

If we look for timelessness in architecture, we must look to tradition

Si buscamos lo atemporal en la arquitectura, debemos acudir a la tradición

Se procurarmos a intemporalidade na arquitectura, temos de olhar para a tradição

Clive Aslet

Earlier this year, around March, time changed. The world stopped. People who had previously been busy travelling to their offices or jetting off to distant destinations found themselves in a state of suspended animation. Confined to their homes, many people found that the days grew longer, because there was little to fill them. They didn't look so much at their watches or mobile phone displays so often. The clock has not yet properly restarted.

So this is a good moment for Robert Adam, an exceptionally thoughtful architect, to bring out his latest volume: *Time for Architecture: On Modernity, Memory and Time in Architecture and*

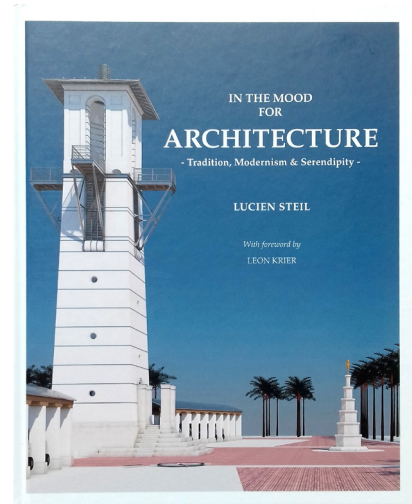
Urban Design. Architecture exists in time, because it is slow to build and subject to the normal processes of decay. But a host of critics have adopted 'timeless' as a term of high praise. It doesn't take more than a couple of illustrations of supposedly timeless buildings to realise that they have quickly become dated. No more than a glance is needed to know that Michael Graves's Denver Public Library was built about 1990.

Architects are no more successful at predicting the future than astrologers or soothsayers. Human beings are quick to adapt to new realities and development does not go in a straight line; they can have – from a Modernist perspective – a perverse attachment to traditions that bring the past into the present. If timelessness means the sense of stepping outside time and change that comes from ignoring passing fashions, we must look to tradition rather than Modernism.

As Professor Adam makes clear in the first paragraph of this engaging book, our awareness of time is related to the span of human life. This is not simply a meditation on mortality, however. Buildings outlast individuals and the best age gracefully. European cities are full of architecture that is many hundreds of years old. They embody the collective memory that's part of culture. This is a doubly important consideration in an age when certain protest groups are intent on expunging history that they consider unacceptable – by toppling statues, for example – because only one version of memory should be allowed to exist. Far more numerous than ancient buildings are ones that aren't expected to last more than 30 years. That is a betrayal of all the labour, energy and carbon that goes into them. Their deliberate lack of permanence is an assault on our perceptions of time itself.

Robert Adam

Time for Architecture: On Modernity, Memory and Time in Architecture and Urban Design
Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020



A Prelude to New Ways of Thinking about Traditionalism

Un preludio a nuevas maneras de concebir el tradicionalismo

Um prelúdio para novas formas de pensar sobre o tradicionalismo

Victoria L. V. Schulz-Daubas

Lucien Steil's book *In the Mood for Architecture, Tradition, Modernism & Serendipity* offers an illuminating and refreshing perspective on contemporary traditional architecture, and what it stands for today. Distilling a wealth of experiences as an architect, artist, teacher and writer, Lucien explores the grounding principles of traditional architecture; principles proven to bring harmony, vitality and variety to the built environment, as the continuing appeal of historic cities testifies. His comparisons between traditional and modern cities sharpen one's own sensibility for the relationship between cultural heritage and local context, between the time-tested and the new.

