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Book Review 1:
Reitz-Joosse, Bettina. *Building in Words: The Process of Construction in Latin Literature*
New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2021

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Architecture is a language. Buildings are "put together"; they can be "read" as texts. Texts in turn are "structured" or "put together" like buildings. Long embedded in everyday speech, such metaphors have endowed the reciprocal relation of texts and buildings with self-evidence that is close to axiomatic. "The *compositio* (putting together) of temples depends on symmetry," writes Vitruvius at the beginning of *De architectura*, Book 3 (3.1.1). An orator, according to his mentor and older contemporary Cicero, must aim for an "*apta compositio*" in seeking to give his words a "well-fitted structure" (*De oratore*.3.200).

Neither Roman author figures with any importance in Bettina Reitz-Joosse's recent *Building in Words: The Process of Construction in Latin Literature*. Cicero's absence is understandable. More than a little surprising, however, is the author's dismissal of Vitruvius on the strength of what she claims is his lack of interest in the processes of construction. Vitruvius's explicit if somewhat gnomic claim to have "written the body of architecture" (2.1.8 and *passim*) would seem to invite serious consideration in this context, and (full disclosure) as the author of two books on Vitruvius I can only regret what appears to me as his undeserved exclusion from the book.

That said, there is much to recommend in this immensely erudite study of Roman construction and its textual representation in early imperial Rome. Of particular interest is how such representations focus far less on description of finished works as such than on what the author calls their "madeness" – the money, manpower, material, skill and time that brought them into being – accounts, which for the most part amplify the rhetoric of power implicit in the works themselves and also enhance their memorability. Thus, for instance, the real *miraculum* of the obelisks Augustus Caesar raised at Rome, according to Pliny the Elder, was not their monumental presence in the city but the labour their transport from Egypt entailed and the effort needed to raise them.

Trajan's column is among the monuments and inscriptions Reitz-Joosse treats in her first chapter, the focus of which is epigraphy. Countless scenes of construction that punctuate the famous 200-meter relief wound around the column shaft like a scroll structure the chronicle of Trajan's Dacian conquest, a narrative in which the omnipresent emperor (59 appearances, apparently) is also often figured as a builder. To this his victory monument was itself a testament. Originally flanked by Greek and Latin libraries, the triumphal column was the self-referential kingpin of the vast forum Trajan had built around it, with the entire complex an autarchic *mise en abîme* consisting of an endless interplay of text, construction and conquest in which, as Reitz-Joosse points out, building is clearly the victor's prerogative. So too, as multiple scenes of ruined Dacian villages attest, is destruction. There is no victory without evidence of defeat.

Not all displays of construction were vehicles of imperial rhetoric. The reliefs of the early second-century tomb of the Haterii represent a series of Roman buildings, along with an image of the tomb itself and, most remarkably, a giant crane that celebrates both the process of their construction and their builder Haterius's success as a building contractor.

The next four of the book's five constituent chapters turn from structures that describe, as it were, their own construction to literary accounts of architectural achievement. Panegyric prevails, yet such accounts are not uniformly encomiastic. In Chapter 2, Reitz-Joosse examines the overlap of praise and censure in three different literary representations of the emperor Claudius's attempt to drain the Fucine Lake in the mid first century CE. Pliny the Elder, ever the apologist for empire, expresses unmitigated enthusiasm considering the tunnel this required an invisible miracle, dug with "indescribable expense and a multitude of workmen over so many years" (*Natural History* 36.124, cited p. 79). Tacitus, typically acerbic, judges the undertaking reckless, ethically ambivalent, and essentially useless, but grants admiration for the spectacle of its inauguration.

Suetonius is even more ambivalent. Each of the three separate accounts in his life of Claudius leads to a different assessment, beginning with appreciation of the project's usefulness. Further on, he derides the channel's inauguration ceremony as a botched celebration, making fun of the presiding emperor's disarray. His last brief mention has Claudius feasting above the newly opened channel and almost drowning in the rush of the outflow, a report Reitz-Joosse interprets as a judgement of the emperor's dangerously arrogant negligence.

Suetonius was born after the events he describes, as indeed was Tacitus, so theirs were obviously not eye-witness accounts. This points to another of Reitz-Joosse's themes: that textual representations of construction processes often acquired a literary life of their own as constructions quite independent of the processes represented.

Chapter 3, "Writing Cities, Founding Texts," is where Reitz-Joosse allows Vitruvius a single brief cameo appearance, invoking his treatise as "the earliest text which suggests and exploits a sustained identification between the composition of a literary work and the foundation and construction of a city" (p. 107). Finding Vitruvius of little apparent interest in his own right, however, she limits his role to that of precursor, quickly turning her attention to detailed examination of passages in three works whose thematic content she thinks *De architectura* as city-text anticipated: Propertius's *Elegies*, Manilius's *Astronomica* and Vergil's *Aeneid*. Vitruvius, who wrote his inaugural "body of architecture" for Augustus Caesar at the very beginning of the Augustan building boom Reitz-Joosse points to in the conclusion of this chapter as the context for the sudden emergence of the city-text metaphor deserves better.

In Chapter 4, three laudatory poems by the late first-century poet Statius from his *Silvae* ("woods" or "forests") are the occasion for an in-depth examination of poetry about construction being self-consciously presented as *compositio*, a "putting together" that reflects the construction process itself. Statius's poems, individual "trees" brought together in these "woods" in turn recall that the chief property of wood construction is a question, paradigmatically, of the fitting together of parts the Greeks called *harmonia* – the "harmony" that also defines the success of a lyric poem.

Lyric poetry raised the walls of Thebes, the stones of which, according to Greek myth, Amphion magically lifted into place with the power of his song. Statius reappears in Chapter 5 as the author of another work, the *Thebaid*. In Book 7 of that epic he writes of the city's destruction, bringing down its walls "built by an unmanly lyre" with the power of his own verse, (*Thebaid* 10.876, cited p. 195) and showing, as Reitz-Joosse would have it, how architectural destruction can be performed by both deeds and words. A discussion of how representations of construction and destruction depend on one another concludes the book.

However, *Building in Words* does not end there. An epilogue follows which, in casting fresh light on everything that goes before, makes it the most historiographically consequential of all the book's chapters. It concerns an obelisk raised in the Foro Mussolini, a sports complex in Rome now known as the Foro Italico where it still stands. From the time the stone for the monument was selected at Carrara in 1928 to when, gold tipped and inscribed MUSSOLINI DUX, the 300-ton white marble monolith was erected four years later, not only did every detail of the superhuman effort entailed by its quarrying, transport and installation receive enthusiastic media coverage complete with countless photographs often featuring the *Duce* himself (a selection is included in the book). The entire enterprise was also recorded in a 1,200-word illuminated manuscript, the so-called *Codex fori Mussolini*, written in classical Latin and entombed in the obelisk's base where disinterment would one day astonish posterity with the immensity of Fascist

achievement and the greatness of its leader. The manuscript has remained inaccessible but reprints of it which appeared in various publications during the 1930's provided the source for its partial transcription and translation here.

In her book, Reitz-Joosse shows how much appreciation of Roman architectural achievement has been fuelled by its literary representation – principally of the construction processes entailed. That the two-way street between the arts of building and literary composition flourished in the early imperial period underscores the role of architecture in the Roman imperial project. Though less so now than in the past, it remains distressingly common to glorify the achievements of Roman builders as exemplary and to find inspiration in the spectacle of Roman conquest. But there can of course be no glorifying Mussolini's parody of such grandeur, and the self-defeating sequel to his attempted "construction of *Romanità*", as the author puts it in her admirable epilogue, is to render reverence for its Roman original indefensible. In this, Mussolini (with Bettina Reitz-Joosse) has, paradoxically, called the inappropriate idealization of ancient Rome into serious question and urged on would-be Romanophiles the adoption of a more sharply critical stance.

About the Author

Indra Kagis McEwen is an architect, historian and affiliate professor of art history at Concordia University, Montreal. She has taught at various universities and, for thirteen years, at the National Theatre School of Canada. She holds degrees in English and philosophy (Queen's University, Canada), architecture, and architectural history and theory, as well as a doctorate in art history (McGill University). In addition to articles and reviews, her publications include *Socrates' Ancestor: An Essay on Architectural Beginnings* (MIT, 1993), *Vitruvius: Writing the Body of Architecture* (MIT, 2003) and *All the King's Horses: Vitruvius in an Age of Princes* (MIT, forthcoming 2023).

Montreal Architectural Review

Book Review 2:
Vidler, Anthony. *Claude-Nicolas Ledoux. Architecture and Utopia in the Era of the French Revolution*
Basel: Birkhäuser, 2021 (2nd & expanded edition)

Paul Holmquist

Louisiana State University

For over thirty years, Anthony Vidler's *Claude-Nicolas Ledoux: Architecture and Social Reform at the End of the Ancien Régime* (MIT Press, 1990) has remained the definitive historical account and interpretation of the late eighteenth-century French architect's career, work, and theory in English, standing alongside those of Michel Gallet and Daniel Rabreau in French. Ledoux (1736-1806) was one of most prolific architects in France in the years leading up to the French Revolution. His most prominent built works include the Royal Saltworks at Arc-et-Senans (1778) in Franche-Comté in Eastern France, the Theatre of Besançon (1784), and the *Ferme générale*'s ill-fated wall and tax-collection *barrières* encircling Paris (1785-89). Ledoux is also well known for his 1804 treatise *L'Architecture considérée sous le rapport de l'art, des moeurs et de la législation* ("Architecture in Relation to Art, Mores and Legislation") in which he elaborated an idealized, if not utopian, architectural and social vision for a model factory town in the ideal city of Chaux, centered on the Royal Saltworks. Vidler's distinct contribution was to comprehensively situate Ledoux's architectural practice, work, and theory within the complexity of his social, cultural, intellectual, and professional

milieux in late eighteenth-century France against the predominant view of him in the 1960s as a 'visionary,' utopian and even 'revolutionary' figure, and particularly against Emil Kaufmann's earlier interpretation of Ledoux as formally and conceptually anticipating the modernism of the early twentieth-century avant-garde. Rather than a utopian revolutionary, Vidler revealed Ledoux to be a proto-modern professional architect deeply ensconced within the *ancien régime*, whose practice and theory comprised both practical reform and social idealism, rational planning, and poetic expression, and manifested at all registers a much more complex interrelation between real and ideal than could be understood within a categorically utopian framework.

