

Book Reviews



The Politics of the Piazza: the History and Meaning of the Italian Square. Eamonn Canniffe. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008. 288 pp., b&w illus.

Visitors to Italy have long been struck by what Eamonn Canniffe calls “the strangely fascinating power of the piazza.” Even more than elsewhere in Europe, and certainly more than in North America, much of daily life on the peninsula takes place *all’aperto* (out in the open). In both major cities and small towns, the *piazza* still serves as the focal point of the community, a place to buy vegetables, flirt, enjoy a gelato, or engage in vigorous political protest.

In *The Politics of the Piazza: The History and Meaning of the Italian Square*, Canniffe sets himself the monumental task of tracing the development of the *piazza* as an urban form in Italy from the foundation of Rome to the present day. He is primarily interested in these iconic urban spaces as expressions of political power and in examining how different ideologies have left their stamp on cityscapes across the centuries. As he notes, “this is largely a history devoted to spaces which have survived through long periods of use, the robustness of the forms adapting to changes in political and social circumstance.” With millennia of architectonic heritage, Italian cities are palimpsests, not blank canvases, and any attempt to reshape them involves a complex negotiation between tradition and innovation.

Canniffe begins his narrative in classical antiquity, a period that would have a profound impact on the subsequent development of the *piazza*. The ancient forum not only established the basic morphology of Rome and many other Italian cities, but it would serve as an ideal for later planners, an “urban exemplar and source of archetypes.” Whereas the emperors of pagan Rome exploited public space to project their authority, the fracturing of the empire and the rise of Christianity led to more heterogeneous cityscapes, reflecting the chaotic political environment of late antiquity. Later, during the Middle Ages, the *piazza* became a site of architectural contestation, as local elites, the papacy, and imperial rulers struggled to assert their presence through the construction of *palazzi*, churches and towers. Then, with the rediscovery of ancient models during the Renaissance, many cities gained a more coherent set of aesthetic values, informed by linear perspective and the idealized forms of classical geometry. For Renaissance theorists like Vasari, the well-ordered city reflected a well-ordered society.

The Politics of the Piazza becomes more compelling as Canniffe enters the modern period. Italian unification in the decade between 1860 and 1870 brought renewed vigor to city planning. The young nation sought to demonstrate its modernity through urban renewal and monumental new public spaces to honor the heroes of the Risorgimento. These aggressive interventions reached their peak during the Fascist period, which sought to identify itself rhetorically with the Roman past while embracing radically modernist aesthetics. Canniffe’s analysis of Brescia’s Piazza della Vittoria, in particular, vividly demonstrates efforts at this time to look both backwards and forwards, juxtaposing contemporary buildings with archaeological reconstructions.

The sections on post-World War II Italy are also fascinating. Canniffe takes a detailed look at the double bind facing postwar architects, for whom both modernism and historicism (and indeed the very concept of public space) were tainted by their association to Mussolini's regime. It was not until the prosperity of the 1960s that new visions could be advanced. As with their precursors, contemporary planners have had to navigate between the preservation of traditional spaces (whose main function is now economic — as tourist attractions) and responding to the exigencies of modern life. Canniffe concludes by speculating about the future of the *piazza*. In the media age (or, in Italy, the Age of Berlusconi), the spontaneity and community of traditional public space has been supplanted. Facebook, not the *piazza*, is where we congregate. What will the next step be in the evolution of these millennial spaces?

Given the breadth and magnitude of this topic, it is not surprising that some issues remain unresolved in this relatively short book. One conceptual problem that Canniffe identifies from the outset is the definition of the *piazza* itself. He writes that it is not simply “a matter of the absence of building, of space left over at the margins of construction.” The bulk of his analysis is thus devoted to architectural analysis of the structures and facades that frame various sites. His argument that the *piazza* should be understood as a presence rather than an absence is important and valid, yet what exactly this “presence” entails is not clear. Is the square to be defined by the buildings that limit it? By the functions designated by its planners? By the ways in which the space is used by its inhabitants?

A related issue is that despite Canniffe's claim that his work is based on “experience of the place itself, not simply in its accumulated detail but in the generality of its effect,” this study is curiously bloodless. One receives very little sense of the human dimension of these spaces or their quotidian function. Canniffe focuses almost exclusively on formal aesthetics and the stated intentions of theorists, designers and patrons. This “top-down” view of the *piazza* is important, but would ideally be complemented by a “bottom-up” perspective as well.

Finally, for a work on the Italian *piazza* writ large, the examples presented here come primarily from the major cities of northern and central Italy (Venice, Milan, Rome, Florence), all of which underwent similar trajectories in their development. Aside from a few mentions of Naples, the South is completely overlooked. It would have been productive to examine the wide diversity of urban cultures across the peninsula, from Moorish and Norman influences in Sicily to the Byzantine-inflected architecture of the Adriatic coast.

The Politics of the Piazza thus works best as an in-depth study of architectural forms and urban morphology, and specialists will find it a valuable contribution to the literature. Nonspecialists might wish that Canniffe's approach had been more broad-based and accessible, but it will still be useful to students of *il bel paese*.

