

Drawing on correspondence and some illustrations from the archives, Meghal Perera writes about a little-known unrealized project, Bawa's landscaping interventions designed for Colombo's Galle Face Green, which Bawa characterized as "the most important open space in Colombo"—thus, the title of Perera's essay. Responding to a request from the Sri Lankan government, Bawa advised minimal intervention in this colonial-era esplanade to preserve its openness, panoramic views, public access, and historic purpose. While Bawa's recommendations reflected his usual great sense of place—in this instance, of an urban space—Perera cautions that we should not nostalgically accept his proposed designs as perfect and desirable, as opposed to the place's current reality; rather, we should consider the tyrannical and transient nature of the politics of space production at the urban scale. The essays on Bali and Galle Face Green are the most useful in the book, as they touch upon projects that hitherto had not received much discussion.

The other two essays in the volume read the subtexts embedded in the drawings in the Bawa Archives. In "Vanishing Points," Sean Anderson sees the illustrations produced in Bawa's studio as more than technical instructions to be executed on-site; they imagine and embody the spatial and sensory experiences and journeys through the places to be created and eventually materialized. Those places are not limited to the sites but include the wider landscapes, often depicted in extended ground-floor plans, sectional drawings across the sites and beyond, and elevational perspectives showing foregrounds and backgrounds that have the same significance as the designed structures. Nature appears between spaces and structures and recaptures and represents the island's capacious landscape with decentered vanishing points. The visual language and styles of drawings articulate an architecture for postcolonial Sri Lanka, blending transnational modernity with local vernacularity.

In "Rendering Place: On the Importance of Archives," Tariq Jazeel traces the style of architectural drawing that merges technical and artistic processes to Laki Senanayake and Ismeth Raheem, who were associates in Bawa's studio in 1960s. Jazeel also discusses the work in relation to that of Minnette de

Silva, a contemporary of Bawa whose work had some influence on his approach to architecture. With a nationalistic consciousness inspired by the independence struggles in India and Sri Lanka, Minnette took a sentient approach to inventing an architectural tradition for postcolonial Sri Lanka that merged architectural modernity with the Sri Lankan vernacular, historical precedents, arts and crafts, and materiality. This kind of cultural production also could be seen in other artistic domains of the time—notably, cinema, theater, music, arts, and literature—in postindependence Sri Lanka. Jazeel emphasizes seeing Bawa's work, and the drawings produced in his studio, in this historical context, and thus the value of the archives as a trove for such critical reflection on the broader artistic milieu. Whether Bawa himself was aware of such a sociopolitical consciousness in his approach is questionable. Most of his patrons were among the sociopolitical elites of the country, and they may have had an influence on his thinking. This is a theme not seen in this volume, and hence yet to be drawn from the archives.

In the book's epilogue, titled "Drawing Stories," Channa Daswatte, one of the last associates of Bawa, reminisces about the significant role that drawings and sketches played in Bawa's design process. Although the drawings were important, Bawa was not necessarily interested in preserving them, and thus the collection of drawings remaining in the archives provides a doorway to his design thinking. The anecdotes that Daswatte narrates about his experiences with Bawa at different project sites are more revealing of Bawa's design thinking. Daswatte relates one intriguing incident in which Bawa spoke of the spatial qualities of a building to be designed, and the experiences and events that would take place there, and then turned those narratives into drawings to be brought into reality. This confirms de Silva's point about the crucial need for architectural archives to collect not only the drawings of the archives' subjects but also oral histories that can shed light on the subjects' creative processes.

Interspersed among the book's essays are illustrations of several of Bawa's projects, presented chronologically. They include St. Thomas' Preparatory School, Colombo (1957–63); Ena de Silva House, Colombo (1962–63); St. Bridget's Montessori,

Colombo (1963–64); Polontalawa Estate Bungalow, Nikaweratiya (1963–67); Yahapath Endera Farm School, Hanwella (1965–71); Bentota Beach Hotel, Bentota (1966–67); Ceylon Pavilion at Expo '70, Osaka (1969–70); and Kandalama Hotel, Dambulla (1991–95). In addition, each essay incorporates drawings from projects related to its theme.