Fifteen years after publishing *Claude-Nicolas Ledoux*, Vidler revised a condensed version of this study originally published in French by Hazan in 1987 into a new edition entitled *Claude-Nicolas Ledoux: Architecture and Utopia in the Era of the French Revolution*. Published by Birkhäuser in 2005 in both English and German language editions, the book was intended for a more general and professional audience. While this new volume included additional research on how Ledoux was likely influenced by Francesco Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (1499) in composing the highly stylized prose of *L'Architecture*, it overwhelmingly reprised the 1990 monograph in summary, yet detailed, form, supplemented by images of Ledoux's plates from *L'Architecture* as well as colour photographs of the Royal Saltworks and other extant works. The abridged edition provided Vidler the opportunity to make the case further that seeing Ledoux through a 'visionary' or utopian lens obscured the complexity of his actual practice. He argued that Ledoux was in most ways a rather typical late-Enlightenment architect whose ideals were "the shared commonplaces of a generation responsive to Diderot and his collaborators, [drawn] readily if eclectically from the theories of the philosophes, agronomists, economists, and writers committed to the reform of traditional institutions and social practices." As signaled by the title, however, the question of Ledoux's idealism, and of the ideality of his work as broadly, if not categorically, utopian, persisted throughout the new edition in a complex interplay with very real historical concerns and conditions which were now more sharply presented in view of the impending French Revolution.

This 2005 volume has now been revised and expanded into a second edition published by Birkhäuser in 2021, again both in English and in German. The book includes a new introduction and concluding chapter, additional material both new and from the 1990 monograph, as well as minor revisions and updates throughout. There are now separate indexes for persons and for locations and projects, and an updated chronology and bibliography. Otherwise, the volume generally reiterates the 2005 edition while reorganizing the material into two sections thematically and chronologically. The first, entitled "A Career Open to Talent, 1760-1789," examines Ledoux's practice up until the French Revolution in relation to key aspects of his social and architectural idealism; the second, "From New Town to Utopia, 1776-1806," situates his ideal city of Chaux and its residences, workshops, and institutions in turn with regard to how they were conceived within contemporary economic, agricultural and social contexts.

Part I opens by surveying Ledoux's formation and early career in Paris as a protégé of Madame du Barry, mistress to Louis XV, as well as in the *Service des eaux et forêts* ahead of his appointment as Commissioner of Saltworks for the eastern region of France including Franche-Comté in 1771. Vidler then focuses on Ledoux's commission for the Royal Saltworks beginning in 1773 in which he took the realities of salt production within the Royal administration's broader agenda for industrial reform and regional development as the basis for developing his social, moral and aesthetic programs for architecture. Organizing the factory complex in a semi-circle with the director's building at the center, Ledoux implemented the technical rationality of the *Encyclopédie* within a veritable "theatre of production," according to Vidler, dramatizing the productive process within a simplified geometrical language of architectural character imbued with qualities of the Burkean sublime. Vidler argues that as a type and metaphor, the theatre perfectly situated Ledoux's ambitions to socialize the worker population within a "pre-panoptical symbolism of surveillance and proto-Rousseauesque model of community." He then shows how, to various degrees, Ledoux extended the sublime idealized physiognomic character of the Saltworks to his other major public commissions such as the Theatre of Besançon, the unrealized Palace of Justice and prison of Aix-en-Provence (1784-85), and the ruinous Propylaea of Paris, or fiscal wall and tollgates of the *Ferme générale*, which are each discussed in their own chapters.

In Part II, Vidler argues that Ledoux's ideal city of Chaux, presented in *L'Architecture* and envisioned from the early 1780s as an imaginary extension of the Saltworks, was far more responsive to pragmatic motivations than had generally been recognized. He shows that Ledoux likely conceived of a town extending around the factory early on in the design process and locates his intentions wholly within the administration's physiocratic goals for industrial, commercial, and agricultural development in the region. Accordingly, Vidler notes that Ledoux's vision of Chaux as a centre of regional networks of canals and roads was much "less utopian than it was an application of common engineering wisdom joined to Turgot's doctrine of progress." Likewise, Vidler describes how Ledoux's idealized rural houses and agricultural projects, such as the model agricultural village developed for the Marquis de Montesquiou at his estate of Mauperthuis in the mid-1780s, were direct responses to the practical reforms advocated by the agronomist movement in France. Finally, Vidler examines how Ledoux's social idealism and architectural symbology drew overwhelmingly from Freemasonry as one of the most important milieux of late eighteenth-century sociability, and shows how he adopted the lodge as an ideal architectural type for the invented social and moral institutions of Chaux.

A final chapter traces Ledoux's fate after his suspension from the *barrières* works and public fall from grace on the eve of the French Revolution, through his imprisonment under the Terror and narrow escape from execution, and into the last years of his life spent preparing the publication of *L'Architecture*. A new concluding chapter surveys Ledoux's reception by the public, architects, and historians of art and architecture as an "*architecte maudit*," or "accursed architect," throughout the nineteenth and twentieth

centuries, alternately dismissed, vilified, or taken as an inspiration by various architectural movements and critics, and acting as a veritable "bellwether" for architecture in modernity. All in all, the new expanded edition remains an invaluable introduction to Ledoux as an architect, practitioner, and theoretician in relation to the social, economic, and cultural conditions of late-eighteenth-century France. Within a concise format, Vidler has masterfully presented Ledoux's practice and theory in their comprehensive breadth and depth, and illuminated the singular interrelationship they maintain between the real and the ideal which resists any simplistic reduction to utopianism.

Vidler's enduring work has immensely enriched our understanding of Ledoux by situating him meticulously within his formative context and influences. Yet in no way, of course, can Ledoux be seen merely as a product of them. While Vidler recognizes Ledoux's originality as an architect, he is more hesitant to recognize as much of a genuine, if not original, philosophical dimension to Ledoux's architectural idealism as he does in others such as Étienne-Louis Boullée. As Daniel Rabreau has suggested, Ledoux's ideas are often too quickly attributed to the influence of the figures he admired, such as Fénelon, Voltaire, and Rousseau. It could be argued that Ledoux merits consideration as an *architecte-philosophe* in his own right, capable not only of registering the philosophical questions and concerns of his time, but also of articulating them in the particular terms of architecture. While these and other questions remain yet to be fully explored, Anthony Vidler has laid the considerable groundwork for further understanding "a Ledoux still posing questions" not only to his own time, but also to architecture and urbanism in our own.

About the Author

Paul Holmquist, PhD is an Assistant Professor of Architecture at Louisiana State University, where he teaches architectural history, theory and design focusing on conceptions and experience of the public realm. He holds a Doctor of Philosophy in Architectural History and Theory from McGill University, and his dissertation examined Claude-Nicolas Ledoux's architectural theory in relation to the moral and political philosophy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Paul has taught at universities in the United States and Canada, and his research appears in *Chora 7: Intervals in the Philosophy of Architecture*, *The Figure of Knowledge: Conditioning Architectural Theory, 1960s-1990s,* and *The Sound of Architecture: Acoustic Atmospheres in Place*.

Montreal Architectural Review

Book Review 3:
Malpas, Jeff. *Rethinking Dwelling:
Heidegger, Place, Architecture*
London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021

Angeliki Sioli
TU Delft

Dwelling as a Space of Possibility

Philosopher and professor Jeff Malpas is certainly well-known in architecture academic circles for his insightful work on the interconnections between architecture and philosophy. In his latest book *Rethinking Dwelling: Heidegger, Place, Architecture* (Bloomsbury, 2021) he seems to discourage his architectural audience by placing a disclaimer in the introduction that posits his work may be too philosophical for architects. But are these two, architecture and philosophy, that disconnected from one another?

A careful reading of the book certainly proves the opposite. *Rethinking Dwelling* focuses on key issues concerning the philosophical understanding of architecture, reminding us that the acts of building, dwelling and living in place are at their very core philosophical acts. This strong reminder comes primarily (but not solely) though Martin Heidegger's famous essay, "Building Dwelling Thinking" (1951). Malpas departs from this essay and creates a book in two parts. The first part focuses on architecture in topological

thinking. Its three chapters touch on Heidegger's essay more closely and discuss the very notions of place and dwelling, the contemporary condition of homelessness, and issues of authenticity. The second part, consisting of seven short chapters, considers architecture as topological practice and discusses themes like parametric design, memory, truth, interiority, and verticality through both Heidegger's and other philosophers' (e.g., Edward Casey, Walter Benjamin) thought. The chapters can be read independently, as all of them explore one main topic: the mode of living that allows one to find "a 'home' in the world, in which one attends to the world and to one's place in it."[1]

In order to find a home and be at home in the world, place emerges as paramount. As outlined in the pages of the book, place is primary to dwelling, while dwelling brings to the fore the way in which place and the human are implicated with one another. The author calls us to understand that dwelling is not a simple passive status of staying in place. It is rather a dynamic act, full of movement that is defined by and defines place. He explains why the term dwelling, that has prevailed as the translation of the German verb *wohnen*, is a translation ill-adapted to the original text (yet paradoxically is almost never remarked upon). Heidegger purposefully used *wohnen*, which is a common term in ordinary German use and thus easy to understand. Given that dwelling is a relatively uncommon term in contemporary English Malpas takes it upon himself to explain how it is connected with our everyday, placed and situated living, inviting the readers to question things they take for granted in building and architecture.