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Space for Engagement: The Indian Artplace and a Habitational Approach to Architecture. Himanshu Burte. Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2008. 340 pp., 134 b&w photos and 22 drawings.



Himanshu Burte has thought deeply about the social implications of space. Those who have read even a few of his articles over the past decade will open *Space for Engagement* anticipating intimate encounters with Indian architecture. These expectations will not leave them disappointed by this book. An evocative

text, it expresses Burte's pleasure in deep contemplation of environments.

In terms of design philosophy, Burte is clearly distressed by the return of modernism, with its hostility to the inhabitant and the emptiness that is its soul. “[T]he bleak expanses of modernist environments [are] best imagined without people,” he writes. And he reminds readers of modernism's “impersonality” and disdain for the body, for human comfort and pleasure. “[D]isconnected from the larger value systems of the societies . . .,” its vast unbroken surfaces deny natural “anchors of rest.” With these concerns in mind, he casts a critical eye on the work not only of the founding fathers of modernism, but on more recent practitioners such as Frank Gehry, Phillip Johnson, Richard Meier, and their Indian counterparts.

In the U.S. and Western Europe, museum and concert-hall design has tended toward the Disneyfied object, creating buzz and exciting donors. But the resulting fortress or sculptural building is too often more of a logo than a functioning space for the arts. Over-glazing is a frequent problem, as radically demonstrated in the glass walls of Diller, Scofidio and Renfro's performance theater in Boston's new Institute of Contemporary Art. But this design flaw is also much in evidence in high-concept Indian theaters. Burte argues for modest spaces that comfort humans and offer places for art that are more approachable.

Having dismissed the prevailing design philosophy in major art spaces, the second section of the book presents Burte's ideas for how to achieve inviting, modest environments for “ordinary dwellers.” The author is intensely focused on how the environment supports and encourages human activity and interaction, drawing on the work of psychologists, sociologists and philosophers as well as architects, landscape architects and urban designers. His thinking is in the tradition of Yi Fu Tuan, Christopher Alexander and Donlyn Lyndon, along with hints of the phenomenologist Martin Heidegger.

Burte's main proposals are five “affordances” (a term borrowed from James J. Gibson). These may best be thought of as qualities of place that support human action:

Occupiability, Penetrability, Legibility, Sociability and Possessability. In many ways, these design dimensions parallel Kevin Lynch's performance dimensions for urban space. In *Space for Engagement*, each of Burte's affordances merits a chapter in which it is developed in detail with numerous examples. They also work together to create a "dimensional weave" of habitability.

Burte focuses on contemporary rather than historic Indian environments, examining the fit between human gesture and space. For him, place is much more than space and form, and includes social protocols and practices. In contrast to the modernist need to maintain the blank surface in a pristine unmarked condition, he embraces the intimacy of touch instead of the logic of sight, and he welcomes the discolorations and abrasions that betray human use. Going beyond the simple perceived form, he appreciates evidence of what the space was in the past and will become in the future: "Thus it is difficult to think of a built form at any moment as distinct from the history that led to its conception and construction, as well as from the modifications that it will undergo in its future interactions with the forces of protocol and practice."

The third section of the book provides three case studies that offer specific illustrations of "architecture for wholesome habitation." The first, Charles Correa's 1984 Bharat Bhavan, is a "non-building" composed of underground galleries, a library, and an auditorium, which all open onto dugout courts on a hillside site. A second example, Correa's 1977 and 1987 National Crafts Museum, is a campus of structures and spaces in the rural village idiom. The third illustration is Ved Segal's 1979 Prithvi Theater, designed as a temporary workshop space for two actors. Only 3,500 square feet in size, it is minute compared with the other examples, yet it fully supports the needs of its users, or "dwellers" as Burte prefers to call them. All three examples in this section also serve as magnets for their communities, providing many transitional zones for sitting, eating, resting, or chatting in shade and shelter, while offering outdoor extensions for their interior activities.

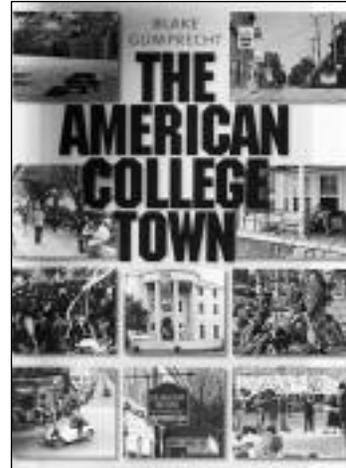
Space for Engagement shows institutions and public-space designers everywhere how to engage with the public city and how to support "wholesome" use. It will be especially valuable to arts administrators, designers and students seeking a non-Western perspective on the making of art-places. Will this handsomely designed book lure major institutions away from their precious object architecture? It is a noble attempt.

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The American College Town. Blake Gumprecht. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008. 448 pp., 82 ill., 12 maps.



