Luis Barragán’s Gardens of El Pedregal
KEITH L. EGGENER
Princeton Architectural Press, 2001 xiii + 162 pp., 100 b. & w. illus. $40.00 (cloth)

The 1976 hagiographic exhibition by the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and his own self-mythifying Pritzker Prize speech have placed the work of Mexican architect Luis Barragán (1902–1988) in the realm of the spiritual, magical, and poetic—outside of the real material conditions of its production. Helping to dispel these myths, Keith L. Eggener’s Luis Barragán’s Gardens of El Pedregal systematically positions Barragán’s work in the specific context of Mexican and international cultural and architectural debates to demonstrate that his work was astutely commercial and part of a reactionary architectural tradition intent on rejecting the social changes enacted by modernity.

In 1945, in collaboration with others, Barragán bought 865 acres of rocky and uninhabitable landscape, known as El Pedregal, located on the southern edge of Mexico City, and began to subdivide and develop it. Its harsh terrain was partly the reason for its availability and low cost, but its character attracted Barragán. On this land, he built a number of Modern-style demonstration homes and exhibition gardens to demonstrate to prospective buyers the aesthetic appeal in their contrast with the rocky terrain. Of his photographer, Armando Salas Portugal, Luis Barragán asked that the homes and gardens be framed “abstractly” to preserve the ideal expression of the place. These photographs, in turn, served a marketing campaign organized by Barragán and his associates.

One of Eggener’s central claims is that by using devices of and references to marketing and fashion photography, Barragán transformed the site into a spectacular representation of fragmentary and surreal compositions. At the same time, surrealism was exalted for its marketing potentials and its allusion to tradition through inherent mnemonic qualities. In the photographs of El Pedregal, surrealism was both personal and idiosyncratic. The photographs touted the subdivision as the “ideal place to live” and emphasized the unique character and serenity of the newly modified landscape and its architecture. Surely, Barragán’s intention was to preserve an arcadia accessible to a limited sector of the population. Through references to vernacular traditions and forms, his work was meant to be popular and appealing, yet, by virtue of its social inaccessibility to the population at large, it was not populist.

This contradiction is the most problematic aspect of Barragán’s work for El Pedregal. The Mexican Revolution of 1910–1920, understood as a social revolution, was at the center of a fierce search for an appropriate and socially minded architecture for Mexico and its people. Ironically, although the revolution enabled Barragán’s modern and historical formal references and explorations, his work undermined the public and social direction of postrevolutionary architectural investigations. His redeployment of idealized, nostalgic, and romanticized Mexican traditions, transformed through the lens of modern abstraction, changed the use-value of the architecture into a mere representation, creating an acceptable, compelling, and contemporary regionalist architecture for an elite group of Mexican and foreign consumers. In defining the cultural and artistic context of postrevolutionary Mexico, Eggener points to this history and the social contradictions in Barragán’s work at least obliquely.

Eggener’s cautious treatment of Barragán avoids the mythifying and rarefying pitfalls of previous studies that have ultimately obfuscated the real character behind the work. By looking beyond the limits constructed by Barragán and his hagiographers, Eggener has given a new breadth and focus to the already available information. His discussion of El Pedregal as part of a system of photographic discourse provides a much needed reexamination of the ubiquitous images of Barragán’s work. Yet, even within the structure of its inventiveness, Eggener’s study falters in convincingly presenting the ideological imperatives behind the work itself. As part of his interest in surrealism, for example, the return to representational pictorial practices, in contrast to the socially minded avant-gardist strategy of radical negation, serves to ground the ideological nature of Barragán’s work. These representational modes, characteristic of bourgeois art, served to commemorate and reconstitute the naturalized and historically determined systems of political and social order of the established ruling class.

Despite these limitations, Eggener’s book provides a well-rounded, compelling, and critical look at Barragán and his work. His analysis of El Pedregal reveals its highly politicized and problematic nature. In the end, the seeming architectural self-referentiality that Barragán so eloquently called for and advocated was far from neutral. As Eggener suggests, the architecture and gardens of El Pedregal and their representations speak of the preservation of structures and traditions that opposed the social changes enacted by modernity.

