

REVIEW

Reviews Summer 2019

Emma Jones, Carole Pollard, Mari Lending, and Ani Kodzhabasheva

Jones, E. A review of Kurt W. Forster, *Schinkel: A Meander Through His Life and Work*, Basel: Birkhäuser Verlag, 2018.

Pollard, C. A review of Susan Galavan, *Dublin's Bourgeois Homes: Building the Victorian Suburbs, 1850–1901*, London: Routledge, 2018.

Lending, M. A review of Lynn Meskell, *A Future in Ruins: UNESCO, World Heritage, and the Dream of Peace*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2018, and Lucia Allais, *Designs of Destruction: The Making of Monuments in the Twentieth Century*, Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2018.

Kodzhabasheva, A. A review of Robin Schuldenfrei, *Luxury and Modernism: Architecture and the Object in Germany 1900–1933*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018.

Meandering Through Schinkel

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Kurt W. Forster, *Schinkel: A Meander Through His Life and Work*, Basel: Birkhäuser Verlag, 411 pages, 2018, ISBN: 9783035607789.

A *meander*, signifying an indirect or aimless journey, could be considered a curious choice for inclusion in the title of a book about the life and work of Prussia's most prolific and industrious architect, Karl Friedrich Schinkel (1781–1841). Yet the choice is an appropriate one, as what appears to be a conventional monograph soon reveals itself to be an experiment in a certain type of wandering, if not of the body, then certainly of the mind.

In *Schinkel: A Meander Through His Life and Work*, Kurt W. Forster speculates that the process of intellectual wandering is stimulated less by academic than by lyrical essay writing (Figure 1). Etymologically derived from the French 'essayer', meaning 'to try', essay writing is always a form of trying, striving, and searching that goes hand in hand with wandering. The genre presumes a kind of circularity, by which the reader revolves ceaselessly around a subject without ever nailing it to the wall. It is perhaps for this quality of pleasurable evasiveness that some of the greatest essayists in the field of architectural history, from John Summerson to Reyner Banham, preferred the essay genre for addressing broader ideas by picking through the particular or seemingly inconsequential. For them, every building held the key to a good story, and facts were only worth telling if they were told elegantly.

Forster restores the ghosts of these writers here, as he tells Schinkel's story through a series of essays that

are in many ways as immensely personal as they are informative. The personal emerges immediately through Forster's lyrical essayistic prose, which contains frequent conjectures, contradictions, asides, and diversions from the main argument that reveal something of the character and interests of the writer; while the informative

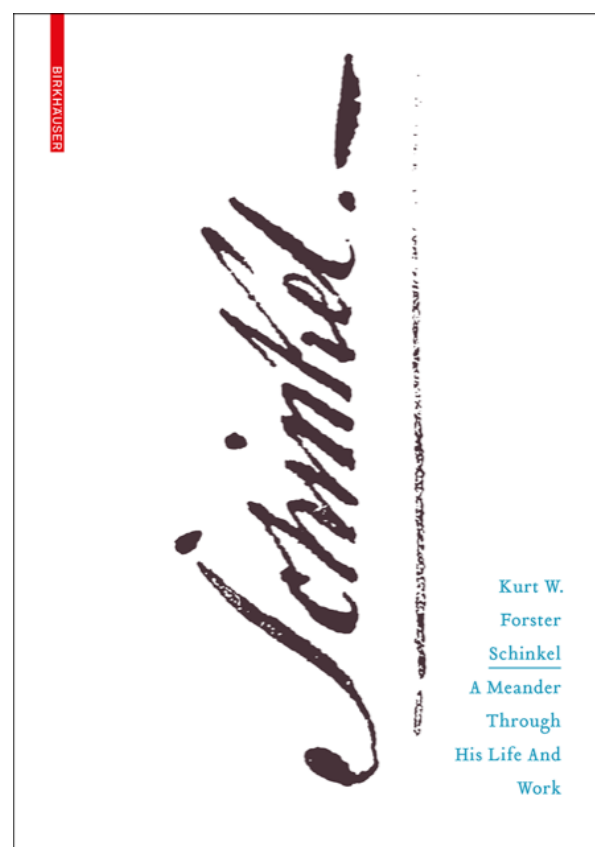


Figure 1: Cover of Kurt W. Forster's *Schinkel: A Meander Through His Life and Work*.

covers vast ground in Schinkel's own life and beyond. This ground includes Schinkel's early travels through Italy, his dalliances with stage design and spectacle back in Berlin, his construction of a network of country estates for the Prussian princes, his panoramic reshaping of the centre of Berlin through carefully placed grand public projects, and the genesis of his *oeuvre complète* in print, the *Portfolio of Architectural Designs*.

This book, in the spirit of *essay*, dances around Schinkel. Forster does not wish to write a study 'about the architect and his work, but a study of those cultural and scientific domains he explored as he crafted his projects' (30). To that end, a central theme is the burgeoning natural sciences and the late 18th-century discovery of their fertile relationships to art, pioneered by crossover figures such as Novalis, a mining engineer and a poet, and Carl Gustav Carus, a physician and a painter. Indeed, the book meanders widely down this path, occasionally forgetting Schinkel entirely in order to explore the worlds of characters well beyond his orbit. We suddenly find ourselves communing with engineer Ignaz Venetz as he attempts to release water from the glaciers in Switzerland's Linth valley, or following the travails of poet and botanist Karl Friedrich Schimper as he studied wandering rocks in Bex, before we are just as abruptly thrown back to observe Schinkel, ensconced in a carriage passing Bex, shivering at the geological instability of Alpine landscapes as his horses make their way gingerly over the desolate Simplon pass (in the chapter 'Ice, Rocks and Trees'). The intention here is not so much to render Schinkel's world as to render the wider world in which he operated, and of which he was only a part. Schinkel is often not the nucleus of this story, but one of many, relative constellations.

