

offers, on both critical and ideological levels, striking parallels with, as well as understandable divergences from, the intermedium discussions in the two preceding chapters: Christopher Lueder's investigation of Saul Steinberg, in all likelihood the best-known, as well as the most accomplished, architectural caricaturist of the modern era; and Olivier Ratouis's examination of Jacques Tati's wry cinematographic sendups of the obsession with technology in postwar France. Lueder's discussion in chapter 11 is marked by close attention to Steinberg's use of a preexisting medium (graph paper) that served as a neutral ground for the cartoonist's metaphorization of the abstract redundancies of standardization and urbanity that stood at the heart of the postwar American, and in particular the Miesian, version of the modernist project. Lueder reconstructs an unanticipated web of contacts and impacts, an entire Venn diagram of overlapping circles of reception emanating from Steinberg's meticulous parodies of postwar modern architecture and urban experience.

Ruth Hanisch's essay on Loos's trenchant deployment of critical humor stands out from the rest of the contributions in that rather than focusing on the modern architect as a target of irony and ridicule, it centers on the way a modern architect satirized other architects. Hanisch's approach reverses the usual emphasis on such works as the Michaelerhaus and the violent critiques launched against them by a reactionary press in favor of a reconstruction of the intellectual, cultural, and theoretical bases of the irony, wit, and humor used by the members of Loos's circle, including Karl Kraus, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and Peter Altenberg.

Despite the thoroughness of the essays in this volume, a few omissions stand out. Absent from Hanisch's discussion is any scrutiny of period satirical representations of Loos's specific built projects, even apart from the often-discussed Michaelerhaus. One is also justified in pointing out in this respect that Hanisch overlooks a well-known cartoon comparing the unadorned upper façade of the Michaelerhaus to a sewer grate. Another cartoon, almost as famous, shows the controversial structure in all of its formal austerity rising behind the elaborate baroque outfit and trailing wig worn by a reborn Johann Fischer von

Erlach, a figure whose ornate legacy Loos admired yet whom he had betrayed, at least in the views of many Viennese at the time.

*Laughing at Architecture* contains many lessons for current architectural history and criticism. One of the most important is that satirical humor, presented as a critical instrument situated at the crux of architectural reception and production, is inherently paradoxical. This reading results from the fact that while such humor has the effect of strengthening and making more vivid the sense of social reality to which architecture, in attempting to be truly modern, must constantly answer, it also distorts this very same reality by deploying the techniques at its disposal: exaggeration, ironic distancing, ridicule, and bathos. Rosso's book will thus be of use not only to those readers within the discipline but also to those outside it who study interactions among the built environment, the cultural and social phenomena that inform it, and the multiple codes of political and aesthetic expression associated with them.

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**Assembling the Architect: The History and Theory of Professional Practice**

London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2020, 295 pp., 65 b/w illus. \$100 (cloth), ISBN 9781350126824; \$34.95 (paper), ISBN 9781350126862

American architectural practice has been the subject of many scholarly and professional studies during the century since the publication of the first *Handbook of Professional Practice* by the American Institute of Architects in 1920. George Barnett Johnston's *Assembling the Architect* is the first study dedicated to the origins of the *Handbook*, as a valuable compendium of contracts, documents, and accumulated expertise that has guided the profession ever since.

Johnston teaches architecture at Georgia Tech and runs his own design firm. As he writes, the goals of this book are "to describe some of the forces that have been in play" in the building industry in the United States and to examine the roles of the dominant parties in that realm, namely, the architect, the owner, and the builder (1). However, given that his critical method

is colored more by European social science theories than by conventional historiographical schemata, the book reads much more as a "theory" than as a "history" of its subject.