The American College Town is a collection of chapters on a type of place the author, Blake Gumprecht, describes as "any city where a college or university and the cultures it creates exert a dominant influence over the character of the town." However, instead of framing his research as a standard exploration of "town and gown" (only one chapter takes up this topic by name), Gumprecht pro-

poses a taxonomy of college-town characteristics, addressing specific physical and social conditions that we observe and expect in these places.

At face value, Gumprecht's argument, that the American college town is a "unique type of urban place," is rather simple. But his eight case studies do a good job of substantiating the reasons why. American college towns are youthful; they have highly educated populations; and they are comparatively affluent, cosmopolitan, transient and unconventional. Gumprecht analyzes an array of social, cultural, economic and physical factors to illustrate and discuss these qualities and support his assertion that college towns form a distinct urban "archipelago."

The book begins by summarizing the characteristics of college towns, the history of universities in the United States, and the author's own approach to the subject. In his introductory chapter, Gumprecht also weaves together personal experience, interviews, and archival research to convey the reasons behind his selection of which towns and universities to study in depth. Each is intended to be a typical, but important, example. The bulk of the book then turns to the case studies, which he pairs with a corresponding theme.

Chapter two, "The Campus as Public Space," considers the University of Oklahoma and how it was envisioned by administrators as a cultural and social center. Gumprecht describes the design of the campus and its buildings in the town of Norman as highly symbolic, a park-like space intended to serve the public good. Interestingly, this is one of the few chapters that addresses the overall plan and design of a university campus.

In chapter three, "Fraternity Row, the Student Ghetto, and the Faculty Enclave," Gumprecht explores three distinct facets of Ithaca, New York, home to Cornell University. It recounts how fraternity members, students, faculty and developers have all helped shaped it as a place. As Gumprecht's discussion shows, both the social and physical geography have been important to how Ithaca has changed over time.

In “Campus Corners and Aggievilles,” Gumprecht next turns to Manhattan, Kansas, home of Kansas State University, and the growth of its student-oriented commercial district. He discusses how this area, like many others near colleges and universities, not only serves student needs for books, school supplies and services, but also provides a source of cheap alcohol and fast food. Contrasting to this culture of consumption, in “All Things Right and Relevant,” Gumprecht then examines progressive idealism in the town of Davis, California, as realized through recycling programs, food co-ops, bike lanes, and co-housing. The chapter shows how different members of the University of California community there — faculty, students and alumni — have played important political roles. And he smartly uses the town, rather than the university, to show how members of the academic community have helped shape the local culture and environment.

Continuing this effort to illuminate the various social actors in college towns, in chapter six Gumprecht recounts the lives of six individuals who have, for various reasons, returned to Athens, Georgia, to live near the University of Georgia. And in chapter seven, “Stadium Culture,” he introduces another characteristic of college towns — intercollegiate athletics. In this case, his focus is football at Auburn University in Alabama. Enthusiasm for college teams not only brings alumni back to campus on game days but has helped shape the town of Auburn — providing it with hotels, wide main roads, and condominium complexes.

In chapter eight, “High-Tech Valhalla,” Gumprecht next explores the knowledge industries originating from and developing around the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. As a driver of the local economy, they differ from student-oriented commercial districts, such as that near Kansas State, and the hospitality complex near Auburn. They are predicated on the ingenuity of faculty and the university’s ability to provide high-tech companies with well-educated employees.

Finally, in chapter nine, “Town vs. Gown,” Gumprecht revisits the issue of housing and examines how the politics of Newark, Delaware (home of the University of Delaware) have changed over time. As has been the case in Ithaca with Cornell, enrollment levels, university rules governing student behavior, and access to university housing have been important defining factors in the culture and form of the town.

Even though many of Gumprecht’s sources are specific to each town and university, he ties local histories to national trends and to other college communities across the United States. But, as one might imagine, several themes reappear in each of the case studies. These include underage drinking, political progressivism, and the cultural amenities afforded by colleges and universities. Thus, the use of discrete case studies in some ways creates a false sense of partition among the shared qualities of college towns.

Instead of eight college-town characteristics, Gumprecht is essentially grappling with three hefty themes: commercial activities, housing, and the unique set of social relations (and conflicts) inherent in university settings. For readers interested in any of these topics, there is another way to organize the chapters from this book. For commercial activities (from

local bars to big-box retailers to the high-tech industry), read the chapters related to Kansas State University, U.C. Davis, Auburn University, and University of Michigan. For housing — a topic Gumprecht covers well — read the chapters related to Cornell, U.C. Davis, and the University of Delaware. For the communities and individuals that form the college town, read the chapters related to Cornell, U.C. Davis, the University of Georgia, and Auburn University.

The best chapters in *The American College Town* are those that integrate both “sides” of each place. In these (namely, chapters three/Ithaca, five/Davis, and seven/Auburn) Gumprecht ably discusses how certain groups traverse the boundary between town and campus. With regard to Ithaca, this is especially apparent among the Cornell faculty, who live in careful proximity to campus. In the case of Davis, this applies to students who have remained in town and participated fully in the life and politics of the community. At Auburn, it primarily concerns alumni, who return to campus for football games and other celebratory events. Together, these case studies are rich because they show how the university as an institution shapes a set of social relations that are temporally contingent and tied to place.

