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The Renaissance Palace in Florence: Magnificence and Splendour in Fifteenth-Century Italy by

James R. Lindow

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the writer, the Sydney School was sometimes a group of architects, sometimes a style, sometimes a romantic movement. The buildings, the architects involved, and the dates all shifted, as did the basic principles defining the category; did the Sydney School reflect a concern with style, material, and compositional principles, or did something else bind the work together? Fung argued: “the progressive acceptance of the concept of a ‘Sydney School’ . . . is based only on inconclusive, relatively short discussions, characterised by a lack of methodological discipline” (47). The paper was a clear, cutting attack on the quality of Australian historiography and made overt the differentiation between SAHANZ members interested in empirical research and those whose work was more theoretically informed.

Other papers in *Shifting Views* address similar concerns. Paul Walker, in his 1991 paper “Kenneth Frampton and the Fiction of Place,” deconstructs Frampton’s notion of “critical regionalism.” He pays particular attention to the importance of coming to terms with architectural regionalism in the analysis of architectural culture in places such as New Zealand and Australia. Julie Willis and Philip Goad’s “A Myth in Its Making: Federation Style and Australian Architectural History” (2000) examines the creation and definition of the term Federation Style. The authors highlight the difficulty of finding unity in the diverse architectural production of the period to which the label is applied, approximately 1890–1915.

While all the papers aim critical eyes on the intellectual foundations of local architectural culture, other links among them can be discerned. For example, Joan Kerr’s “Why Architects Should Not Write Architectural History” (1984) and Paul Hogben’s “The Aftermath of ‘Pleasures: Untold Stories of Post-Modern Architecture in Australia’” (2003), are much concerned with the instrumentalization of history by architects. They tease out the ways in which the question of a critical distance between practitioner and historian has been variously framed locally. Thus, as noted above, what emerges is a selection of essays that, in the editors’ words, “share a self-consciousness.”

The focus by the editors on works that largely recalibrate existing historical narratives means there is an overall concern with how architectural history is carried out locally, rather than what that history is. Julie Willis and Philip Goad, in a recent paper in the SAHANZ journal *Fabrications* (June 2008), have suggested that from the 1980s onwards the history of Australian architecture, stimulated by the foundation of SAHANZ as well as the journals *Transition*, *Fabrications*, and *Architectural Theory Review*, “was being discussed in smaller and smaller pieces, albeit more critically.” (19). They go on to argue that, while important, these contributions have done nothing to alter seriously the overall understanding of the country’s architectural evolution. It is perhaps appropriate that the cover of *Shifting Views* is a photographic detail of an unidentified building, revealing a stone wall, partial window frames, and a disembodied section of veranda. It calls to mind David Hemmings, the photographer in Antonioni’s *Blow Up*, repeatedly enlarging and scrutinizing a negative in the hope of sighting evidence of a crime he thought he saw.

The way that the editors have framed their selection inevitably leaves other aspects of the body of SAHANZ writing less thoroughly examined. For example, there is little sense given of the pattern of thematic concerns that has emerged over twenty-five years, or much discussion of the gaps in scholarship. The latter seems particularly important given the uncertain place and uneven treatment of research into indigenous architecture within the forum of SAHANZ, a concern elucidated by Paul Memmott and James Davidson (*Fabrications*, June 2008). The selection of essays makes a fairly careful balance of writings, in their geographical and historical focus as well as the authorial voices, but beneath this smooth surface run currents of dispute that would have been useful to chart.

Nevertheless, given the large, extremely diverse body of work produced over the twenty-five years of conferences, the curatorial approach provides a useful perspective, and the papers are an absorbing index of continuity and change within the discipline of architectural history in Aus-

tralia and New Zealand. With its intensity of focus, this is not an easily accessible text for general readers or those wanting introductory readings in the architectural history of the region. However, it would make an excellent companion to more general sources and would be especially useful in university courses addressing architectural history within the region. It is tempting to suggest this as a determinant of the editorial decisions.

The design of the book is elegant and uncluttered, apart from a slightly distracting cross-hair motif that appears throughout. Reflecting the specialized nature and constraints of a small organization like SAHANZ, *Shifting Views* is not illustrated and published only as a paperback. This economy is no index of the scholarship within; all of the essays are excellent pieces that have been provocative, influential, or expositive. They have broadened the scope of architectural history in New Zealand and Australia and recalibrated its methods of investigation. *Shifting Views* is planned as the first in a series of more substantial publications sponsored by SAHANZ. It is as a happy marker of the society’s sustained intellectual vitality and impact.

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James R. Lindow

The Renaissance Palace in Florence: Magnificence and Splendour in Fifteenth-Century Italy

Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2007, 265 pp., 8 color and 42 b/w illus. \$114.95 (cloth), ISBN 9780754660927

Much of the literature on the Italian Renaissance palace treats the architectural type essentially as a façade. This is understandable, considering that façades are typically the least altered and most accessible parts of a palace, and seemingly the focus of most of the design energy. Palace plans have received some attention, but mostly with regard to their use of Vitruvian accounts of the ancient Roman house. Traditionally, the most neglected aspect of the study of the Renaissance palace is precisely that which has the



potential to bring it most vividly to life: the interior. Indeed, palace interiors are of great interest to students eager to understand a different scale of domestic life.