Much has been written about Bawa's work. This volume highlights the person and his thoughts through stories about him and illustrations produced in his studio. As his archive is neither complete nor coherent, what is left tells a fragmented story of Bawa's process and projects. This book represents a valuable effort to stitch together a narrative that is as complete and cohesive as possible. What is clear from reading it is the extent to which oral histories can play a role in bridging the gaps. One hopes to see a future work that draws from the Bawa Archives and is generously supplemented with stories about the architect and his work from those who knew him.

KAPILA D. SILVA
University of Kansas

Note

1. Brian Brace Taylor, *Geoffrey Bawa* (Singapore: Concept Media, 1986).

Todd Cronan

Nothing Permanent: Modern Architecture in California

Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2023, 400 pp., 18 color and 147 b/w illus. \$160 (cloth), ISBN 9781517915193; \$39.95 (paper), ISBN 9781517915209

In our time, the term "California Modern" has become a watchword—a style, a design ethos, a shorthand descriptor for midcentury modern, and, still more, an evocation of a state of mind and a way of living. Like many labels, it is often tossed off as settled and complete, a closed and consummated story. Todd Cronan's brilliant rereading of modern California architecture, *Nothing Permanent*, is anything but a glib response to the question of what "California Modern" is, how it came about (primarily in Los Angeles, it should be noted), or what it might mean.

Cronan has not written a history as such, and many key players involved in the rise of the new building in California

do not appear in his account. Most of this longish book is about four figures: R. M. Schindler, Richard Neutra, and Charles and Ray Eames. Other significant architects, such as Gregory Ain, Craig Ellwood, Harwell Harris, Pierre Koenig, Raphael Soriano, and William Wurster, have only cameo roles. They fade in and out of the story, but they are never the primary actors. Cronan instead uses his four protagonists to speak to larger themes that are illustrative of a wider tale of the California Modern: permanence (or the lack of it), control (specifically of the inhabitants), interiority (or its opposite, an emphasis on the exterior), and, last, and most trenchantly, intentionality.

This is not an easy book, and it is not easy to summarize, in part because the four themes are interwoven throughout. Furthermore, Cronan is after something that is difficult to elucidate. What he seeks to show is how and why these main characters took different tracks, and how the paths they pursued and the choices they made came to exemplify the varied strains of architecture and design in California.

To make this storyline as clear as possible, it is best to start where the book does: with Neutra's and Schindler's divergent philosophies and approaches. Here, Cronan traces the two architects' intellectual roots and teachers. On one side is "Adolf Loos, mentor to both Neutra and Schindler; on the other, the tradition that runs from August Endell in the 1890s through Wassily Kandinsky and the Bauhaus in the 1930s and on" (49). Loos's thought, Cronan argues (correctly in my view), issued from a humanist and cultural perspective. In his buildings, Loos sought to fuse materiality, history, and use (i.e., the rituals of everyday life) together into a seamless whole. He was interested in affective architecture, in the sense that it enhanced and served the inhabitant's daily experience, and contextual architecture, in that it was a response to the realities of life and culture. The other dominant mode of thinking was about reform—employing architecture to change and improve the environment and the human condition. This was the visionary strain of architectural modernism, that of Endell, the pre-war German Werkbund, Walter Gropius and Adolf Meyer, and the Bauhaus. The first direction, following Loos, was an effort to put "people before environment"; the second, stemming from Endell

and the Bauhaus, was based on the notion "that human agency is unreliable" (55), and therefore, architecture must remake people by encouraging them to pursue a better way. If both Neutra and Schindler were profoundly moved by their experiences of Loos and his teachings, it was Schindler, Cronan contends, who carried Loos's ideas forward. Neutra, for his part, became increasingly wedded to the other stream, to a conviction that the purpose of architecture is inherently therapeutic and ameliorative.

These two approaches then played out in their architecture on the sprawling terrain of endless boulevards, winding hill streets, and benign climate of Southern California. Schindler, ever the virtuoso maker of form, sought to establish a new freedom for his clients while never abandoning his belief in the centrality of a culture of living. Cronan writes: "Inhabiting [Schindler's] spaces, one could measure the difference *between* civilization and culture. . . . His structures . . . bear an evolutionary history inscribed into their forms; they are agents of history, not expressions of a posthistorical world" (133).