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Mies in Berlin
TERENCE RILEY AND BARRY BERGDOLL, editors
The Museum of Modern Art, 2001 392 pp., 595 illustrations (105 color, 490 duotone) $70.00 (cloth) $35.00 (paper)

Mies in America
PHYLLIS LAMBERT, editor
Canadian Centre for Architecture and Whitney Museum of American Art, 2001 792 pp., 630 illustrations (118 color, 512 black-and-white) $75.00 (cloth)

In a single year, Mies van der Rohe was the subject of two major museum exhibitions and these related
massive volumes. As the forward to *Mies in America* notes, 2001 should be remembered as “The Year of Mies.” The highly successful exhibitions—“Mies in Berlin” mounted by the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) and “Mies in America” organized jointly by the Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA) and Whitney Museum of American Art—were both visually stunning in the amount and quality of Mies’s original graphic work on display, as well as new videos, computer simulations, interpretive photographs, and highly instructive and comparative physical models. Not all that work could be reproduced in these related publications, yet any absences are more than recompensed by the volumes’ critical content. Both transcend the catalog genre.

In *Mies in Berlin*, scholarly standards are uniformly high. Terence Riley begins by reviewing the extensive exhibition and publication record of Mies’s work at MoMA. Riley exposes the biases—particularly Philip Johnson’s—that these introductions into subsequent interpretations of Mies. Next, Thomas Ruff’s interpretive photographs offer eerie color and black-and-white composite impressions of Mies’s German work. Several evocative, motile prints recall Gerhard Richter’s mid-1960s “blurred” painting style.

Following these introductions, *Mies in Berlin* offers four topical essays reviewing broad aspects of Mies’s German phase. Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani studies Berlin’s urban milieu in relation to Mies’s theoretical and competition projects. A pioneering essay by Barry Bergdoll discusses how Mies’s German villas interact with nature. The other pair of articles juxtaposes avant-garde and historical influences on Mies. Detlef Mertins studies Mies’s interaction with Dada, de Stijl, and other radical groups, and Wolf Tegethoff studies how peculiarly Prussian tendencies in classicism informed Mies’s early work.

The volume next provides plates and descriptions of Mies’s German work. There is a balance between historical black-and-white images, new color photographs, freshly commissioned plans, and Mies’s own process sketches and stupendous perspectives. Acknowledged experts, such as Dietrich Neumann, Christian Otto, and Julian Heynen, as well as promising new voices like Claire Zimmerman, contribute the descriptions. Although this section seems outwardly comprehensive, it has some significant lacunae. In the preface, the editors note that the book is not intended as the definitive account of Mies’s German work. Still, coming so close risks misleading the unwary reader. Unexplained is the omission of a dedicated entry on, for example, Mies’s towers in Berlin, his sole industrial effort in Germany. Also unfortunate are the absences of entries on many interiors projects, especially Mies’s collaborations with Lilly Reich. The breadth of her participation in Mies’s German phase receives too little acknowledgment here.

A section of focused research essays follows. Fritz Neumeyer recounts the launch of Mies’s career, and Jan Maruhn contributes a study of Mies’s relations with art-collecting clients. Andres Lepik extends the recent scholarly attention generated by Mies’s exceptional photomontages, and Riley returns to unravel the myths of Mies’s purported “courtroom” phase and its nagging confusion about attribution. Wallis Miller analyzes Mies’s recurring efforts at exhibition design, including a substantive discussion of Reich’s contribution within this one area of Mies’s oeuvre. Lastly, Rosemarie Haag Bletter argues that Expressionism does not disappear from Mies’s German work but continues through his use of “dark” transparency. Several concluding essays project toward Mies’s second career, including an article by Jean-Louis Cohen on the German view of American urbanism at the time of Mies’s 1938 emigration to the United States.

The second volume, *Mies in America*, is also valuable, although less even in coverage. It begins with introductory essays about Mies prior to his settling in America. Werner Oechslin attempts to reconcile Mies’s cryptic and contradictory writings made while still in Germany. Vivian Endicott Barnett contributes a ground-breaking essay about Mies’s own art collection, and Cammie McAtee relates new information about Mies’s first, tentative visit to America. Each of these essays offers many new facts, but two hundred pages into the volume we still await an overview of the “American” Mies.