This spirit of *essay* is also reflected in the structure and graphics of the book. Images are scattered nonchalantly throughout the volume. Sometimes they are only in partial crop, clipped to reveal a hitherto unnoticed detail without displaying the entire composition (a possible source of irritation for readers accustomed to treating images as artifacts). Many of them are not by Schinkel, but by other authors of his time, or personal travel snaps by the author himself. The most delicate aspect of the book's visual structure is the graphic distinction made in the table of contents between the short 'vignette' chapters (e.g., 'Schinkel's Last Days'), which adopt a certain amount of poetic license in order to focus on particular moments or incidents in Schinkel's life that reveal something fundamental about his character and thought processes, and the longer and usually more analytical chapters, which tend to explore the ramifications of the architect's thinking upon the world (e.g., 'Architecture in Print; How Schinkel Invented the "Œuvre complete"'). Both chapter forms possess the essayistic quality, but the vignette chapters are typically sliced in between the longer and more detailed chapters as lighter points of relief. Occasionally this is welcome, but the reader is often left wondering how to make chronological or thematic sense of the progression of the book's narrative. Faced with a writer of such wide-ranging ideas, the designers have done their best to give Forster's writing a double-pronged structure

(vignette interspersed with analysis) that is both tight and loose at the same time.

Forster resists falling into the trap of relying on Schinkel's inherent 'German-ness' for his analysis, recognizing him as a far more complex figure for a broader audience, and one refreshingly free of 'Teutonic sentiment' (30). Furthermore, with this publication, Forster has carefully resisted the trope of delivering his swansong, the 'definitive' Schinkel. If anything, this collection of a lifetime of meditations on a great architect is imbued with a generosity that only seems to invite further expansion by new generations of scholars, rather than a firm closing of the case. Forster's explicit intention, he tells us, is to challenge 'tiresome ideological interpretations' of the architect's work, favouring a more inclusive, expansive approach. Such examples of German literature of the sort Forster seeks to counteract include the comprehensive 22-volume *Karl Friedrich Schinkel – Lebenswerk* series published by Deutscher Kunstverlag, containing exhaustively detailed explanations of Schinkel's projects, beginning in 1931 and continuing with the most recent volume published in 2014, and a more recent monograph by Andreas Haus, *Schinkel als Künstler* (Haus 2001). Luckily for Forster, the English-language offerings are sparser. There is only the excellent *Karl Friedrich Schinkel: An Architecture for Prussia*, by Barry Bergdoll (1994), and the somewhat myopic though undoubtedly provocative *Schinkel's Berlin: A Study in Environmental Planning*, by the German-born scholar Hermann Pundt (1972). Apart from these two sources, English language readers until now may have turned to a small pool of dense and tautly edited articles and book chapters intermittently authored by Forster over the last 25 years, examining various aspects of Schinkel's work, including the insightful 'Schinkel's Panoramic Planning of Central Berlin' (Forster 1983), 'Only Things that Stir the Imagination: Schinkel as a Scenographer' (Zukowsky and Forster 1994: 18–35), and 'Show Me: Arguments for an Architecture of Display' (Forster 2010).

The common theme among all these articles is how Schinkel manipulated tropes of the theatre stage to, in turn, 'stage' architecture as a display mechanism. It was a concern Forster also pursued with the exhibition *Karl Friedrich Schinkel: The Drama of Architecture*, which he co-curated with John Zukowsky at the Art Institute of Chicago in the winter of 1994–95. The seeds of this previous output have been revised as new chapters for inclusion in this book – particularly in the section on Schinkel's creation of a new urban scenography for Berlin, 'Panoramic Urban Planning', and 'Only Things that Stir the Imagination', an appraisal of Schinkel's contributions to early 19th-century stage design. However, the remainder of the content is almost entirely new.

However, *essay*, to try, does not always mean to succeed. Very sharp and original analyses stand side by side with shakier ones that remain too speculative to convince. The cleverer moments of originality with the format include a chapter revealing Schinkel's penchant for punctuality and 'micro-scheduling' his professional appointments. To explain this character trait Forster skips

through a busy day in the life of the in-demand architect, elaborating on the evidence recorded in a surviving letter to his chief project architect, Friedrich Ludwig Persius. Beginning his day at 4:30 am, Schinkel travels to Potsdam with his family, where he conducts a series of architectural tours and rapid-fire work meetings before sitting down to a carefully pre-ordered lunch at an inn, which he in turn uses as an opportunity to conduct further business. He cleverly has a change of clothes sent in advance to the tavern in anticipation of his audience with the king of Prussia in the evening. While he is engaged on business, Schinkel simultaneously arranges a series of activities and visits for his family, allowing him to fulfil all his professional obligations while treating them to a day out. Appointments are kept to the minute and complex travel arrangements are handled with aplomb, everything organized by letter. Forster's creative license with this archival material makes us understand instantly how Schinkel, ever hungry for knowledge, work, and life, could duck and weave, keeping all balls in the air.

Less convincing segments, though, include the likening of an ascent of Schinkel's Altes Museum foyer to the ascent of a mountain peak. This is a stretch, but one that just passes in the context of the informal essay format, in which such speculations can be entertained. And the too-long chapter, painstakingly detailing a fictional meeting in the Vauxhall Gardens between Schinkel and Stendhal, eludes purpose. The creative license taken between fact and fiction is jarring rather than charming here, as the imagined conversation is stilted (having been plucked from recorded phrases uttered by the two characters in other contexts). Arbitrary diversions such as these highlight the fact that without either a biographical or a chronological structure to the book, the sudden leaps Forster frequently makes between disparate topics and characters are sometimes hard to follow.

The most original contributions of the book are Forster's chapters on geology. Here it is clear that Schinkel has become in many ways a vehicle for the author's own fascinations. One in particular that pervades throughout is the relationship of natural phenomena to the passage of time, and how such ideas were played out in early 19th-century romantic thought. Forster has marshalled an army of examples to qualify Schinkel as an artist strikingly in tune with the temporal transformations of landscape, geology, and weather – his penchant for drawing erratic boulders, certainly in his travel diaries but also in numerous stage designs and in some architectural projects, is placed against the drawings and paintings of such subjects by 'scientific artists': Jean de Charpentier, Hans Konrad Escher von der Linth, Louis Agassiz, Caspar Wolf. The entrance of these players from the world of science is a device that serves cleverly to link Schinkel not only to both the romantic and the scientific strands of thought prevalent in his time, but also to contemporary directions of thought, as art and science begin once again to intertwine.

