BOOK REVIEWS

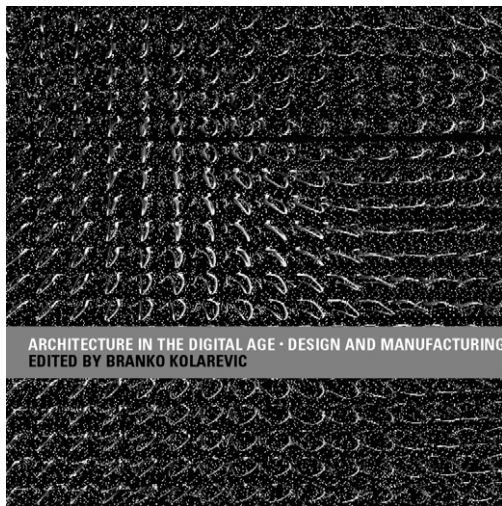### Architecture in the Digital Age: Design and Manufacturing
BRANKO KOLAREVIC, editor

Spon Press, 2003
320 pages, illustrated
$105.00 (cloth), $48.95 (paper)

ARCHITECTURE IN THE DIGITAL AGE · DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING
EDITED BY BRANKO KOLAREVIC

Performative Architecture: Beyond Instrumentality
BRANKO KOLAREVIC and ALI MALKAWI, editors

Spon Press, 2005
266 pages, illustrated
$115.00 (cloth)

In March 2002 and October 2003, the University of Pennsylvania organized two symposia bringing together a mix of digitally oriented architecture and engineering professionals from small studios and large, well-known firms in the United States, England, and Europe. Sponsors from the software industry and McGraw-Hill also participated in the

PERFORMATIVE ARCHITECTURE · BEYOND INSTRUMENTALITY
EDITED BY BRANKO KOLAREVIC AND ALI M. MALKAWI

first symposium. The proceedings of these events resulted in two attractive books, both published by Spon Press. Branko Kolarevic, then on the Penn faculty, edited the first, *Architecture in the Digital Age: Design and Manufacturing*, and added substantial commentary intended to establish a context for the practitioners' material, essentially treating the projects presented as case studies. Kolarevic coedited the second book, *Performative Architecture: Beyond Instrumentality*, working with a Penn colleague, Ali Malkawi.

The resulting books take on a range of issues related to the impact of computing technology on architectural practice, at a point when the territory is still changing quickly, and the investment of time and money involved means that most firms are unable to comprehensively adapt all the potential opportunities offered by new technologies. *Architecture in the Digital Age* emphasizes the use of computer tools to generate novel architectural and structural form, resolving the difficulties in producing these shapes by unifying design and

fabrication through the computer. The concept of addressing forces such as energy performance or acoustics through digital technologies is a minor part of the first book, acknowledged only by Kolarevic and elsewhere by Arup's Chris Luebkeman. This topic became the central theme of the second symposium and resultant volume, *Performative Architecture*. Strangely, ''performance'' primarily addresses thermal conductivity at the building skin and the artistic or ''communicative'' potential of envelopes, with almost no mention of other conventional concerns such as daylighting design.

The difference between how academics and practitioners involved in this effort benefit from research is at the heart of these books, and ultimately, of their shortcomings. Professionals want to benefit from being known for the results of their work without revealing technique. Too often here, practitioners return to well-trod ground and offer little evidence of new directions, for example, reviewing already widely known background on Gehry's Bilbao and Disney Hall or Foster's Swiss Re. Academics are constrained by their lack of access to up-to-date and detailed information on new developments; in the quickly changing territory of expensive digital tools, these books seem to suggest that the faculty involved may tender only historical and conceptual structures for understanding changes under way in industry. Kolarevic attempts to perform this function single-handedly in *Architecture in the Digital Age*, offering up four chapters that somewhat disjointedly cover historical precedent for today's computer-based practices, the morphological families that result from new strategies for form generation, and mechanisms for linking design and fabrication. Unfortunately, his use of language and the referents he includes in these chapters do not correlate sufficiently with that of the practitioners who also contribute to the book, making his contribution less effective in its efforts to contextualize the work that follows. Ironically, this

problem is resolved in the second volume by accepting a less unified approach. Kolarevic's role is reduced; he and Malkawi included participation by four other colleagues from Penn and one from elsewhere, and all offer insights. The diversity of academic responses is a better match for the diversity seen in chapters authored by those in practice.