Phyllis Lambert, the volume’s editor, fills this need with a multichaptered “book-within-a-book” spanning Mies’s American phase. Some portions reiterate Peter Carter’s 1974 monograph and Kenneth Frampton’s recent writings, but Lambert offers new insights, particularly about how Mies’s IIT Metallurgy and Chemical Engineering Building contains in microcosm his later devotion to both cellular and clear-span typologies. Lambert usefully employs “gothic versus classic” terminology to explicate this development, a vocabulary she also applies to Mies’s diverse corner solutions. Further, she clarifies Mies’s sketch and photomontage processes and contributes newly prepared comparative orthographic and detail drawings of his high rises. Detlef Mertins, the only contributor to both volumes, follows Lambert with an essay about Mies’s relation to the concept of organicism. Sarah Whiting then adds the volume’s most outstanding contribution: her incisive discussion of IIT’s urbanism situates Mies in the social and political context of Chicago, and adroitly uses the metaphor of the bas-relief to set a new standard for discussing space and mass in Mies’s American work.

The book’s final section addresses the “challenge of Mies today.” K. Michael Hays employs neo-Marxian criticism in presenting Mies’s American programming and aesthetic choices as glyphs of resistance, as intimations of a possible but forever receding social utopia. Peter Eisenman, referring to his own entry for the 1997 IIT Student Center Competition, discusses the dialectic of absence/presence in Mies’s work, and Rem Koolhaas ends the volume with an impassioned though wry defense of his firm’s contentious winning proposal for that same competition.

One general concern with *Mies in America* is how it disproportionately favors coverage of IIT. Although the focus on the entire campus as opposed to just Crown Hall is refreshing, buildings unrelated to IIT suffer. For example, Mies’s sequen-
tial additions to the Houston Museum of Fine Arts receive just half a page. General readers could only assume that IIT represents Mies’s consummate American achievement. Fortunately, the volume also includes an astonishingly comprehensive, five-foot-long, folding, color-coded chart compiled by Elspeth Cowell that tracks the phases of all Mies’s American work with monthly accuracy.

Like the Berlin volume, *Mies in America* presents intriguing new photography (by Guido Guidi, Richard Pare, and OMA) recording the inhabitation and subsequent vicissitudes of Mies’s American buildings, and offers much new research, including many references drawn from interviews initiated or collected by the CCA. It gives greater emphasis to collaboration in Mies’s practice and contains useful data on his American disciples. But, surprisingly, *Mies in America* mostly ignores Mies’s IIT teaching, where many of these collaborative relationships formed. The volume on Berlin does peripherally address Mies’s Bauhaus teaching in the context of his courthouses, but neither volume stresses pedagogy. Also sparse between the two books is treatment of Mies’s 1930 New York Apartment for Philip Johnson. This lapse is ironic because it results from the book’s project of separation. Mies designed this first American commission while still comfortably residing in Berlin. An insignificant work by other measures, it is important precisely within the context of cross-continental tension that underlies these two books. Yet it was too American for the first book and too early for the second.

Of course, these books are not intended as a cohesive pairing that provides an overview of Mies’s career. Instead, they seek to view Mies by halves. *Mies in Berlin* wishes to transcend prior readings that regard Mies’s career as a “seamless creation” bridging his emigration, and *Mies in America* suggests that dividing his career helps redirect attention toward his later work. These are worthy intentions. Certainly the volumes bring forward differences between, for example, Mies as urbanist in Europe and America. Yet, try as these volumes might, the impression conveyed is of an architect whose achievements were rich because his interests ran deep, not because those achievements evolved in several environments. These volumes unintentionally discover more links across his “two” careers than distinctions. His lifelong interests in art collecting, in subtly perturbed axial compositions, and in photomontage all receive fresh emphasis between these books. Mies, history’s most dogged architect, underwent no stylistic alteration as potent as, for example, Le Corbusier’s shift between the 1929 Villa Savoye’s avant-garde aesthetic and his 1935 Weekend House’s rustic manner. Hopefully, these volumes will encourage an equally necessary volume focusing on the cohesiveness of Mies’s work.

