part of a reality that has been in the making for decades. Here the work of Lisle in *Modern Coliseum* comes into focus, with his emphasis on how sports stadia are “massive components of urban landscapes [that] since the mid-1960s have played an important role in the reordering of central business districts” (7). Lisle, like Shubert, believes that stadia are often overlooked yet worthy of consideration, as “these modern colisseums tell us a great deal about who we were, who we aspire to be, how we experienced space and the city, and how we conceived of ourselves as a public” (15). This final point, about the construction of a shared identity, is particularly valuable. It is striking, given the sweep of Lisle’s claims, that his book unfolds over the years from 1945 through the late 1970s. While many readers will agree with Lisle’s freighting of the stadium with broader civic and societal significance, many would point out that this period saw the birth of the often-unloved and much-maligned cookie-cutter or “concrete doughnut” stadium. It is to Lisle’s credit that he has written a volume that is squarely situated in an era of increasingly regular and standardized stadia in order to tell a story about the broader significance of the building type.

The impact of suburbanization on cities, the distinctly American habit of team owners moving their teams from one city to another across the country (unthinkable in most other parts of the world), and the impact of race and class divisions on stadium design and urban identity all inform Lisle’s narrative. Like Shubert, he writes about the ways in which in the 1990s “the game on the field became simply a thematic anchor to a broader consumption experience, marked by souvenir shops, restaurants, bars, art installations, and sports-themed museums and memorials” (233). These all looked new and different, even if they were only a new form of already existing tensions between sport and business. The stadia that emerged in this decade—think of Baltimore’s Camden Yards—were cast as corrective to the generic concrete projects of the 1960s and 1970s. Lisle quotes Paul Goldberger, who went so far as to say of Camden Yards, “This is a building capable of wiping out in a single gesture 50 years of wretched stadium design, and of restoring the joyous possibility that a ball park might actually enhance the experience of watching the game of baseball” (255). But as Lisle reminds us, “The aesthetics and rhetoric of democratic inclusion and traditionalism ran aground the realities of increasing economic inequality and consumerist spectacle” (231).

*Modern Coliseum* covers an era when bigger was often seen as unquestionably better, illustrated by the author’s case studies of projects like the Houston Astrodome (1965) and St. Louis’s Busch Stadium (1966). That neither is still in use today is a reminder that scale alone does not prevent a building from falling out of favor. It is also a reminder that stadia, while often advertised as assets to the cities in which they are located, are in reality liabilities. Teams may depart long before the bills for their arenas have been paid, with taxpayers left on the hook for years afterward.

Both of these volumes are welcome additions to the history of this building type, which is only getting more expensive at the same time its average life span (in North America) grows shorter and shorter. *Modern Coliseum* reveals how stadia have always been about more than sports alone. The variety of ends to which stadia have served as means reminds us that these vast projects are complexly intertwined with the many other forces shaping our lives. And the forces that *Architecture on Ice* rightly sees shaping hockey arenas have been shaping stadia in North America since at least the 1990s. The imperatives driving development of stadia today bear little in common with the forces that drove the creation of their predecessors just fifty years ago. The program of stadia now is to generate revenue; that sports are played in them is a symptom of the forces behind their creation, not the cause.

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**Notes**


Tamar Zinguer

**Architecture in Play: Intimations of Modernism in Architectural Toys**

Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2015, 252 pp., 129 illus. $49.50 (cloth), ISBN 9780813937724

The design of objects and spaces for children is a hot topic these days, as evidenced by a spate of recent publications and exhibitions dealing with subjects ranging from school and playground design to summer camps, museums, toys, and games. Tamar Zinguer’s recent book *Architecture in Play: Intimations of Modernism in Architectural Toys* finds a place squarely within this trend, at a site of intersection between architectural history and the material cultures of childhood: construction toys. Zinguer’s book is not a comprehensive study of construction sets (no Lincoln Logs or Lego here). It focuses on four case studies: Friedrich Froebel’s kindergarten Gifts and Occupations (1836); Gustav and Otto Lilienthal’s Anchor Stone Building Blocks (1877); Frank Hornby’s Meccano (1901) and A. C. Gilbert’s Erector Set (1911); and Charles and Ray Eames’s Toy (1951) and House of Cards (1952).