The discussion then segues neatly into Schinkel's design for a 'Granitschale', a giant granite bowl to rival the work of the Ancients. Intended for the interior of Schinkel's Altes Museum but eventually deemed too large to fit inside, it

was ultimately placed in the museum's forecourt – where it still stands. Forster comes at the subject from beguilingly oblique angles, examining the selection and transportation of the stone, the difficulties encountered in its carving, and the public interest the whole venture attracted. Earlier diversions into the topic of glacial tables come back down to earth and feel suddenly, again, relevant. In moments like these, Forster manages to set up a curious contradiction that runs as a hypothetical thread throughout the book: that Schinkel could only really understand natural forces as temporal phenomena in the very moment that they were captured, even fixed, into an image or a concrete object (a trait perhaps not atypical of architects).

What is clear throughout Forster's text is the sense that for Schinkel, the image was everything. He pioneered the role of the architect as manipulator of the total effect of the image, and indeed the now very familiar notion of architecture *as* image. Schinkel's pictorial relocation of Milan's cathedral from its urban location onto a rocky mountain top (165) is offered as evidence that he frequently restaged existing buildings in ideal settings and formats that were not possible in 'reality'. Schinkel was thus not only constructing buildings, but ideas about buildings, and their role in the formation of culture. And yet, living in the first age of mass media, Schinkel never let the pervasiveness of the image destroy the building, instead conceiving of an architecture that could use the image as a tool.

As Forster explains, Schinkel's careful regard for the architectural image was linked to its ability to stimulate *Gefühl*, 'feeling', which is a concept that emerges for Schinkel in the absence of any other strongly articulated architectural theory. Forster defends Schinkel's lifelong attempt to probe the workings of human cognition by using architecture and its images as mediation devices, in the sense that the images *are* the theory. The role of such images was to 'elicit a powerful and manifold response in the beholder' (295). In other words, Schinkel turned viewers into active agents, as they were called upon to complete an image, and by extension a work of architecture itself, with their own response. Rather than dismissing such 'feelings' as arbitrary, personal, or individual, Forster advocates their transcendent and transformative collective dimension as something to be exalted.

With all these competing themes at play and ripe for discussion, Forster nevertheless laments the fact that Schinkel today 'smarts under a heavy patina of opinion'. For architects of all periods, he has been an inexhaustible source of formal inspiration. For early 20th-century modernists, he offered an architectural grammar to be repurposed. For nationalists and politicians, he is a symbol of long-gone Prussian days of glory, builder of the 'New Athens' on the river Spree. For meticulous art historians, he is a skilled builder of pictures rather than buildings – pictures full of illusion, effect, and symbolic meaning. There are many Schinkels: each a construct in an author's mind, conjured up as a vehicle for other ideas, other imaginings, other speculations. It seems, perhaps because his output was so prolific and varied that it has become impossible for any writer to adequately categorise

him, that Schinkel has always been standing in for something else. Because of the immensely personal nature of Forster's reflections, we are left wondering in which of these categories the author would like to place himself. Or perhaps he has deftly meandered past them all and created an entirely new one, all his own.

An Architectural View of Life in Victorian Dublin

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Susan Galavan, *Dublin's Bourgeois Homes: Building the Victorian Suburbs, 1850–1901*, London: Routledge, 164 pages, 2018, ISBN: 1138392677.

In terms of historical housing typologies, Dublin is probably best known for its Georgian townhouses, which form long terraces and line squares throughout the city. Built over a hundred-year period, roughly 1720 to 1840, their elegant and sparse facades have become synonymous with Dublin's architectural identity. These homes were originally built to accommodate Dublin's nobility and professional classes, but political and social fallout arising from the 1800 Act of Union and the abolition of the Irish Parliament led to their abandonment. The grandeur of the townhouses was eclipsed as they became the main vehicle for accommodating the city's poor; vast swathes of Dublin's Georgian core became teeming tenements with

all the accompanying social ills of overcrowding and poor sanitation.¹ By the mid-19th century, Dublin's middle classes needed somewhere else to live, and the response came in the form of new suburbs promising clean air and large gardens. Susan Galavan's *Dublin's Bourgeois Homes: Building the Victorian Suburbs, 1850–1901* traces the development of those suburbs and their impact on the architectural legacy of the capital city of what is now the Republic of Ireland (**Figure 2**).

In setting out the scope of her investigations, Galavan's introduction promises to reveal the architectural idiosyncrasies of Dublin's Victorian suburbs. Her study uncovers the life of speculative developers, architects, builders, and residents through the architecture of their houses. As a qualified architect and historian, Galavan draws on both disciplines to illustrate how particular Dublin suburbs reflect the aspirations of the city's growing bourgeoisie in the years 1850 to 1901. Her study of Dublin's Victorian houses began as a PhD in architectural history at Trinity College Dublin. Although the book still retains academic undertones and is occasionally repetitive, its rigorous analysis of house typologies is presented in an engaging and meaningful way, making it accessible to the non-expert. Nevertheless, a glossary of terms would have been useful for readers who are not familiar with architectural nomenclature.

Dublin's Victorian suburbs are located on both the north and south sides of the city, but Galavan's study focuses on the south side, where there was a greater proliferation of development during the era of study. The south side is where the upper middle classes primarily chose to reside and their bourgeois aspirations are clearly read in the variety of housing. Galavan further narrows her study by highlighting three districts – Pembroke, Rathmines, and Kingstown (now known as Dun Laoghaire) – and three of the era's key protagonists, Michael Meade, William Carvill, and John Crosthwaite, all developers. She then selects particular houses or groups of houses as case studies to illustrate particular trends and the evolution of neighbourhoods.