Scholarly interest in Mies is clearly on the rise. *Mies in Berlin* and *Mies in America* bring forward dozens of emerging voices in the company of already recognized authors. Both volumes demonstrate a staggering range of energetically new interpretations and an overwhelming diversity of subjects for future study. Nor are these substantial scholarly volumes the only recent additions to the Miesian literature. At least eight single-building case studies have arrived or have been announced, including a coordinated series of four volumes by Werner Blaser, published by Birkhäuser. A sumptuous coffee-table book associated with yet another exhibition has appeared (Yehuda E. Safran, *Mies van der Rohe*, Gingko Press, 2001), and an entire book has emerged analyzing a single photograph of Mies (Ricardo Daza, *Looking for Mies*, Birkhäuser, 2000). Space-conscious librarians will have to worry anew about a shelf too long ignored.

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### The Gray Cloth

**Paul Scheerbart**  
**John A. Stuart, translator**

MIT, 2001

143 pages, 5 color illustrations by John A. Stuart  
$27.95 (cloth)

And in the evenings, they sit in their tower salon and ate artichokes. (p. 123)

In a theme issue on transparency, one should not overlook the wonderful new translation of Paul Scheerbart’s *The Gray Cloth*. The translator, John Stuart, provides a new introduction and illustrates it with five of his own whimsical and translucent watercolors. First published in 1914, Scheerbart’s science fiction fantasy tells the story of Edgar Krug, an architect in the vein of Frank Lloyd Wright, intent on transforming the globe with his glass architecture.

Scheerbart (1863–1915) is remembered as the muse for Bruno Taut’s crystalline utopias and his collaborator on the Glass House (1914), and, in literature, as an important writer of esoteric fictions and fairy tales. *The Gray Cloth* is in the genre of comic fantasy. Like Thomas Moore in *Utopia*, Scheerbart satirizes his own creation as he fashions it. Krug as the quintessential Germanic hero is arrogant and demanding, a man of genius, but one absurdly oblivious of others—excepting how they help fulfill his destiny. There is the preposterous way in which he chooses Clara Weber for his bride: at first meeting, she distinguishes herself by the severity of her dress. He stipulates that her marriage vow be to always wear the combination she has donned that night: gray cloth with 10% white trim. (The book’s original title is *The Gray Cloth and Ten Percent White: A Ladies Novel.*) With the complacency of aesthetes, they agree that she will make the perfect complement to his color-drenched and light-filled structures. They marry that same evening. A comedic subplot tracks the fortunes of the
gray cloth formula: Clara’s sometimes wavering resolve, society’s rejection of Krug after a documentary filmmaker exposes Clara’s sartorial oppression, and a dirigible raider in which the thieves are disguised in her garb. In his “ladies novel,” Scheerbart portrays a paradoxically strong-minded, but remarkably agreeable wife, whose reform movement dress becomes the unintentional accessory of Krug’s creations.

From the nineteenth-century naturalists, Scheerbart inherited a relish for descriptions of sensation and experience, and one of the principal pleasures of The Gray Cloth lies in the imaginings of a utopian world of fantastic inventions and wondrous natural environments. Characters enjoy exotic foods in dreamlike settings with ephemeral light effects choreographed by unseen hands. They visit underground glass architecture in Japan, an Indian zoo in the Himalayas, and an “air research” laboratory in Ceylon with its fleet of high-altitude balloons. The particular machine in the garden in Scheerbart’s world is inevitably aerial. Krug’s dirigible is a floating ambassador that brings glass culture, aestheticism, and joy to each port. He and Clara supervise progress on his works from above, hovering in their gondola. The experience of architecture is also mostly of the sky: they glide through a dirigible port in Antarctica along its lighthouse “street” and detour around older cities where brick buildings offend their senses.

Unlike the Italian version, Scheerbart’s aerofuturism is demilitarized, indeed, pacifist, and nationalism is traded for a stateless and placid anarchism. The backdrop of a Europe on the verge of war explains the political appeal that Scheerbart held for radicals like Taut. The great oneness of this stateless world represents not internationalism, but a globalism in which Krug moves about the world planting seeds of “third way,” that is, nonpartisan, reform. As they drift across the globe, Krug and his bride encounter and build one after another alternative institutions: an artists’ colony in Antarctica, a rest home for retired pilots in Fiji, a spa in Borneo—places where nature and miraculous invention soothe the mind and temper the spirit.

