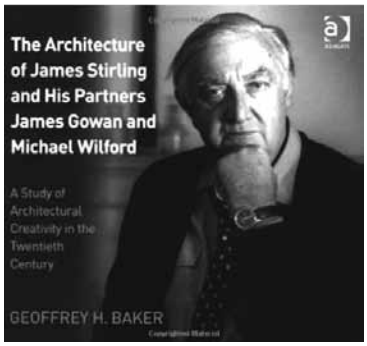
Modernisms in context

Maps as art; tradition as future



The Map as Art: Contemporary Artists Explore Cartography
Katherine Harmon (ed.)
Princeton Architectural Press
New York, 2009
256 pp.
ISBN: 978-1-56898-972-3
£17.99 (pb)

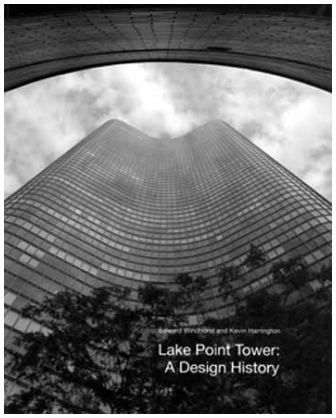
Historic maps decorate the walls of many homes and institutions, reminding us that maps have long had double-lives as art works. As architects, we know that cartography exerts power, that maps and plans are not neutral instruments, that they condition the world as much as they describe it. For this reason, imagining fresh ways to make maps and plans can help us to imagine the world, and imagine architecture, differently. *The Map as Art* catalogues various artists' travels in cartography. It might not contribute much to the theory of map-making and drawing but it contains some wonderful images to stimulate the imagination. Ingrid Calame's *Constellations of Residue*, Chris Drury's *Atlantic Winds*, Peter Dykhuis's *Radar Paintings* – among many others – open up windows onto intriguing worlds.
AS



The Architecture of James Stirling and his Partners James Gowan and Michael Wilford. A Study of Architectural Creativity in the Twentieth Century
Geoffrey H. Baker
Ashgate, Surrey, England; Vermont, USA, 2011
489 pp.
ISBN: 978-1-4094-0926-7
£75.00 (hb)

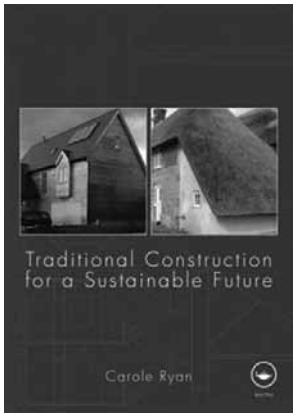
Geoffrey H. Baker excels in that kind of formal and spatial analysis which, on certain important levels, makes him an ideal interpreter of the work of James Stirling and his partners – those exquisite machine-tooled compositions of intricately engaged parts. Stirling, himself, praised Baker's understanding of his art as shown for example in Baker's *Architectural Design* article interpreting the entry for the London National Gallery extension – one of the practice's finest uncompleted projects, in Baker's estimation. Stirling himself was notoriously wary of doing theory, in presentations to clients focusing on the pragmatics of function, cost and programme. Drawing out the formalist virtues of this book's approach, does not imply it is theory-light; Baker shows how the richness of the best buildings rests in the interconnection of many strands: Modernist archetypes, historicism, surrealism, ambiguity and wit. On the basis of these latter aspects some commentators in the current Post-Modernist buzz seek to reclaim Stirling for the PoMo cause; but PoMo surely only glancingly describes such a dense work as the Neue Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart which, in these pages, restates its claim as one of the finest buildings of the second half of the twentieth century. In his extended investigation of this masterwork, Baker is particularly good on the office dynamics as 'searching factory', on the evolution of the design through sketches, and in showing the important contributions of many, such as Russ Bevington. Throughout, the book strives to fully attribute the atelier as a whole, giving the key partners, James Gowan, followed by Michael Wilford, their due. The book is black and white throughout, and laden with diagrams and images.
SK

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135512000139 Published online by Cambridge University Press



Lake Point Tower: A Design History
Edward Windhorst and Kevin Harrington
Chicago Architecture Foundation
Chicago, 2009
46 pp.
ISBN: 978-0-9620562-2-2
$19.95

Lake Point Tower, one of Chicago's most famous landmarks, was opened in 1969. To mark the fortieth anniversary, the Lake Point Tower Condominium Association sponsored this slim commemorative volume celebrating their seventy-storey, tricorn, Y-shaped structure, with its 1200 apartments. The book draws on previously unpublished archive photographs and includes plans, sections, some details and a structural analysis. The block with its round cornered curtain walls is mounted on a podium, landscaped by Alfred Caldwell, which proves that kidney-shaped pools can be both elegant and appropriate. Similar observations could be made about the brown tinted facade that, personally, explains a world of less convincing derivatives. The architects were Schipporeit and Heinrich. If you are travelling to Chicago I recommend this book as an insight not only into this particular structure, but also into the way that Chicago architects think. Available through the Chicago Architecture Foundation online shop.
JAO

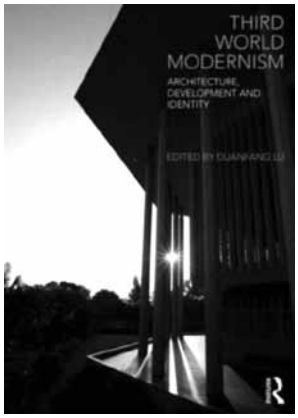


Traditional Construction for a Sustainable Future
Carole Ryan
Spon Press
Abingdon, 2011
384 pp.
ISBN: 978-0-415-46757-5
£29.99 (pb)

This work advocates traditional buildings as sustainable, being constructed from healthy and durable materials that have a limited environmental impact and functioning in a way that ensures longevity. Following a brief background to historical built forms, there is an interesting commentary on materials and their uses, from the basic staples of construction – stone, earth, brick, lime and timber – to later manufactured materials, drawing from David Pearson's *The Natural House Book*.

The substance is in the sections relating to the performance of traditional buildings and the role of the Building Regulations, where examples provide an insight into the common issues. It would be easy to assume that modern materials and methods should be discouraged by definition, however, examples of modern sustainable buildings are offered as are materials developed to be suitable for conservation works.

As a reference work, most areas are covered in sufficient detail to be both engaging and informative. It is a shame that more attention was not paid to the diagrams, several of which appear rushed. While some of the arguments may be considered subjective, on the whole the work gives a balanced, instructive overview of the subject matter and will be of interest to students and practitioners.
JG



Third World Modernism: Architecture, Development and Identity
Duanfang Lu (ed.)
Routledge
London, 2011
304 pp.
ISBN: 978-0-415-56458-8
£29.99 (pb)

This book of collected essays 'attempts to contribute unique perspectives to the critical rethinking of the modern by unravelling the complex meanings of "Third World Modernism"'. The collected papers critique the presentation of Modernist architecture in the 'developing world' as presented in the historiography of the twentieth century, contributing to the revision of issues such as the 'authenticity' of artistic productions; and the relevance und understanding of Modernism as a style and how this is read by different cultures and in different situations. Chapters present architecture from Brazil, Morocco, Peru, Nigeria, Ceylon [sic], and Turkey; Indian design pedagogy – a 'Modernity Transfer'; tropical 'decolonisation' and the 'tropicalisation' of British architectural Culture. The writing is punchy and the voices diverse. This book forms an excellent reference point for contemporary debates on this understudied topic.
JAO

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135512000139 Published online by Cambridge University Press