As a rule, published proceedings frequently exhibit awkwardness when read in their entirety, with unacceptable variety in areas such as their assumptions regarding the basic issues that inform the topic, the level of detail or breadth appropriate, and even writing styles. That is certainly the case here; the language is by turns elegant or dry, clear or jargon-laden. The terminology that each author uses when discussing, say, digital form, varies widely. Professionals generally eschew Kolarevic's classifications (NURBS, datascapes, homeomorphic figures) in favor of more ambiguous terms like "puffed" and "pillowed" (used by Jim Gylmph) or internal, personal language, such as "nest" and "shell" (by Mark Goulthorpe of dECOi). More problematic is the lack of agreement on a topic. Generally, editors show a reluctance to exclude papers that may not fit neatly into the collection, especially when the authors in question contributed prestige or financial support to the symposium. In *Architecture in the Digital Age*, for instance, Norbert Young of McGraw-Hill offers a brief synopsis of how practices are utilizing the Web, a subject not addressed elsewhere in the two volumes. The same problems occur in the second volume, where the role of deeper analytical knowledge results in two camps, those using data conceptually or "operatively" (managing functions) and in the mystifying inclusion of a chapter by Thomas Herzog.

Conversely, the second problem with any set of published proceedings is that papers may offer too much consistency, returning repeatedly to the same points or architectural projects. The editor cannot easily cut repetitive sections, since they are integrated into and support the development of the somewhat different positions that each author takes. In spite of the fact that these two volumes are theoretically distinct, repetition extends across them, in part due to the rather clubby selection of participants. For example, the "Bubble" and "Dynaform", temporary pavilions for BMW, turn up in essays by Kolarevic and also are presented at both symposia; architect Bernhard Franken was a participant in the first and the structural engineer on the same projects, Harald Kloft, spoke at the second. Both volumes rely particularly heavily on the output of three major firms: Gehry's, Foster's, and Arup. As a result of these influences, eight projects turn up repeatedly in both books—not always obvious choices. These range from the dynamically responsive *Aegis Hyposurface*, a wall that flexes and changes shape in response to nearby sound and movement, to the Experience Music Project, which is not an ideal example of the application of digital tools to either form or performance. The most ridiculous illustration of this repetition is embodied in a single set of images showing the acoustical performance of Foster's London City Hall (also referred to as GLC, the name it held during design): the same images turn up four times in the two books—included by Kolarevic, Hugh Whitehead (from Foster's office) and Arup's Luebkeman and Mahadev Raman, speaking at separate meetings. But this illustration is not an isolated case; in the first volume, at least a dozen specific images appear more than once; Kolarevic can particularly be faulted for using images that the other authors supplied, in his effort to establish a set of unifying themes. As a group, the regular appearance of the same projects and images contributes to a growing dismay at their redundancy and the circumlocutory text.

I would like to recommend these books. The topic needs to be better understood by students and those not privileged enough to be in the group represented by these volumes. The participants, who also included Craig Schwitter of Buro Happold and Andrew Whalley of Grimshaw's office, were stellar. Regrettably, though, these texts do not fulfill their promise. However, they do begin to shine a light on the range of issues and concerns that must be addressed in understanding digital tools; until more comprehensive texts come along, these books fulfill a genuine need, in spite of their flaws.

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Surrealism and Architecture
THOMAS MICAL, editor

Routledge, 2005
362 pages, illustrated
$54.95 (paper)
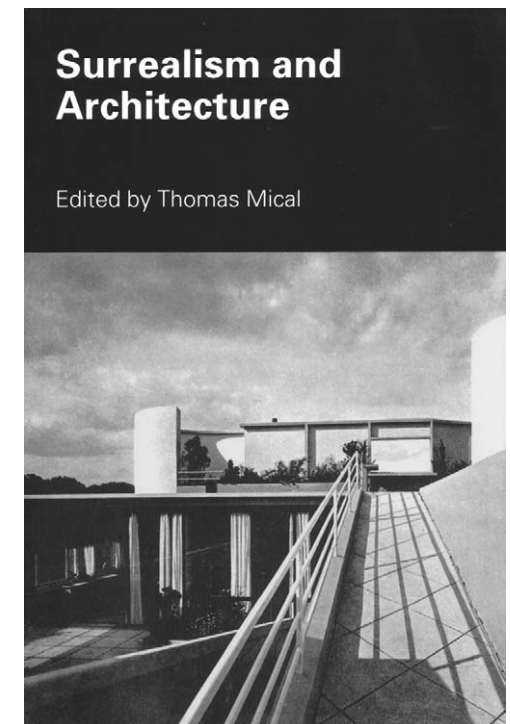
Over eighty years since its official inception, the subject of surrealism and its rather obscured currents within modernist thought is still present, if not becoming evermore revealed and fulfilled as if by its own design. As part of a renewed interest in the subject, *Surrealism and Architecture*, edited by Thomas Mical, builds on the greater body of historic research on modern art and architecture. More significantly, it presents timely discourse on surrealism's relation to the current philosophical framework informing architectural endeavors.