Galavan regularly refers back to Georgian precedents, beginning with a comparison of Victorian house plans to their Georgian forebears. Her study becomes more enlightening when other architectural aspects are considered. As Niall McCullough says in his book *Dublin: An Urban History – The Plan of the City*, 'typological evolution must distinguish building style from plan development – aspects not necessarily related in fact – and accept the concurrence of quite different aspirations in the same age' (McCullough 2007: 186).

Dublin's Bourgeois Homes is organized in five principal chapters. The first and second chapters explore, respectively, the exteriors and interiors of the houses. In the second chapter, Galavan uses contemporaneous British texts to illustrate life inside Victorian suburban homes, solely for the reason that there is a dearth of specifically Irish domestic records and inventories. The relevance of these British sources is completely convincing; Galavan uses the interior layouts of Irish houses to compare life as lived by Dublin's Victorian families and their servants.

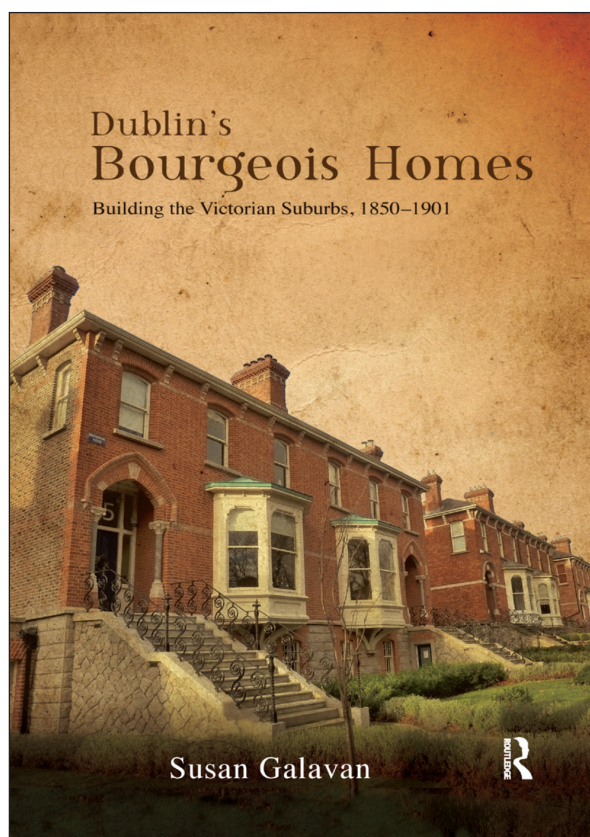


Figure 2: Cover of Susan Galavan, *Dublin's Bourgeois Homes: Building the Victorian Suburbs, 1850–1901*.

The third chapter examines the legal and social mechanisms that dictated development of Ireland's residential architecture in the mid-19th century. Galavan explains that 'it was the specifics of the building lease that determined the architectural character' (79). In the absence of any planning authority, landlords wielded supreme control. The chapter also discusses the concurrent development of suburban infrastructure, such as drainage, street-lighting, and public transport. Chapter four, in turn, focuses on the individual personalities behind the homes' development. Here, Galavan relies on articles published in *The Dublin Builder* (which in 1867 became *The Irish Builder*), and rightly so. This periodical is an essential tool in any analysis of Irish built environment of the period. Chapter five examines building methodologies and the practical realities of key building materials. It provides the basis for what could become a detailed study of the Victorian building industry, and a sequel to Arthur Gibney's study of *The Building Site in Eighteenth-Century Ireland* (Gibney 2017).

For the most part, the chapters are illustrated with maps and floor plans and the author's own black and white photographs, which, although not dated, were presumably taken during the course of Galavan's doctoral research. Colour plates included at the centre of the book present historical maps, architectural drawings, and contemporaneous photographs. These images bring life to Galavan's descriptive passages, though it would have been beneficial to the flow of the narrative if they had been more closely integrated with the text. But the format was most likely decided by the publisher and does not overly detract from the book's narrative. Sources for both illustrations and quotations are provided in the footnotes at the end of each chapter. They reveal the depth of Galavan's investigations and provide a rich resource for further reading.

Dublin's Bourgeois Homes is a comprehensive analysis of the 19th-century development of Dublin's prosperous inner suburbs. Fortunately still substantially intact, these areas remain among Dublin's most desirable neighbourhoods. Galavan's use of the term bourgeois underscores the proclivity for materialism and the striving concern for respectability that drove this architectural development. Her study shows how materialism, in particular, became an increasing factor in the design of these suburban homes, as plain brickwork gave way to polychromatic and textured brick detailing; entrances became more elaborate, with decorative door frames, columns, and porticos; roof profiles became more complex; and ornate interiors were increasingly embellished with polychromatic marble fireplaces, timber paneling, and interior detailing, such as archways and decorative built-in joinery. All of these architectural developments show the owners' growing confidence in the display of their wealth and success.

For current residents of all of Dublin's Victorian suburbs – not just Pembroke, Rathmines, and Dun Laoghaire – Galavan's book provides fascinating insight into both the architecture of the houses and the ways in which these still much sought-after suburbs evolved. It facilitates a better understanding of their evolution in relation to that of the city, and helps residents and scholars alike to realize their importance as an integral part of a greater

architectural legacy. The book is also instructive beyond the framework of Dublin or Irish history. In an era of ever-increasing awareness of the importance of conservation of architectural heritage, this book provides context for home owners who struggle to understand the merits of conservation and helps to elucidate the enduring legacy of the residential architecture beyond a single generation. The owners might be said to be temporary custodians of the homes in which they reside, the significance of which belongs to a longer history.

Monument Survival and a Tyranny of States

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Lynn Meskell, *A Future in Ruins: UNESCO, World Heritage, and the Dream of Peace*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 372 pages, 2018, ISBN: 9780190648343.

Lucia Allais, *Designs of Destruction: The Making of Monuments in the Twentieth Century*, Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 347 pages, 2018, ISBN: 9780226286556.

