Leon Battista Alberti and the Homogeneity of Space

In his “Perspective as Symbolic Form,” Erwin Panofsky argued that the concept of homogenous space developed shortly before, and enabled, the discovery of the geometrical construction of perspective. Subsequent scholarship has suggested that this understanding arose much later. However, without the concept of space as homogenous, it is very difficult to conceive of such fundamental elements of architectural theory as dimension, proportion, shape, or the multiplication of shapes. Consequently, the question as to whether Renaissance theorists operated with the concept of homogenous space is of great importance not only for the history of perspective, but for the history of architectural theory as well. In this article, I explore Leon Battista Alberti’s views on the subject.

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Cardinal Pamphilj Builds a Palace: Self-Representation and Familial Ambition in Seventeenth-Century Rome

In reconstructing the palace commissioned by Cardinal Giovanni Battista Pamphilj between 1636 and 1638, this article brings to light a previously unstudied earlier building phase of the Palazzo Pamphilj in the Piazza Navona, Rome. The revised history alters our understanding of the palace, which was formerly thought to have been designed in its entirety after 1645, by Girolamo Rainaldi and Francesco Borromini, as half its design can now be attributed to Francesco Peperelli, who was an active palace builder though little known today. This new information also changes our perception of Cardinal Pamphilj, whose patronage prior to his pontificate as Innocent X (1644–55) has not been considered by historians. On the contrary, Cardinal Pamphilj emerges as an active patron who engaged in conspicuous consumption—specifically the building of a palace—to fashion an image representing his newly acquired identity as someone at the top of the social hierarchy, acting similarly to, and in competition with, his peers in the Sacred College.

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Styling Japan: The Case of Josiah Conder and the Museum at Ueno, Tokyo

The public museum that opened in 1882 in Ueno Park, Tokyo, was conceived as the archetypal museum of Japan, serving to maintain and exhibit the nation’s cultural assets, natural specimens, and industrial collections. In this article, I focus on the Ueno Museum’s architecture, which was a product of the alliance between the English architect Josiah Conder (1852–1920) and his Japanese host, the nascent Meiji bureaucracy (1868–1912). As an institution of conspicuous national significance, it encompassed multiple layers of meaning both intended and projected. Many of the nuances of expression stemmed from the complexity of Japan’s standing as a non-Western nation in a Western-centric world, as well as the particular patron-architect dynamic between the Japanese government and its foreign specialist. An examination of the formative stage of the museum through the various factors that propelled the design sheds light on the intricate process of cultural interchange and the underlying notions of progress and modernization in the late nineteenth century.

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Frank Lloyd Wright’s Annie M. Pfeiffer Chapel for Florida Southern College: Modernist Theology and Regional Architecture

Frank Lloyd Wright’s Annie Pfeiffer Chapel for Florida Southern College, Lakeland (1938–41) was built for a client, Ludd M. Spivey, who had studied with modernist theologians at the University of Chicago and as president of Florida Southern had directed it toward an educational program that balanced the natural sciences and study of Christianity in the context of world religions. Spivey asked Wright to design a campus and chapel that would express these ideals. Wright’s Pfeiffer Chapel is an essay in modern cantilevered construction of steel-reinforced concrete. Analysis of this daring structural system suggests that it was partly his realization of the principles of Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, whose writings Wright admired. For Spivey the chapel was a symbol of religion as a source of democratic values that would resist totalitarian powers. Wright wrote of modern cantilevered construction as a symbol of American democracy. The chapel embodied his aim of regional character rather than uniformity in modern architecture.

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