Gumprecht concludes by reiterating how American college towns, with their shared characteristics, provide a special type of urban community. However, to claim that the American college town is a youthful, affluent, cosmopolitan and unconventional place, without addressing, with equal weight, other towns, is somewhat problematic. The American college town is a special place, but why is this significant? Why should we care? What do college towns show us that other towns and cities do not?

The chapters on Ithaca, New York, and the Newark, Delaware, illustrate how social and economic circumstances shape social conflict in ways that are different from non-college towns. For example, the fact that areas adjacent to the University of Delaware were once working-class neighborhoods is an important but underdeveloped detail in Gumprecht’s book. In addition, universities own land, which not only affects property tax collections, as Gumprecht observes, but also creates a variety of urban-edge conditions absent in other cities. That said, how do the anti-growth sentiments in Davis, California, and the aspirations to be a high-tech center in Ann Arbor, Michigan — two topics discussed in many city development offices — compare to city planning efforts and urban spaces in non-college towns?

Although there are books on campus planning and design and others on the university as a cultural, political and economic entity, few combine the physical and social aspects of colleges and universities, and none attempt to define the college town. For this reason, and despite the text’s shortcomings, *The American College Town* is a welcome addition to the literature on the history and experience of colleges, universities, and their urban settings.

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Mātrā: Ways of Measuring Vernacular Built Forms of Himachal Pradesh. Jay Thakkar and Skye Morrison. Ahmedabad: Research Cell, School of Interior Design, CEPT University, 2008. 314 pp., color photos, measured drawings, computer renderings, and sketches.



I read with great pleasure Jay Thakkar and Skye Morrison's *Mātrā: Ways of Measuring Vernacular Built Forms of Himachal Pradesh*. As an architect who lived and worked in Himachal Pradesh, I found the book extremely enriching. This beautifully illustrated volume brought back many memories of my own visits to the villages in this mountainous area of northern India. It is also of invaluable archival importance and high technical quality. In particular, it sheds light on the building technique called Kath-Khuni (cator and cribbage), and it clarifies many details, features and spaces I came across while working in the area. Nevertheless, this compilation remains a mere drop in an ocean of missing information about indigenous architecture in India, especially traditional dwelling forms and construction methods. Substantially more work of this type is needed to better understand and appreciate this heritage.

The book is based on two field trips to Himachal Pradesh by a mix of faculty and mostly interior-design students from CEPT (the Center for Environmental Planning and Technology) in Gujarat. During these trips the group measured and produced scaled drawings and computer models of a range of buildings. By documenting homes, granaries and temples, the book covers the main elements of a traditional village. Work by the group had a systematic, archival character rather than a targeted research agenda. Nevertheless, the book is put together in a way that makes sense and clarifies deeper aspects of lifestyle as projected in forms and spaces.

The first part of the book describes the two journeys the group made to Himachal Pradesh. By providing information both about the destination and the group, it emphasizes the cultural gap between the investigators and the place. This section also describes how destinations were chosen and some of the challenges faced by group. As one might expect, the section is not short on colorful anecdotes.

The second part of the book then dives into vernacular house features and forms as represented through the Kath-Khuni construction method. Common to Himachal Pradesh and other mountainous areas south of the high Himalayas, it employs horizontal wood beams and layers of local stone to produce an earthquake-resistant structure appropriate to the region. The book does not delve into the origins of this method, and it does not describe other locations where similar techniques can be found. But it provides a wealth of technical description and detail about the construction process.

Kath-Khuni is not the only construction method used in the area (for example, later sections of the book examine all-wood construction for temples and granaries), and the presentation here does not explain the advantages of Kath-Khuni over other methods of house-building. Therefore, the book's subtitle, "Ways of Measuring Vernacular Built Forms of Himachal Pradesh," may create some unmet expectations. But, in fairness, such a comparative analysis might have required a whole other project, studying the use of mud bricks, bamboo construction, and flat-slate layering techniques, among other building methods.

From its lengthy discussion of house form, the book moves on, in Part 3, to look at granaries. While these shared storage spaces may at first seem insignificant, the discussion of them sheds light both on village social structure the need of people in the region to cope with harsh seasonal weather. Moreover, as mentioned later, granaries may be the first structures to disappear from these villages as they are modernized, unless new uses can be found for them. The book divides the granaries into freestanding forms and forms combined within houses. Some are made using the same Kath-Khuni construction; others are made fully of wood. The chapter explains their features and includes detailed drawings.

Part 4 of the book then focuses on wooden and wood-and-stone temples. It divides these into six typologies based on roof construction. The variety of temple forms in the area is wide and has been influenced through history by outside visitors. This explains the research team's decision to include both all-wood and wood-and-stone structures. Naturally, looking at only one type of construction will not give a comprehensive overview of the temples in the area. Nevertheless, the chosen typologies do present a good way to structure understanding of the types studied.