To mention just a few examples, Malpas begins by affirming that building, if it attends to dwelling, must also attend to thinking, meaning that "building must be itself thoughtful."[2] Investigating homelessness, he observes that it is a condition associated with a loss of 'groundedness' or 'rootedness' which is characteristic of modernity. Examining building in relation to memory, Malpas reminds us that memory is always nostalgic (and thus melancholic) as it involves a sense of loss, the loss of what is no longer present as it was. In that respect, to attend to what is remembered, through building architecture, "is to attend to the dynamically unfolding character of place."[3] When looking at common practices of making architecture he corrects our associations about parametric design with our digital age. Given that the basic idea of parametricism is to define the set of parameters that create variations among a range of outcomes, Malpas claims that "a designer who sketches variations on a basic design form using paper and pencil may effectively be operating parametrically even if not in any formalized fashion."[4] He continues explaining why parametric design does not connect architecture with place, and, more passionately than many contemporary architects, he argues that buildings should be genuinely *responsive to* the place in which they arise. Mentioning a number of well-known examples, he criticizes high-rises for their lack of relationship to place. Most importantly, Malpas clarifies that place is not a product of subjectivity, as many contemporary architects tend to support undermining place's importance. Instead, he posits that place "stands in an important relation to subjectivity (…) properly speaking, it is subjectivity that is 'determined',

in the sense of being made possible, by place."[5] Malpas extends the conversation on place to language, proving clearly that place is structured and opened up by language, as places are suffused with stories and narratives (from simple stories of how to get to a place, to complex stories of self-formation, anticipation, hope, fear, alienation or loss).

In *Rethinking Dwelling* architects can find many more relevant insights or clarifications of ideas and concepts that are mistakenly taken for granted in present architectural discourse and practice. In that sense, the book is a necessary read. If there is an element that could have made the work even more pertinent to an architectural audience, this would have been the inclusion of more contemporary and un-derrepresented architectural examples. The majority of the architectural projects discussed, in relation to the different philosophical arguments, are ensconced in the Western architectural canon and probably too well known. The inclusion of more recent and diverse examples would have been an asset.

After having read this book architects can approach building and place anew, from a perspective that is inquisitive and reflective. They are encouraged and inspired to investigate in greater depth basic but foundational conditions of dwelling and thinking, of a thoughtful dwelling that is meant for and addresses our human needs, dreams and aspirations. As professor Malpas poetically reminds us, the human being, although conditioned "in certain important ways, is never settled, never 'completed', but always remains to be worked out – the space that dwelling opens up is thus a space of possibility."[6]

Notes

1 Jeff Malpas, *Rethinking Dwelling: Heidegger, Place, Architecture* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), 183.

2 Ibid., 48.

3 Ibid., 110.

4 Ibid., 139.

5 Ibid., 141.

6 Ibid., 46.

About the Author

Angeliki Sioli is an assistant professor at the Department of Architecture, TU Delft in the Netherlands. She previously taught at McGill University, in Montreal; Tec de Monterrey, in Mexico; and Louisiana State University in the U.S. Her research connects architecture and language. She has edited the collected volumes *Reading Architecture: Literary Imagination and Architectural Experience* (Routledge, 2018), and *The Sound of Architecture: Acoustic Atmospheres in Place* (Leuven University Press, 2022).

Montreal Architectural Review

Book Review 4:
Lewis, Philippa. *Stories from Architecture: Behind the Lines at Drawing Matter*
Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2021

Caroline Dionne
The New School

Stories from Architecture is a collection of 25 stories that share a common point of origin: each short piece of literary fiction has been written in relation to a drawing, or set of drawings, that Philippa Lewis uncovered through her explorations of the Drawing Matter archive in Somerset, UK. Lavishly reproduced in color and displayed on a separate page or spread, each drawing is inserted in its corresponding story. The *Notes* section at the end of the book provides material, historical, and biographical accounts for each figure.

At first glance, as one flips through the pages, the author's selection of drawings feels accidental, almost whimsical. It is as if, embracing the vagaries of archival research, Lewis had given in to the attractive power or potential for intrigue embedded in these images. The unattributed drawing of a house in "Islamic Style" from the 1870s sits comfortably besides the plan of Richard Neutra's residence for Josef von Stenberg, followed by a peepshow of Marc Brunel's Thames Tunnel from the 1830s. The freedom that emanates from her choices reminds the reader that scholarly research is a labor of love, the outcome of which is always fleeting and uncertain. There is joy, and privilege, in spending time at a library, opening

up large folios dug up from secured vaults, and browsing through carefully preserved artefacts. By virtue of having been assembled into collections, these artefacts share an artificial proximity; research findings rely, to a large extent, on coincidence. The drawings featured in Lewis's book do not cohere under the umbrella of a specific architectural or urban type. They are not arranged chronologically. They differ radically in terms of media, size and scale. The images show a wide range of architectural elements, from the shaded sketch of an ornamental detail produced by Antonio Asprucci during the transformation of Villa Borghese in Rome (1775-1780), to the flashy interior of an "intelligent" bachelor's pad — the "Playboy Duplex Penthouse" — published in a 1970 issue of *Playboy Magazine*, including a bird's eye view perspective of a 1907 real-estate development project called Selsey-on-Sea Limited.

The images assembled in this book function as enigmas, or riddles, inviting us to engage with the stories as we look for answers. However, readers expecting to find information based on factual evidence will soon be disappointed. As Adrian Forty writes in his foreword to the book, "part of the pleasure of reading *Stories from Architecture* comes from the uncertainty as to what is fact, and what is fiction." Although some of the stories are based on factual evidence like, for instance, the one featuring a correspondence between Edith Carlson and Frank Lloyd Wright, where the client persistently enquires about her house, a project that was never realized, most of the stories assembled in the book are fabricated. And yet, Forty remarks, historians are increasingly aware of "the fragile certainty of 'facts.'" Lewis's book shows the productive potential of looking at archival documents differently; in their open-endedness and ambiguities, her stories bring the reader to engage in a timely line of questioning on the historiography of architecture.

Stories from Architecture invites us to rethink the way we look at drawings beyond the traditional methodologies deployed by historians. To produce her stories, Lewis ventured "behind the lines" into the images' societal contexts. The book thus challenges the conventions that govern the writing of architectural history by interrogating the status of the architectural drawing in the context of the everyday. Approached under this light, drawings acquire a life of their own, separate from their relationship to an architecture — imagined, projected, or built. Lewis mobilizes the potential of literary narratives so as to blur the line between fact and fiction. In so doing, she not only urges us to reflect on the material conditions that coalesce in the production of social space, but also models another way of writing histories in which architecture is desacralized. By carefully looking at drawings as "things made" in a specific social context, we can shed light onto the relationships between people and places.

At the heart of her stories, we find the quotidian, at times absurd, and often comical interactions, conversations, and conflicts between protagonists as they engage with architecture and the built environment. Shifting focus away from the instrumental character of a drawing and the authorship of the architect, Lewis's satirical stories recount the down-to-earth, harsh reality of collectively making place. For one of her protagonists, a draftsman, the drawing is a testament to his limited talent. Drawing is a practice, and some drawings fail. In another story, George Cook's drawing of the wall and trees of the London Smallpox Hospital becomes an occasion to explore the frailty of human life, and how processes of grief and acts of

memorialization are inevitably caught in the social pressure for marriage and the pragmatics of finding a prospect. For Cook, the draftsman grieving his lost lover who died behind the wall, the act of drawing becomes an elegy. For the young woman passing by who witnesses the scene and strikes a conversation, the situation opens up exciting possibilities for romance. While acknowledging the solemnity with which we can approach drawings, Lewis also reminds us, with humor, of the economies of affect and need that drive our actions.

In *Stories from Architecture*, drawings serve as pretexts: each image initiates a literary exploration into the social conditions that simultaneously frame and foster collective acts of designing. Lewis shows how acts of placemaking (drawing, planning, building, and dwelling) take place in the context of everyday life where financial concerns abound, where labor conditions can be dire, and where relationships between architects and their employees, competitors, patrons, or clients are, more often than not, sites of conflict marked by power imbalances, especially of class and gender. Amongst Lewis's protagonists are draftsmen, architects, interns, patrons and clients, secretaries and aides, craftsmen, construction workers, sons and daughters, wives and mothers. Each stories highlights a relationship — artistic, emotional, familial, erotic, mercantile — between people and designed things, from furniture to interiors, from private buildings and estates to shared urban spaces. Reading the stories, we are reminded of the lineage of social changes in values and beliefs, as much as the persistence of the past into our present. Lewis's stories cover a crucial moment in our Western history, from the mid-18th century to the 1970s. The stories are mostly geographically set in the UK, Europe, and the United States. A few recurring themes emerge: tensions between the bourgeoisie and a declining class of aristocrats; the failed investments and exploitative practices of capitalists in their pursuit of profit; workers' struggles in the context of the industrial revolution; the crystallization of patriarchal views. Changes in architectural discourses and practices, along with their impacts on building trades, also permeate the stories.

The force of *Stories from Architecture* lies in the subtle satire embedded in Lewis's narratives, which latter manifests in the wit of her prose. As she pokes fun at the contriving rules governing bourgeois life, she unveils 19th century social anxieties about taste, fashion, and style. Her satire also targets the colonial and imperialist views behind clients' requests for "orientalisms," the unwavering belief in progress that supported the industrial revolution, and the male-centric canons have shaped our fields. How much of these rules, values, and beliefs still condition our daily interactions and shape our understanding of the built environment? Reading *Stories from Architecture* prompts such critical questions, inviting us to write other histories of architecture. By tapping into the power of the comical, Lewis reminds us, as Bergson writes in *Laughter*, of the need to stay alert in the face of social conventions, and to keep our minds and hearts open and elastic.

About the Author

Caroline Dionne is Assistant Professor of History and Theory of Design Practice and Curatorial Studies at Parsons School of Design, The New School. Trained in the history and theory of architecture, she pursues interdisciplinary research at the intersection of architecture, literature, philosophy, and social theory. Her scholarship and teaching are concerned with the social and political implications of design, with a focus on the relationship between language and space and between speech acts and collective processes of placemaking. She is currently completing a book that investigates spatial theories of the emergent based on a close reading of the complete works of nineteenth-century writer and mathematician Lewis Carroll.

