

# Introduction

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The beginnings of architectural history as a discipline go back to the Renaissance and the efforts of Italian architects to recover the design skills of their ancient Roman colleagues. 'And there was no ancient building that was praised and that I did not examine carefully in order to learn from it', wrote Leon Battista Alberti.<sup>1</sup> Although it was originally an endeavour of architects, at least since the Enlightenment architectural history has been closely intertwined with art history, and many people today see it as a sub-discipline of the latter. The differences that ensure that architectural history remains a separate field nevertheless persist. Unlike histories of painting or sculpture, architectural history has its own institutional framework, the local societies of architectural historians and specialist journals. Historical buildings can attract public attention (and this attention can sometimes acquire political connotations) in ways that is uncommon for paintings or sculptures. Museums of architecture are rare and, unlike art historians, few architectural historians work in museums, but many of them are involved in the preservation of historical buildings, which is not so often the case with the historians of paintings or sculptures. Only some architectural historians receive their training as art historians, others are educated as architects and within the contemporary academic setting some of them work in architecture schools and others in art history departments.

These differences are also noticeable in the attention that art and architectural historians have dedicated to the histories of their respective disciplines in recent scholarship. For the past fifteen years art historians have been increasingly interested in art historiography, understood as the study art historians' practices. This trend naturally included the examination of the development of such practices through history and had the form of the research about individual historians' approaches to history writing. An equivalent trend has been much less pronounced among architectural historians and studies about architectural historiography are still much more rare. The classic work about the history the writing of architectural history is David Watkin's *The Rise of Architectural History*, published in 1980.<sup>2</sup> Through the twentieth century, the common form of architectural historians' interest in the history of their discipline were general bibliographical studies about literature on certain architects, such as, for instance, Deborah Howard's study of the bibliography on Andrea Palladio.<sup>3</sup> Also, some architectural historians, especially those who worked on Renaissance architecture, paid much attention to the ways individual architects themselves studied historical buildings and how this affected their work—in Palladian studies this a major topic and one should mention the

<sup>1</sup> Leon Battista Alberti, *De Re Aedificatoria*, 6.1.2. Cited according to Leon Battista Alberti, *L'architettura*, ed. Giovanni Orlandi, parallel Latin-Italian edition, Milan: Polifilo 1966, 443.

<sup>2</sup> David Watkin, *The Rise of Architectural History*, London: Eastview Editions, 1980.

<sup>3</sup> Debora Howard, 'Four Centuries of Literature on Palladio', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 39, 1980, 224 – 241.

works of Bruce Boucher, Pierre Gros and Douglas Lewis as examples.<sup>4</sup> More recently, research on architectural historiography has mainly concentrated on the complexities of the relationship between modernist architectural theory and architectural history and especially the contributions of architectural historians to the rise of modernism in architecture—one should mention Panayotis Tournikiotis' *The Historiography of Modern Architecture* and Anthony Vidler's *Histories of Immediate Present* as examples of such interests.<sup>5</sup> One is tempted to see in such works a collateral extension of interests in the intellectual forces that shaped architectural modernism rather than research that is motivated by interests in historiography *per se*. Individual monographs on specific historians, such as Andrew Leach's book on Manfredo Tafuri are still relatively rare.<sup>6</sup>

The hybrid nature of architectural history as a discipline and the fact that the primary training of architectural historians is in some cases in architecture and in some cases in art history manifests itself in the specific contributions published here. The questions that their authors ask are often motivated by their earlier disciplinary training and the same applies to the authors (architectural historians) they write about. Positioned in the direction of more specifically architectural interests, Johanna Gullberg's paper deals with the concept of space in the works of August Schmarsow and Bruno Zevi. Very similar in its architectural orientation is Braden Engel's analysis of Colin Rowe's approach to the teaching of architectural history in the education of architects. It is also interesting to ask what happens when architects write architectural history: Matthew Wells' paper discusses Alison and Peter Smithson's approach to the writing of architectural history while Caterina Cardamone presents a stimulating analysis of Joseph Frank's writings. It is difficult for architectural historians to avoid reacting to contemporary architectural trends and Michela Rosso's paper explores such reactions to early modernism in Great Britain. Political influences in architectural historiography are analysed in the papers by Miriam Cera, Olga Yakushenko and Nadia Podzemskaia.

In line with the practice of the *Journal of Art Historiography* to publish translations of important documents, for the first time the journal includes the translation of an entire book -- Karl Johns' translation of Hans Sedlmayr's book on Francesco Borromini -- together with an extensive study about this book by Ian Verstegen, as well as Andrew Hopkins and Arnold Witte's translation of Hans Rose's commentary on Wölfflin's *Renaissance and Baroque*.

The content of this issue of the *Journal of Art Historiography* is a reflection of the pool of the contributions that have been received. It will be noticed that all architectural historians whose work is discussed are Europeans. While I have made efforts to find contributions about non-European architectural historians, and have

<sup>4</sup> Bruce Boucher, 'Nature and the Antique in the Work of Palladio', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 59, 2000, 296-311. Pierre Gros, *Palladio e l'antico*, Padua: Marsilio, 2006. Douglas Lewis, *The Drawings of Andrea Palladio*, Washington DC: The International Exhibition Foundation, 1981.

<sup>5</sup> Panayotis Tournikiotis, *The Historiography of Modern Architecture*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999. Anthony Vidler, *Histories of the Immediate Present: Inventing Architectural Modernism*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2008.

<sup>6</sup> Andrew Leach, *Manfredo Tafuri. Choosing History*, Ghent: A&S Books, 2007.

been promised such materials, eventually none of them arrived. It will be also noticed that twentieth-century interests are dominant in the works presented here—in fact, only the paper by Miriam Cera is dedicated to a pre-twentieth century work on architectural history. A remarkable aspect of this collection of essays is that most of the authors are in the early stages of their careers and that their papers are based on the doctoral dissertations that they are working on or have recently completed. Twenty years ago doctoral dissertations on individual architectural and art historians were rare—but by this time we are obviously facing a trend that indicates that the discipline is increasingly engaged in self-examining. It is certainly interesting to contemplate, though it seems difficult to predict, the long-term effects of this trend.

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