The last, fifth, part of the book is an epilogue that looks at the next generation of villagers and at the future of these buildings — as well as at the future of these construction methods. Here many questions are raised. What is the environmental impact of this traditional building technique? Can it survive a shortage of wood supply? Can it survive the penetration of concrete buildings into these villages? Can these houses be adjusted to changes in lifestyle? Some of these questions may have answers in other similarly developing places. Some have the potential to generate further, fascinating research in the field.

The drawings and photos in *Mātrā* are beautiful and detailed. They are also systematic and accurate. If I had one

complaint with the presentation, it would be that the sources for the wealth of additional information provided are not always clear. Sadly, it appears the investigators also did not take thorough-enough notes during their visits and interviews with local people. Greater attention to this dimension of their work would have deepened its academic credibility and added to its social-science applicability. Ultimately, however, the text, presented in a storytelling form, nicely complements the detailed measurements and brings life and meaning to the drawings and photos.

Finally, the high architectural quality and detailed level of drawing is more than can be perceived in print. It would be of great value if these drawings could be made available online, with the ability to zoom as needed. Measurements are often missing in the drawings. And although the scale is sometimes provided, it is not enough to extract the actual sizes of various elements. Again, technology could easily address these limitations without adding cumbersome detail to the printed version.

Mātrā is a very aesthetically pleasing book, filled with beautiful photos and drawings of the villages of the Himalayan foothills. It is also an important source, of exceptional quality, for architects and designers interested in vernacular and traditional architecture, as well as for historians and social scientists looking into indigenous built forms.

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Conferences and Events

UPCOMING CONFERENCES AND SYMPOSIA

8th Annual Hawaii International Conference on Arts & Humanities, Honolulu, HI: January 13–16, 2010. All areas of arts and humanities are invited. To be held at the Waikiki Beach Marriott Resort & Spa and Hilton Waikiki Prince Kuhio Hotel. For more information please visit: <http://www.hichumanities.org>.

“Visualizing the Future of Environmental Design,” Berkeley, CA: February 3–6, 2010. Part two of the fiftieth anniversary celebration of the College of Environmental Design at U.C. Berkeley. For more information on particular events and talks, please visit: www.ced.berkeley.edu/events/50thanniversary.

“Istanbul: Layers of History, Culture, and Architecture,” Istanbul, Turkey: April 8–12, 2010. Sponsored by continental Europe’s chapter of American Institute of Architects. For more information, please visit www.aiaeurope.org.

“The Sustainable City’s Annual Conference,” La Coruña, Spain: April 14–16, 2010. The conference, sponsored by the Wessex Institute of Technology, focuses on themes of urban regeneration and sustainability. For more information, contact Irene Moreno Millan, imoreno@wessex.ac.uk.

The 63rd Annual Meeting of the Society of Architectural Historians, Chicago, IL: April 21–25, 2010. The SAH, an IASTE affiliate, has also issued a call for session proposals for its 64th annual meeting in New Orleans, LA, in 2011. Session proposal submissions are due January 4, 2010. For more information, please visit www.sah.org.

“Multiple Belongings: Diaspora and Transnational Homes,” London, England: May 21, 2010. Second conference of the Histories of Home Subject Specialist Network. Submit abstracts by January 8 on themes related to the material culture of migrants’ homes throughout history. For more information, contact Krisztina Lackoi, klackoi@geffrye-museum.org.uk.

“Public Life in the In-Between Cities,” Haifa, Israel: June 6–10, 2010. Technion University is hosting this conference, which will critically examine the changing nature of public space. Abstracts are due December 15, 2009. For more information, please contact: plic2010@gmail.com.

“Cities and Nationalisms,” London, England: June 17–18, 2010. Sponsored by the Centre for Metropolitan History, the conference seeks to explore understudied geographies related to colonial cities and cities of the global South. For more information, contact: Vivian Bickford-Smith, vivian.bickford@sas.ac.uk, or Olwen Myhill, Olwen.Myhill@sas.ac.uk.

The European Architectural History Network, First Annual Meeting, Guimarães, Portugal: June 17–20, 2010. Conference sessions will pursue the following themes: Architecture in Nineteenth-Century Photographs; Architectures of the Suburb; The Changing Status of Women in Architecture between the Wars; The Urban City: Cultural Urbanism in the Heyday of Functionalism; Fictionalizing the City; and Village Architecture in the Age of a Sustainable Future. For more information, please visit: www.eahn2010.org.

“East meets West,” Osaka, Japan: June 18–21, 2010. The Inaugural Asian Conference on Arts and Humanities will feature scholars from a wide range of disciplines. For more information, please visit: <http://acah.iafor.org/>.

“Global Rebalancing: East Asia and 21st-Century Globalization,” Busan, South Korea: June 21–23, 2010. Scholars from a wide range of disciplines are encouraged to participate in this year’s Global Studies Conference. Please visit: www.onglobalisation.com.