Review Essay:
Paul Guyer's *A Philosopher Looks at Architecture*
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021

Bert Olivier
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Introduction: Guyer, Kant, and architecture

When a book by a scholar who is well-known as an authority on the work of 18th-century philosopher, Immanuel Kant, appears, one's first thought is that he seems to have switched his attention to something completely different. That is, if one forgets that a thorough familiarity with Kant's work will undoubtedly have impressed upon such a person the crucial place of Kant's 3rd *Critique* (*The Critique of Judgement*) – which deals with questions concerning beauty and the sublime in art (including architecture) and in nature – in his work in its totality. I am thinking particularly of the manner in which the 3rd *Critique* may be understood as providing a 'bridge' of sorts to connect the findings of the first two – the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of Practical Reason* – which address issues concerning the conditions of possibility of human cognition, and those pertaining to the conditions of possibility of morality and ethics, respectively. Insofar as Kant had famously argued that human beings are citizens of two worlds

(which seem to be incompatible) – those of sensibility (knowledge) and intelligibility (moral action) – the 3rd *Critique* appeared to bring its predecessors closer together through Kant's elaboration on the faculty underpinning both cognitive statements and moral choice, namely judgement. At the same time it was shown that this faculty operates indispensably in matters concerning taste, beauty and the sublime in art and nature. It is but a small step from there to a sustained focus on one of the areas scrutinised by Kant in the 3rd *Critique* – one that implicates the beautiful and the sublime – to wit, architecture. Paul Guyer has taken this step, with significant consequences.

One could take this further at a general level, however: there is an analogy between Kant's claim in the 1st *Critique* that all rational beings possess the same structural mental faculties ('forms of intuition' and 'categories of the understanding'), so that – regardless of differences in natural and cultural environments in which they may live – they 'know' the world in the same manner . . . . formally, that is. Accordingly, surroundings may change throughout history, but the manner in which we know the world will remain constant. Analogously, Guyer argues that there are three 'constants' of architecture that have stood – and will continue to stand – the test of time: those articulated by Vitruvius in the first century BCE, namely "durability, utility [convenience] and beauty" (Guyer 2021: 5), or (in Guyer's free translation): "good construction, functionality and aesthetic appeal" (p. 6). In other words, the Enlightenment philosopher of Königsberg has left his imprint on Paul Guyer's thinking, including the latter's choice of formal features to validate the quality of works of architecture.

Guyer writes on architecture

The first things that strikes a reader of this book – *A Philosopher Looks at Architecture* – is the clarity of Guyer's writing. Anyone with a good command of English would understand what he writes, at least at a primary level of grasping the meaning of the words; moving towards the question of understanding concepts that belong to the disciplines of philosophy and architecture may not be as straightforward, though. He explains why he has chosen Vitruvius's three criteria as his guiding stars for evaluating architecture and reflection on it in different historical eras (as he has just demonstrated by way of a comparative discussion of two buildings, one ancient and one modern; Guyer 2021: 5):

> The argument of this book will be that for all the changes over the years and centuries in architectural tech-
> nologies and styles and in cultural and socio-economic conditions, at the most abstract level the core goals
> and values of architecture have not changed. Architects have always been and will continue to be concerned
> with how and how well their buildings can be and are built, how well they serve the needs of the client, and

how pleasing, engaging, and/or interesting the experience of the building will be for its audience, which may include owners, other users, and those who may simply see their buildings, whether on foot, from cars or other vehicles, or through images in various media from prints to photos to computer screens.

And of his own rendition of Vitruvius's tripartite benchmark for good architecture he writes (p. 6):

These are not literal translations, but they will be used to stress the generality of these goals. As available materials and structural technologies, as ways of life and therefore conceptions of appropriate uses thereof, and as aesthetic expectations– what might be found beautiful or grand or exciting– have varied radically through history, the general values of good construction, functionality, and aesthetic appeal remain constant...I will argue this here by looking at a sample of philosophical treatments of architecture, architectural theories, and actual buildings from antiquity to the present, concluding with a glimpse into the future.

Considering Guyer's argument about the enduring value of the three Vitruvian principles governing architecture, together with his demonstration of this claim with reference to architects, architectural theorists and philosophers of architecture, it is not difficult to agree with him – there does indeed seem to be a sense in which these principles are as valid today as they were for Vitruvius. And it is easy for him to show, very deftly, that many thinkers who ostensibly disagreed with Vitruvius (even explicitly, as did Gottfried Semper, according to Kenneth Frampton; Guyer 2021: 6-7) are actually in agreement with him, because their arguments are compatible with his claims. In other words, they merely move the proverbial deckchairs on the same ship.

Guyer's discussion of Vitruvius's foundational contribution to the understanding of architecture sets the scene for subsequent discussions of those who considered the Roman's thoughts on architecture interpretively for their own times. To my mind it is one of the most compelling parts of the book insofar as Guyer succeeds in demonstrating the circumspect manner in which Vitruvius situated architecture within the totality of human activities and social life. He was quite aware, for instance, that the three principles governing 'good' architecture cannot be divorced from the plethora of other human activities and practices in a social setting, and that, ideally, architecture should 'facilitate' "human flourishing" (Guyer 2021: 16) – something I shall return to in critical vein below. Guyer devotes a thorough discussion to Vitruvius's *Ten Books on Architecture*, from the Roman's recommendations regarding the multi-disciplinary education of architects through his views on the relationship between human society and nature, his 'evolutionary' account of the origin of buildings in the "primitive hut" (which recalls Joseph Rykwert's [1981] work in this regard), and of types of building, to the role played in architecture by "imitation and invention" as adaptation to the natural environment (p. 19), against the backdrop of which he focuses on good construction and functionality via an examination of construction methods and building types and materials, among other things. Vitruvius was evidently quite aware of the fact that while functionality and aesthetic appeal are distinct aims, they could be actualised simultaneously through good construction (p. 22). Interestingly, as

Guyer observes, Vitruvius gives comparatively little attention to the requirements for aesthetic appeal (pp. 15, 23), as opposed to good construction and functionality, although his remarks on this issue are highly suggestive. Moreover, while Vitruvius's successors seem to have comprehended his notion of the aesthetic value of architecture as being predominantly formalistic with regard to "proportions" internal to and among the components of buildings, Guyer insists that things are more complex than this (pp. 23-34), he subsequently elaborating on the various aspects comprising the Vitruvian architectural aesthetic – such as adding sensory perspectival considerations to formal ones regarding the beauty of architecture, and linking important ratios in buildings to human bodily proportions. Against the background of his elaboration on Vitruvius's three architectural ideals, Guyer stresses that these were very general, which facilitated their adaptable interpretation and application by the Roman architect and thinker, which Guyer appropriates and continues in this overview of thinkers on architecture and architects.

Considering this book in its entirety, it was clearly very productive for Guyer to have employed the Vitruvian paradigm in his (selective) interpretation and evaluation of architecture and architectural philosophy since Vitruvius's time. Nevertheless, despite the hermeneutic fecundity of this approach, I believe that Guyer has overlooked something fundamental (even in Vitruvius's work, as well as in that of some other figures he discusses) about the 'meaning', or perhaps the *raison d'etre* of architecture, in adhering to it, as I shall argue below. The tripartite Vitruvian ideal is not invalid – far from it – but as I shall demonstrate with recourse to a philosopher of architecture for whose work Guyer seems to have a blind spot, the Roman's three principles serve something more fundamental that is inseparable from architecture. To be able to formulate such a critical stance, a prior reconstruction of Guyer's elaboration and discussion of the (work of) selected architects and thinkers is required.

Applying Vitruvius's three principles

It is interesting that the Italian Renaissance architect and thinker, Alberti, who – as Guyer indicates (2021: 35-36) – was conspicuously indebted to Vitruvius "in [the] form…and… substance" of his work, which ultimately entails subscribing to the Roman's tripartite normative criteria for architecture, nevertheless differs from the latter in two important respects. The first is that, instead of employing Vitruvius's (probably Epicurean and Lucretian-derived) empiricist orientation regarding beauty, Guyer points out, Alberti harks further back, to the rationalism of Plato and the philosopher of mathematical ontology, namely Pythagoras. This is evident in his claim (in Guyer's words), that (p. 37):

> ...the basis of beauty is recognized by our reason, not by feeling and certainly not by mere custom, as the older author so often suggested. And what makes Alberti's view Pythagorean and Platonic is that he assumes that the mathematical relationship that constitutes *concinnitas* and beauty is the essence of nature itself...

In fact, the term *concinnitas* is defined by Alberti as the "reasoned harmony of all the parts within a body, so that nothing may be added, taken away, or altered, but for the worse" (quoted in Guyer 2021: 37), which attributes conspicuous primacy to reason. His rationalist thinking is evident in all the aspects of his work that Guyer discusses, for instance in his characterisation of aesthetic judgements in terms of an "inborn" faculty of reason (p. 37), which contrasts with the understanding of such preferences as the manifestation of a merely "contingent feature of human psychology" (p. 38). Here one may notice the Neo-Platonic influence of Renaissance figures like Marsilio Ficino (p. 38), which also surfaces in Alberti's use of his "mathematical rationalism" in relation to specific instances in architecture. Guyer's observation (p. 43), that Alberti gave even less acknowledgement than Vitruvius to what he (Guyer), to my mind rather incongruously, refers to as the "content" (as opposed to "form") of architecture – which may contribute to aesthetic value, and which is linked with the notion of "meaning" that would later occupy an important place in architectural aesthetics – gives a clue to what is lacking in this approach to architecture, as I shall argue below.

