

Joshua Ketelaar in Mewar (ca. 1711). As forms of cultural appropriation, these seem underthought, as does the brief mention of the fact that the British from the 1760s began to formalize such diplomatic practice in terms of attaching residents to courts (196). Why the EIC chose expanding diplomacy while the VOC focused on securing territory in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) remains underexplored.

Part 4, on company settlements, compares EIC Madras on the mainland with VOC Ceylon. Van Meersbergen notes, “Even more actively than was the case in Madras, the VOC also implemented policies of spatial segregation in towns under its command” (218). That gap widens in chapter seven, as fears of “mestization” appear to be matters of concern for the highest levels of the VOC but largely ignored by the EIC until the nineteenth century (231–32). Here, the sameness thesis starts to obscure promising comparisons and contrasts, especially how gender relations and women’s labor might be brought into the question of historical discourse. Their voices are also missing.

In conclusion, Van Meersbergen claims, “A century after their first forays into the Indian Ocean world, the Dutch and English East Indian Companies had become firmly rooted in South Asia’s commercial and political structures” (254). Well, no. For better or worse, more aggressive and extensive Dutch ethnographic discourse did not create firm roots in South Asia. English is still an official language in India, and for Said, William Jones—rather than Peter van Dam—represented the basic problem of Orientalism. Differences matter.

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doi:10.1017/rqx.2023.613

*Metropolis in the Making: A Planning History of Amsterdam in the Dutch Golden Age.* Jaap Evert Abrahamse.

Architectural Crossroads: Studies in the History of Architecture 6. Turnhout: Brepols, 2019. 536 pp. €125.

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The rapid transformation of Amsterdam’s urban center during the seventeenth century was a subject of fascination and wonder even to contemporary audiences; as author Jaap Evert Abrahamse remarks in the introduction, period histories of Amsterdam’s expansions essentially constitute the first texts in the genre of urban planning literature (23). While the results were widely admired, the complex administrative processes behind the city’s reshaping have remained understudied, an oversight now corrected by Abrahamse’s rigorous and meticulously organized study.

Nineteenth-century authors presented Amsterdam as a kind of “Gesamtkunstwerk” (27) filled with princely picturesque vistas, a Northern rival to Versailles, thought to have been shaped by the hand of a single genius—variously claimed to be city architect

Daniel Stalpaert, national architect Hendrick de Keyser, or one of any number of architects, princes, or military engineers. Later writers argued that the city was less an expression of Baroque artistry than Baroque geometry, linking its rectilinear forms to the idealized mathematical diagrams of model fortresses found in architectural treatises. Twentieth-century historians, including W. B. Peteri and Lucas Jansen, complicated these views with research into the more pragmatic urban problems of traffic and civil engineering, but associations between Amsterdam and lofty visions of an ideal city linger on.

Abrahamse's monograph therefore offers a useful and timely demystification, grounded entirely in the mundane (and highly revealing) evidence of meeting records, rulings and ordinances, treasury notes and budgets, court proceedings, and other documents that comprise the city archives (Stadsarchief Amsterdam). The metropolis that emerges from this trove is far from ideal; instead, as Abrahamse argues, it is "optimal" (22), shaped by trial and error while navigating problems of environment and soil quality, trade, population boom and land ownership, and—crucially—water management. Solutions emerged not from a supreme masterplan but from the "confrontation" (461) between need, desire, and reality. In other words, grand plans were made and then continuously adapted, scaled, or scrapped. Examples are plentiful: the 1610 harbor-digging project whose costs were underestimated and revenues doubly overestimated; an expansion in the Haarlemmerbuurt forced to wait years for a new dike to settle into its marshy bed; the realization that the Jordaan, built on polder land, would require ten locks to connect its new canals to the water levels of the old. Frustrations of city administrators are palpable throughout, and it is from their vantage point that the book's narrative unfolds; other voices enter, but are largely filtered through the recorded perspectives of the city's ruling merchant and burgomaster class.

The book is divided into two halves: the first offers a chronological recounting of the city's major extension projects, with chapters 2 and 3 providing decision-by-decision and brick-by-brick chronicles for the periods between 1600–50 and 1650–1700, respectively. The second half explores three crucial themes in urban planning: land-use policy, traffic, and water management. Chapter 4 delves into the thorny problem of residential versus commercial interests and the gradual emergence of formalized zoning policy, a process which saw the banning of trades considered nuisances from the city's center as well as the figurative and physical displacement of Amsterdam's poor to the margins. Chapter 5 explores the tension between the need for traffic—as an engine of economic activity—and traffic's deleterious effects on social order. Chapter 6 focuses on water management, one of Amsterdam's most visible (and olfactory) problems, which was not solved until the nineteenth century. The latter three chapters, taken together, substantially support Abrahamse's claim that city administration gradually grew better-prepared for public works, and as such Amsterdam's fourth extension—while the least examined—was the most efficiently organized, revealing a powerful turn towards "rational" planning and "urbanism as a discipline" (465).

No detail of Amsterdam's major extensions escapes Abrahamse's aggregation; the result is a lengthy book, at 470 pages. Yet the reader may be left wishing for deeper analysis of the rich material presented. Likewise, Abrahamse presents a wealth of well-selected images—not only period maps and artistic renderings of city views but also seldom-seen administrative documents such as auction maps of new building plots—but provides little additional interpretation. At times, the volume may feel like a long listing of painstakingly compiled minutiae, yet perhaps that is less a failing than an apropos reflection of its subject matter: after all, it was out of such minutiae that “the most meticulously planned city of Europe” (470) arose. For its comprehensiveness and breadth of scope, this work will undoubtedly become an indispensable aid to scholars of Northern European urban, economic, and social history.

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doi:10.1017/rqx.2023.615

*Sephardic Book Art of the Fifteenth Century*. Louís U. Afonso and Tiago Moita, eds. Studies in Medieval and Early Renaissance Art History. London: Harvey Miller, 2019. 256 pp. €125.

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Medieval manuscripts bear testimony to the historical and artistic context of their production. Moreover, they become living objects of history, for they contain evidence of various temporalities—dialogues between interlocutors through their marginal notes, and artists who have continued to decorate the manuscript throughout the centuries—while giving us an account of their trajectory from conception to their arrival in the hands of a patron or library. As Andreina Contessa notes, while fifteenth-century Sephardic manuscripts share a story similar to that of other medieval texts, they are particularly interesting because they provide evidence of their itinerant history: “Hebrew manuscripts were often damaged or destroyed and sometimes drifted from place to place, following the destiny of persecution, banishment and migration suffered by their owners” (175). This book offers a multifaceted examination of a series of Sephardic decorated manuscripts from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, which have not received much scholarly attention from art historians when compared to Sephardic manuscripts from previous periods. Nevertheless, they present unique and compelling examples of book art. In the introduction, the editors situate the book's contribution to the medieval Sephardic visual culture present in manuscript and incunabulum production by examining how they illustrate the artistic complexities and intercultural dialogue which their creation entails.

The book brings together ten different essays that consider the final stages of Hebrew art production in medieval Iberia. The essays encompass various disciplines and perspectives, including art history, codicology, astrology, and history of science, among