“Emerging Landscapes: Between Production and Representation,” London, England: June 25–27, 2010. Co-sponsored by the University of Westminster’s School of Architecture and the Built Environment and School of Media, Arts, and Design. The conference will focus on the intersections between architecture and media. For more information, please visit: www.emerginglandscapes.org.uk/.

“Imagining,” Newcastle, Australia: June 30–July 2, 2010. The annual conference of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand, will take place at the University of Newcastle and explore the role of the imagination in architecture and architectural history. For more information, please visit: www.newcastle.edu.au/conference/sahanz-2010/.

“Electronic Visualization and the Arts,” London, England: July 5–7, 2010. The annual Electronic Information, Visual Arts, and Beyond conference will focus on architecture and heritage. The deadline for abstract submission is January 15, 2010. For more information, visit: www.eva-conferences.com/eva_london/2010_home.

“Modern and Postmodern Vision: New Belgrade and Port of Belgrade,” Belgrade, Serbia: October 7–10, 2010. Sponsored by continental Europe’s chapter of American Institute of Architects. For more information, please visit www.aiaeurope.org.

RECENT CONFERENCES AND SYMPOSIA

“Traditions of Design Activism and Their Consequences,” Berkeley, CA: September 25–27, 2009.
Part one of the fiftieth anniversary celebration of the College of Environmental Design at U.C. Berkeley. For more information on particular events and talks, please visit: www.ced.berkeley.edu/events/50thanniversary.

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

In recent years IASTE scholars have examined traditions and their multitude of built forms in an increasingly interconnected global landscape. To advance this effort, this conference seeks to study how tradition inspires and informs changing concepts of utopia in theory and space. Utopian theories and plans emerge from a complex symbiotic relationship with traditions that are based on notions of the ideal. Indeed, utopias cannot be understood without understanding the traditions from which they develop.

At its etymological root, utopia embodies both the theoretical paradox of an ideal place, *eu-topia*, and a non-place, *ou-topia*, rendering it an impossibility. As an ideal place, utopia relies on tradition, but as a non-place it attempts to negate it. Although most utopias have spatial manifestations, they often attempt to harness and make static the traditions used to create these spaces. The geographies of utopia physically ground tradition, but tradition simultaneously controls these very same geographies. This contemporary moment of economic crisis necessitates a re-examination of this dynamic.

The word "utopia" is no longer as commonly referenced in professional practice as it was a few decades ago. However, architects, planners, and politicians continue to look for and disseminate notions of ideal forms. Regulated by ethnicity, religion, or race, the identity enclaves of many modern nations use territory to perpetuate visions of perfect communities based on specific traditions. The continuation and strengthening of tradition, cloaked in the language of utopia, may thus be seen to provide the focus for new gated communities in the developing world, the dreamscapes in cities around the Persian Gulf and the Pacific Rim, and the faux-colonial homes in American suburbs. On the other hand, there is an emerging discourse that reconceptualizes utopia itself, not as a product but as an open process aimed at transforming, rather than transcending, the existing condition.

Perhaps the relationship between utopia and tradition can best be understood by examining dystopia, utopia's twin other. Dystopia finds its clearest manifestation in literary and filmic representations, such as *1984* and *Blade Runner*, which embody complex imageries of terror, control, and urban anxiety. Tradition, in these brave new worlds, has often been explicitly rejected, and new forms are introduced as alternatives.

The historical development of utopia both draws upon and creates anew traditions of space, citizenship, and government. Those engaged with the idea of utopia have always come back to its physical realization within space, however elusive and/or illusory. In writing his *Republic*, Plato drew heavily on Greek traditions of warfare, civic engagement, and physical form, while Augustine of Hippo's *City of God* was a response to a particular moment of empire and decadence. Thomas More created a sketchy ideological geography of "no place" as a mythical island with a-spatial intonations. Since the Renaissance, when architects and artists such as Vitruvius searched for the *citta felice*, practitioners have tried to create physical spaces that would provide Eden-like environments for humankind. In more recent times, the modernist schemes of Ebenezer Howard and Le Corbusier envisioned ideal spaces that claimed to erase difference. This IASTE conference will focus on the theme of utopia and tradition in the twenty-first century.

The conference will attract an interdisciplinary group of scholars and practitioners from around the world working in the disciplines of anthropology, architecture, art and architectural history, city and regional planning, cultural studies, geography, history, landscape studies, sociology, and urban studies. They will present papers related to the following three themes:

Track 1 | Utopian Ideals versus Traditional Physical Realities

Central to the conference theme is the main tenet that utopias use tradition in their formulation and perpetuation of the ideal. Inquiries regarding attributes of utopia that may be rooted in traditional practices are encouraged in this line of inquiry. This track seeks to explore the convergence of ideals and realities as well as the underlying concepts of utopia and how they relate to a given traditional context or are manifested in space.

