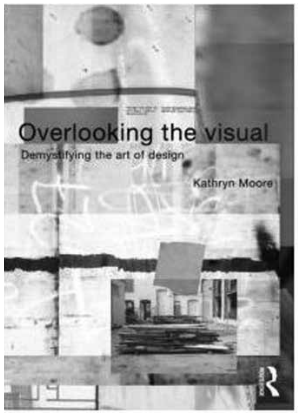
On modernist thought and practice

Measuring quality, overlooking the visual



Quality Out of Control: Standards for Measuring Architecture
Ed by Allison Dutoit, Juliet Odgers and Adam Sharr
Routledge, London and New York, 2010, 240 pp.
ISBN 0-415-55366-0
£29.99 (pb)

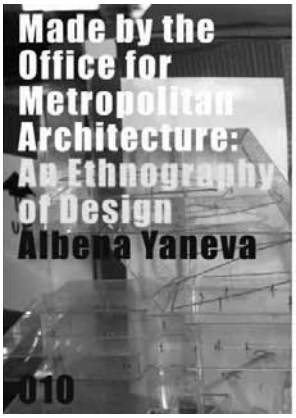
As the title implies 'Quality Control' in architecture does not necessarily deliver the highest standards. But why not, what is quality anyway, who decides and how can you see it, appreciate it, let alone measure it? These are the questions addressed. The book offers a wide range of approaches and topics ranging from the insightful and original to the somewhat predictable. Largely written by architectural academics (and therefore a useful research resource, well produced and referenced) there is also a contribution from Adam Caruso; an essay based on the quality control work of Sunand Prasad, past President of the RIBA; and one beautifully written piece by Catherine Belsey, Professor of English, on Lacan and pre-historic Maltese temples.
JM



Overlooking the Visual. Demystifying the Art of Design
By Kathryn Moore
Routledge, Abingdon, Oxon., 2010, 254 pp.
ISBN 0-415-30870-4
£24.99 (pb)

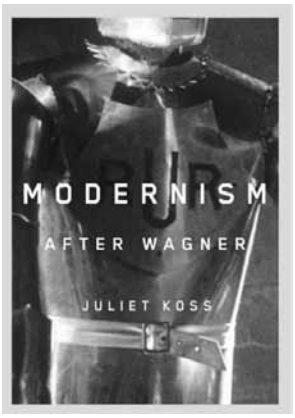
As the *double-entendre* of its title implies, this book aims to put design practice at the heart of education and culture. It is unapologetically pragmatic about this as the conclusion makes clear: 'Ditching the metaphysical baggage enables us to articulate the art of design [...]'; counter indeed to John Ruskin's proposition that every architect should be a metaphysician. If this might seem to throw out the poetic baby with the functional bathwater, the points made in this matter-of-fact approach to design are strong ones. Moore argues that in making design appear an arcane and mysterious activity, its promoters have in reality only served the rationalist discourse in its project of relegating matters that should be central to society – the realisation of a humane environment for all – to the margins. Stating design, not as ineffable, but as something teachable, applicable, and grounded in real places produces design excellence whose value even civil servants and policy-makers must recognise. The book is enlivened with numerous images taken largely from the landscape design studio; its claims for innovation may apply there, but many of the processes of investigation shown would be recognisable in the architectural studio. As a handbook to stimulate engaged mark-making and investigation the book will appeal to designers from a range of disciplines.
SK

https://doi.org/10.1017/S135913551000059X Published online by Cambridge University Press



Made by the Office for Metropolitan Architecture
By Albena Yaneva
010 Publishers, Rotterdam, 2009,
120 pp.
ISBN 978-90-6450-7144
£21.95 (hb)

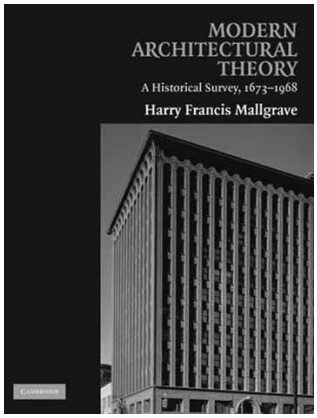
This book presents an ethnographic study of design practices at the Rotterdam office of OMA which draws from observations and transcripts assembled by the author between 2002 and 2004. The narrative focuses on the human interactions of those engaged in projects which have now been assimilated into the canon of high architecture, including the Casa da Música in Porto and the CCTV project in Beijing. The story's protagonists are known by their first names – Sho, Olga, Ole, Carol, Alain and, of course, Rem – and their musings are recounted in detail. Recurring tropes are those of innovation, novelty, creativity and meaning. The ethnographic approach seems to aspire to scientific detachment but the author's admiration for her subjects shines through. The result is a curious but chummily engaging mix of ethnography and hagiography. It offers a certain sort of insight into a very particular sort of architectural practice. But it may be of more service to historians in the future than to architects in the present.
AS



Modernism after Wagner
By Juliet Koss
University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis,
392 pp.
ISBN 0-816-65159-0
£18.50 (pb)

Formulated by Richard Wagner in 1849, the idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* or 'total work of art' has enjoyed a long and often controversial history in Modernist thought and practice. It is perhaps surprising, therefore, that this is the first comprehensive study of its development and influence.

Tracing the *Gesamtkunstwerk* from its revolutionary origins in German aesthetic theory and practice, via the founding of the festival theatre at Bayreuth, to its impact on fields as diverse as the visual arts, theatre, film and radio, Koss's account is historically grounded and critically acute. From familiar landmarks on the road to Modernism, such as the Darmstadt Artists' Colony, to the celebrated performances and parties at the Bauhaus, she has fresh and interesting things to say. And despite its subsequent appropriation by Fascism, Koss is at pains to stress the *Gesamtkunstwerk*'s emancipatory potential.
RW



Modern Architectural Theory: A Historical Survey, 1673–1968
By Harry Francis Mallgrave
Cambridge University Press, Cambridge,
2009, 522 pp.
ISBN 978-0-521-13048-6
£29.99 (pb)

The paperback publication of *Modern Architectural Theory* brings this comprehensive survey of the thinkers of modernity into an affordable price range. Written by Associate Professor of History and Theory at Illinois Institute of Technology, Harry Francis Mallgrave places the three hundred year development of Modernism in architecture into its respective political and social contexts. Exploring the birth of modernity in the Enlightenment, Mallgrave traces the avowedly architectural discourse of quite specifically architectural writers throughout the centuries, culminating in the tumultuous challenge to modernity's hegemony in the late 1960s. The strength of this book lies in the assessment of the conditions that led to the emergence of systems of architectural thought, and each era is positioned firmly with historical detailing of the political landscape. As an architectural survey, the book seems light on pictorial elucidation of the impacts of changing theoretical approaches, but its breadth and depth of study recommends it as a useful accompaniment to more graphical surveys of the development of Modernism.
EW

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