Two monographs recently appeared that share institutional trajectories and several major players, concepts, and events. Both books devote a chapter to perhaps the most spectacular and definitely the most media-covered 'salvage' operation of an ancient monument: the so-called Nubian Campaign of the 1960s, epitomized in the cutting, moving, and reassembly of two stone-carved temples at Abu Simbel in Upper Egypt. Both mention the concert by a St. Petersburg symphony orchestra conducted by Kremlin-favorite Valery Gergiev in the Roman theatre at Palmyra in 2016 where the so-called Islamic State had staged the execution of Syrian soldiers the year before; the symbolic significance of the Maison des Esclaves at the Senegalese island of Gorée; and the terrorist group Ansar Dine's destruction of libraries, shrines, and mosques in Timbuktu, Mali. These three sites were inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list in 1980, 1978, and 1987, respectively. The 2012 attacks in Timbuktu resulted in the first verdict from the International Criminal Court in The Hague, establishing the destruction of heritage as a war crime in its own right, as recounted by Lynn Meskell in *A Future in Ruins: UNESCO, World Heritage, and the Dream of Peace* (Figure 3). The acts of demolition also exemplify how globally acknowledged monuments make attractive targets in warfare, as Lucia Allais shows in *Designs of Destruction: The Making of Monuments in the Twentieth Century* (Figure 4). But Allais and Meskell have written two very different books that in complementary ways explore the politics of monuments and heritage sites on a global scale.

Meskell, an archeologist and anthropologist at Stanford University, writes the history of UNESCO from the perspective of archeology and partly in the genre of anthropological fieldwork. She has interviewed ambassadors,

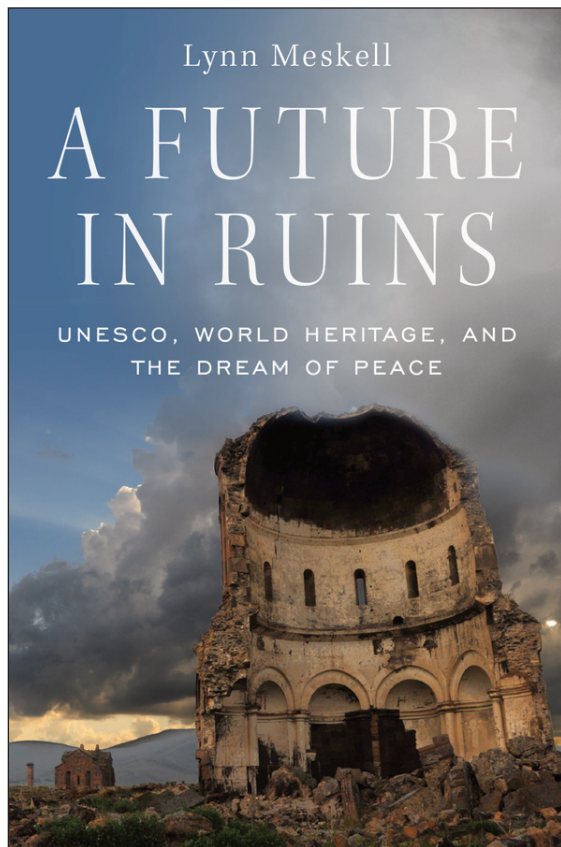


Figure 3: Cover of Lynn Meskell, *A Future in Ruins: UNESCO, World Heritage, and the Dream of Peace*. Photo credit: Oxford University Press.

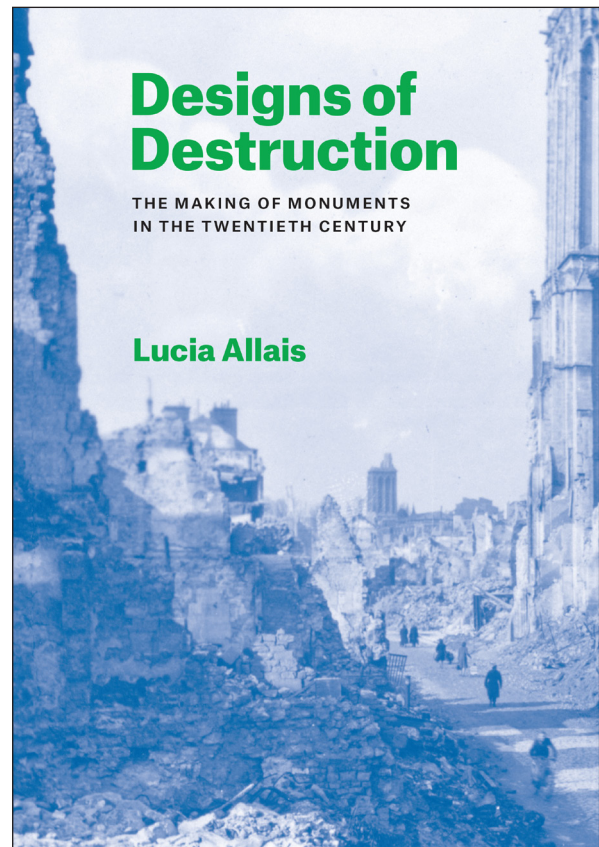


Figure 4: Cover of Lucia Allais, *Designs of Destruction: The Making of Monuments in the Twentieth Century*. Photo credit: University of Chicago Press.

committee members, advisory bodies, and UNESCO staff from around the world, and she reports from committee meetings, sometimes as an observer, and she also draws on her experience at archaeological digs in Turkey, Egypt, and South Africa. Through close readings of both documents and design projects by architects and engineers, Allais, an architect and architectural historian at Princeton University, critically establishes what she terms ‘monument survival’ by presenting the thought-provoking claim that destruction ‘became a new architectural category in the public imagination’ (2) after World War I – a category that has profoundly conditioned our understanding of the modern monument.