The brief consideration of Palladio (p. 44 ff), one of whose paradigmatic buildings featured comparatively in the Introduction to Guyer's book as illustration of the 'timeless' validity of Vitruvius's three architectural norms, serves to emphasise the virtually incomparable influence and originality of this 16th-century Italian architect who nevertheless maintained Alberti's mathematically oriented rationalist aesthetic (actualised through the creation of 'geometric architectural beauty') within the context of Vitruvian principles. (One might expect a brief reference to the overtly geometrical, neoclassical architecture of Claude-Nicolas Ledoux in the 18th century here for the sake of continuity.) The sustained influence of Vitruvian architectural norms, variously implemented, is further noticeable in Guyer's account of the work of the 18th-century figures Kames and Laugier (p. 46 ff). The former (being Scottish) predictably shows a more empiricist leaning with regard to the role of perspectival appearance and consonance between human and architectural proportions in his estimation of (function and) beauty in architecture than have the two Italians discussed above, tweaking the "*decor* and propriety" (p. 50) of various buildings in the direction of desirable emotional responses.

With Laugier, too, one sees the continuation of homage to Vitruvian principles, with him picking up on the Roman's idea of the "primitive hut" (p. 51), and – borrowing his contemporary Batteux's principle, that beauty equals "the imitation of nature" (p. 51) – applying this to architecture. The result is a strange kind of 'structuralist functionalism', where beauty, according to him, is generated by buildings that imitate nature by being useful while displaying nature-enabled structure. As Guyer sums it up (p. 52): "His theory is just that beauty arises from useful construction" – clearly, the functionalist architecture of the 20th century has a precursor in Laugier, as further emphasised by his resolute stance against ornament,

pointing forward to Adolf Loos's early 20ᵗʰ-century modernist linking of ornament with 'crime'. Despite this, Guyer finds that Laugier still honours the Vitruvian tripartite criteria for architecture (p. 53), and it is striking that his counterpart to aesthetic appeal – "good sense" – seems to correspond to *decor* (related to decorum, or "propriety"; the appropriateness of a building to its "purpose"), as distinct from ornament (p. 53). I shall return to this distinction below.

While Laugier eschews Vitruvius's indication, that 'meaning' in architecture could be conjoined with its aesthetic value, in the work of Kant as major 18ᵗʰ-century Enlightenment figure, as well as in that of his successors, this manifests itself clearly (Guyer 2021: 54-55). This occurs without deviating significantly from the three basic Vitruvian principles (although it may at first seem to be the case regarding Kant's claim that judgments of 'taste' are 'disinterested', and with regard to the fact that Kant focuses largely on aesthetic appeal and functionality in architecture); in fact, Guyer points out, these thinkers amplify and enrich Vitruvius's insights. His elaboration on the work of Kant, Schopenhauer, Ruskin and Semper is informative and illuminating, although initially I found his omission of Hegel's thoughts on architecture within the context of the latter's illustration of the progressively clearer expression of the Idea in the arts, from the symbolic (exemplified in architecture) through the classical to the romantic, somewhat puzzling. I say this because the element of 'meaning' in the arts, including architecture, is explicit in Hegel, albeit here somewhat tempered in its merely symbolic functioning. I wrote 'initially' because at a certain point (p. 72) I was reminded that precisely this aspect of Hegel's work, to wit, the exclusion of the Vitruvian ideals of good construction and utility in architecture, explains Guyer's omission.

Guyer does justice to Kant's seminal insistence on the role of the "free play" of imagination in aesthetic judgements, and his clarification of the way this works with architecture as instance of "adherent beauty" (as opposed to the "free beauty" of flowers, shells and lyric-less music, among others) illustrates well how Kant reconciles the intended function of different buildings with the "free play of imagination", without which buildings would not satisfy the "sufficient conditions" for architectural beauty, but only the "necessary conditions" (pp. 61-63). The amount of attention Guyer bestows on Kant is commensurate with his reputation as a leading Kant scholar – he covers everything that is germane to architecture, including Kant's famous notion of 'aesthetic ideas', and even the relevance of Kant's moral philosophy of a universal moral law (the observation of which would guarantee the optimal freedom of all people) for the design and experience of architecture. The brief section devoted to Schopenhauer's relevance for architecture highlights the curious fact that this philosopher, who proclaimed the primacy of the (irrational) Will – thus anticipating Freud – disregarded one of the three Vitruvian principles, namely utility, completely in favour of the other two (good construction and aesthetic value). The result is what Guyer (p. 75) calls "as pure a statement of structural functionalism as can be found: the beauty of architecture lies solely in the expression of the function of its materials and the type of structure they necessitate". The emphasis is clearly on "expression" and not "function" here, given Schopenhauer's abnegation of utility, and yet it

strikes one as paradoxical that this should be the case – does the expression of *function* not implicitly acknowledge its indispensability? A building that satisfies these criteria without actually functioning well would be a performative contradiction, surely, except if it is meant in the sense that Mies van der Rohe employed I-beams 'expressively' in an ostensibly structural and functional, but really aesthetic manner (as will be seen below) in the 20th century.

At first blush it may appear, from Guyer's treatment of the important 19th-century British critic and thinker, Ruskin, that his stance on architecture is identical to Schopenhauer's, but it turns out that this is not the case, and that Ruskin grants utility or function its proper place, alongside the other two Vitruvian principles, in relation to buildings (Guyer 2021: 80-82; 93-94). In the process, he not only expands on Kant's understanding of architecture, but also refines the three Vitruvian ideals. To anyone not familiar with it, the extensive discussion devoted to Ruskin's famous *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* by Guyer would undoubtedly be persuasive regarding his importance in the history of reflection on this art form. Guyer sums it up succinctly where he writes (2021: 90):

> One major accomplishment of Ruskin's *Seven Lamps* is a profound enrichment of the conception of the aesthetic appeal of architecture that makes room for emotional and historical responses to architecture while also, in the principle of truth, suggesting the connection between beauty and structural technology that would subsequently become so important. But the principle of obedience also suggests that we can take pleasure in architecture as an expression of human freedom, although not of unhindered license, which is never particularly pleasurable except perhaps for the person exercising it, and even then only momentarily.

 I hope this will serve to whet potential readers' appetite for reading Guyer's very readable book, and perhaps Ruskin's work too, whose "thoroughly modern medievalism" – as Guyer dubs it oxymoronically (p. 94) – will never lose its relevance, as the American also persuasively demonstrates through his lucid overview of Ruskin's three-volume work, *Stones of Venice* (a treat for anyone in love with Venice's complex Gothic architecture). But although the name of Ruskin is perhaps better known to members of the public than the names of the other thinkers dealt with by Guyer, his judicious presentation and illumination of their thoughts on architecture make of this book a treasure house for anyone interested in understanding the history, meaning and significance of the arts, in this case architecture.

The brief look that Guyer affords Semper should not disguise the latter's importance in the history of reflection on architecture. Although (like Ruskin) not primarily a philosopher, Semper's extensive writings on architecture were no doubt informed by his experience as a practising architect who produced impressive 19th-century buildings. This probably also explains his greater attention to function in architecture, compared to even Ruskin. In sum, what distinguishes Semper's appropriation of Vitruvius's legacy is his conviction that the aesthetic appeal of buildings is the fortunate result of good construction and utility or function (Guyer 2021: 97).

The stubborn hold that Vitruvius has largely had for more than two thousand years on the way humans understand architecture is evident from Guyer's overview of the multiple developments in architectural theory and practice in the 20th century. On the opening page to Chapter 3 – on "Multiplicity of meaning in twentieth-century theories" – Guyer summarises the first two chapters admirably (p. 98), and reminds readers that the theories of all the figures discussed up to that point are "pluralistic rather than monistic" in so far as their requirements for good architecture amount to the coherent integration of several aspects rather than to only one. His goal in this chapter is to show that, just as reflections on architecture in the nineteenth century were marked by a recognition of the complexity of factors that contribute to the aesthetic appeal of architecture – including both visual appearance and diverse levels of meaning – this trend continued in thought-provoking theories regarding architecture in the twentieth century.

Having deftly disposed of the idea that architectural monism could be a coherent notion, and explained in what sense ostensibly monistic statements such as Louis Sullivan's well-known remark, that "Form follows function" should be understood non-deterministically (pp. 99-101) – in the process demonstrating the continued validity of Vitruvius's three ideals – Guyer turns to the various "languages" of architecture that became topical in the 20th century. To Guyer's credit, he makes it clear that it is by no means evident what theorists mean when they talk about the 'language' of architecture. To replace 'language' with "symbolic forms" is better, of course, because 'symbol' is a more encompassing concept than 'language' (although, in Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, the two may seem to coincide), but even the latter term is not unproblematical (p. 102). Guyer grants that many writers use the term 'language' metaphorically in relation to language, which is just as well when one considers what the analysis of language entails in terms of syntax, semantics, pragmatics and the like. Referring to Rafael Moneo's critical comparison of deconstructionist architect Peter Eisenman with Robert Venturi (p. 103), he brings to light that the former's conception of architecture is purely 'syntactical' in so far as it elides the relationship between architecture and interpreters of its meaning as well as functionality, highlighting only the relations between the constitutive (constructed) 'signs' comprising architecture. By contrast, Venturi is interested in the cultural symbolism (i.e. meaning) of architecture (pp. 103-104), in this way neglecting construction and function. Guyer cannily points out that Moneo's criticism of these two figures – each of whom emphasises only one of Vitruvius's principles – reveals Moneo's implicit endorsement of the Vitruvian triad. I must admit that his remark (Guyer 2021: 104) that Venturi's notion of symbolism was "often crude", as shown in Venturi's partiality for a duck-shaped stand selling ducklings, is an understatement; in my estimation anyone who understands architectural symbolism in such a literal sense does not do justice to architecture (more on this below).