With the exception of a few precious intact spaces such as the chapel of Palazzo Medici, Renaissance palaces give little hint of how they might originally have appeared, save for the basic dimensions of their rooms. Visits to museums such as the Victoria and Albert in London or the Bargello in Florence can in part correct this void; their supplies of majolica jugs and basins, *spalliere*, *cazioni*, *lettucci*, and birthing trays allow one to begin to imagine the spaces filled with furnishings. These collections, however, rarely attempt to arrange the objects in relation to their original setting.

Until recently, information on domestic interiors could be found primarily in two sources. Kent Lydecker, a student of Richard Goldthwaite, broached the subject in his much-cited PhD dissertation of 1987, *The Domestic Setting of the Arts in Renaissance Florence*. In *The Italian Renaissance Interior, 1400–1600* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1991), Peter Thornton demonstrated the rich information that can be gleaned from the details of period paintings—especially interior scenes such as the Birth of the Virgin and St. Jerome in His Study.

In recent years, however, material culture and its connections to the social fabric and architecture of early modern Italy have received substantial attention in a number of excellent scholarly studies. Jacqueline Musacchio's *The Art and Ritual of Child Birth in Renaissance Italy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), examined the many objects that accompanied the birth of a child, and her *Art, Marriage, and Family in the Florentine Renaissance Palace* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), places these issues in the larger context of marriage and palace life). Luke Syson and Dora Thornton's *Objects of Virtue: Art in Renaissance Italy* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2002), is a substantial corrective to the earlier tendency to focus only on panel paintings, and to ignore the many objects considered even more precious by fifteenth and sixteenth-century patrons. Other studies

have explored the richness and splendor of materials themselves, such as Suzanne Butters's *The Triumph of Vulcan: Sculptors' Tools, Porphyry, and the Prince in Ducal Florence* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1996) and Paul Hills's *Venetian Colour: Marble, Mosaic, Painting, and Glass 1250–1550* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999). More recently, Patricia Brown's *Private Lives in Renaissance Venice: Art, Architecture, and the Family* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004) has begun to put these details together to create a sense of how life was lived by the noble classes in and around the beautiful objects they coveted and collected.¹

Within this field of studies, James Lindow's book *The Renaissance Palace in Florence: Magnificence and Splendour in Fifteenth-Century Italy* offers a rich analysis of the furnishing, layout, and theoretical underpinnings of the Florentine palace. The emphasis throughout the book is on primary texts, whether humanist writings on magnificence and splendor, or archival sources such as household inventories. Lindow's most original contribution is the result of his discovery of an important trove of archival documents in the Archivio di Stato in Florence. The inventories compiled by the *Magistrato dei Pupilli*, or Office of Wards, were intended to safeguard the property of heirs too young to protect their own interests. They reveal in considerable detail the furnishings and distribution of goods in various rooms of a palace. The scale and chronological range of Lindow's research is impressive: he has consulted 750 inventories ranging in date from 1418 to 1526.

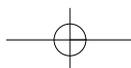
In the introduction, the author states his aim: "Considering the Florentine palazzo as a complete entity, this book calls for a far more nuanced approach that highlights the relationship between fifteenth-century theoretical debates and Renaissance building and furnishing practices" (5). This is a worthy goal, given that the discussion of humanist ideas about building often occurs apart from the consideration of the buildings themselves, and that the relation between theory and praxis for figures from Alberti to Raphael remains vexing. Lindow might have noted that a similar objective, with less emphasis on fur-

nishing but with more geographical breadth, has recently been achieved by Georgia Clarke in her *Roman House—Renaissance Palaces: Inventing Antiquity in Fifteenth-Century Italy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003). While both authors emphasize humanist ideas such as magnificence, Clarke also considers how these concepts motivated particular people and design decisions. Lindow's emphasis on texts and ideas means that the architect and patron remain shadowy figures.

Lindow does a marvelous job of allowing the documents to speak for themselves and infuse every aspect of his text. While some of the sources cited, such as Alberti's *Della famiglia* or Pontano's *De splendore*, are well known, many archival documents and some of the humanist sources are less so, and these are welcome additions to the literature. Familiar texts such as Leonardo Bruni's *Laudatio florintinae urbis* are analyzed for their architectural content and implications in an original way.

The book has four main chapters, each of which is easily followed thanks to short summaries at the start of each section. In a broad sense, the book is divided in two, the first part considering humanist sources and their discussions of the concept of magnificence, and the second considering what inventories reveal about the layout and contents of the typical palace. The book is clearly and concisely written, with little excessive or extraneous material. The one exception is that portion of the first chapter devoted to collections of books and the keeping of libraries, which, although interesting, does not seem directly relevant.

The first chapter, "Debated Concepts: Magnificence and Splendour," focuses on ancient and fifteenth-century texts, from Cicero and Aristotle to Pontano and Alberti, that treat these notions. While the significance of ideas about magnificence as a justification for lavish building has been discussed since Fraser Jenkins wrote about the patronage of Cosimo de' Medici, the importance of splendor is less familiar.² Here Lindow points to contradictions in the Florentine attitude toward wealth, which alternately favored display and concealment, but he might have gone further.