Indeed, the disciplines of architecture and archeology offer very different perspectives on monuments, heritage, and preservation. In Meskell’s discourse, monuments are there to be saved, while in Allais’ perspective, they are products of deliberate design work. Although Meskell, like Allais, deals with the political, institutional, and intellectual antecedents of UNESCO, her study has a more contemporary inclination, focusing on the Convention on World Heritage, adopted in Paris in 1972. Allais writes a 20th-century history of the construction of monuments through destruction, in which Nicolas Belanos’ infamous Parthenon restoration is an early occurrence, framed by an in-depth analysis of the 1931 Athens Conference, ‘the event where monuments first entered into the agenda of an international organization’ (35). This historicizing of 20th-century monuments has deeply felt contemporary

repercussions: *Designs of Destruction* completely rethinks the relationship of modernism, technology, and the past, and makes a substantial contribution to the field of preservation in doing so.

Whereas Allais aptly deconstructs political, legal, ideological, and aesthetic concepts by tracing their invention, appearance and use, thus revealing their historicity, Meskell, as an insider, is more accepting of UNESCO’s own discourse and vocabularies. A highlight in the passages of reportage-style writing is her report from the World Heritage meeting in Istanbul that took place during the attempted coup d’état in July 2016. The UN recommended that the delegates leave the country but the hosts refused to call off the meeting. Stuck in a militarized city as Erdogan was performing his resolute and sweeping arrests, the delegates found the conference center decorated with Turkish flags (assuming they were expected to wave them in solidarity with the regime: ‘they did not’). Where Allais gives a strong account of the invention of the modern monument, Meskell presents the history of a well-intended and increasingly dysfunctional bureaucracy.

A Future in Ruins shows how peripheral archaeology has been for the ethos of UNESCO, including its approach to world heritage: ‘for archeology as a discipline the organization means almost nothing’ (xix). UNESCO was established in Paris in November 1945, and Meskell recounts the preoccupation with archeological research and excavations from the founding of the League of Nations in 1920, the International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation

(1922–1939) and the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation (1926–1946) (the ICIC and IIIC, respectively). After the tenure of its first General-Director, the biologist Julian Huxley, the importance of archeology diminished. Meskell shows that the archeological component of ‘The World Saves Abu Simbel’ campaign, executed during the construction of the Aswan High Dam, was short-lived, erratic, and untypical.

In two contemporaneous examples, neither the archaeological threat of the Tabqa Dam, constructed upstream from Raqqa in Syria nor the international Save Moenjodaro appeal could match the allure of the Nubian desert and the archeological survey, excavation, and research that site has afforded. Moenjodaro, in Pakistan is a case in point for Meskell’s exploration of how UNESCO, rather than the Pakistani authorities, downplayed archaeology and turned to a development-oriented technocracy dominated by hydrologists, engineers, and architects, pursuing a technical rather than an archeological solution for recording the site. In 1980, the mudbrick remains of a 5,000-year-old settlement, once one of the biggest cities in the Indus Valley civilization, was listed as a ruin ‘rather than an archeological site’. Today, the mudbrick structures are collapsing and archeologists fear the site may be gone in a couple of decades. ‘Unlike the acclaimed victory in Nubia’, writes Meskell, ‘Moenjodaro signaled a technological defeat for the organization and a lapse into futility’. The same shift from archeological discovery to monumental recovery and risk management is described in relation to the 9th-century Buddhist temple of Borobudur on Java, Indonesia. When it was inscribed as World Heritage in 1991, ‘UNESCO was providing technical solutions, retreating further into its bureaucratic, managerial, and expert-driven function’ (65).

UNESCO was founded on humanism and pragmatic idealism after two world wars, aiming at both material and moral reconstruction. Meskell’s first chapter is entitled ‘Utopia’, the last ‘Dystopia’, and her nuanced criticism gets better the bleaker the outlook. She rehearses the continuous critique of the organization’s eurocentrism, of scholarship being replaced by report-writing, and the shift ‘from an assembly of statesmen to a tyranny of states’ (xvii). In 1968, the British archeologist Sir Mortimer Wheeler stated that UNESCO has ‘the most inefficient staff in the world’ (86). Meskell examines the politics at play in what appears as a byzantine bureaucracy of committees dominated by state-appointed ambassadors and politicians rather than heritage experts.

Examples are drawn from contested national borders, where local and global tensions are created through nationalist and territorial agendas. Exiled members of the Khmer Rouge lobbied in Paris for Angkor Wat to receive World Heritage status (granted in 1992); in 2008 the US was instrumental in inscribing a Shiva temple from the Khmer empire – part of an intense regional conflict between Cambodia and Thailand – as Cambodian heritage. By scrutinizing diplomatic cables released by WikiLeaks, Meskell illuminates the US’s sudden and great interest in this particular Hindu temple in relation to Cambodian gas reserves (with Boeing, Nike, McDonald’s, and Marlboro lurking in

the shadows); yet another example of the ‘hyperconnectivity of heritage on a global scale’ (120).

A powerful example of how heritage listing supports state violence is drawn from the 2016 Istanbul meeting of UNESCO, where the host nation had the international committee approve the inclusion of the medieval Armenian city of Ani – awarded to Turkey in 1923, a year after the Armenian genocide ended – as a Turkish World Heritage site. On many occasions Meskell suggests UNESCO’s complicity in ‘episodes of illegal occupation, atrocities, war crimes, and even genocide, while the victims are left to relive the trauma. This is the dark side of heritage branding’.

A Future in Ruins clearly demonstrates that heritage is not about the past, but about the present and the future, and covers geopolitical ambition, capitalist expansion, and mass-tourism. It is well known that the protection of monuments by distinguishing them as World Heritage often contributes significantly to their destruction.

