locations just outside of towns, as at St. George in 1877 and at Manti, a change that reinforced a more differentiated, less unified landscape. In the book’s climactic and final full chapter, Carter focuses on the temple at Manti, exploring its background, construction, symbolism, and secretive inner workings at length. He shows how Folsom’s building balanced support for the existing social order even as it offered individual believers a new portal to God.

There is room here for more consideration of race and conflict. Carter does little to investigate how Mormon settlements and buildings might have bolstered ideas of whiteness, given the early church’s policy of barring blacks from the priesthood and from most temple ordinances. Even more, at times in this book the Mormon experience in the Utah landscape unfolds as if on a blank slate, rather than amid the Ute Indian settlements and resulting tensions that shadowed the steps of the community’s growth. For example, readers learn that initial settlers at Manti built and lived within a succession of fortifications for defense, but the settlement’s emergence thereafter is described without reference to Indian relations. And although the first residents of at least three different settlements in the valley—at Spring City, Mount Pleasant, and Ephraim at Pine Creek—were driven out by Indian attacks, the return of settlers is described in a similarly solitary fashion. There is no doubt that Mormon communities ultimately prospered on these lands, but this study offers little sense of how such communities engaged with the encampments of the Utes or their subsequent removal from the area.

For its portrait of the Mormon experience, Carter’s otherwise thorough book is a notable achievement. It is a useful complement to David J. Howlett’s Ohio-based Kirtland Temple: The Biography of a Shared Mormon Sacred Space (2014), with relevance to insiders and outsiders alike. And Carter’s study fulfills so much of the vision for vernacular architecture fieldwork set out by Henry Glassie, Dell Upton, and others that it received the Abbott Lowell Cummings Book Prize from the Vernacular Architecture Forum in 2016. Lastly, Building Zion convincingly demonstrates the value of applying a material lens when tracing religious belief and conceptions of the sacred. Refusing to settle for easy answers, Carter’s holistic approach to Zion will endure.

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Note

Mario Gooden
Dark Space: Architecture, Representation, Black Identity
New York: Columbia Books on Architecture and the City, 2016, 144 pp., 21 color and 26 b/w illus. $20, ISBN 9781941332139

“Identity is passé.” It was 2002, and the words stung. As an undergraduate applying to doctoral programs, I was searching for the vocabulary I needed to talk about the issues in design that were important to me. Identity, I determined, was one of them. The words came from a senior scholar I respected at a program I was pursuing, and suddenly what I envisioned as my academic trajectory seemed trivial and faddish. However, in the current political climate, with the 2015 Supreme Court ruling in Obergefell v. Hodges, the recent campaign of the first female candidate of a major party for the U.S. presidency, increased xenophobia and Islamophobia, and the continued visibility of grassroots movements like Black Lives Matter and the 2017 Women’s March on Washington, it has become clear that identity is anything but passé.

Mario Gooden takes on the issue of identity in architecture and wrestles with the notion of subjectivity throughout Dark Space. For him, how design contends with, reflects, directs, and responds to individual and collective identities—historical, present, and future—is an issue of utmost concern. The centering of identity—viewed through the lens of investigating subjectivity—within this design discourse is both paramount and timely.

This book is one of only a few texts that deal with the history, theory, and criticism of the question of an African American architectural tradition. Most texts that emphasize race in relation to design are
concerned with the historical consequences of inequity in the social construction of race, and how it has affected individuals and communities. Other texts address the interpretation of race, either in museum and monument design or in historic preservation. Finally, some texts strive to recognize the contribution of individual African American architects in an attempt to elevate their status and, perhaps, even make the case for a long tradition of African American contributions to design in the United States dating back to slavery. Gooden probes the question of an African American architectural tradition in five relatively short yet dense chapters that also work as stand-alone essays.

Throughout the book, he engages Michel Foucault and Henri Lefebvre to connect their theories of spatial production, praxis, and power to the relationship between African Americans and the built environment in the United States. He exhibits these theories as useful to designers in conceptualizing the African American experience. Conversely, Gooden also shows how the works of Adolf Loos, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, and Le Corbusier restrict and marginalize black bodies and their subjectivity. In addition to highlighting some of the primary theorists on whose ideas architects and students of architecture rely in developing a design praxis, Gooden investigates the work and theory of African American artists, literary critics, and social scientists. How often does a single-author architectural text engage W. E. B. Du Bois, Romare Bearden, Jacob Lawrence, bell hooks, and Cornel West? Never—until now.

The title of the first chapter, “‘Made in America’: There Is No Such Thing as African American Architecture,” is a veil—it tricks the reader into thinking that Gooden sees no African American lineage in the history of design in America. In fact, he takes his cue from Du Bois, who stated, “There is nothing so indigenous, so completely ‘made in America,’ as [African Americans]” (13). In this chapter, Gooden discusses the absorption of African American culture into the larger project of American culture, citing some well-known examples: dance, music, and fashion. Jazz, he proclaims, was the “first indigenous American style to affect music in the rest of the world” (15). African American building practices were also incorporated into the general repertoire of American building. The erasure of the “African” in African American cultural production is akin to what happened to African culture in the vast and devastating project of the transatlantic slave trade. America created something entirely “new.”