An unusual conception of architecture is encountered in the work of Susanne Langer – who accommodates all of Vitruvius's paradigmatic criteria – particularly her notion of architecture as the creation of "illusion". Guyer (p. 106) explains this as the demarcation of a specific space (or place) that has a certain significance as (in Langer's words) "self-sufficient, perceptual space" (a formulation that resonates with

Henri Lefebvre's work on architecture as being 'socially produced'; see Lefebvre 1991: 38-39; Olivier 2011) within the endless continuum of Newtonian space. Even something as minimal as Stonehenge achieves this. For Langer architectural space is also an "ethnic domain" in so far as it "represents" and "houses" an identifiable kind of human practice or activity (p. 106). Furthermore, the "illusion of life" in which Langer claims architecture participates (together with the other arts) through the creation of, for example, "decorative patterns", and which has a demonstrable "emotional impact" on people (pp. 107-108), may be regarded as contributing to the 'language' of architecture. As Guyer (p. 108-109) observes, one may wonder why Langer's "lively" thought on language did not have more influence on subsequent philosophy of language or architectural theory.

I found the third part of Chapter 3, Guyer's chapter on "The Phenomenology of architecture", to be one of the most interesting in his book, despite the fact that he does not pay direct attention to the most important thinkers in this field, instead merely mentioning them in passing (p. 109). I am thinking particularly of Martin Heidegger and Christian Norberg-Schulz, who explicitly subjected architecture to phenomenological analysis, albeit with an 'existential' twist. The former's essays on the work of art and on the so-called 'fourfold' (earth, sky, mortals and divinities) in relation to architecture have profound implications for an understanding of the arts (see Heidegger 1975; Olivier 2011). Nevertheless, it is already something for someone of Guyer's philosophical orientation to mention Heidegger at all – that he grasped Heidegger's importance is reflected in his use of crucial terms from Heidegger's work itself, namely "earth and sky" (p. 109) – so one should not grumble. This is especially the case because his elaboration on the work of the Danish architect and writer, Steen Rasmussen (p. 110 ff) – who honoured Vitruvius's three principles – compensates somewhat for the omission of a sustained discussion of Heidegger's (and Maurice Merleau-Ponty's) significance.

Guyer conceives of Rasmussen's approach (correctly, I believe) as phenomenological despite the latter's not situating it in these terms. This much is evident in the Dane's focus on "experiencing architecture" in his book by that title, which work emphasises that one's sensory, embodied relationship with architecture should not be restricted – as it all too often is – to the visual level; all one's senses are involved in a holistic sense. Guyer shows clearly in what sense Rasmussen's idea of architecture supposes human beings to be embodied creatures who experience architecture in the course of living in and around buildings, moving inside and through them, and experiencing them in a sensorily interactive, multi-sensorial manner where even sound and smell contribute to the particular modalities of one's awareness of architectural spaces (pp. 111-113). It follows from this that no two people experience buildings in precisely the same way – architecture gives rise to highly personal, widely divergent experiences. Nor is there any "objectively correct idea of a thing's appearance" according to Rasmussen (quoted on p. 113); we only have evidence of an indefinite collection of "subjective impressions". This is compatible with Friedrich Nietzsche's individualist perspectivalism, which radicalised the Kantian notion that humans experience the world in generally the same manner, given the commonly shared structure of reason. But Guyer's remark,

that Rasmussen differs from Kant regarding the universal appeal of an aesthetic judgement seems a bit puzzling – after all, as he grants, this should not be understood in constitutive, cognitive terms. But what Kant meant was simply that to the person making the aesthetic judgement it appears as if it *ought* to be applicable to all people, so that one could at least enter into dialogue with others about it – much in the same way as Jürgen Habermas's idea of 'consensus' in communication, or of the 'ideal speech community' is not anything necessarily achievable in concrete terms, but rather consists of 'regulative ideals' of sorts that enable dialogue.

It is unusual to find an architect and theoretician who understands architecture from the perspective of evolutionary psychology, as Grant Hildebrand does (Guyer 2021: 115), but his views on "architectural pleasure" certainly do, as Guyer claims, enrich one's comprehension of experiencing architecture (aesthetically). It is easy to understand why Hildebrand sees architecture in terms of 'hiding' ("refuge") from and 'seeing' ("prospect") of other people. This reminds one of Gaston Bachelard's wonderful book, *The Poetics of Space* (1994), which deals with intimate spaces considered as nests, burrows, shells and the like, in which people often 'hide' the way Hildebrand suggests. To be sure, the latter also connects this with the human tendency to value both "complexity and order", and to seek "security in the known" as well as risking the "unknown", which have all carried "survival value" in the evolution of humans and have therefore moulded their experience (p. 115). Guyer's discussion of Hildebrand's insightful work on the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright (p. 116 ff) points forward to his own evaluation of the work of this iconic American architect (p. 128 ff).

Roger Scruton's book on *The Aesthetics of Architecture* is also dealt with under the aegis of phenomenology because of its experiential orientation (p. 117 ff), although experience is less broadly understood by Scruton than by Rasmussen. On the whole, in Guyer's estimation, Scruton foregrounds the aesthetic dimension by stressing the role of imagination in the perception of buildings at the cost of the other two Vitruvian criteria (p. 122), and one way in which he makes this point is worth mentioning. After a talk by Scruton, the architect, Nicholas Ray, remarked to Guyer that Scruton "paid no attention to floor plans" (p. 121) – an ostensibly innocent remark, until one recalls that floor plans, which architects have to consider regarding the demarcation of the different spaces comprising a building, concern the way people *use* buildings. In other words, Scruton neglected the *function* of buildings (and by implication their *construction*, too), in favour of "the freedom of the imagination" at the visual level, particularly as far as the experience of elevation, verticality and horizontality are concerned, where varying one's visual focus is a source of imaginative, aesthetic pleasure.

By contrast, architect and writer Steven Holl (Guyer 2021: 122 ff), whose Y-House features in the Introduction, does not neglect any of Guyer's three guiding Vitruvian ideals; this much is already evident from the "five interrelated factors" foregrounded by the architectural programme at Columbia, where he taught, and which includes "construction" as well as "public and private aspects of built form". That topics like "phenomenological . . . studies" also feature here, is no doubt an indication of Merleau-Ponty's

influence on Holl, alluded to by Guyer (p. 122). It is not surprising, therefore, to find that Holl appears to understand that the true 'language' of architecture should not be taken literally (confirmed by Guyer, p. 125). Hence the five concepts highlighted by his curriculum (p. 123), namely "*limits*" (on design); "*composition*" (articulated in terms of oppositional pairs such as "vertical/horizontal"); "*materials* of construction" (the way they are experienced); and "*space and light*" (the use of "light and shadow"). (This resonates with the philosophy of architecture encountered in the work of Karsten Harries, which I shall address below.) The fact that Holl's multi-facetted conception of architecture is further indebted to Paul Klee's painting and writing underscores his amplification of aesthetic appeal, which is not limited to visual perception, but incorporates "feeling and the moving body" (p. 124). It is not difficult to agree with Guyer that Holl's work demonstrates the continued relevance of the Vitruvian triad (p. 126). Holl is certainly one of the most impressive contemporary figures featured in Guyer's book.

The fourth chapter in this book – "Words and Works" (p. 127 ff) – is devoted to illustrating and strengthening Guyer's conviction, that the Vitruvian paradigm should be seen in conjunction with two values particularly espoused by Frank Lloyd Wright, truth and freedom. Interestingly, these two values, together with the term 'organic', that pervade Wright's rhetoric, are nowhere found in Vitruvius; nor do Wright's buildings resemble the traditional buildings that pay homage to Vitruvius, Palladio and Alberti. Guyer more than does justice to Wright's critical and architectural achievements. Regarding the latter (as I do) as being America's greatest architect, I find this particularly gratifying, given Wright's observable architectural legacy. For one thing, who can fail to discern in the 'horizontality-signature' of Wright's domestic architecture a paean to the wide-open spaces of the American plains, that is, of geographical nature in those parts of the world, let alone recalling that the 'open floor-plan' found in houses across the world testifies to Wright's lasting influence? And is there a person sufficiently insensitive to the merging of architectural and natural beauty to resist the beauty of Wright's masterpiece, Fallingwater? (In passing I should note Guyer's admirably restrained, pithy allusion – "the flames of romantic scandal"; p. 129 – to the tragedy that befell Wright with the murder of his lover, Martha Cheney and several other people at the 'love cottage', Taliesin, in 1914.) Guyer summarises Wright's approach to architecture as follows (pp. 129-130):

> Wright's claim was that his buildings fit into nature in the way they sit on the earth and flow from indoor rooms to outdoor gardens; that they allude to nature, for example that the long, low roofs of some of the Prairie style houses allude to the flat plains of Illinois or the gentle hills of Wisconsin; but above all that everything about his houses, from floorplan to decoration, evolves from an organizing idea in the way an oak grows from an acorn.

Guyer proceeds to list and elaborate on the six principles for organic architecture stated by Wright and adhered to throughout his long, productive life (pp. 130-132), and further demonstrates that, despite the absence of explicitly Vitruvian language in his writings, one does encounter echoes of the Roman's tripartite

paradigm in some of his written work, and, of course, embodied in his buildings (pp. 132-133). Notably, the interpretive skills Guyer displays where he elaborates on the relevance of 'truth' and 'freedom' for Wright's buildings are impressive (pp. 133-138); this is balanced by a discussion of the shortcomings of some of these because he sometimes "pushed beyond what could be properly done at the time" (p. 139). In all, I find Guyer's treatment of Wright very satisfying.

One may question Guyer's inclusion of Adolf Loos and Mies van der Rohe as the other two 20th-century architects on grounds of representativity (personally I would have liked Louis Kahn's inclusion), but not of influence, and furthermore, they evidently confirm his claim about the lasting influence of Vitruvius's three principles. He provides a fitting summary of Loos's work – writing as well as buildings – where he writes (Guyer 2021: 151):

> Thus Loos's texts stressed freedom and his buildings realized it – the freedom of the client, the freedom of the workmen, and the freedom of the architecture from some of its traditional constraints, but not the untrammelled freedom of the architect.