The book’s chronological boundaries mark a period of significant changes in thinking about childhood as a distinct field of human experience, and about the importance of play for children’s social and intellectual development (also arising at this time was a new commercial and design interest in childhood games and toys). Zinguer surveys shifting theories of play from Friedrich Schiller to Sigmund Freud, John Dewey, Johan Huizinga, Roger Caillois, and Erik Erikson, making suggestive links between developing ideas about play’s utility and the nature of construction toys during this period. The material strata of these toys—wood, stone, metal, and paper—also link them to modernist architectural imperatives: natural form, tectonics, engineering, lightness, and flexibility. However, *Architecture in Play* is not much concerned with the influence of these toys on modern architects’ practices. Zinguer’s argument is at once looser and more capacious, situating the toys within larger constellations of intellectual, technological, and cultural developments, and within the particular concerns of their inventors, while posing questions about construction sets’ potential as tools for rethinking architecture. Her definition of these sets as “kits of parts that form miniature spatial constructions and can be manipulated, taken apart, and then reconstructed” (2) points to her real interest: the toys’ capacity for disassembly and reassembly, allowing for different structures to
emerge at any point from a series of possible elements.

The book’s first chapter examines Froebel’s Gifts and Occupations, a series of twenty structured wooden play objects developed for use in the first kindergartens, starting in 1836. These are familiar objects in design history: Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier, Buckminster Fuller, and Charles Eames, among others, cited play with the Froebel Gifts as a formative design experience. Zinguer, while hardly the first historian to note this connection, goes further than previous authors in deftly unfolding a dense series of interwoven preoccupations that underlay Froebel’s development and deployment of these objects. She shows the Gifts—three-dimensional solids (sphere, cube, cylinder) broken down into constituent elements of planes, lines, and points—to have been indebted both to Froebel’s studies in mineralogy and to his adherence to German romantic philosophy. Froebel had studied under Samuel Weiss, a proponent of axial crystallography, and he followed Friedrich Schiller in understanding play as a means of mastering sensory impressions and bringing them under the impulse of form making (38). Children were to encounter the various elements of the Gifts in carefully directed sessions, first through looking at them and then taking them apart, breaking them down so as to reconstruct them, intuiting for themselves the inherent structure of all visible reality—or what Froebel called the “Unity of Life.”

Zinguer’s second case study considers Gustav and Otto Lilienthal’s Anchor Stone Building Blocks (Anker-Steinbaukasten), small blocks made of artificial stone that could be assembled into a variety of building types with the guidance of the step-by-step patterns provided. Zinguer convincingly reads these sets in relation to contemporary debates about tectonics in architecture (Karl Friedrich Schinkel, Karl Bötticher, Gottfried Semper) and their emphasis on essential structural components (an especially plausible connection, given Gustav Lilienthal’s own architectural education in a milieu suffused with Schinkel’s ideas). More tenuously, she connects the Anchor Stone Blocks to the Lilienthal’s experiments in early manned flight, relating new bird’s-eye views afforded by flight to children’s overhead views of these play structures. It is curious, however, that Zinguer barely notes the historicist element of the blocks; the patterns included with the sets were dominated by medieval castles, forts, and churches, seemingly capitalizing on (and possibly contributing to) the era’s renewed interest in founding myths of national culture and the accompanying promotion of neo-Gothic edifices.