This edited collection of contemporary research projects discusses an array of surrealist notions attributed to designs ranging from distinct spatial images, artistic objects, and domestic spaces to larger scale implications within landscapes, geographies of place, and urban spaces. The catalyzing focus is surrealism's particular, if not peculiar, critique of social and epistemic frameworks as conditions for thought, creation, and perception of everyday life, especially in regard to understanding its relations to modern architectural discourse. Although Mical's introduction weaves varying discourses along common conceptual threads, the strengths of this book are in its multiplicity of views. Itself a curio box of ideas analogous to the numerous facets of the surrealist lens, this compilation presents twenty-one multimethodological discourses from broad cultural and interdisciplinary viewpoints. It sheds new light on a rich ambit of influences and lets this highly contested relation between surrealist thought and modern architecture emerge through a gamut of varying dialogs.

The research provides insightful references to the originators of surrealist thought, primarily those of literalist Andre Breton and his contemporary interlocutors, their ideas, and socio-political critiques of the then contemporary and emerging perceptions of modernity being enabled through artistic activities. Influenced by Freudian psychoanalysis, the ideas focus on the role of subconscious operations within the untapped creative psyche always present in artistic engagements as well as in everyday experiences, themselves part of the same set of individuating and self-liberating endeavors. The discussions collectively explore the notion of surrealist thought as a vital intellectual component of creative processes and the architecture of Modernism. The discourse extends these notions and creates enlightening connections between surrealist thought, the literary works of Georges Bataille and Louis Aragon, the creative endeavors of such notable artists as Salvador Dali, Giorgio De Chirico, and Joan Miro, and the works of various avant-garde, modern architects, such as Le Corbusier and Oscar Niemeyer. Through the exploration of formal surrealist ideologies and their distinct references to the critical framework of continental philosophy, the texts also lead into the present arena with examples and interpretations in the contemporary discourses and architectural works of John Hejduk and Bernard Tschumi.

Most successful are the insightful discussions by the authors Krzysztof Fijalkowski and Gray Read concerning surrealist influences on modern perceptions of domesticity. David Pinder, Jill Fenton, and Richard J. Williams and M. Stone-Richards propose other perceptive thoughts regarding surrealism and its influences on social and urban issues, a rereading or reclaiming of urban space and social conditions that can only be recounted by an individual's psyche and interpersonal sensory experiences. Kari Jormakka discusses Guy Debord's notion of a random wandering and a defamiliarized appraisal, an "otherness" or estrangement (also known as *ostranie*) of one's place and the artifacts therein that provides an authentic reframing of the city's agglomeration and even divergent perceptions, revealed in the subtlest of engagements. The mode radically stimulates critical perceptions and transcendence of the reality of the everyday to reveal alternative meanings. A realization of creativity in the very nature of experience within the diverse human psyche provides limitless trajectories for urban structuring and thus architectural engagements.

A critical point originally presented by Dalibor Vesely's research on the subject, as noted by author James Williamson, is that analysis of representational notions or stylist reassemblages of surrealist imagery should not be confused with the ideas and concepts of surrealism as essentially part of a radical "intellectual movement" and "theoretical [social] construct," even to possibly an epistemic or phenomenological mode of knowing the world. The significance of surrealism for architecture is more a way of reframing social fabrics as the conditions for thought, meanings, and creative production: its material value being redirected through juxtapositions of context and content, alternative values, linguistic and contextual modality, and metaframeworks of meanings. In this, an analysis of surrealism in architecture would have to be passed through the same set of critical ciphers in lieu of analysis in terms of visual or stylistic resemblance to surrealist works made in other modes of creative production. As a weakness, some of the interpretations in this book, at times, fall suspect to this error in analysis and should be read carefully. However, essential to the surrealist mode, the ideas presented inherently allow for a critical nature to emerge so that even its own modes of inquiry and analysis, as socially constructed and part of the everyday, can become subject to the same set of criteria which it discusses. Readers can significantly benefit from this realization set forth within the book's conceptual structure.

Surrealism and Architecture places an emphasis on architectural form and creative endeavors within the intellectual context of surrealism and as such will be of particular interest to art and architecture history scholars, students, and practitioners alike. Its cross-disciplinary nature successfully extends the discussion to other fields of inquiry, placing the material within current

research endeavors. Its rich bibliography will be of use to many prospecting researchers, setting a course for furthered understanding and future development of this multivalent field.