The book is broken into five chapters, following the sections in Frank Miles Day's 1920 edition of the *AIA Handbook*, which also figure in the "Uniform Contract" between owner, builder, and architect that the AIA established in 1888 and adopted as its first standard document. Founded in the 1850s, by the 1880s the AIA was struggling to establish its preeminence as a professional society amid numerous urban architectural clubs and builders' organizations. The Uniform Contract was the first successful salvo in its attempts to eliminate the competing organizations. One of the significant issues for the historian is the confusing mix of players, economic forces, and regional cultures present in the United States during the post-Civil War period. Who and where was the professional architect during this time of economic expansion and political turmoil?

Johnston acknowledges the complexity of this question, but he spends little effort in outlining the ways in which architects banded together during the latter part of the century to address problems of licensure, education, professional standards, and artistic ideals. Numerous published sources on architects and their efforts to professionalize practice are not cited in his endnotes or included in the bibliography.<sup>1</sup> In his presentation of a text explicating a text, Johnston limits himself mainly to lengthy elaborations of quotes from just two publications introduced in the first chapter. One of these is Frank Miles Day's draft of the *Handbook*, which Johnston found in the AIA archives in Washington, D.C. The second publication is a rather sophomoric 1914 satire, *Architec-tonics: The Tales of Tom Thumtack, Architect*, by the sometime architect Frederick Squires.<sup>2</sup> Squires's satirical mode of journalism (which first appeared in *Architecture and Building* magazine) was common during this golden age of periodicals. Although Squires was a relatively minor figure, his collaboration with the artist Rockwell Kent set him apart from the crowd. As a foil for the discussion of key professional topics, the *Thumtack* book would have served Johnston better if he had cited it less often, despite the

temptation to use Kent's illustrations as pithy commentary.

Johnston does not go into the early life of Frank Miles Day, who served as an apprentice in England before moving back to Philadelphia to practice as an architect. Day was an early member of both the T-Square Club and the architecture faculty at the University of Pennsylvania. His experience made him a good choice to chair the committee that produced the document eventually published as the *Handbook*. Still, Johnston does not explain how or why Day was chosen for such a position.

In the final half of the book, Johnston addresses the precarious position of the modern architect in the early twentieth century. A materialistic, money-driven society took shape in the United States during the era of J. P. Morgan and Henry Ford, and no treatment of the social context of architecture for this period can ignore the turbulent milieu in which owners, builders, and designers wrestled to gain the upper hand. As chapter 3 begins, Johnston sets the stage by invoking three business motives, "profit, performance, and prestige," that bedeviled the professional architect in attempting to mediate between price-conscious owners and profit-conscious builders. He notes the mid-nineteenth-century AIA campaign to present the architect as both an owner's advocate and an impartial go-between in conflicts between owner and builder. He also analyzes efforts by builders to have "clerks of the works" stand in for the architect in such a role. The effort to substantiate the architect's professional position with respect to the builder continued at national meetings of the AIA from 1906 through 1914. Leaders debated the issue of how to protect the architect from lawsuits when taking the side of the client. Given the codification of the architectural license during this same period, architects assumed the burden of the "standards of care" formerly attached to builders, while paradoxically also losing the capacity to perform these duties through a clerk of the works on the building site. Whereas often during the previous century an architect's clerk of the works rendered construction decisions, the new AIA documents made it impossible for such arrangements to continue. The new architects did not wish

to dirty their hands with such menial work, as AIA members sought to identify with "white-collar workers" rather than with artisans.

The most powerful sections of *Assembling the Architect* are in chapters 4 and 5, where issues of construction practice and technology enter the fray. Here the author is in his element, seeming to grasp through his own experience the battered position of his colleagues a century ago. Johnston particularly shines in the sections discussing Day's correspondence with both architects and builders regarding the changing roles of the subcontracting trades, the necessity for specifications, and the complex rubric for describing how a general contractor ought to run a project. His detailed analysis of the final "General Conditions to the Contract for Construction" (a portion of the *Handbook*) ought to be required reading in professional practice courses in architecture programs. We learn that during negotiations with the building industry, many in the AIA saw the new system of "general contracting" as a threat to architects' very existence.

