

Historiography and Architecture I

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PRESENTED HERE AND IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE JOURNAL OF ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION are two sets of papers originally proposed for a session at the annual meeting of the Society of Architectural Historians (SAH), in Boston in March of 1990. The session was titled "Historiography and Architecture" and chaired by Stanford Anderson. Due to time constraints at the meeting, only six of the papers now published were actually presented in Boston.¹

The call for papers for the SAH session hypothesized an increasing divorce between the discipline of the history of architecture and the discipline of architecture. By *discipline* I intended to suggest what I believe should rightly be inclusive enterprises: the potential concern of every person—not just professionals—with all aspects of our physical environment. Indeed, the professionalization of the fields of history and of architecture contributes to the divorce of one from the other, and of both from the broader domain of concerns about our physical and social environment.

The call for papers ended with an invitation for theoretical or historiographic studies illuminating the relations of the disciplines of history and architecture. The number and quality of papers proposed were gratifying. However, the greater number of the proposals concerned historiographic positions that, though entailing reconsideration of the relations of history and architecture, did not explicitly explore that relation. Consequently, the session more closely reflected the title "Historiography and Architecture" than the polemical tone of the call for papers.

The papers, their number now slightly enlarged, are those deemed best among those submitted. While these essays yield neither a conceptual map of the historiography of architecture nor a survey of the relations of history and architecture, each provides materials for the debates surrounding these issues. In this issue, Sylvia Lavin explores Quatremère de Quincy's studies of Egyptian architecture. In examining both the theoretical base of that historical—or ahistorical—study and the intrinsic relationship of Quatremère's inquiry to contemporary architectural theory, Lavin is prepared to open the possibilities of a more engaged relationship of architecture and history. Taisto Mäkelä, accepting Nietzsche's distinction of monu-

mental, antiquarian, and critical history, renews a claim for the necessity of both the historical and the unhistorical in any modern praxis—and finds an example in the work of Adolf Loos. Mitchell Schwarzer projects into the history of architecture the recent claims for the necessarily narrative and rhetorical construction of historical discourse. In the most determinedly historiographic of the papers presented here, Schwarzer does also note at least a first demand placed upon architects by this acknowledgement of rhetoric: the more evident need for a critical reading of the past and its expositors.

When I first proposed a session for the SAH annual meetings that should concern itself with what I perceived as an increasing divide between the practices of history and architecture, I continued in a long-held belief that theory could and should be the common ground that informs the historical and the unhistorical. I was concerned about the negative effects of the professionalization of both history and architecture, and saw theoretical inquiry as a potentially countervailing force. Not stated in the call for papers, but at the root of my disruptive intervention at the end of the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Society of Architectural Historians in Washington, D.C., in 1988, was my belief that the historians were the more culpable party in the estrangement of history and architecture. In the ensuing months a new and troubling potential has arisen: the professionalization of architectural theory. This activity, taking place within schools of architecture, projects theoretical inquiry as the confirming antipathy, rather than the uniting force between architecture and history. There are even signs that this professionalization of theory will distance itself from architectural praxis, encouraging three distinct and counterproductive bodies of knowledge. One response to this emerging condition is offered here by Mark Jarzombek.

Note

1. Of the papers published in this issue of the *JAE*, those of Sylvia Lavin, Taisto Mäkelä, and Mitchell Schwarzer were presented at the SAH meetings.