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Future City

STEPHEN READ, JURGEN ROSEMANN, and JOB VAN ELDIJK, editors

Spon Press, 2005
296 pages, illustrated
$53.95 (paper)
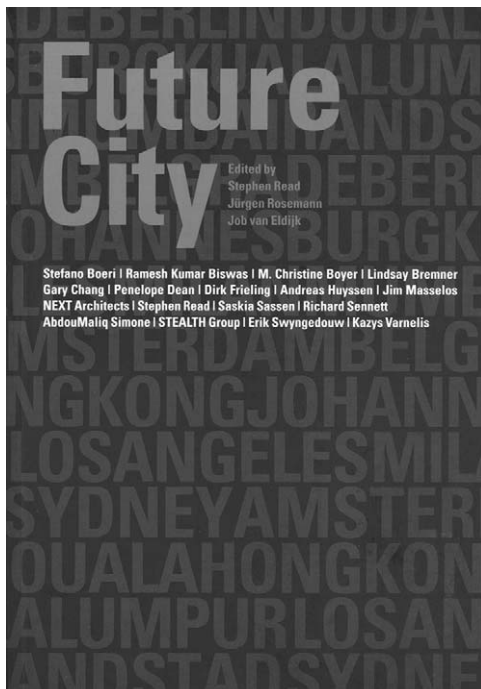
The anthology *Future City* sets out to discover a relevant urban theory for today's ever more drastically changing cities. The outcome of a lecture series organized by Job van Eldijk at Delft University of Technology, *Future City* is a more casual compilation than urban studies texts organized in themed chapters or dealing with a single city. In tackling a range of issues including new formulations of the local in a global age, revised understandings of urban centrality, means to represent the contemporary city, and the plausibility of urban planning in an era of subdued government and discredited master planning, the editors have aptly chosen to represent various ''tiers'' of cities from established global cities to cities in crisis. This gives the book vitality and dimension. Stephen Read's introductory essay, ''The Form of the Future,'' which problematizes contemporary cities' dynamic condition with great clarity, and three substantial theoretical essays—by Richard Sennett, Erik Swyngedouw, and Saskia Sassen—dealing with urban processes and their related political underpinnings provide a sturdy conceptual framework for the case studies and photographic essays also contained in the book.

Sennett's rappel à l'ordre, ''Capitalism and the City,'' discusses the loss of alterity and faltering social responsibility in contemporary urbanism, with its short-term commitments. Erik Swyngedouw's essay ''Exit 'post'—the making of 'glocal' urban modernities'' in turn calls for a ''humanized and just urbanization'' that is only possible through a pluralism encompassing both the particular and the universal and supportive of human creativity. Cities' dichotomous mandate to be territorialized fairly and to nurture personal existential yearnings is reiterated in a number of case studies. In particular, Lindsay Bremner's informative essay on Johannesburg and Jim Masselos's thorough account of Mumbai's narratives of identity vividly articulate some of today's most treacherous urban problems: paranoiac urban

planning practices, the simultaneous development of elite neighborhoods and urban poverty, and fear of heterogeneity.

Saskia Sassen's ''Reading the city in a global digital age,'' which contributes a welcome formulation of the social and political repercussions of cities' imbrication in place-bound and digital domains and on their representation, supports another grouping of essays dealing with first tier cities. Andreas Huyssen's ''Voids of Berlin,'' Penelope Dean's ''The Construction of Sydney's Global Image,'' and Ramesh Kumar Biswas' contribution on Kuala Lumpur, all underline the contrived and exclusionary urbanisms associated with cities' entanglement in global corporate circuitry. In his article about clusterization in Los Angeles, Kazys Varnelis points out the ''darker side of clusterization'' (p. 192) that the creation of elite enclaves only occurs in the context of sprawl, one an alibi for the other. The city of the future, like those of yesterday and today, is a site of both alienation and freedom.

Given urban studies' failure to predict the contemporary city, the editors orient the anthology away from commitments to formal strategies, pursuing instead an urban theory dealing with understanding and managing processes. Thus, if Sennett states, ''We need to discover the craftwork'' of the new city (p. 124), *Future City* does not clarify what this craftwork looks like. More than any other essay in the book Abdou Maliq Simone's on Douala—a city where the collective framework is so frail as to slip into spectral realms ''that are as real as anything else in the city'' (p. 226)—lends urgency to this mission. Case studies are by nature observational more than speculative, so it is not surprising to find that the majority of the contributions only go as far as to suggest attitudes and outlooks. If some of the essays contain hints at future directions—Dirk Frieling's account of a planning and policy think tank on the cities in the Randstad region of the Netherlands, Christine Boyer's examination of representational devices

used by contemporary urban thinkers to isolate and analyze urban processes, and Varnelis's cluster urbanism as a redensification strategy in Los Angeles—the new urban project still begs for commitments.