Johnston correctly points out that historians have given less attention to the history of modern building construction than to the heroic careers of individual architects. The final chapter of his book takes up a broad menu of topics that first caught the attention of Day and Squires, but that continue today to haunt not only the members of the architectural profession but also practitioners of medicine and law. In our technocratic society, the expansion of digital information continues to erode expertise. The architects who created the first instruments to describe design and building practice in the modern world of construction understood implicitly that they also described the means by which architects could be rendered obsolete.

Perhaps specifications, not necessary in an artisanal society, served as the harbingers of doom. Even technical drawings and shop drawings functioned simply as stand-ins for the knowledge of materials and crafts that architects lacked. Johnston makes the relatively short leap from these tools to the contemporary crutches of CAD, BIM, and 3-D modeling, noting that while these are more powerful than their predecessors, they are nonetheless

interlopers between designers and builders. If designers have ceased to understand anything about materials, techniques, and methods (the province of contractors and technical consultants), where is their expertise? Have they been liberated or hamstrung by technology?

Johnston's book thus provides much fodder for thought, especially in the final chapters, but his text fails to address the historical forces and circumstances that pushed the AIA to create the *Handbook of Professional Practice* when nothing of the sort previously existed. If Johnston had expanded his narrative to incorporate the arguments within the AIA and other architectural societies concerning the relation between the architect and the builder, along with the countervailing discussions among builders, he might have unraveled the reasons why Frank Miles Day and his colleagues ceded ground to both owners and builders in their final drafts of the *Handbook*. That would have required more archival research and less reliance on a few sources available in good libraries. It might also have required more compelling illustrations of construction sites, photos of architects standing alongside builders, relevant working drawings, and even specifications.

*Assembling the Architect* is not a history of professional practice, even though it unveils contradictions in that history that contemporary historians and critics must address. Nevertheless, the book is valuable as a foray into a subject complex enough to inspire much further research, given that it spotlights the precarious position of architects in a society intent on stripping them of their power, prestige, and artistic agency. It also hints at issues of race, class, gender, and social status that have eluded historical scrutiny until very recently. The book is written with style and often pointed analysis, although in places it suffers from a lack of organization and thorough research. The author would have benefited greatly from consulting and citing authoritative scholarship on the profession, whether or not it conforms to the recent trends in the discipline. If he continues his investigation into these important areas of the profession's relation to cultural history, one hopes that these criticisms will be constructive, leading him in the future to a more catholic

point of view and to more convincing scholarship.

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## Notes

1. Key sources not cited include Robert Gutman, *Architectural Practice: A Critical View* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1988); Dana Cuff, *Architecture: The Story of Practice* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991); Mary N. Woods, *From Craft to Profession: The Practice of Architecture in Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Mark Alan Hewitt, *The Architect and the American Country House, 1890–1940* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1990).
2. Frederick Squires, *Architec-tonics: The Tales of Tom Thuntack, Architect* (New York: William T. Comstock, 1914).

Murray Fraser, ed.

### **Sir Banister Fletcher's Global History of Architecture, 21st edition**

London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2019, 2 vols., 2, 633 pp., 2,200 illus. \$575 (cloth; slipcase edition), ISBN 97814725272 (vol. 1), ISBN 9781472589972 (vol. 2), ISBN 9781472589989 (set)

The two volumes of the twenty-first edition of *Sir Banister Fletcher's Global History of Architecture* (henceforth *Banister Fletcher's Global History*) are a sumptuous textual and visual banquet to delight varied tastes, with offerings that can be savored repeatedly over time, separately or, if desired, in their entirety. No matter where one enters the volumes, it is soon evident that this edition represents a boldly radical and welcome rethinking of *Banister Fletcher* (first published in 1896).<sup>1</sup> For the first time, the word *global* enters the title, and more than any other worldwide architectural history survey to date, these volumes reveal a truly global architectural history beginning to take shape.