The book’s third chapter considers both Hornby’s Meccano and Gilbert’s Erector Set in relation to the engineering marvels (and some well-publicized failures) that inspired them. These sets were directly mimetic of the changing industrial landscape of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; although neither of their inventors was an engineer, Zinguer notes, the component metal parts of the sets paralleled real elements (girders, beams, trusses) and engaged users in real activities of assembly and interchangeability associated with the engineering of structures, along with their potential for collapse. Compellingly, she argues that the success of Meccano and Erector Set not only reflected an admiration for these new structures but also offered a means to psychologically offset fears associated with this new world and its potential for catastrophic failure—“building trust in a complex technological world, building reassurance that world would not collapse” (143). This chapter further investigates the gendered social utility claimed for these toys, as in the marketing for Erector Set, which suggested that playing with the toy would redirect boys’ innate desire to destroy into a constructive urge, preparing them for a future as productive citizens.

The book’s final case study, regarding the Eameses’ Toy and House of Cards, will likely be the one most familiar to scholars of modern architecture and design. The author moves from the flexible, lightweight arrangements of these toys to Alexander Graham Bell’s experiments with tetrahedral kites, Buckminster Fuller’s and Konrad Wachsmann’s space frames, twentieth-century prefabricated housing, and the Eameses’ own Case Study House (1949–51), the modular components and colored panels of which are mirrored in the imagistic planar arrangements of the House of Cards.

Zinguer’s innovative and wide-ranging book marshals evidence for the place of construction toys in a genealogy of modernism. It also poses intriguing questions about such toys’ potential as tools for rethinking architecture and spatial thought, through the author’s emphasis on the improvisational and divergent character of construction play and players’ agency in recombining component parts in ways not directed or imagined by the sets’ creators. Although this is undoubtedly an important aspect of these toys, it is perhaps too much to say, as Zinguer does, that play with these sets “always entails a sort of deviation” (2). Froebel famously disallowed free play with the Gifts, asserting the necessity of a controlled procession through the stages of discovery; although not as strict in their recommendations, Anchor Stone Building Blocks, Meccano, and Erector Set all featured detailed outlines for young builders to follow. Only the Eameses’ toys, reflecting a new midcentury acceptance of creative play as an end in itself, eschewed explicit direction. Zinguer’s claim that “as a tool, the architectural toy specifically allows one to manipulate and tinker with space, literally grab and toy with morsels of architecture without a specific task” (211) applies well to these sets’ capacity for endless reinvention. But there was another side as well: of instructions, plans, and dutiful child builders seeking to follow them.

By the end of Zinguer’s lively history, I found myself wishing that its boundaries had been extended slightly further into the 1960s, when radical architects and designers explicitly began to incorporate play and toylike elements into their formal vocabularies: Cedric Price’s Meccano-esque Fun Palace and the Lego-like clip-on parts of Archigram, for instance. But that would be another book. By ending her story at the very outset of the television age, Zinguer provides a retrospective view on a discrete moment in the history of childhood play, just as its activities—and objects—began to shift once more.

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Notes


Alona Nitzan-Shiftan
Seizing Jerusalem: The Architectures of Unilateral Unification
Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017, 376 pp., 8 color and 129 b/w illus.
$39.95 (paper), ISBN 9780816694280

Seizing Jerusalem elegantly entwines the history of modern architecture with nation building and state policy. In particular, it weaves the history of architecture together with the history of Zionism after the 1967 Six-Day War and the unification of Jerusalem, when the city’s population tripled in size. This book is not the first to examine the development of modern architecture in Israel and its connection to sociopolitical issues. The controversial 2003 publication A Civilian Occupation is perhaps the most familiar to architectural historians, yet a number of important books have tackled this subject.1 What makes Alona Nitzan-Shiftan’s study unique, however, is her thorough exploration of “the agency of architecture” (3). She underscores the impact of architecture on sociopolitical formations, as opposed to the reverse, and explains that she views architecture “neither as a mere reflection of the agenda of individual architects, nor as a spatial technique representing meaning beyond its confines” (3).