Neutra, too, was gripped by the belief that architects could fashion culture. But he drew very different conclusions from this idea. Neutra sought an architecture of the moment, an architecture that could express most fully and completely the character and conditions of modernity. He made architecture for those with modern nerves, an architecture reflecting the mood and the psychology of the inhabitants. But these were aspects of the human condition to be shaped, not responded to. Design and building for Neutra were about control; the role of the architect was to structure the environment, even to the point where the landscape itself was remade and improved. (The best example here must be the contrived *mise-en-scène* of the 1946 Kaufmann House in Palm Springs.) If Schindler was purposefully spirited and obliging, Neutra was compulsive, often in the extreme.

Cronan then explores how permanence, control, interiority, and intentionality were infused into the architecture of Schindler and Neutra, and of those who came after them. These divides reflect some of the basic splits that ran through all modern architecture. Is architecture fundamentally an art, as Schindler's work

suggests (despite his strong interest in new materials and technical solutions), or should it be driven by "scientific" modes of analysis, as Neutra increasingly claimed? How should an architecture respond to the landscape? By putting a building "on it," as Schindler typically did, or "in it," as Neutra sought to do? To what extent should an architect's work be determinative? How much control should a building exercise over its inhabitants' lives? Schindler essentially wanted to amplify his clients' patterns of living; Neutra (whose psychologist brother was at one time part of Sigmund Freud's circle in Vienna) was fixated on the idea that architecture should be therapeutic, that it should guide and reform our patterns of living.

There is also the related question of consistency. Neutra's work became increasingly formulaic as time went on; Schindler, by contrast, was set on finding unique—or, at least, quite various—solutions for each building situation. And then there is the problem of permanence. Neutra, predictably, sought solutions that could be durable and lasting precisely because they were based on immutable "truths"; Schindler had no such illusions or aspirations.

Cronan next traces these divergences, these very different ways of thinking about architecture and modernity, through the five decades from Schindler's arrival in Los Angeles in 1920 to Neutra's death in 1969, during which time both the Eameses and Craig Ellwood appeared and effectively followed Schindler's lead. Collectively, they held that "architecture served as a model of progressive living, embracing complex modes of experience. . . . For these architects, what was at stake was nothing less than fully embodied experience" (54).

Cronan is particularly good at describing the Eameses' vision of temporary art and the highly free and experimental nature of their practice. He also offers an excellent discussion of Neutra's biologism and how it presented an almost diametrically opposite view of the Eameses' open and playfully investigational approach. His analysis of Neutra's 1954 book *Survival through Design* is especially poignant.¹ Anyone reading the book today will be struck by how very strange and off-putting it is. It is not the environmental alarmism that is so odd; that part even

feels timely. But Neutra's obsession with repairing everything that is purportedly wrong with modern life is almost scary. And more frightening still are his blanket prescriptions for anything and everything. That totalizing vision that came out of the mainstream of modernism and that was so much a part of its lifeblood now seems quaint, if not sadly misguided.

Cronan's quest, however, is not merely to expose these divides or to challenge the absolutist strivings of the most fervent so-called scientific modernists. He also has a political axe to wield. Toward the end of the book, he brings in the British-born critic Reyner Banham, whose 1971 book *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies* has remained the most influential reading of the city's peculiar landscape and the distinctive modern California architecture that resides in it.² "Banham," he writes, "took his cue from both Schindler and the Eameses, but he ultimately came to a conclusion that diverged from theirs regarding the goals of modern architecture" (53). Banham, to paraphrase Cronan, saw their attempts as mere performance, and in one of his most famous essays, he trivialized their efforts at constant reinvention as "a throwaway aesthetic" (300–301).³

Cronan, though, is more troubled by Banham's politics, which he characterizes as thoroughly libertarian: "Californians today, despite their progressive self-image, too often follow in Banham's ideological footsteps. Politically conservative in their fixation on individual responsibility—as though the problems of environmental collapse are a matter of more electric cars and recycling" (53).