Regarding the latter, especially, the contrast between Loos and Wright could not be clearer; it will be recalled that Wright insisted on the architect's freedom but limited the client's freedom to his or her choice of architect. Guyer's elaboration on Loos's vignette (p. 149), "Poor Little Rich Man", may even give readers the impression that Loos had Wright in mind when he wrote that. Nevertheless, he also points to resemblances between these two master architects (Guyer 2021: 143-145), such as the way both attain functionality and beauty by way of conspicuous spaces and materials that engender a sense of "freedom from traditional styles and ornament, freedom for movement" (p. 145). While Loos's work did reflect the value of 'truth' (for instance in his "honesty in the use of materials"; p. 145), Guyer shows that in his writings he put less emphasis on truth than Wright (p. 151). Moreover, in Guyer's estimation Loos actualised all three of the Vitruvian architectural values equally in his work (p. 151). The best example of this is probably Loos's famous Villa Müller (see figures 5a and 5b). For anyone who has heard of Loos's famous (in some quarters notorious) lecture/essay, "Ornament and Crime", Guyer's discussion (p. 145 ff) of this text is illuminating.

Mies is presented as the most "radical yet most classical" of these three architects – an ostensible oxymoron, but one that Guyer justifies with reference to his choice of materials and the striking geometric properties and proportions of his buildings, as well as his continued adherence to the Vitruvian paradigm (p 152). Like the other two architects dealt with in this chapter, Mies also spoke – although more economically – of freedom and truth in architecture, and of its civilisational role (p. 153), which Guyer understands in terms of the materials and technology available to the architect at a certain point in cultural history, and the distinctive way of life of such a time, which both the architect should serve (pp. 153-154). Surprisingly, Guyer even alludes to Heidegger's ("etymologically tendentious") conception of truth as *alētheia* or 'non-forgetfulness' – usually translated as 'unconcealedness' – to explain Mies's conviction that the

character of materials used in buildings should be manifested 'truthfully', and that beauty in this context is a function, precisely, of materials "reveal[ing] their nature" (p. 154). One of the surprising things about Mies is that, while he regarded good construction, functionality, and beauty (all of which are related to good materials) as fundamental to 'good architecture' or *Baukunst* (a German word which he apparently preferred to 'architecture'), he exercised the freedom to employ materials for aesthetic purposes. In Guyer's words (p. 160):

> He attached vertical I-beams to the exterior surfaces of his buildings that served no direct structural purpose but could allude to the actual [hidden] structure of the building, and thus contribute a kind of meaning to the beauty of the building (Figure 6). Mies further used these I-beams as mullions between windows in order to create a play of light and shadow that changes throughout the day – a beautiful purely aesthetic effect. And while at Lake Shore Drive he did all this with black-painted I-beams, at the Seagram Building he did it with more finely detailed bronze I-beams, which are both too soft and too expensive to be used in a structural role but which are beautiful.

The other thing about Mies (as presented by Guyer; p. 157-158) that I find striking, is his notion of "multi-functionality" or flexibility, which amounts to a revision of Sullivan's well-known dictum, that 'form follows function'. In essence, this means that the spaces he created were meant to be sufficiently flexible to serve several purposes, depending on the changing needs of the people who inhabited those spaces. This strikes one as being very different from, say, Wright's conception of spaces in one of his buildings, which were created for specific purposes and sometimes included fixtures that could not be temporarily removed. For Mies, spatial flexibility implied practicality that allowed for evolving, multiple functions. As Guyer remarks (p. 158), this modern revision of Vitruvius's principle of functionality is a refinement, not a rejection of it.

The final chapter (5) of Guyer's book, "Looking Forward", opens with an evocation of Hegel's familiar remark, that "the owl of Minerva begins its flight only with the onset of dusk" (quoted on p. 163), to emphasise that people cannot predict the future, being confined, as philosophers, to the interpretation of the present and the past. Having said this, however, he appears to revert to Kantian thinking once more – in terms of a distinction between the general or formal, on the one hand, and the materially particular, on the other – by first asserting that there is no reason to suspect that the three Vitruvian ideals that have guided his interpretation regarding the architectural past would lose their relevance in the future, and then asserting that there is nevertheless no way of telling what specific future changes architecture, together with human culture, would display (pp. 163-164). Guyer suggests that we think about the Vitruvian categories in light of the historical "tug-of-war" in aesthetic theory (pp. 164-166) between those who claim (in rationalist fashion) that there are universally valid, spatiotemporally transcendent norms of beauty, and their (empiricist) opponents, who assert that aesthetic tastes are influenced by local customs and criteria to such an extent that no universal norms are possible. (David Hume comes to mind here.) Besides (p. 165), some commentators have drawn attention to the way in which novelty may upend "customary preferences".

The discussion of the future of functionality and construction (p. 166 ff) – which cannot be conclusively separated from beauty – yields interesting insights concerning the phenomenon of "adaptive reuse" of existing, but for some reason unused structures. Guyer is convinced that this practice will continue for as long as the functions of buildings continue changing along with developments of an economic, cultural and environmental nature. Among the recent examples of this enumerated by Guyer, the two that stand out are the High Line in Manhattan, New York, which has been converted into a "linear park" from being a "disused elevated railroad freight spur", and which has become a favourite tourist attraction, and in Germany, the Elbe Philharmonic Hall in Hamburg. The latter, which was constructed on top of a 1960s warehouse and strikes one as a gigantic crystalline crown on an earthy base, includes three different concert halls, and was designed by the exceptional Swiss architects, Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron, of whose work Guyer writes that their "…constant exploration of new materials and techniques means that no two of their buildings look alike…" This is no exaggeration, as any closer look at their various projects confirms; a building I am familiar with – Vitra House on the Vitra Campus, Weil am Rhein – is a case in point. At first glance it may appear to be a collection of houses arbitrarily piled on top of one another, until one enters this delightfully variegated space where, ascending the stairs from the ground floor to the fourth, one discovers one differently modulated space after another.

Given prevailing natural and cultural conditions, Guyer could hardly overlook the challenges regarding climate change (including the climatic consequences of construction materials and techniques) and social justice facing contemporary architects. What he singles out as the most pressing climate change concern, namely energy-dependence on polluting fossil fuels and non-renewable resources for the operation of buildings, is not restricted to architecture, of course, and given his recognition that "everything is connected to everything" (p. 170), this means that the excessive dependence on these in other areas of economic activity – notably transportation – will further exacerbate the situation, in this way stimulating innovative solutions to the problem. Nor can this be divorced from aesthetic considerations – using new building techniques, and with new materials, will require "architectural imagination as well as engineering prowess" (p. 171). Regardless of such novel challenges, Guyer believes that the three values of good construction, functionality and aesthetic appeal will continue to assert themselves in architectural practice.

Architects don't work in a social vacuum; hence, as a professional community they face issues of inequality and social injustice, and unsurprisingly, Guyer focuses on those concerning the presence and recognition of both women and black architects in the profession. Needless to stress, some of what he brings to light reflects very negatively on the profession, although more recent developments are cause for hope of improvement. The names of contemporary black and women architects that he lists confirm this. If Guyer had been familiar with the South African architectural scene, he would probably have added the name of Ora Joubert, who has been one of the prominent architects in this country for some time; her House Tzaneen (2001; Limpopo), and Ivy Villa Stables Conversion and Studio (1995; Pretoria), among other projects, attest to this.

Guyer concludes this chapter with a reflection on the task architects face, to promote social justice through their buildings, particularly against the backdrop of spectacular failures in this regard – such as Le Corbusier's ill-fated idea of future cities, or the socially dysfunctional Pruitt-Igoe public housing development in St Louis. Acknowledging that the "political will" is necessary for it to happen, he detects signs of an improvement in this regard, and an awareness that architects should do better with affordable, yet "good housing" (p. 178), cautioning that the aesthetic appeal of such buildings – actual or imagined – should not be overlooked (p. 180). Given the increasing homelessness in cities around the world, his discussion of the manner in which architects in Oakland, California, replaced a collection of tents and cardboard boxes (of homeless people) with "a well laid-out community of enhanced garden sheds with utilities such as…electricity and running water…" (p. 178) is a timely pointer towards the need for similar socially sensitive approaches elsewhere. In the end, the role of effective policies and "architectural imagination" for the provision of affordable housing cannot be ignored (p. 179). Nevertheless Guyer insists, finally, that regardless of future societal changes, and what will be seen at that time as good construction, functionality and aesthetic appeal, these time-tested values are bound to endure.

Shifting the terrain

But – returning to my earlier metaphor – instead of merely moving the 'deckchairs' around on the Vitruvian ship (as the thinkers discussed by Guyer mostly do), how about shifting the terrain to a 'different ship' instead, and in doing so implying that, over and above these three time-honoured criteria, there is something else that is more fundamental to architecture than they are, and that this is irreducible to these three principles (even if at first it may seem as if it is simply an umbrella term for them)? This, I would argue, is indeed the case, and I can back up my claim by referring to the work of Karsten Harries of Yale University – in my estimation the most important philosopher of architecture alive, and someone who has contributed to this discipline in no small measure. In fact, I find it astonishing that Guyer does not even mention Harries in his book – despite the fact that he does refer to thinkers in the phenomenological tradition, such as Edmund Husserl and Heidegger, on whose work Harries draws – particularly because he must surely be aware of the Yale philosopher's work in the philosophy of architecture, if not of Harries's substantial contribution to Continental philosophy generally. The closest Guyer comes to the spirit of Harries's philosophy of architecture is in his appreciative discussion of the Danish architect and thinker, Rasmussen, whose experience-oriented conception of architecture resonates strongly with that of Harries (and also of Heidegger, Norberg-Shulz and Merleau-Ponty).