The Gray Cloth begins in Chicago, in the pagoda-like glass “Tower of Babel,” thirty stories tall with a restaurant on each floor, and a deck to view the surrounding skyscraper landscape. Such exotic images people the Scheerbartian landscape: suspended glass houses in Arabia, and the proposal for glass ships to sail the Nile. The dream of the orient formed part of the esoteric nexus of Scheerbart’s time and reminds us that Taut’s conception of the city crown (Die Stadtkrone, 1919) employed Indian and Chinese temples as social and architectural models. A fantastic notion, the oriental temple as city crown would recur in the proposals for cities and settlements by German architects through the disastrous years of hyperinflation in the 1920s.

Filled with oddities, written in an aphoristic style that set the precedent for surrealist writing, Scheerbart’s ethereal fantasy retreats into peace and beauty, an ideal of a benevolent society and a tamed planet, from a real world on the cusp of violence and tragedy. If simply for this reason, John Stuart’s new translation is worth a read today.

Susan R. Henderson teaches architectural history at Syracuse University. With this issue, she concludes her tenure as book review editor of JAE.

The Glass State: The Technology of the Spectacle, Paris, 1981–1998
ANNETTE FIERRO
MIT, 2002
336 pages, 124 illustrations
$45 (cloth)

A fleeting decade has elapsed since Tony Vidler’s ground-breaking essay “Transparency” appeared in his book, The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely (The MIT Press, 1992). Focusing on the glass architecture of the Grands Projets in Paris sponsored by Mitterand’s socialist government, Vidler’s essay introduced a new way of understanding connections between structure, materiality, psychology, and politics. Vidler examined this innovative and socially progressive architecture against an American backdrop of the conservative politics of the Bush administration, a post—Gulf War recession, and the dismal prospects for architecture in New York City. He linked contemporary politics to building materials, their significations, and contexts, with astute observations such as: “the present passion for see-through buildings is indubitably linked to the attempt to construct a state identity of technological modernity against a city identity (Paris, Chirac) emmeshed in the tricky historicism of preservation” (p. 220).

In The Glass State: The Technology of the Spectacle, Paris, 1981–1998, Annette Fierro uses her abundant research and interpretive skills to reexamine Vidler’s ideas and extend the discourse in a direction entirely her own. Written in a graceful style rich in precise observations, the book explores Parisian buildings that Fierro believes contribute most to the notion of transparency. She examines each of the Grands Projets, in roughly chronological order. After an initial overview, the second chapter draws parallels between the Eiffel Tower (1889) and the Centre Georges Pompidou (Piano and Rogers, 1979), exploring issues of populism and transparency. Other chapters deal with the Cité des Science et de l’Industrie (Adrien Fainsilber, 1986), the Institut du Monde Arabe (Jean Nouvel, 1987), the Grande Pyramide du Louvre (I.M. Pei, 1989), the Fondation Cartier (Jean Nouvel, 1993), the greenhouses at the Parc André Citroën (Berger, Clément, Viguié, Jodry, and Provost, 1993), and the Petite Pyramide du Louvre (Pei, Cobb, Freed, 1993). Fierro’s penultimate chapter is a very engaging and informative discursive on Perrault’s Bibliothèque Nationale (1998). She ends the book with “Dis-
course of the Detail,” which argues for expanded discussions of details and construction beyond “limited essentialist conceptions” and the recognition of disciplines outside architecture that examine social, engineering, political, and financial conditions.