What troubles Cronan most of all, however, is what went lost in the dominant, Neutra-Bauhaus-positivist direction: the demise of the most human dimensions of living. He puts this poetically: "What they [Schindler, the Eameses, et al.] shared was a sense that to express the full range of human experience, their work had to express its impermanence, to exemplify the ways in which the work was not reducible to a set of material qualities but subsisted both within and beyond them" (54).

Cronan's book lays out with a coruscating clarity the weaknesses and outright failures of nearly all readings of California modernism. It is an insightful and useful critique of that time and place and how we

have understood it. But it is much more. This very clever rereading can readily be expanded to modernism as a whole, for it lays out perfectly and powerfully where the new building went wrong. It is a challenge to our historiography and a call to action for today's designers.

CHRISTOPHER LONG
University of Texas at Austin

Notes

1. Richard Neutra, *Survival through Design* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954).
2. Reyner Banham, *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).
3. Reyner Banham, "A Throw-Away Aesthetic," *Industrial Design*, Mar. 1960, 61–65. On Banham and his critique of Los Angeles and its architecture, see also Nigel Whiteley, *Reyner Banham: Historian of the Immediate Future* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002).

A. Krista Sykes

Vincent Scully: Architecture, Urbanism, and a Life in Search of Community

London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2023, 289 pp., 60 b/w illus. \$115 (cloth), ISBN 9781350298378

As a Yale College freshman in 1963, I was uncertain about which elective courses to take, so I asked some upperclassmen and immediately was advised to sign up for Vincent Scully's art history lectures. I had never heard of Scully before, but he would change my life, as he did the lives of so many.

Scully's lectures were conducted in semidarkness; he said he wanted students to experience the images of the buildings, not just write down their dates. He used a 10-foot bamboo pointer, which he whacked against the projection screen as the rapid-fire sequence of slides flashed before us. He spoke with a theatrical cadence, often growled, and at least once wept. Most lectures ended with a standing ovation.

In her crisply written and highly accessible biography of Scully, A. Krista Sykes charts the life and career of a scholar who, at his death at the age of ninety-seven in 2017, had become a campus legend. In the 1970s, a fifth of Yale undergraduates took his courses. In 1975, *People* magazine dubbed him one of America's "Great Professors." But while acknowledging

Scully's unique impact, Sykes does not shrink from the complexities of his character and the choices he made that cloud his legacy.

Sykes begins with a sympathetic account of Scully's origins in New Haven, Connecticut, as the only child of Irish Catholic working-class parents who lived within walking distance of the Yale University campus. Scully excelled in high school and won a scholarship to Yale, an accomplishment tempered by his experience of having to wait on tables in the dining hall, serving privileged prep school graduates who looked down on him as a "townie." Despite the class consciousness, Scully distinguished himself, was admitted to Yale's graduate program, and would go on to be named a Sterling Professor, Yale's most distinguished faculty rank.

Scully's academic arc was interrupted by World War II. Having washed out as a flight cadet, he joined the Marine Corps. Sykes tracked down Scully's military records and learned that he was involved in secret operations before the invasion of Sicily, but she does not explain why his experience was, to use her words, "traumatic" and "horrifying." What she does report is that Scully was later hospitalized for months with what his doctors termed "psychoneurosis" and was judged unfit for combat. As a result, he remained in the States when his unit was sent to the slaughterhouse of Iwo Jima.

After the war, Scully resumed his studies and in 1955 published *The Shingle Style*, based on his doctoral thesis. The book enjoyed positive reviews for drawing attention to the neglected domestic American architecture of the late nineteenth century. In 1962, Scully followed his first book with *The Earth, the Temple, and the Gods*, a quasi-Jungian examination of classical temples in which he argued that ancient architects saw their buildings as having a spiritual relationship to the surrounding landscape. His Yale lectures on Athens and Paestum emphasized what he insisted was the universality of thinly veiled sexual imagery, including mounds, cleft mountains, and thrusting columns, a vocabulary thrilling to undergraduates at an all-male college.

But his rhetorical skills did not convince many of his scholarly colleagues. One review of his second book, quoted by Sykes, declared that Scully "has tried