There is consensus among the editors and the contributors that an attitude of openness to the provisional is generally the direction to take. Masselos asserts that the city's balance is constructed from the bottom up and through the very act of living. ''Disparities,'' he states, more often than not are ''contained and restrained by routines of daily life'' (p. 113). NEXT's image mosaic and inventory of statistical anecdotes also lean in this direction. As attested by Gary Chang's experiential account of Hong Kong and Stefano Boeri's commentaries on photographs of Milan, the city is physical, sensual, and material, and we are aware of it as of ''the position of our limbs'' (Read, p. 197). It is a place worth searching for physically. *Future City* constitutes a fruitful offering to critical studies and debate in architecture and urban theory, but it might have ventured further into answers on how to give form to the changing city. Facing the parallel challenge of loosening modernist planning half a century ago, Aldo Van Eyck, the Smithsons, and others searched for forms to reckon with indeterminacy. Would it have been too risky to acknowledge their legacy?

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Architourism: Authentic, Escapist, Exotic, Spectacular

JOAN OCKMAN and SALOMON FRAUSTO, editors

A Buell Center/Columbia Book of Architecture, Prestel, 2005
191 pages, illustrated
$39.95 (paper)

The conference and exhibition *Architourism*, organized by the Temple Hoyne Buell Center for the Study of American Architecture at Columbia University, was held in 2002, with the primary provocation being the heady ''Bilbao effect,'' the spectacular success of Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum in attracting large numbers of tourists to an industrial city previously perceived as grimy. However, in the aftermath of September 11, 2001, the issues were tempered by memorialization and themes of ''tragic tourism.'' The book, based on the conference and exhibition and edited by the curators, Joan Ockman and Salomon Frausto, is presented along the four structural themes of the conference: ''Authentic,'' ''Exotic,'' ''Escapist,'' and ''Spectacular.'' The multimedia nature of the exhibition has been transposed in between the text in the form of yellow ''site-seer'' pages: contributions by artists and architects using visual media to present their critical reflections. The compact volume presents complex issues of contemporary global architectural experience through the vehicle of tourism with surprising breadth, depth, and accessibility.

At face value, the term ''architourism'' describes a form of tourism analogous to ecotourism, heritage tourism, etc., suggesting architecture's growing niche as a marketable tourist destination. Elsewhere in the book, the term is elaborated to specify the new role of architecture in advanced consumer society as an integral agent in the construction of tourist values and, in turn, as being constructed by these values: timely acknowledgment of architecture's complicity in today's economy of mass consumption. The topics dealt with by the authors, many leading historians, cultural and architectural critics, and artists, cover a formidable range of critical perspectives. At the same time, text and seductive images bring the reader on a whirlwind, although curated, tour of sites as diverse as Beijing, Krakow, and Las Vegas, hopping onto ''love-boat'' cruise ships and passing through the nonplaces of countless airports. Although architourism is presented as a new phenomenon, the sites of architourism span in time from the acropolis of antiquity to recently completed iconoclastic buildings such as Santiago Calatrava's Milwaukee Museum of Art, temporary buildings such as Diller + Scofidio's Blur Building in Switzerland, and buildings that are yet unbuilt.

Important observations about the contemporary state of experiencing places converge in the book: such as would address questions on the novelty of architourism compared with age-old traditions of visiting monumental sites. As observed by anthropologist Marc Augé in ''Contemporary Tourist Experience as Mise-en-Scène,'' the vast accumulation and availability of information and new means and resources of travel tend to place all experiences and itineraries within the realm of the present. Laments that architecture has lost its ''authenticity'' through processes of dehistoricization and delocalization, exacerbated by the technologies of globalization echo throughout the book.

Augé also contends that the geographies of difference are continuously being flattened to a generic sameness through various processes—foremost being that new iconoclastic buildings are no longer symbolic of their locations or time but are part of a global network of ''singularities,'' objects created by an elite group of architect-auteurs. Another is the phenomenon described by McKenzie Wark in ''Multitudes on Tour'' as the transformation of people into ''multitudes'' who lack a definitive unity and who seep through the pores of state boundaries, indulge in Certeausque tactics, tap onto insidious networks that disregard borders, and inhabit the antitheses of iconoclastic buildings: interchangeable buildings without qualities.