Rather than the “singular authorial voice” that characterized earlier *Banister Fletcher* editions (1:xvii), this work presents 102 chapters written by eighty-eight major scholars from around the world. Recognizing the specialized expertise of these scholars, editor Murray Fraser gave them considerable freedom in crafting their contributions. While many are architectural historians, others are architects, archaeologists, art historians, and cultural

historians, representing a multiplicity of disciplinary approaches. This massively expanded edition, the first to be published in two volumes, signals an important departure from other global histories of architecture (including previous *Banister Fletcher* editions) in that it was jointly produced by many individuals. Noting the reliance on teamwork needed to pull the numerous contributions together, Fraser states that this edition “indeed can be claimed as the largest collective research project to date in architectural history” (1:xxiv). This work demonstrates long-overdue humility in its recognition that authoritative knowledge of global architectural history is beyond the grasp of any one individual or small group of scholars. At the risk of sounding imperial, one could say that holding *Banister Fletcher's Global History* in one's hands is rather like holding a globe on which appear more of the world's architectural histories than ever before. They are presented non-hierarchically, and if they do not yet enjoy equal coverage, clearly the plan is to remedy that in the future.

The clarity of the volumes' structure and the flexible interpretations permitted to the contributors result in a harmonious text rather than a cacophony of multiple authorial voices. In his excellent introduction, Fraser explains this edition's underlying principles and framework. Addressing the two versions of “The Tree of Architecture,” he underscores the imperialist perspective of early editions of *Banister Fletcher*, in which the so-called West was viewed as the source of “modern styles” while the non-Western world was seen as capable of producing only “nonhistorical styles” of architecture. In contrast, the current edition reflects a radical rethinking in which postcolonial and poststructuralist critiques are taken seriously.

*Banister Fletcher's Global History* uses as its starting point 3500 BCE, commonly accepted as the beginning of the “urban revolution,” and concludes with the present day. A neutral framework divides the volumes into seven parts covering sequential and broad periods that unfold in linear time without focusing on particular historical events or favoring particular regions. Chapters in individual parts follow a consistent geographical route, making it easy for readers to circumnavigate the globe in a predictable direction. Acknowledging

that this edition bears only some “traces” of the original works, Fraser defends the use of Sir Banister Fletcher's name in the title by affirming that “just as no man is an island, nothing stands anew” (1:xv).

Preceding part 1, an engaging chapter by Catherine Gregg titled “*Sir Banister Fletcher's A History of Architecture: The Father, the Son, His Wife, and Their Book*” reveals the fascinating long history of this work and includes a useful table with a chronology of various *Banister Fletcher* editions. The original 1896 edition, written by both Professor Banister Fletcher and his son Banister Flight Fletcher, contained 159 illustrations and focused entirely on European architecture, concluding in contemporary Britain of the late nineteenth century. Although the elder Banister Fletcher died in 1899, many subsequent editions bore both names as the son continued to revise the text and add new illustrations. In the fifth edition of 1905, for example, the problematic “Tree of Architecture,” an illustration that would become iconic, appeared for the first time. Sir Banister Fletcher, the son, received sole credit for the sixth edition, published in 1921, despite the major contributions of his first wife and coauthor, Alice Maud Mary Fletcher. That edition featured a new version of “The Tree of Architecture,” which became the authoritative model for the seventh to sixteenth editions, through Sir Banister Fletcher's death in 1953.

Beginning with the seventeenth edition, published in 1961, various editors revised and reshaped the book. Critically, in the seventeenth edition, seven contributing authors responsible for particular sections replaced the sole authorial voice. By the twentieth edition, the centennial edition published in 1996, the number of contributing authors had risen to thirty-six. In the present twenty-first edition, the authorial voice of Fletcher has disappeared entirely, except when quoted or used with original drawings. With 2,200 illustrations, this is the first edition to use color images; it is also “the first fully digitized online edition” (1:xxviii). Gregg's critical perspective on the Fletcher dynasty, and her appreciation of the long-overlooked first Lady Fletcher, fortunately does not prevent her from making readers aware of Sir Banister Fletcher's perspectives on architecture, not all of which may be palatable, but which