Track 2 | The Practices of Utopia and the Politics of Tradition

The deployment of tradition demands a certain selectivity that negates some forms of the past while celebrating others, making this exercise inherently political. In constructing utopias, practitioners also draw upon traditional discourses, practices, and forms, thus politicizing the quest for ideal

communities. A key component in interrogating utopia and tradition is the political backdrop against which they occur. Examining the linkages between utopias, politics, and tradition, papers in this track are encouraged to investigate how tradition is deployed within the political sphere and the role the state plays in formulating notions of community and governance.

Track 3 | Utopia and the Space of Difference

By the end of the twentieth century, the crisis within modernism and the critical opposition to authoritarianism had caused a retreat from the idea of utopia as an ideal and perfected spatial form. This track seeks to examine new concepts of utopia that have risen to question its previous incarnations and established traditions. Papers in this track are encouraged to explore how the latest utopias have become more of an open process that engages both the present condition and the forbidden, the unseen, and the marginalized, straying from the imagined idyllic landscapes towards a new politics of difference.



image courtesy of Nicolas Fayad

OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF TRADITIONAL ENVIRONMENTS

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Please refer to our website www.ced.berkeley.edu/iaste for detailed instructions on abstract submissions. A one-page abstract of 500 words and a one-page CV are required. For further inquiries, please email IASTE Coordinator Sophie Gonick at iaste@berkeley.edu.

Proposals for complete panels are welcome. All papers must be written and presented in English. Following a blind peer-review process, papers may be accepted for presentation in the conference and/or publication in the Working Paper Series.

Contributors whose abstracts are accepted must pre-register for the conference, pay registration fees of \$400 (which includes a special discounted \$25 IASTE membership fee), and prepare a full-length paper of 20-25 double-spaced pages. Registered students may qualify for a reduced registration fee of \$200 (which includes a special discounted \$25 IASTE membership fee). All participants must be IASTE members. Please note that expenses associated with hotel accommodations, travel, and additional excursions are not covered by the registration fees and have to be paid directly to the designated travel agent. Registration fees cover the conference program, conference abstracts, and access to all conference activities including receptions, keynote panels, and a tour of the Beirut Central District.

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

February 12 | Deadline for receipt of abstracts and CVs

May 5 | Notification of accepted abstracts for presentation

July 15 | Deadline for pre-registration and full paper submissions for possible publication in the Working Paper Series.

October 5 | Notification of accepted papers for the Working Paper Series

December 15-18 | Conference program

December 19 and 20-22 | Optional trips

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CONFERENCE SITE & ACCOMMODATIONS

The conference will be held at American University of Beirut's West Hall, with accommodation at nearby hotels. In order to be able to obtain special room rates, reservations should be made online, over the phone, or through email at the conference hotel:

Gefinor Rotana Hotel, Hamra, Beirut, <http://www.rotana.com/property-6.htm>
E-mail: gefinor.hotel@rotana.com

Other accommodations with a special IASTE discount:

Casa d'Or Hotel, Hamra, Beirut, <http://www.casadorhotel.com>
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POST-CONFERENCE TRIPS

Two optional one-day trips are offered at participant's expense to Byblos and Tripoli, or to Baalbek and Anjar, on Sunday, December 19, 2010.

A two day/two night trip to Damascus, Syria, is also available from Monday, December 20 to Wednesday, December 22, 2010.

To participate in any of the three additional trips, please contact:

Mr. Charbel Salem, Nakhal Travel, <http://www.nakhal.com>
E-mail: tours@nakhal.com.lb or charbel@nakhal.com.lb

Note: An additional visa may be necessary for travel to Syria. Please check with your local consulate.

INQUIRIES

Please use the following information when making inquiries regarding the conference.

MAILING ADDRESS:

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Guide for Preparation of Manuscripts

1. GENERAL

The editors invite readers to submit manuscripts. Please send three copies of each manuscript, with one copy to include all original illustrations. Place the title of the manuscript, the author's name and a 50-word biographical sketch on a separate cover page. The title only should appear again on the first page of text. Manuscripts are circulated for review without identifying the author. Manuscripts are evaluated by a blind peer-review process.

2. LENGTH AND FORMAT

Manuscripts should not exceed 25 standard 8.5" x 11" [A4] double-spaced typewritten pages (about 7500 words). Leave generous margins.

3. APPROACH TO READER

Because of the interdisciplinary nature of the journal, papers should be written for an academic audience that may have either a general or a specific interest in your topic. Papers should present a clear narrative structure. They should not be compendiums of field notes. Please define specialized or technical terminology where appropriate.

4. ABSTRACT AND INTRODUCTION

Provide a one-paragraph abstract of no more than 100 words. This abstract should explain the content and structure of the paper and summarize its major findings. The abstract should be followed by a short introduction. The introduction will appear without a subheading at the beginning of the paper.

5. SUBHEADINGS

Please divide the main body of the paper with a single progression of subheadings. There need be no more than four or five of these, but they should describe the paper's main sections and reinforce the reader's sense of progress through the text.

Sample Progression: The Role of the Longhouse in Iban Culture. The Longhouse as a Building Form. Transformation of the Longhouse at the New Year. The Impact of Modern Technology. Conclusion: Endangered Form or Form in Transition? Do not use any numbering system in subheadings. Use secondary subheadings only when absolutely essential for format or clarity.