Throughout the book, Fierro underscores the mutability of political meaning attached to buildings formed of shifting internal contradictions everywhere from initial design intentions to the perceptions of public. She connects socialist symbolism of glass to conditions in the historically laden landscape of Paris, rightly reminding the reader that in “Mitterand’s buildings were a metaphor of accessibility tied to democracy and the leftist government.” However, this association is complicated by the political traditions of monumental French architecture that is firmly rooted in absolutism, in bloody revolutions, and in Haussmann’s single-handed reshaping of the fabric of Paris. Fierro makes some of her greatest contributions on the subject of glass as both symbol and building material. She argues that in Mitterand’s Grands Projets “we see irrefutable evidence that the might could also participate in larger conceptual and intellectual orders of buildings and projects. Clearly evident in all of these cases is detail’s capacity to order, to connote, to refer, and to signify.” A special focus of the book is the work of Rice Francis Ritchie (RFR), the engineering firm responsible for detailing several projects, including the pyramids at the Louvre. Fierro explores the physical implications of the details as well as the elaborate fabrication processes of the glass and its fasteners, and sets the detail in the larger symbolic structure of the buildings. In the example she considers the “epitome of [glass] technology,” Pei’s Petite Pyramid du Louvre, the author describes the irony that one of the best works of the Grands Projets is a highly detailed skylight constructed simply to add sparkle to the mall of luxury chain stores located around it.

Fierro explores the signification of the Grands Projets as modern monuments. She contends that the “open concept” of the projects— their unsettled meanings— makes them “viable expression[s] for the monument in our time.” The statement is complicated by the fact that these buildings, often constructed and detailed with immense care— akin to that of urban jewelry— are both formed and informed by the politics of spectacle. Here their interpretations become as fluid and changeable as the reflections and refractions in the glass from which they are made. While she raises these questions, the broader implications the Grands Projets may have for understanding the relationship between monuments, memory, and meaning beyond Paris is outside the scope of Fierro’s book. For educators, especially those exploring the politics of making and the design of details, The Glass State is an important resource. Yet Fierro has set the groundwork for future histories of specific building projects that expand to address issues of multiculturalism, identity, gender, site, and neighborhood— which populations were displaced by the construction, who works in and visits them now. Such readings will serve to deepen the course Fierro has set and strengthen her message. It is indeed a tribute to this book that it raises as many questions as it answers and points to new directions of inquiry.

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California Modern: The Architecture of Craig Ellwood
NEIL JACKSON
Princeton Architectural Press, 2001
208 pages, illustrated
$50.00 (cloth)

Craig Ellwood: In the Spirit of the Time
ALFONSO PÉREZ-MÉNDEZ
Editorio Gustavo Gili, 2002
321 pages, illustrated

Craig Ellwood produced nearly one hundred buildings between 1948 and 1977. Most were single-family residences, nearly all built in southern California, and many were widely celebrated for their promotion of a technically oriented and structurally rigorous domestic environment. The recent resurgence of interest in Ellwood and his California contemporaries reflects both the revival of neomodernist aesthetic agendas, and an interest in historicizing the postwar period.

Ellwood presents a number of historiographic challenges. Most notably, there are questions as to the extent of his involvement in the design of many works: a series of talented employees and consultants were certainly instrumental in much of it. Ellwood had no formal architectural training and, purportedly, could barely draw. Historians and critics have also to contend with Ellwood’s ability to control the presentation of his work, in the pages of Arts & Architecture, and Esther McCoy’s 1968 book Craig Ellwood, Architecture. Even his name was a calculated construction. Ellwood was born John Nelson Burke, yet he gave the fictitious name “Craig Ellwood” to his fledgling business, adopting the name himself when it became clear that potential clients actually expected to encounter a Craig Ell-
wood when they came to call. This episode under-
scores the compelling but challenging character of a
career in which entrepreneurial ambition combined
with an instinct for publicity and, eventually, a dis-
tinctive architectural sensibility.

In Neil Jackson’s *California Modern: The Archi-
tecture of Craig Ellwood*, authorship and publicity
are at the center of the narrative. Venturing onto
the tricky ground of architectural biography, Jack-
son marshals a wealth of material derived from
archival sources as well as from personal interviews
with Ellwood’s friends, family, and associates. This
evidence is shaped into a chronicle of Ellwood’s
complex personality and professional evolution.

Jackson also throws new doubt on Ellwood’s
role as a designer. He devotes substantial attention
to Ellwood’s self-invention, portraying his archi-
tectural career as the culmination of his family’s flight
from their Texas panhandle roots, and transcending
his limited education and means. Significantly, the
transformation of John Burke into Craig Ellwood
was catalyzed by his encounter with Hollywood
image-making: his first two wives were actresses,
and he worked for a time as a publicist and a model
before finding his way into the construction busi-
ness. Ellwood worked briefly as a cost estimator for
the contracting firm Lampert, Cofer, and Salzman,
who built the 1949 Eames house as well as other
Case Study houses. This experience was key in set-
ting the eventual direction of his career, in exposing
him to an innovative and marketable aesthetic lan-
guage, and to the *Arts & Architecture* milieu.