Whereas Meskell discusses UNESCO’s successes and failures in preserving World Heritage, Allais’ agenda is motivated by different ends. Despite now-canonical modernist attempts to proclaim the death of the monument, the modernity of monuments became defined by their ‘capacity to survive destruction’, Allais argues; she defines monuments not as stable objects but as building projects. This conceptual operation required new classifications, paperwork, administration, pragmatics, information changes, and governance: ‘Monument survival itself became a branch of international diplomacy’. This diplomacy – both surrounding and constituting what the League of Nations called ‘artistic or historic monuments’ and UNESCO categorizes as ‘world heritage’, a term coined in a White House conference in Washington, DC, in 1965 – is everything but metaphorical. Highlighting the significance of diplomacy and the work of committees, Allais traverses disciplines – architectural and art history, philosophy, political theory, history of technology, anthropology – to write the institutional history of how the threat of imminent destruction shaped the modern, international monument, from the illustrious intellectuals involved in the League of Nations, the ICIC, and the IIIC, to UNESCO and its transformation into a more faceless bureaucracy.

Allais characterizes her approach as episodic. I believe this particularly explains why she has included some specific topics, and left others out (some of which she has dealt with elsewhere). Yet, the five chapters – accompanied by an introduction and a coda, and bridged by a shorter piece on the UNESCO house in Paris – read more as reflecting prisms than episodes. The opening on the 1931 Athens Charter, the two chapters on World War II (the first on the Allies’ Lists of Monuments, the second on the German ‘Baedeker raids’ and the maps of monuments used in the American bombing of Europe in the final years of the war), a fourth chapter on museums and decolonization, and finally the one on Abu Simbel, are precisely defined. They all unfold fundamental issues – technological, philosophical, and political – that reverberate across both the pages of the book and 20th-century global discourses on monuments. From different

angles and drawing on vast and varied archives, she shows the ways in which destruction and preservation are intricately entangled – whether the threat of destruction is being posed from insects, aerial bombing, or the work of preservationists.

With the architectural object placed centre stage, and with an apt eye for both canonical figures and those who reside in the shadows of architectural historiography, Allais demonstrates the ways in which ancient monuments (with their complex temporalities and authorships) have been conjured into new forms of existence, in changing presents. Balancing archival sources, bureaucratic evidence, policy documents, and rigorous theoretical outlooks, she presents unknown facts and incidents within powerful re-interpretations of more familiar historiographical accounts.

The exploration of preservation politics, bureaucracies, policy documents, technology, engineering, infrastructure, and vocabularies relies on a revealing eye for detail and surprising continuities. The book covers many aspects, from the insects that ‘evoke a deep history of coproduction of science and empire’ (179) in UNESCO manuals to atmosphere and decay on a molecular scale, from the European continent as a matrix of monuments to be destroyed or preserved to the infrastructure and design of entire deserts.

Allais critically reassesses monuments as mediated through documents and visual material, not least photography and film. The illustrations are splendid, but it is somewhat awkward that the publisher has grouped the colour plates in a separate ‘gallery’ and placed the illustration credits with the captions – an unappealing detail contrasting the extreme care with which the rest of the composition is put together. Without losing the very physical materiality of the object from sight, Allais is alive to the no less significant reality of the documents that have identified, and thus invented, these objects as monuments. As such, an architectural object such as the Parthenon becomes ‘both a monument and a document’, by means of restoration and international politics (62). For Allais, the materiality of monuments resides simultaneously in historic sites, in stones or locations, and in the mediation that shapes their design, their reception, or their translation. In its erudite complexities, *Designs of Destruction* strangely reads as a page-turner.

Was the German Modern Movement Elitist?

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Robin Schuldenfrei, *Luxury and Modernism: Architecture and the Object in Germany 1900–1933*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 336 pages, 2018, ISBN: 9780691175126.

Modern architecture is a luxury made for a select few. This is the thesis of Tom Wolfe’s 1981 diatribe *From Bauhaus to Our House*. From the 1929 avant-garde film *Les*

Mystères du Château de Dé, shot at Robert Mallet-Stevens’ Villa Noailles, to Jacques Tati’s 1958 comedy *Mon Oncle* and the opening scene of *Holy Motors* (2012), modernist buildings have endured as a trope signifying aristocratic and exclusive living.

Modern design can be a mark of exclusivity, yet architectural historians have rarely put this issue front and centre in their work. The consensus has been that the pre-World War II modern movement included conflicting currents. While Mies van der Rohe moved towards increasing individualization and luxury in his work (Mallet-Stevens or Pierre Chareau can also be mentioned here), other protagonists, like Hannes Meyer, Martin Wagner, Bruno Taut, or Karel Teige remained committed to social(ist) values and laboured to reform the daily lives of as many people as possible. Few historians would argue that catering to the upper classes was characteristic of the movement as a whole.

This is where Robin Schuldenfrei’s *Luxury and Modernism: Architecture and the Object in Germany 1900–1933* makes its intervention. The book urges us to look more critically at the pioneers of modern design in the ‘classical’ age of modernism in Germany, the period from the 1900s to the early 1930s, from the Werkbund to the Bauhaus. Schuldenfrei’s project is a bold re-reading of celebrated figures like Peter Behrens and Walter Gropius. Rather than emphasizing the designers’ and architects’ aspirations, she draws attention to the performance of their work in the consumer market and in society. Neither dismissing modernism offhand as elitist, in the manner of a popular critic like Wolfe, nor writing an apology for its higher goals, she objectively lays out evidence to show what a few of the key figures actually achieved, and for whom. Comparing rhetoric against reality, she repeatedly shows how the modern movement ‘failed’ to meet its goals, and instead served an exclusive clientele, much like movements such as Jugendstil before it. This conclusion pertains to a particular time period within Germany, but, naturally, it also raises broader questions.