The operative behavior of the tourist becomes the norm for everyday life—one becomes a tourist in one's own home environment. The cultural logic of tourism as a dominant way of being in the world is marked by the displacement of emotive experience with casual attentiveness, a distracted consciousness that the individual adopts as a coping mechanism in the face of information overload. While such a form of experiencing the world presupposes an immersive, consuming tourist gaze as *modus operandi,* the critical gaze of the architect as tourist offers a detached, intellectual perspective that accumulates information for the potential production of creative work, as in the case of Le Corbusier's *Voyage d'Orient.*

Such a tradition of the architect ''site-seer'' is brilliantly traced by Joan Ockman in ''Bestride the World like a Collosus: The Architect as Tourist'' through the search for otherness in the African *dogons* by Aldo Van Eyck and the model of the road trip by Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steve Izenour to learn from Las Vegas through research and the suspension of judgment. However, such a discourse is brought to its logical conclusion through the depoliticized, postcritical stance of Rem Koolhaas. Devoid of social concern, he turns the aestheticizing gaze to new experiences as raw material for seductive publications. The ultimate

product of research as aesthetic emanating from a process of abstraction and distancing is indifference.

Architourism questions architecture's capacity to remain critical in the light of its major role in the economy of consumption. Perhaps, the question is best left for readers to ponder, but the geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, in ''Architecture, Route to Transcendence,'' posits that great architecture, whatever its purpose, has the innate capacity to lift the senses and the spirit and thus evokes an escape to the transcendent, even for crowds of tourists. If architourism makes diverse architectural experiences available to wider audiences, would not the possibility of such transcendence hold promise for those of us whose business is to produce portals to creative daydreaming?

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Sprawl: A Compact History
ROBERT BRUEGMANN

The University of Chicago Press, 2005
280 pages, illustrated
$27.50 (cloth)

Robert Bruegmann's new book, *Sprawl: A Compact History*, is a passionate call for rewriting the history of the great urban regions that are today's cities and that dismay so many urban professionals and scholars. His acute sensitivity to the formal and social nuance of the sprawling urbanism of Los Angeles and New York that frame this history and his quiet plea for tolerance in the final paragraphs of an otherwise combative text, betray his love of these cities, unhampered by distaste for their imperfections, outrage over their real failings, or desires to reform the beloved. This kind of love of cities, sprawl and all, is rare in American urban
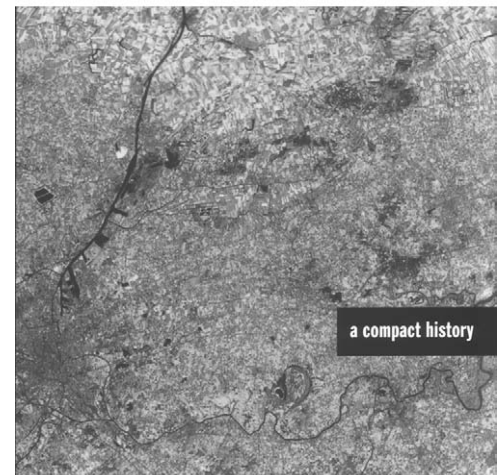
scholarship. Cannons of causality are turned on their head in this work, tried and true criticisms swept aside, and the familiar steps of ideal makeovers dismissed. Bruegmann intends to rehabilitate this most extraordinary of human artifacts to provoke us into accepting its complexity and humanity, with eyes unclouded by preconceptions of beauty.

This is a tall order yet Bruegmann makes short shrift of it by tackling what smart growth proponents perceive as its major failing, the fact that when it grows, it sprawls. In a truly compact three hundred pages including notes, he provides a history of sprawl from Rome to the present, from Europe to North America, and from eighteenth-century poets to today's antisprawl advocates. His scope is narrow; he hews closely to the debate's central preoccupation with demographic density and settlement dispersal, presenting graphs plotting relationships

between demographic, physical, and economic expansion of cities. He makes no pretense of being even-handed in his account of the debates or his rejection of the widespread consensus of urban malaise and dysfunction.