The second chapter, “Architecture Liberation Theology,” highlights one of the most important spaces in the African American experience—the black church. Gooden introduces theories on spatial practice based on the work of Foucault, bringing the topic of liberation into full discourse with the issue of spatial praxis. He also questions the Eurocentric and formalist concepts of early avant-garde modern architects and theorists—Le Corbusier, Jacques Lacan, and Mies—arguing, “Taken together, the liberative promises of the modern architectural project are tied to the technological and abstract intellectual production of a European patriarchy” (26). He rails against the traditional idea that “privity is given to the architect as author and conceptualizer of the spatial composition from whom all meaning in generated” (27). High modernism, then, is the opposite of liberating. It is through engagement with the social production theories of Lefebvre and others that design methodologies can become more inclusive and comprehensive. Gooden holds up the design of the Bethlehem Baptist Church (1944) by Rudolph M. Schindler as one example of how foregrounding the design of space over form subverts traditional power structures in modern design and has a liberating effect.

In the third chapter, “Space as Praxis as Identity,” Gooden expands the notion of subjectivity in one of his strongest contributions to architectural theory and practice. He introduces artists whose work cuts across time and space. Gooden wants the reader to pay attention to the possibilities that two-dimensional art holds for making temporal and spatial connections. While examining the work of Martha Rosler, Rose-Lee Goldberg, Louise Lawler, Adrian Piper, and his colleague Bernard Tschumi, Gooden asserts, “The paradox of architecture is not about the impossible reconciliation of perception of the architectural concept and real space but about the complex and dialectical relationship between the ‘ideal’ (form) and the ‘real’ (experience) in architecture—the questioning of the nature of space while at the same time experiencing a real space that is sensual and perhaps, even political” (57). An understanding of this statement is a must for all architects, students of architecture, teachers of architecture, designers, planners—for all people. This is the crux of the work of design and how it informs everyday lived experiences. To build, to design, is to be political. One cannot divorce design from this truth.

Given the recent opening of the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C., “The Problem with African American Museums” is Gooden’s strongest, most argumentative, and most poignant chapter. The timing was anything but coincidental. Gooden penned this essay in response to receiving repeated requests for proposals to design African American museums. Here he returns to the notion put forward in his first chapter, that there is no African American architecture because of the “naturalization of blackness into African American culture—resulting in a more postmodern black double consciousness that finds itself at the center of cultural production while still marked by difference” (100). So how does one design for an African American museum given this condition?

Gooden argues that black architects have strived to create an African American aesthetic in the most superficial ways. This superficiality, however, is not simply a condition of black architectural practice. The architecture profession more broadly is preoccupied with “surfaces, skins, symbols, and skin color”; Gooden asserts that this is a “recent postmodern phenomenon, and one that afflicts a number of major African American museums” (102). In addition to this postmodern aesthetic, another glaring issue with current design trends for African American museums is the flattening symbolism of Afrocentricity. Gooden critiques the “kente cloth, Ashante stools, headwraps, and occasional Egyptian iconography” that are central to an Afrocentric aesthetic as a means of self-stereotyping. He echoes Cornel West in declaring that such aesthetic practice “reinforces the narrow discussions about race” (103). Much of the design work for African American museums, Gooden argues, is uncritical, and not nearly as radical as the liberation struggle of African Americans in the history of America. This chapter embodies Gooden’s harshest criticism of recent architectural trends.
Gooden’s final chapter, “(Black) Sexuality and Space: The Body and the Gaze,” is a critical analysis of two architectural projects for black women: the Josephine Baker House by Adolf Loos and Amaza Lee Meredith’s Azurest South project, which she designed for herself. Gooden highlights the inherent racism of major philosophers and theorists like G. W. F. Hegel and Loos and pushes forward his argument that modernism, with its biases evident in the words and designs of its major proponents, was never meant to serve anyone other than the elite. It most certainly did not respond to the needs of working-class ethnic communities, and especially not to those of women of color. The juxtaposition of the communities, and especially not to those of women who broke gender and sexuality norms.

Dark Space, taken as a whole, represents a vital broadening of the discourse of architectural history, theory, and praxis; however, at times Gooden works too hard to show how established theory fits into his own arguments and theory. One example is his use of the scientific liberation of the Renaissance as a parallel to the spatial liberation of African Americans in Schindler’s church design. Another is his introduction of Foucault’s analysis of Diego Velázquez’s Las Meninas into his discussion of the spatial tensions of subject–object relationships, which then segues into his museum design critique. By situating his arguments in this manner he is trying to show the relevance of his examples by relating them to better-known and more firmly established examples in the architecture, art, and design canon centered on early modern Europe. Perhaps his method of connecting such vast examples is an attempt to gently guide more Eurocentric design theorists into his world of theory and praxis.

Regardless, the work is necessary and well timed. It conjures up unspoken histories of African American building traditions that have been lost in time—as many stories of African American cultural production have been—or absorbed into the American mainstream. The book repositions the black subject as the center of its analysis. It begins for a reconsideration of the Afrocentric trope—an invented aesthetic that flattens the black experience and disregards historical accuracy. Finally, it challenges designers to employ a more thorough methodological process through spatial praxis that acknowledges the existence and autonomy of the black subject, the black experience, and black identity.

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Notes
1. See Darell Wayne Fields, Architecture in Black: Theory, Space, and Appearance (London: Bloomsbury Press, 2015); Lesley Naa Norle Lokko, ed., White Papers, Black Marks: Architecture, Race, Culture (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000). Both of these volumes investigate the condition of blackness as it relates to architecture through a pan-Africanist, diasporic, and global lens; they do not focus simply on the United States, although the theories they put forth can be applied to the United States and the African American experience.
John Michael Vlach’s research on shotgun houses also follows in this tradition.