Luxury and Modernism consists of six main chapters, arranged roughly chronologically, each focusing on a key figure from the canon of German modernism. Each chapter brings out stark truths that, even when they conflict with established historiography, are hard to dispute. In the first chapter, ‘Consumption’, Schuldenfrei makes plain that Peter Behrens’ work for AEG not only remained out of reach for ordinary consumers, but it was designed and marketed specifically for the elite. The intimately scaled appliance showrooms targeted high-class consumers; Schuldenfrei juxtaposes these spaces with Berlin’s more popular department stores at the time. Her account pulls together a variety of evidence, from architectural and object design, to class-based distinctions in consumer behavior, and the pricing of retail goods relative to salaries. Other historians have critiqued the effectiveness of Behrens’ AEG work. Frederic J. Schwartz, whom Schuldenfrei cites, argues that the AEG aimed not to democratize consumption, but rather to achieve economic centralization by setting up a monopoly and limiting the types of standard goods sold (Schwartz 1996). But Schwartz’s analysis remains on the level of the Werkbund

and the AEG's intellectual history. *Schuldenfrei*, on the other hand, deals with real-life outcomes. A Behrens kettle, she notes, cost between \$95.40 and \$138 in today's money; an AEG vacuum cleaner would be worth \$1,590 (34). She also reminds us that the city was slow to provide wider access to the electric grid; in 1910, 3.5% of apartment houses were connected (35). These statistics, combined with AEG advertisements *Schuldenfrei* has unearthed, like the one showing a servant with a blow-dryer coiffing the lady of the house or drying the dog, undermine any notion of Behrens offering modern goods to the masses. By putting Behrens in the context of everyday life in Berlin, *Schuldenfrei* paints a fuller picture of modern design's social role.

The two chapters on the Bauhaus are equally compelling. In Chapter 3, 'Capital', *Schuldenfrei* problematizes the early Haus am Horn project in Weimar as a prototype of the modern dwelling. In a section subtitled 'Taking Financial Stock', she finds that the prices for the many electrical appliances in the house were forbidding (125–33). At the same time, printed matter about the project amounted to an advertisement for the appliances. *Schuldenfrei* argues that rather than providing realistic solutions for modern dwelling, the house was little more than a showcase for industry-produced electrical goods. This is affirmed in contemporary criticism of the project, which presents it as divorced from most people's living conditions and needs (135–36). In Chapter 4, 'Production', *Schuldenfrei* examines the Bauhaus's Dessau period, highlighting how the school primarily sold high-end artisanal goods even as it paid lip service to the idea of mass production. As in-house publications show, Bauhaus objects, often made of expensive materials, were advertised to upper-class clients. A shift in focus from intention to outcome tells a different story than most Bauhaus narratives, one of failure.

Chapter 2 – entitled 'Objectivity', in relation to the New Objectivity movement, or *Neue Sachlichkeit* – examines the Werkbund's longstanding campaign to reform German shop windows. The discussion here, in which *Schuldenfrei* argues that aesthetic choices imposed by the industry association failed to move the buying public, is the most open to debate. The section on the forgotten Ladenstrasse at the 1914 exhibition in Cologne is noteworthy. This model shopping street, lined with Werkbund-approved storefronts, was met with negative reviews both for its plainness of design and for the exclusivity of the goods showed, which included furs and cigars (82). The chapter's overall thesis, however – that all display windows of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* were by nature elitist – seems more difficult to sustain. It is contradicted by one of *Schuldenfrei*'s examples: a sleek modern Leibniz Keks store selling prepackaged cookies. In their matter-of-fact, geometric boxes, the cookies look the embodiment of New Objectivity brought to the masses. In this case, no statistics are offered on pricing and sales, so it is difficult to measure the success of the redesign. *Schuldenfrei* asserts that the Werkbund window dressing guidelines were 'admirable in their intention but ultimately elite, top-down edicts' (83) and that 'they did not necessarily attract the attention – or meet the approval

– of the general urban population likely to encounter them' (91). But the voices of shoppers themselves are not included, apart from the Cologne Ladenstrasse criticism; popular taste is assumed as a given. Did the people find modern Leibniz Keks alienating? How were the *Neue Sachlichkeit* storefronts in Berlin perceived? These questions deserve further research. At times the argument becomes strained, for example when *Schuldenfrei* defines a display by Hannes Meyer for a workers' cooperative in Switzerland as elitist because it was a 'cerebral presentation that would have appealed to the readers of the avant-garde architectural journal, *Das Werk* (104). Is a design from an architecture journal by definition not popular? Interestingly, this chapter's thesis is at odds with that of Chapter 4, where *Schuldenfrei* argues that the Bauhaus was a luxury producer because its designs were not mass-made. If Werkbund shop windows were elitist in their dissemination of top-down ideas, should we understand the wider diffusion of modern design as being populist or elitist? What does it mean to make good design democratic? This conundrum finds no easy resolution.

The book's final two chapters, 'Subjectivity' and 'Interiority', demonstrate how Mies van der Rohe's residential designs of the late 1920s and early 1930s catered to the elite with their high-end materials and separation from the common urban realm. Because of their close attention to a few projects, these chapters read like part of a monograph on the celebrated architect. While Mies's move away from mass societal concerns to creating sumptuous individual homes is well documented, *Schuldenfrei* uses the architecture itself as evidence of the exclusivity of his designs. She lavishes attention by employing rare woods, highly polished metallic window trim, and bespoke mechanical devices. *Schuldenfrei* is clear that Mies was an outlier among his colleagues: 'Mies' architecture and interiors, as unique solutions, were ideologically very different from those of his peers' (246). A focus on other architects, like Bruno Taut or Hannes Meyer, could have presented *Neues Bauen* as more socially engaged. Mies's position is an extreme, and yet it shows how modernism and luxury were very much compatible.

In *Luxury and Modernism*, *Schuldenfrei* confronts the longstanding issue of modern architecture's elitism, going to the heart of the canon and building up evidence in varied case studies. In 2017, the poet Robert Montgomery lamented, 'Modernism isn't a style/Modernism is a dream/Of free education and/Racial equality and/Libraries full of books...' By extension, one might well ask, who are modern buildings and objects for? In our discipline, for whom is the 'cerebral' discourse about them? *Schuldenfrei*'s book raises these important questions and tackles issues that extend beyond 20th-century Germany.

Note

- ¹ Dublin's Tenement Museum at 14 Henrietta Street, owned and conserved by Dublin City Council, www.14henriettastreet.ie.

Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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