Ellwood launched his own business with a
series of designs for contemporary speculative
homes that brought more commissions after they
were featured in a host of regional, national, and
international publications. Although this work was
credited to Craig Ellwood alone, it clearly grew out
of a collaboration between he and other contrac-
tors, designers, and consultants. Jackson attempts
to clarify the nature of these collaborations, espe-
cially for the early designs, but he ultimately
focuses on the string of associates moving through
the Ellwood office, many of whom Jackson inter-
viewed or otherwise consulted. Together, these
sources add up to a view of Ellwood’s attitude as
detached at best. But the claims of Ellwood’s
employees, however convincing they may be, focus
Jackson’s discussion on the problem of assigning or
denying single authorship for the projects. Given
the limits of existing evidence, it remains a question
that likely can never be conclusively answered.

As an architectural biography, Jackson’s
account raises expectations that remain unmet. Core
themes, including the opportunism of Ellwood’s
self-invention and his likely dependence on others
for his designs, are obscured by an obsessive atten-
tion to authorship disputes and biographical detail.
Do we need to know, for example, the name and
department number of the judge hearing Ellwood’s
first wife’s divorce petition (Jackson, p. 18)? Much
of the detail is also highly speculative, such as the
assertion that Ellwood’s dislike for Paul Rudolph
“was probably due, in the main, to professional jeal-
ousy and Ellwood’s inherent insecurity, although
Rudolph’s homosexuality might also have been a
cause” (Jackson, p. 102). Still, Jackson’s biography
is highly engaging and benefits from the fascinating
personality of its subject. It is hard to resist being
drawn into Ellwood’s life.

Craig Ellwood: *In the Spirit of the Time*, by
Alfonso Pérez-Méndez, condenses discussion of Ell-
wood’s early life to two pages, instead placing
emphasis on the architectural and ideological con-
text of Ellwood’s work. For Pérez-Méndez, that
context is defined by the technological euphoria of
the immediate postwar years, which was most pro-
nounced in southern California. Ellwood’s architec-
ture was not only in sympathy with that context,
but his own adoption of the architect’s identity can
also be explained by it. The author traces Ellwood’s
journey in a thoughtful and convincing analysis of a
wide range of buildings and projects. Unimpeded by
the hunt for the keys to Ellwood’s personality,
Pérez-Méndez reveals the work produced between
the late 1940s and mid-1970s as a reflection of the
evolving attitudes of American modernists, filtered
through the culture of southern California.

With regards to authorship, Pérez-Méndez is
less interested in deciding who “designed” individ-
ual works, instead stressing collaboration as basic to
Ellwood’s practice. He suggests three ways in which
Ellwood interacted with his designers. First, he hired
designers sympathetic to his own developing views
on architecture. Second, through his name and
instinct for publicity, Ellwood provided a setting for
talented designers to do work that was otherwise
unavailable to them. Finally, he engaged his associ-
ates in critical dialogue with earlier work produced
by the office. This account offers an alternate read-
ing to Jackson, one that suggests that collaboration
allowed Ellwood, unable to draw or to “design” in
the normal sense, to employ his considerable con-
struction experience and his generalized sense of
taste.

Pérez-Méndez argues that the organization of
Ellwood’s practice foreshadowed that of many later
offices. Ellwood’s mistake was in failing to admit
publicly the collaborative practice. By presenting the
Ellwood work as the work of an office rather than a
heroic individual designer, Pérez-Méndez is able to
shift our attention away from polemics and back to
the work itself. In the process, the work gains clarity
even if the figure of Ellwood remains enigmatic.

Both of these books are of great value.
Although Pérez-Méndez is clearer about the broader
significance of Ellwood’s work, Jackson’s text pre-
sents a compelling study of the complex relation-
ship between Ellwood’s life and the work that bore
his name. When read together, the two works pro-
vide a rich and provocative story.

