

DESIGN OUTSIDE THE ARCHITECTURAL SPOTLIGHT

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MUNIO GITAI WEINRAUB

ELECTA

Munio Gitai Weinraub, *Bauhaus Architect in Eretz Israel* by Richard Ingersoll; photographs by Gabriele Basilico. Milan: Electa, 1994. 239 pp., illus., \$45

Shaping Seattle Architecture: A Historical Guide to the Architects, edited by Jeffrey Karl Ochsner. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press in association with the American Institute of Architects, Seattle Chapter, and the Seattle Architectural Foundation, 1994. 401 pp., illus., \$40; \$19.95 paper

Two recent books by *Cite* contributors break new ground by documenting the careers of architects whose work, by and large, has not figured in canonical accounts of 19th- and 20th-century architecture.

Richard Ingersoll has produced an extremely handsome monograph on the work of the Israeli modern architect, Munio Gitai Weinraub, who practiced in Haifa from the mid-1930s until his death in 1970. A Polish Jew, Weinraub (who in the 1960s Hebraized his surname to Gitai) was involved from his youth in Zionist-Socialist activities. He attended the Bauhaus in 1930 but was suspended by its director, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, for participating in political protests. Nonetheless, Mies hired Weinraub to work in his studio, and readmitted him to the Bauhaus in 1931. Weinraub left the Bauhaus in 1932. The next year he was expelled from Germany. He worked for Karl Moser's firm in Zurich until 1934, when he was able to immigrate to Palestine, where he spent the rest of his life.

Ingersoll analyzes Weinraub's career in Palestine as an effort to apply the ethic (to employ one of the terms of Reyner Banham's ethic-aesthetic dichotomy) of Bauhaus functionalism to Haifa's Zionist-Socialist milieu. Ingersoll particularly draws attention to the thoughtfulness and care with which Weinraub and his partner, Al Mansfeld (who had trained with Auguste Perret), produced modest housing and community buildings for the new workers' suburbs of Haifa and for nearby kibbutzim. Although rigorously simple, this work was often stylistically conventional rather than vanguard. By examining the evolution of specific projects, Ingersoll demonstrates Weinraub's commitment to using a "modern" democratic participatory pro-

cess to formulate architectural designs, even when this frustrated his modernist formal inclinations.

Ingersoll contrasts the urbanity of Weinraub and Mansfeld's large public buildings — such as the 1946 Central Synagogue in Haifa and the 1948 General Federation of Labor Building — with Weinraub's production following the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. During the 1950s and 1960s, Weinraub's institutional complexes, social housing estates, and commercial buildings became more formally assertive, although never pretentious or exaggerated. Ingersoll notes that these larger projects exhibit a decline in urbanistic responsiveness that was balanced by Weinraub's continued commitment to the expressive resolution of architecture and construction detail.

Giorgia Dalla Pietra's graphic design and Gabriele Basilico's photographs help amplify Ingersoll's text in presenting the inherent quality of Gitai Weinraub's buildings — as well as the insensitive alterations that have befallen many of them. In this modest but conscientious monograph, Ingersoll explores Weinraub's work within social, political, and ideological contexts to show how he translated Jewish, European, and socialist idealism and modernist architecture to Palestine in the middle third of the 20th century.

Jeffrey Karl Ochsner, now a Seattle architect and assistant professor of architecture at the University of Washington, has contributed significantly to the formation of a body of knowledge on the architectural history of Seattle and Washington state. His most recent effort is the compilation of a biographical dictionary of Seattle architects to which more than 20 historians have contributed, including Dennis A. Andersen, Meredith L. Clausen, Grant Hildebrand, and Thomas Veith.

Seattle was founded in 1852. During the 1880s, when the profession of architecture was first established there, the city's population grew in a rapid series of economic expansions and contractions. As the result of a disastrous downtown fire in 1889, Seattle acquired a collection of substantial late-Victorian public and commercial buildings. These were followed in the early 20th century by skyscrapers, imposing public institutions,

and impressive residential architecture. Ochsner and his associates profile the practices of 45 Seattle architects in short, comprehensive essays illustrated with photographs and drawings of their subjects' most important buildings.

By assembling such a catalogue, Ochsner demonstrates how rich an architectural heritage Seattle possesses. Rather than representing only the work of white male architects, some of the book's most compelling illustrations are of buildings by female and minority architects, such as Elizabeth Ayer, the Japanese-American A. K. Arai, and the African American Benjamin F. McAdoo, Jr. *Shaping Seattle Architecture* documents the careers of Seattle architects who achieved wider reputations (such as Robert C. Reamer, Paul Thiry, Paul Hayden Kirk, and Victor Steinbrueck) as well as many others whose work deserves to be better known — in particular eclectic architects from the first half of the 20th century. In addition to the major profiles, there are shorter, unillustrated entries on another 81 Seattle architects, a list of major out-of-town architects who designed buildings in Seattle, and extensive bibliographic references. There are also entries on Native American architecture, pattern-book architecture, and vernacular building types. The comprehensiveness, organizational clarity, and impressive graphic design of *Shaping Seattle Architecture* make it a model for other U.S. cities to follow.

Ingersoll, and Ochsner and his collaborators, demonstrate that in the field of architectural history, one can — to quote a popular bumper sticker — act locally while thinking globally. Their research, scholarship, and publications make available not only factual knowledge but an interpretive breadth that rescues their subjects from the suspicion of provincialism and, even more critically, the futility of collective oblivion. ■

SHAPING SEATTLE ARCHITECTURE

A Historical Guide to the Architects

Jeffrey Karl Ochsner, editor

