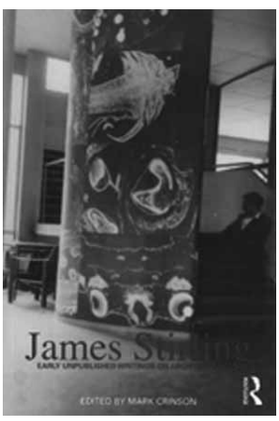
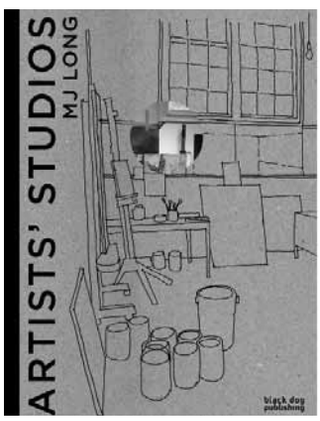
On building, writing and collecting

Constructions and deconstructions



James Stirling: Early Unpublished Writings on Architecture
By Mark Crinson
Routledge
Abingdon, Oxon, 2010
160 pp.
ISBN 10-0-415-55059-9
£24.99 (pb)

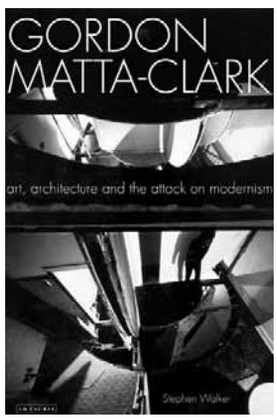
James Stirling's fame can be attributed to his eloquence in building rather than in writing. However, among his archive – now held at the Canadian Centre for Architecture – are a variety of texts. Mark Crinson has edited some of these together to form the core of this book, taken from: a 1950s black notebook, lecture notes, an interview with Stirling and James Gowan, and a transcript of a talk given to Team 10. These sometimes rather enigmatic fragments are top-and-tailed with extensive interpretative essays by Crinson. The resulting book offers glimpses into a voracious architectural mind – some more intriguing than others – and an insight into a certain British architectural milieu in the 1950s. It is a delight for Stirling aficionados. But his buildings still speak louder than his words.
AS



Artists' Studios
By M. J. Long
Black Dog Publishing
London, 2009
189 pp.
ISBN: 978-1-9061-5572-8
£24.95 (hb)

If Colin St. John (Sandy) Wilson (1922–2007) had built or written nothing he would still be considered a major figure in British cultural life as an impassioned collector and friend of artists such as R. B. Kitaj and Peter Blake. When M. J. Long first worked for Wilson after graduating from Yale she was immediately drawn into that art circle in making the house and studio at Cambridge (1965–6) for Christopher Cornford, painter and Dean of the Royal College of Art. In 1972 she married Wilson. As they worked together on the long and gruelling task of making the British Library (1970–97), Long also became close to Wilson's painter friends. Almost as relief from the awesome task of the Library – and returning to the more intimate speculations of light and space engendered at Cornford House – it fell to Long to begin to create studios for these artists; Kitaj, then Blake. These were the first works of what became a remarkable series of art spaces born of long conversations and her insights into their work and practices. *Artists' Studios* is, therefore, not a history of the studio as typology. It is a much more personal book and in that aspect its quality lies. The actual text is not long; rather the exploration into the working methods and life of each artist is evoked through Peter Blake-like collages of studiedly related impressions: photographs, the architect's own sketches, working drawings and models, and the work of the artists themselves, together transmitting the excitement of architect and client building as one when that rare rapport of intention occurs.
SK

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135509990273 Published online by Cambridge University Press



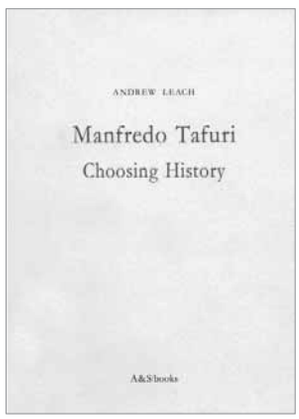
Gordon Matta-Clark: Art, Architecture and the Attack on Modernism
By Stephen Walker
IB Tauris
London, 2009
224 pp.
ISBN 978-1-84511-966-9
£16.99 (pb)

Literary deconstruction has nothing on the literal deconstructions of artist Gordon Matta-Clark. His unsettling slices and incisions into familiar, frequently domestic, buildings in the 1970s were recorded in photographs since published widely, much to the intrigue of architects and architecture students. This surgeon of space reportedly sought to subvert and resist the formalism he came to detest during his architectural education at Cornell, cutting out floors and walls as if by some cathartic act of revenge. The artist's practice is often understood as a rejection of the tenets of Modernism. Stephen Walker's intriguing thesis – drawing from the thinking of Henri Bergson and Deleuze and Guattari among others – is that Matta-Clark's attitude to architectural heritage was more ambivalent than is commonly assumed. Locating Matta-Clark's 'discrete violations' both 'within and without modernism', Walker argues for a less binary, more differentiated understanding of his work, claiming his ongoing relevance to contemporary art, architectural and academic production.
AS



Concrete Vaulted Construction in Imperial Rome. Innovations in Context
By C. Lancaster
Cambridge University Press
Cambridge, 2009
274pp.
ISBN 978-0-521-74436-2
£27.99 (pb)

The seeds for this book were sown during its author's travels in Italy as an architecture student. Deeply impressed by the daring and 'honesty' of the ruins of the Imperial era, Lancaster would not, she readily admits, have liked them in their marbled finery. The focus, therefore, is on building rather than style, and combines an architectural approach with archaeological rigour. All aspects of the buildings' production are explored – constituent materials, geology of Roman stones, use of calculation – and situated in the broader cultural and political context. Throughout, God is in the details: on the presence of amphoras in vaults, for example, she convincingly questions the received view – promulgated by Alberti – that they were used to lighten the load. This may have been the case in a few late structures but the practice's origins were probably prosaic – availability, and shortage of other materials. Scholarly yet accessible, this fascinating book is essential reading for anyone seeking a full understanding of the building tradition that culminated in the Pantheon, and also an ideal preparation for a visit to Rome.
RW



Manfredo Tafuri: Choosing History
By Andrew Leach
A & S Books
Ghent, 2007
323 pp.
ISBN 90-76714-29-0
£20.00 (pb)

References to Manfredo Tafuri are inescapable in discussions of architectural theory or history. Yet interpretations of his enigmatic oeuvre tend still to rely on the readings of those who first brought his ideas to an anglophone audience in the 1970s. Leach's aim is not to reposition Tafuri, but to trace the breadth of his contribution to architectural culture so that his relevance to contemporary discourse may be considered afresh. *Choosing History* draws on a close study of Tafuri's texts – the internal logic of the arguments they present and the sources to which they refer – to explore key themes and questions in his theorisation of architectural history. Addressed to readers with or without prior knowledge of the subject, this discussion is complemented by a biographical introduction and a sizeable bibliography of texts, lectures and other sources.
SA

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