For Bruegmann, sprawl is really another word for the inevitable process of urban expansion in the wake of the increasing prosperity and democratization of societies. It occurs differentially in time and space, according to density gradients closely linked to economic affluence. The slope from center to periphery, from high density to low density, is very steep in traditional or nineteenth-century cities; it has flattened considerably over time. According to Bruegmann, this is caused not by cultural predilection, racism, government highway financing, fiscal policy, or even greedy developers in cahoots with local governments but by the natural desire of individuals and households in increasingly democratic and wealthy societies to accede to the privacy, mobility, and choice that have long been the prerogative of the very wealthy. A mix of rhetorical arguments and data drawn from a broad range of studies support this claim.

Bruegmann also provides a history of how sprawl the *process* has been conceptualized as sprawl the *problem*. He documents how each generation's professional and cultural leaders have formulated antisprawl agendas, in different guises, becoming most vociferous during cycles of economic expansion that fuel what is perceived as intractable growth. He argues that historically, efforts to contain that expansion either fail or generate unintended consequences that often produce even worse situations of inequity and inefficiency.

Critics of this book will likely attack the scholarship, which might be too broad, cross-disciplinary, and heavily weighed with geographic and urban policy references for their taste. Scholars who are used to parsing urban data will closely review and perhaps challenge the graphs of density gradients on which many of Bruegmann's

assertions rely. Others will chafe at the tone, which in many paragraphs is as scathing and provocative as any antisprawl treatise. Many who agree that there is no one single cause for sprawl and that the designated culprits may have a far smaller role than generally asserted will nonetheless regret that the option ''all of the above'' is equally dismissed. Some will note that he talks little of the problem of inner city minority populations although he lobbies for the inclusion of central city disinvestment and gentrification as essential variables in the sprawl equation.

Sprawl is nonetheless a necessary and welcome reminder of the potential sterility that can emerge from a rational problematization that essentializes urban form and relies on evermore controls over use and boundaries and, ultimately, individual choice. Winners and losers are unfairly created without redressing fundamental injustices and with implicit aesthetic judgment. Below the surface of Bruegmann's polemical stance in defense of the messiness, uncertainty, and complex unpredictability of cities is a real impatience with the urbanist's private vices of aesthetic and behavioral control masquerading as public good. Are compact settlements, growth boundaries, public transportation, and architectural codes really essential to ensure that all infants born in cities will have an equal opportunity to health and education, economic opportunity, and shelter and clean air and water? Bruegmann argues maybe not.

So what is an urbanist to do? For clearly, this keen observer sees that the wonderful city is not equally wonderful for all, whether it is growing smartly or sprawling unchecked. Like all historians, Bruegmann brings us through time masterfully and concludes that the lessons of history suggest that we need a little of this and a lot of that and sometimes it works and sometimes it does not. He then leaves us to our confusion. But he has provoked us out of our complacency and reminded us that entangled as we are in the debates about

how to fix the city, we should not forget to what end and for whom.

Jacqueline Tatom is an assistant professor at Washington University's School of Architecture where her research focuses on the urbanizing periphery of American metropolitan areas and their deurbanizing centers.

Remaking Beijing: Tiananmen Square and the Creation of a Political Space
WU HUNG

The University of Chicago Press, 2005
272 pages, illustrated
$35.00 (paper)
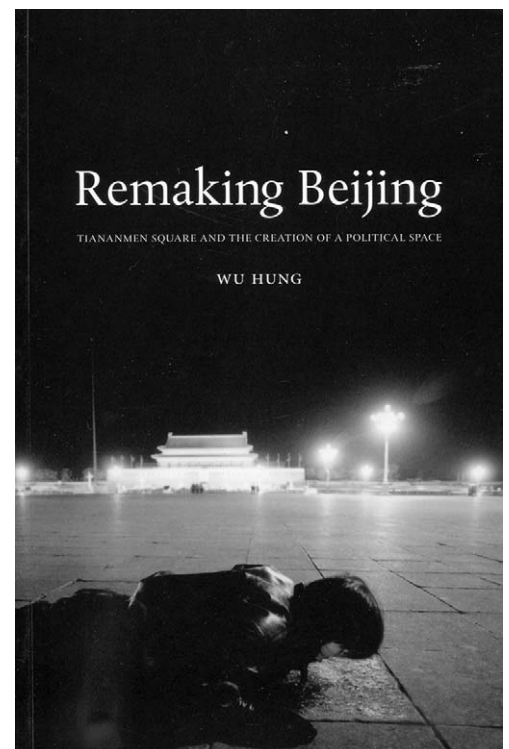
Wu Hung's *Remaking Beijing: Tiananmen Square and the Creation of a Political Space* is an exemplary affirmation of the fact that urban open spaces are never neutral but are expressions of, among other things, layers of political negotiation and cultural narrative. Tiananmen Square would make anybody's top-ten list of the world's most politicized urban spaces, so Wu might be subject to some ribbing about having chosen too easy an illustration. But there are few book-length works devoted explicitly to this largest of all public squares; the Forbidden City just to the south of Tiananmen Square has always been the irresistible draw for the analyst's attention.