6. REFERENCES

Do not use a general bibliography format. Use a system of numbered reference notes as indicated below.

A condensed section of text might read as follows:

In his study of vernacular dwellings in Egypt, Edgar Regis asserted that climate was a major factor in the shaping of roof forms. Henri Lacompte, on the other hand, has argued that in the case of Upper Egypt this deterministic view is irrelevant.¹

An eminent architectural historian once wrote, "The roof form in general is the most indicative feature of the housing styles of North Africa."² Clearly, however, the matter of how these forms have evolved is a complex subject. A thorough analysis is beyond the scope of this paper.³

In my research I discovered that local people have differing notions about the origins of the roof forms on the dwellings they inhabit.⁴

The reference notes, collected at the end of the text (not at the bottom of each page), would read as follows:

1. E. Regis, *Egyptian Dwellings* (Cairo: University Press, 1979), p.179; and H. Lacompte, "New Study Stirrs Old Debate," *Smithsonian*, Vol.11 No.2 (December 1983), pp.24-34.
2. B. Smithson, "Characteristic Roof Forms," in H. Jones, ed., *Architecture of North Africa* (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), p.123.
3. For a detailed discussion of this issue, see J. Idris, *Roofs and Man* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984).
4. In my interviews I found that the local people understood the full meaning of my question only when I used a more formal Egyptian word for "roof" than that in common usage.

7. DIAGRAMS, DRAWINGS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

Illustrations will be essential for most papers in the journal, however, each paper can only be accompanied by a maximum of 20 illustrations. For purposes of reproduction, please provide images as line drawings (velox, actual size), b&w photos (5" x 7" or 8" x 10" glossies), or digitized computer files. Color prints and drawings, slides, and photocopies are not acceptable.

Digitized (scanned) artwork should be between 4.5 and 6.75 inches wide (let the length fall), and may be in any of the following file formats. Photos (in order of preference): 1) b&w grayscale (not rgb) TIFF files, 300 DPI; 2) b&w grayscale Photoshop files, 300 DPI; 3) b&w EPS files, 300 DPI. Line art, including charts and graphs (in order of preference): 1) b&w bitmap TIFF files, 1200 DPI; 2) b&w grayscale TIFF files, 600 DPI; 3) b&w bitmap EPS, 1200 DPI. CDs are the preferred media for digitized artwork.

8. ELECTRONIC IMAGE RESOLUTION AND FILE TYPE

All images should be submitted as separate grayscale TIFF or JPEG of at least 300 dpi at the actual size they will appear on the printed page. Images taken directly from web pages are unacceptable unless they have been sourced at 300 dpi.

9. CAPTIONS AND FIGURE PREFERENCES

Please include all graphic material on separate pages at the end of the text. Caption text and credits should not exceed 50 words per image. Use identical numbering for images and captions. The first time a point is made in the main body of text that directly relates to a piece of graphic material, please indicate so at the end of the appropriate sentence with a simple reference in the form of "(FIG. 1)." Use the designation "(FIG.)" and a single numeric progression for all graphic material. Clearly indicate the appropriate FIG number on each illustration page.

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Sample attribution: If the caption reads, "The layout of a traditional Islamic settlement," add a recognition similar to: "Source: E. Hassan, *Islamic Architecture* (London: Penguin, 1982). Reprinted by permission." Or if you have altered the original version, add: "Based on: E. Hassan, *Islamic Architecture* (London: Penguin, 1982)."

11. OTHER ISSUES OF STYLE

In special circumstances, or in circumstances not described above, follow conventions outlined in *A Manual for Writers* by Kate Turabian. In particular, note conventions for complex or unusual reference notes. For spelling, refer to *Webster's Dictionary*.

12. WORKS FOR HIRE

If you have done your work as the result of direct employment or as the result of a grant, it is essential that you acknowledge this support at the end of your paper.

Sample acknowledgement: The initial research for this paper was made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts [NEA]. The author acknowledges NEA support and the support of the sabbatical research program of the University of Waterloo.

13. SIMULTANEOUS SUBMISSION AND PREVIOUS PUBLICATION

Submission of a manuscript implies a commitment to publish in this journal. Simultaneous submission to other journals is unacceptable. Previously published work, or work which is substantially similar to previously published work, is ordinarily not acceptable. If in doubt about these requirements, contact the editors.

14. ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION

Please include an electronic file of your entire paper on a CD or other commonly used media at the time of submission. Please indicate the software used. We prefer *Microsoft Word* for PC or Macintosh. PDF files are also acceptable. Initial submission by email is not allowed.

15. NOTIFICATION

Contributors are usually notified within 15 weeks whether their manuscripts have been accepted. If changes are required, authors are furnished with comments from the editors and the peer-review board. The editors are responsible for all final decisions on editorial changes. The publisher reserves the right to copy-edit and proof all articles accepted for publication without prior consultation with contributing authors.

16. SUBMISSION AND CORRESPONDENCE

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