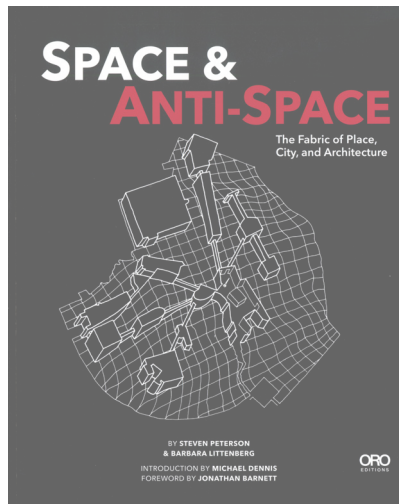
Throughout the book, Lucien's observations shed light on prejudice and

misconceptions around new classicism: On the side of the Traditionalists he criticises those who understand architecture as a way of ‘freezing time’ and that fend for it for reasons of conservative or religious thinking, or out of a regret for the ‘disappearance of class hierarchy and rigid order’. At the same time, he highlights how ‘similarly, many Modernists remain stuck in their own nostalgia for permanent revolution, a revolution now without social or political purpose, proposing no change but only perpetuating the status quo’. Instead, Lucien argues for a “perpetual becoming” and a continuous “re-learning, re-invention and recreation” enriched by the knowledge of generations of preceding architects, that clearly transcends an idealised representation of the past and evokes imagination with regards to architecture, society and togetherness.

The book combines Lucien’s writing with a great number of selected quotations of poets, architects, artists and historians. The composition of these texts and his own vibrant, mesmerising drawings and photographs turn the book into a synthesis of the arts, stimulating the reader on multiple levels, while communicating Lucien’s well-founded architectural and philosophical ideas visually, poetically, and melodically in a unique way.

Lucien Steil

In the Mood for Architecture, Tradition, Modernism & Serendipity
Ernst Wasmuth Verlag, 2018



The best way to learn about urban design is to study great cities

La mejor forma de aprender urbanismo es estudiar las grandes ciudades

A melhor maneira de aprender sobre desenho urbano é estudar grandes cidades

Matthew Bell

Colin Rowe is remembered having said that, aside from buildings, there are several scales of architecture, which includes both “micro-architecture like furniture and silverware, and macro-architecture like London and Paris... well maybe more Paris than London.” *Space & Anti-Space: The Fabric of Place, City and Architecture*, by Steven Peterson and Barbara Littenberg, is devoted to what Rowe called the “macro” scale, and this book adds an immense amount to understanding how to design at the scale of the city.

Several observations come to me upon an initial reading of the book. First, it’s sad that anyone should have to write a book about designing cities. Prior to

the advent of modernist architecture, it was an integral part of the discipline and an essential part of any architect’s education. Since then, architects have either struggled with the scale of the city or ignored it altogether. Second, it is surprising to say the least, to start a book about building the city with a chapter devoted to the thoughts and approach of Mies van der Rohe, but more about that later. And third, every architect that aspires to do buildings and urban design in the city, any city, should get a copy of this book and closely study its contents.

The leading premise of the book is that the design of successful cities is largely dependent on the shaping and defining of public “space” by (mostly) private buildings, and the utopian approach of modernists like Mies and others of his generation developed a theory of architecture and urbanism that was predicated on universal space, or “anti-space”, in Peterson and Littenberg’s terms. This ultimately led to a preponderance of individual buildings lacking any coherent relation to one another, a disintegration of the fabric of the city, and a generation of architects incapable or unwilling to shape space with buildings to make urbanity. For Peterson and Littenberg, dense, compact living is now more than ever necessary to combat climate change, and the best way to learn about urban design is to study great cities. For them, the modernist model of the city (the city of “anti-space”), widely practiced in the 20th century and now well into the 21st century, is inadequate to build the cities we need today.

The authors of the book have been engaged in the teaching of architecture and urban design throughout their careers, and their point of view and professional projects have clearly been informed by academic rigor. Their practice has involved influential hypothetical projects, such as the 1978 *Roma Interrotta* project led by Colin Rowe, winning some noteworthy international competitions in North America and Europe, and proposals for the rebuilding of Ground Zero in Lower Manhattan, where they advocated,