Echoing observations by many architectural historians of the modern Middle East, in chapter 1 Nitzan-Shiftan considers the evident tensions between modernist architecture’s investments in history and its orientation toward the future.2 After World War II, while the Israeli nation aspired to be modern, it was at the same time deeply invested in its ancient roots. In chapter 2, Nitzan-Shiftan traces works by a generation of architects who were mostly born and raised in Israel, commonly known as the sabra (Israeli-born) architects. Through analysis of select examples, such as housing in Giloh by Ram Karmi and Ma’alot Dafna by the Sho’p Team, she shows how sabra architects appropriated Palestinian vernacular and religious sites understood to have links to a Jewish past. She argues that this approach was rooted in Israeli nationalism, but it also owed much to the contemporaneous global embrace of phenomenological approaches to architecture, widely known as place making. Set in motion during the 1960s by urban activists like Jane Jacobs and champions of vernacular building such as Bernard Rudofsky, place making aimed to create spaces that would promote shared identity through the direct engagement of local topographies and histories. Through place making, Israeli architects embraced forms and ideas later associated with postmodernism and critical regionalism. Thus, the local attempt to create a new home for a generation of Jews who had suffered the traumas of the Holocaust and displacement also complemented global trends. However, as we read in chapter 3, the seemingly innocent and utopian dream of place making soon led to state projects that appropriated local architectural styles and land, particularly land belonging to Palestinians. The Ministry of Housing’s expansion of Jewish settlements soon became one of the leading sources of tension between Israelis and Palestinians.

In chapter 4 we are introduced to the influential mayor of Jerusalem, Teddy Kollek, an unwavering Zionist of the Ben-Gurion school who maintained his position as mayor for three decades (1965–93). Kollek’s ambitions to legitimate Jewish rule over Jerusalem provided architects with a unique opportunity to explore the possibilities and limits of modernist design, whether as built form or as political and social action. Although Kollek was interested in cultural, rather than political, Zionism, his systematic “Judaization of Jerusalem” went hand in hand with the 1965 Planning and Building Law, Israel’s victory over East Jerusalem in 1967, and the 1968 Jerusalem master plan. Israel’s military victory in 1967 was accompanied by new state initiatives that included architectural elements modeled on British colonial styles of the mandate period. Such was the case with Arye Dvir’s 1969 National Park Plan for Jerusalem, inspired by the picturesque Silwan Village in East Jerusalem, which had a Muslim-majority population before 1967. Dvir belonged to the so-called Anglo circle—architects trained according to the building traditions and sensibilities of the British. Despite their ostensibly benevolent and idealistic intentions, the members of the Anglo circle envisioned projects that led to further expansion into the unoccupied territories, even as they featured a romanticized and Orientalizing style referencing Arab vernacular architecture of both Muslim and Christian populations. These appropriations did not go unchallenged.

Chapter 5 features, among other issues, the critical voices of high-profile international writers and architects, many of whom had already been invited by Kollek to participate in building what he called “the sacred city of mankind.” Lewis Mumford decried the state’s privileging of nationalist ambitions over spiritual sentiments. Louis Kahn insisted on the importance of universal human values while many others warned against the consequences of master planning projects. Nitzan-Shiftan aptly regards these reactions as early expressions of postnationalist discourses that align with contemporary forces of globalization in Jerusalem. Indeed, today nongovernmental organizations and independent firms have assumed roles that were previously maintained solely by the government. The extent to which these new independent and diverse forces will be able to resist the pressures of neoliberalism remains to be seen.

The sixth chapter of the book examines Moshe Safdie’s design for the Western Wall Plaza. Although aimed at healing the wounds of the city, the project ultimately was unrealized. Nonetheless, Nitzan-Shiftan’s analysis of the building’s plans and the debates that ensued shed light on the complexity of nationalist and religious ideologies. As the book nears its conclusion, the reader is provided with details of the spatial segregation and land confiscation, among other discriminatory acts, that led to the 1987 Palestinian war of independence. The two Palestinian initiatives