In the second chapter, "Magnificent Architecture," Lindow continues the discussion of magnificence in relation to Cosimo de' Medici, the motivations for building the Palazzo Medici, and its reception. This is well-trodden territory, and while the wealth of evidence surrounding Cosimo and his palace serves Lindow's purposes, one wishes he had turned his attention to a less-known building.

The third chapter, "Going beyond the Palace Façade," aims to unite considerations of the interior and exterior features of the Renaissance palace. While the author correctly observes that this unity is rarely achieved, the evidence he compiles does not fully make the case. He does, however, provide a useful discussion of hospitality and of the varied spaces intended for guests of differing statures.

The most original chapter is the last, "The Splendid Interior," which goes into detail about the types and functions of rooms in a palace, as well as their furnishings. Here Lindow draws both on the *Pupilli* archives and on the practical advice contained in Alberti's treatise. Lindow provides much detail about the objects that ornamented these rooms, including tantalizing mention of the taste for foreign and especially Islamic objects, brought from Damascus and southern Spain, and for locally produced objects that imitated the foreign ones ("alla domaschina," 155–57).

While Lindow successfully evokes the sensuous and lavish objects found in a Renaissance home, these adjectives cannot be used to describe the book itself. The grainy black-and-white photographs and few color plates do not do justice to the subject. The visual qualities of the book could have been enhanced had Lindow made further use of paintings as sources of information about interiors, expanding on the work of Peter Thornton.

Despite these reservations, Lindow's book makes substantial contributions to the literature on the humanist context and background of Florentine palaces, as well as to the understanding of the furnishings and function of Renaissance interiors. While the author draws on the rich documentation available for Florence, it is to be hoped that his book will encourage

other scholars to expand the investigation in other cities.

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Notes

1. Other recent contributions to this field, along with Lindow's book, are reviewed by Fabrizio Nevola in a forthcoming volume of *Journal of Design History*.
2. A. D. Fraser Jenkins, "Cosimo de' Medici's Patronage of Architecture and the Theory of Magnificence," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 33 (1970), 162–70.

William D. Moore

Masonic Temples: Freemasonry, Ritual Architecture, and Masculine Archetypes

Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2006, 272 pp., 89 b/w illus. \$34.95 (cloth), ISBN 9781572334967

Masonic Temples is a groundbreaking interdisciplinary study in both architectural history and gender studies, illuminating both fields and the intersections between them. William Moore's focus, evidence, and ethnographic approach to the architecture of Freemasonry departs significantly from earlier art historical work on the subject.¹ His primary goal is "to untangle the webs of significance that the builders and inhabitants designed into these edifices" (xiv). He goes beyond the study of symbols to investigate buildings as vehicles for the making of meaning and masculine identity. The result is a significant contribution to the rich genre of urban building-type studies that have shaped study of the North American built environment in recent years, including libraries, summer camps, asylums, YMCAs, and hospitals.

The book, based on a deeply researched case study of Masonic temples in New York State, begins in the 1870s and extends through the 1930s. This was the golden age of fraternity in the United States, a time when the Masons and other secret societies enjoyed consistently high membership and had the resources to build vigorously. Fraternal life during those years was, in large part, a response to shifts in male identity that attended the rise of corporate culture. Men, particu-

larly white men, confronted increased hierarchy in the workplace, decreased occupational mobility, and challenges to their authority and identity as women increasingly entered the public sphere, especially after the turn of the century. Moore suggests that many men were forced "to come to terms with existential ideas concerning the structure of reality and the nature of authority" (2). Freemasonry's carefully scripted membership rituals and fancifully decorated lodge rooms provided a safe and enjoyable arena for men to "enter another cognitive reality" and productively redefine their identities.

The book is organized in two parts: an extensive investigation of interior ritual spaces and a brief consideration of the design and typological development of the temple building's exterior. Proceeding from a clear and useful introduction to the legends and practices of American Masonry, four chapters detail the space and the ritual of the "degrees" of the society, including the Blue Lodge and the concordant bodies of the Knights Templar, the Scottish Rite, and the Shriners. Moore examines and nicely illustrates how men used costume, furniture, ritual, and architectural design to help them shape several timeless articulations of masculine identity: the artisan, the warrior, the wise man, and the jester. Through the development of varied degrees of Masonry, men could try on a variety of identities and negotiate the changes they faced in the real world.

In his discussion of each group Moore makes a connection between the design and use of the lodge rooms and larger social forces that shaped gender during the period. The chapter on the Knights Templar, for instance, links the development of this military order, with its drill halls and elaborate costumes, to the martial climate that arose during the Civil War and late nineteenth century. By the turn of the twentieth century, many Knights embraced a new concept of masculinity, embodied in the orientalist identity of the Shriner. The exotic, luxurious, and sensual mosque environments they created strongly contrast with the upright and moral conception of manhood that guided the designs of Knights and Blue