Each of the five chapters of this study examines a different facet of the negotiation between built form and political will. In Chapter 1, Wu deals with transformation of what was little more than an intersection of public thoroughfares during the Qing Dynasty into the present enormous square under Maoist socialism—when China's leaders decided to publicly proclaim their power under the guise of a ''people's'' square. This was accomplished not only by the erasure of the Qing structures that stood there but also more specifically by means of the monuments placed on the Square.

Chapter 2 deals with the ''Face of Authority'' in relation to the Square. The contribution here is Wu's analysis of the many different Mao portraits that have ''graced'' the top of the Tiananmen Gate over the years. This reviewer, who has personally been on the Square numerous times, has never paused to think about how that Mao portrait might be *changing* over the years, much less how those changes reflect shifts in the political winds in Communist China. Throughout the book, Wu is strongest when analyzing paintings.

Chapters 3 and 4 are less successful than the others. Chapter 3 assesses the role that ''display architecture'' plays in promoting political ideology. What is unique to this study of architecture's role in signifying legitimacy and power is the demand that those edifices appear, as it were, *spontaneously*. It is surprising that Wu fails to make reference to Chinese philosophical constructs to explicate this desire for spontaneity. In both the Confucian and the Taoist traditions, spontaneity was regarded as proof of legitimacy for sage as well as for ruler because it characterized the essence of natural processes. The Great Hall of the People on the west side of the Square was built in an astounding ten months—or so the claim goes—even if enormous numbers of companies and workmen had to drop everything to make it happen. Why? The new regime needed the old stamp of the Mandate of Heaven sought by every past Chinese ruler; being spontaneously successful is evidence of that Mandate. In Chapter 4, Wu deals with how time was perceived in imperial China and considers how the importation of clocks from the West altered the experience of space and time in daily experience in Beijing.

Chapter 5 is a superb analysis of Chinese art as it relates to Tiananmen Square, from the founding of the People's Republic to the present day. Art history professor Wu is clearly in his element here. He notes how various politicians are included, only to be later excluded, or new faces added, in a single painting over time. Or he assesses the Political Pop Art of the current generation: Mao behind a red grid, Mao peeking over the shoulder of a female exhibitionist on the Square, or Mao's face simply *erased*. It is remarkable how Wu can weave together such a large body of art related to the Square, offering a glimpse of each through a kaleidoscope of political and cultural prisms. This chapter alone is worth the price of the book.

Wu's failure to reference Chinese ideological roots vis-à-vis spontaneity is symptomatic of a curious absence of appeal to historic Chinese ideas in general. Confucius is not mentioned (!), but Paul Virilio is. Lao Tzu is not mentioned (!), but Michel Foucault is. Early Chinese Legalism and its proponent Hanfei Tzu are cited once but not in relation to the government brutality in the 1998 Tiananmen Square uprising, brutality that Hanfei would have condoned. Chinese art and artists are treated almost as if they have no indigenous ideological moorings. For example, when Wu reviews the artist Li Wei's art-mirror that makes the artist appear to float bodiless on the Square, reference could have been made to the eighth-century artist Wutao Tzu, who disappeared into a landscape painting upon securing the emperor's approval of his work. Li Wei, of course, ''disappears'' into the Square for reasons very different from securing his government's approval.

Wu does mention his own experiences growing up in China, this in the form of personal recollections inserted, with *sans serif* typeface, at various points in the text. These vignettes do not match, in content or tone, the larger analytical prose. For example, in the midst of explaining political parades in Tiananmen Square, we are suddenly transported back to when the young Wu Hung was marching in such an event, ''struggling with the crotch of my trousers.'' From this comical inappropriateness, we go to Wu's description of a fellow artist being beaten almost to death during the Cultural Revolution. Wu does not prepare the reader for these flashbacks of either childish ineptitude, which are irrelevant, or the visceral brutality of Mao's regime, which can be relevant, but not as jarring inserts into an otherwise analytical prose.

It is clear that Wu was motivated by a kind of cathartic need to write down these experiences; probably for Wu, this book was necessarily both scholarship and therapy. In return, Wu Hung has made an enormous contribution to the interdisciplinary literature on China's contemporary art, architecture, and material culture. And as for an explicit analysis of Tiananmen Square as a cultural object, Wu's book occupies a unique corner in that body of literature.

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