So what is it in Harries's work that designates what architecture is, or does, which is more fundamental than Vitruvius's tripartite measure? In a word, it is what Harries (1998) calls *The Ethical Function of Architecture* in his book by that name (winner of the American Institute of Architects 8th Annual International Architecture Book Award for Criticism). If, conditioned by the history of philosophy (particularly aesthetics), one's first response were that he seems to have the wrong discipline in mind, one would be in error, for this is decidedly not the case. Harries is not blind to aesthetic appeal; neither in architecture nor in art, and his little masterpiece, *The Meaning of Modern Art* (1968) bears testimony to this. But he regards the manner in which architecture creates a sense of *ethos* – in short, a sense of place – in varying degrees and ways, as being primary (Harries 1998: xii). Unless a building does this, its good construction, functionality, and aesthetic appeal – which, incidentally, can contribute to its 'ethical function', as even Guyer (2021: 16) seems to recognise in broad terms where he discusses Vitruvius – would be wasted. An example of what Harries has in mind would shed light on this issue. In the Preface to *The Ethical Function of Architecture* he remarks (1998: xii):

> A certain unease with modern art led me to examine some of its central propositions: already with that book [*The Meaning of Modern Art*, 1968; B.O.] and its call for a new realism I wanted to call into question the aesthetic approach that had for so long presided over the progress of art. Architecture interested me precisely because, while on the aesthetic approach an essentially impure, compromised art, compromised by its need to take its place in a world ruled by other concerns, it calls that approach into question, demanding a different approach – and finally not just to architecture but to all the arts. My book on the Bavarian Rococo church (*The Bavarian Rococo Church: Between Faith and Aestheticism* […1983]) gave me a first chance to develop some of my thoughts with greater precision and close attention to works of architecture.

While it is certainly not the case that Guyer's Vitruvian guiding principles for evaluating architecture – good construction, functionality, and aesthetic appeal – equal an exclusively aesthetic approach, a case can be made that it privileges the aesthetic component, insofar as buildings that satisfy them are judged by whether the first two serve the last one. If a building is soundly constructed and functional, it would still be disqualified as 'good architecture' if these were to undermine its aesthetic value. Harries (1998: 4) confirms this where he quotes Nikolaus Pevsner's familiar observation, that "A bicycle shed is a building; Lincoln Cathedral is a piece of architecture". Pevsner's answer to the obvious question about the differentiating element between the two constructions is in line with what Harries calls the 'aesthetic approach', and what Guyer seems to have in mind with the 'aesthetic appeal' of architecture: architectural works are "designed with a view to aesthetic appeal" (quoted in Harries 1998: 4). On this (Pevsner's) view, as distinguished from the 'ethical approach', Harries says (p. 4), "…the work of architecture is essentially a functional building with an added aesthetic component. An obvious way of creating such a work would be to decorate some utilitarian structure: *work of architecture = building + decoration*". Hence he proposes to call such buildings, following Venturi and his fellow authors of *Learning from Las Vegas* (1977), "dec-

orated sheds" (Harries 1998: 6). Before I turn to an explication of the latter, it should be noted that, where Guyer discusses Vitruvius's conception of architecture, his formulation gets close to something more than only 'good construction, functionality, and aesthetic appeal' (Guyer 2021: 16):

> These statements show that Vitruvius understands architecture as a fundamental medium for the relation of human beings to the rest of nature and to each other in society. The products of architecture are not simply aesthetic objects, in our terminology, intended for pleasurable contemplation, but are also means for the interactions of people with their physical and social environments on which the possibility of human life and flourishing depends. Facilitating human flourishing in its natural and social context is the underlying goal of the architect...

I submit that it is but a small step from here to what Harries (1998: 4) calls "the ethical function of architecture", and that Vitruvius was evidently – on Guyer's interpretation of the latter's precepts – quite aware of the manner in which architecture either contributes to this or fails to do so. And I would further argue that the so-called 'decorated shed' does not succeed in promoting architecture's 'ethical function'. What does Harries mean by this phrase? Referring to Siegfried Giedion's remark (in 1967), that contemporary architecture faces the task of articulating "the interpretation of a way of life valid for our period" (quoted in Harries 1998: 2), he continues (1998: 4):

> ...what way of life is valid for our period? Is not our world, our society with its differences of class and race, gender and religion, too heterogeneous, too filled with confusion and contradiction, to allow us to answer this question with any confidence? Have postmodern suspicions made it impossible to demand that architecture meet what Giedion calls its main task? Is there a way of life valid for all?
>
>   Despite such questions, I find it difficult to surrender Giedion's modernist hope. Should architecture not continue to help us find our place and way in an ever more disorienting world? In this sense I shall speak of the *ethical function* of architecture. 'Ethical' derives from 'ethos'. By a person's ethos we mean his or her character, nature, or disposition. Similarly we speak of a community's ethos, referring to the spirit that presides over its activities. 'Ethos' here names the way human beings exist in the world: their way of dwelling. By the ethical function of architecture I mean its task to help articulate a common ethos.

This is not to deny the importance of the Vitruvian triad employed by Guyer to understand architecture; however, it is to identify something more basic, in the service of which these three Vitruvian principles stand and which the Roman himself appears to have had in mind according to Guyer's own formulation (quoted above) where he alludes to Vitruvius's conception of architecture (2021: 16): "Facilitating human flourishing in its natural and social context is the underlying goal of the architect...".

Returning to Pevsner's understanding of architecture as 'decorated buildings', or, in Venturian terms, 'decorated sheds', it is worth noting that, on Guyer's account (pp. 41-42), Alberti already anticipated the 'decorated shed' in very modern fashion with his 'merely ornamental' treatment of columns. Unlike

Harries (1998: 47-48, 50-68), however, Guyer does not make the crucial distinction between two types of ornament, or 'decoration' and 'ornament', based on a distinction encountered in none other than Loos. Referring to a passage in Loos's "Ornament and crime", Harries (1998: 48) writes:

> Two kinds of ornament are here distinguished. In one a whole culture finds its expression; the other is the creation of an isolated individual. One is part of an ongoing history, the other has neither past nor future; one has a social function, the other is experienced only as an aesthetic presence; one even today communicates traces of the vigor of its past life, the other arrives stillborn. Loos was by no means the only one to draw such a distinction. And since I, too, want to make use of it in the following discussion, it seems helpful to make a terminological disctinction. Up to this point I have used 'decoration' and 'ornament' more or less as synonyms. From now on I shall call decoration that articulates a communal ethos *ornament* and decoration that we experience primarily as an aesthetic addition to building *decoration*. So understood, *decoration is the aesthetic analogue to ornament.*

Short of summarising Harries's entire argument involving decoration, ornament and architecture's 'ethical function', suffice it to say that, for architecture to fulfil its constitutive role of providing the means for orienting oneself 'ethically' in relation to one's place and role as a human being in the world, it has to find counterparts to what 'ornament' used to be, before 'mere (arbitrary) decoration', as embodied in Michael Graves's Hotel Dolphin in Orlando, Florida (see Harries 1998: 30), took its place. This is the task that Harries (1998) sets himself in his exceptional book referred to here.

Besides, it is not as if the material Guyer discusses does not contain conspicuous hints and references to the theme of Harries's book. Guyer's discussion of several architects overlooks their awareness of what Harries calls architecture's 'ethical function'. For example, Guyer's elaboration on Mies's Villa Tugendhat seems to have a blind spot for this, particularly where he quotes Daniela Tugendhat's observation (p. 156) that: "My mother told me that [the] experience of space was an essential quality of life in the house: while providing seclusion and privacy there was a feeling of belonging to a larger totality at the same time". Guyer even interprets this as "...a pretty good image of conditions for individuals living both as they wish and in harmony with others within a family circle and beyond" (pp. 156-157). Resonating with Vitruvius's conception of architecture as "Facilitating human flourishing..." (Guyer 2021: 16), these comments on Mies's House Tugendhat – "belonging to a larger totality", and "in harmony with others within a family circle and beyond" – arguably evoke precisely what Harries has in mind with the 'ethical function' of architecture as situating humans within an encompassing *ethos* through its structural design (in relation to a specific location and aesthetic value) as well as via its materials and use or function. One could add that what Guyer describes as a "purely aesthetic effect" (p. 160) of the changing diurnal play of light caused by the I-beams Mies used between the windows of, among others, the Seagram Building, is

not 'purely aesthetic'; on the contrary, it contributes to the 'ethical function' of the building in so far as it situates observers and passers-by in the broader context of natural rhythms – what Heidegger calls the 'fourfold' of 'earth, sky, mortals and divinities' (Heidegger 1975 ; Olivier 2011).

Conclusion

It could be argued, of course, that Guyer omitted Harries from his book because there is no obvious way in which the latter employs the Vitruvian triad in his philosophical work on architecture. I would counter that the apparent oxymoron in the title of Harries's book – *The Ethical Function of Architecture* – is an implicit criticism of the notion that one can rest content with Vitruvius's three values: 'ethical function' implies that the crucial, or indispensable 'function' of architecture is its capacity of imparting to buildings a 'sense of place', or of 'belonging' to a distinct community, or cultural, and beyond that, natural order. This in no way negates Vitruvius's values, but places them under the imperative that, once they have been embodied in a building, it still has to satisfy the litmus test of instantiating an *ethos*, that is, fulfilling its 'ethical function'.

A good example of such architecture is found in South African architect Peter Rich's award-winning Mapungubwe Interpretation Centre (Noble 2021: 129 ff). The impressive building complex rises out of the African Bushveld and Savannah landscape as if it is a natural outcrop of Mother Nature. Appropriately, given its apparent continuity with the surrounding countryside, it comprises a centre providing information on an area with rich archaeological deposits pertaining to the civilisations that flourished there in the late, pre-colonial middle ages. The striking design not only includes circular cairns connecting it morphologically to the hilly surroundings and traditional dwellings of the indigenous people, but is situated in a manner that is congenial to visitors orienting themselves visually in relation to the landscape as they negotiate the ascending zigzag path from the entrance to the exit with its views towards Mapungubwe Hill. The ethical function performed by Mapungubwe can be expressed spatiotemporally by saying that it orients one temporally as well as spatially with regard to an enduring 'ethos': the former through its *cultural-historical* function as Interpretation Centre; the latter through its design – including the colours of its constituent materials – blending with the surrounding *natural* countryside. Moreover, it achieves this without relinquishing the Vitruvian norms of good construction, functionality and aesthetic value. Demonstrably, therefore, it is not a matter of the Vitruvian triad clashing with architecture's ethical function; they are the indispensable means through which it is attained.

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