It is likely that readers will also be drawn to
both books by their graphic appeal. Both reprint
many of the original Ellwood-supervised photos-
graphs and supplement these with previously
unpublished photographs and drawings. In Jackson,
some small photos are difficult to study, but this
allows for a great quantity and range of graphic
material. The Pérez-Méndez text includes eighty
Robert Weddle is an assistant professor at the Hammons School of Architecture at Drury University. His research includes studies of the intersections between technology, urbanism, and housing during the twentieth century.

**Courtyards: Aesthetic, Social, and Thermal Delight**

JOHN S. REYNOLDS

John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2002

253 pages, 158 illustrations

$75.00 (cloth)

Courtyard housing is an ancient form that can be traced back to Mesopotamia with substantial evidence dating as early as 2000 B.C. In later periods, it is found in most parts of the Mediterranean basin, in the civilizations of Greece, Rome, Byzantium, and Islam. With the spread of Islam, courtyard housing and its related system of through streets and cul-de-sacs took root in North Africa, Spain, Sicily, Persia, and farther east in the northern parts of the Indian subcontinent. In the sixteenth century, the Spanish colonists brought the form to South and Central America, and to what is now the southwest United States. Courtyard housing was also used in traditional Chinese and Japanese cultures. Many examples survive in all these regions.

This excellent book, John Reynolds’s *Courtyards: Aesthetic, Social and Thermal Delight*, is a serious study of courtyard housing and its many variants; the book is not a historical study, but rather is intended as a reference for design. It is profusely illustrated with black-and-white and color photos and very effective analytical drawing. The study does not address the clustering of courtyard houses in neighborhoods or their effect on urban planning, design, or form. Reynolds devotes the three parts of the book to courtyard characteristics, particular examples and courtyard design, and provides three useful appendices dealing with technical matters such as rainwater collection and planting. He includes forty-three case studies of individual houses, thirty of them in Colimar, Mexico, and thirteen in Andalusia, Spain, eleven of those in Cordoba, and all undertaken between the mid-1980s and the mid-1990s. On whether or not those forty-three examples are representative, the author remarks, “From the several hundred courtyards I have seen and photographed in Mexico, Spain, Peru and Argentina, I consider these a reasonably typical sample” (p. 103).

Reynolds’s approach for studying these buildings is to start from the courtyard and then look at linkages and uses around it. From this study, he derived forty-four “Guidelines for Planning and Design.” Of these, the most sophisticated include discussions that deal with environmental issues: cooling, winter sun, daylight, and aspect ratio. In the aspect ratio (the degree of openness to the sky), the greater the ratio, the more exposed is the courtyard to the sky. The related measure of the solar shadow predicts that, the greater the solar shadow index, the deeper the well formed by the courtyard, and the less winter sun reaches the floor or the north wall of the courtyard. Reynolds documents each of the case studies in a very useful, comparative table. Other guidelines concern contextual issues of the courtyard in the city and the neighborhoods, and its links to arcades and to parking. In the last chapter, Reynolds provides two illustrative designs, one by him, and both relying on the row formation of courtyard houses. It would have been very useful if he had included one or more other designs to show the combinational potentials of clustered courtyard housing and the alternative possibilities for the access system and related parking.

A major omission from the book is a discussion of codes and how the codes followed in the communities of the author’s examples facilitated the formation of courtyard housing—in particular how codes deal with the problems of abutting neighboring courtyard houses on one side, the problems associated with increasing the height of buildings by adding additional stories, privacy and overlooking considerations, the equitable dealing with party walls, and a demonstration of how zoning and subdivision codes work against courtyard housing. The interface of codes and courtyard housing is covered in my own studies of codes in the Byzantine and Islamic cultures in the eastern, southern, and western Mediterranean, including Spain during the Islamic period prior to the 1500s. It would have enhanced the book if the author had allocated a chapter on codes for at least the cities of his case studies, Colimar and Cordoba. By incorporating the consideration of codes into his design guidelines, Reynolds would have enriched and strengthened his work considerably. Even given this reservation, Reynolds’s book is a vital reference for any architect involved in designing or retrofitting courtyard housing, and for students of architecture studying this form of housing.

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